

# What are the main challenges facing young people in coastal communities?

Latest findings from the Coastal Youth Life Chances project

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# Aims of this project

In what ways does growing up in a coastal community impact on young people's experiences, aspirations and life chances?

In light of these experiences, what are the solutions young people propose to improve their coastal communities?



# Mixed method study: Data we draw on



## Quantitative data

Longitudinal cohort studies (Understanding Society and Next Steps) enable us to look at long-term impact



## Qualitative case studies in five areas

East of England (Great Yarmouth & Lowestoft); Torbay (Paignton & Torquay); Barrow-in-Furness; Blackpool (and Fleetwood); and East Sussex (Newhaven, Peacehaven & Seaford)



## So far engaged with...

197 young people aged 15-24, using in-depth interviews, mapping workshops and creative co-production



## Also...

50 local policymakers and practitioners from around England

# Main areas of interest

**Education**

**Employment**

**Housing**

**Mental health**

**Youth-friendly spaces and youth services**

**Place-attachment and belonging**

**Outward migration**

**Youth inclusion in local decision-making**

## Youth mental health

- Our research shows that young adults residing in the most deprived coastal areas of England face a double whammy of poor mental health.
- They are both more likely to rate their mental health lower and more likely to live with an undiagnosed mental health condition, than if they had lived inland.
- The primary explanation (so far) lies in the economic and social challenges that people in deprived coastal communities face. Household incomes and private renting are key factors.
- Further enquiry is needed to identify reasons for the remaining mental health gap.

## Educational outcomes

Longitudinal survey data  
(2006 – 2022)

- Coastal youth are less likely to go on to a get a degree-level qualification when compared with young people from inland areas.
  - And individuals living in the 20% most deprived coastal areas face greater hurdles.
- This coastal disadvantage was found even after controlling for individual-level and family background characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status).
- Do area-level characteristics also influence the outcome? Yes, partly explained by growing up in neighbourhoods that are income deprived and “education deprived” (% with low qualifications, poor school attendance, etc).
- But again, these only partly explain the coastal association. Further research required.

## Youth spaces: nothing to do and nowhere to go

- Common theme, from young people and policymakers and practitioners
- Lack of youth clubs and social infrastructure where they feel welcome.
- But also a lack of commercial spaces that are youth-friendly due to the decline of the high street.
- Affordability and seasonality – key issues
- Surprising *lack* of use of beaches and other coastal amenities.
  - Reports that some young people have *never* been to the seaside, and some haven't been for years.
  - Why? The beaches are not clean or safe, or they feel the beaches are for tourists, not for locals.

## **Lack of youth-friendly spaces is important because it contributes to...**



Young people feel marginalised from their communities



Sense of disconnection from the place where they live



Anti-social behaviour



Desire to move away from their communities



May also contribute to lower mental health and wellbeing



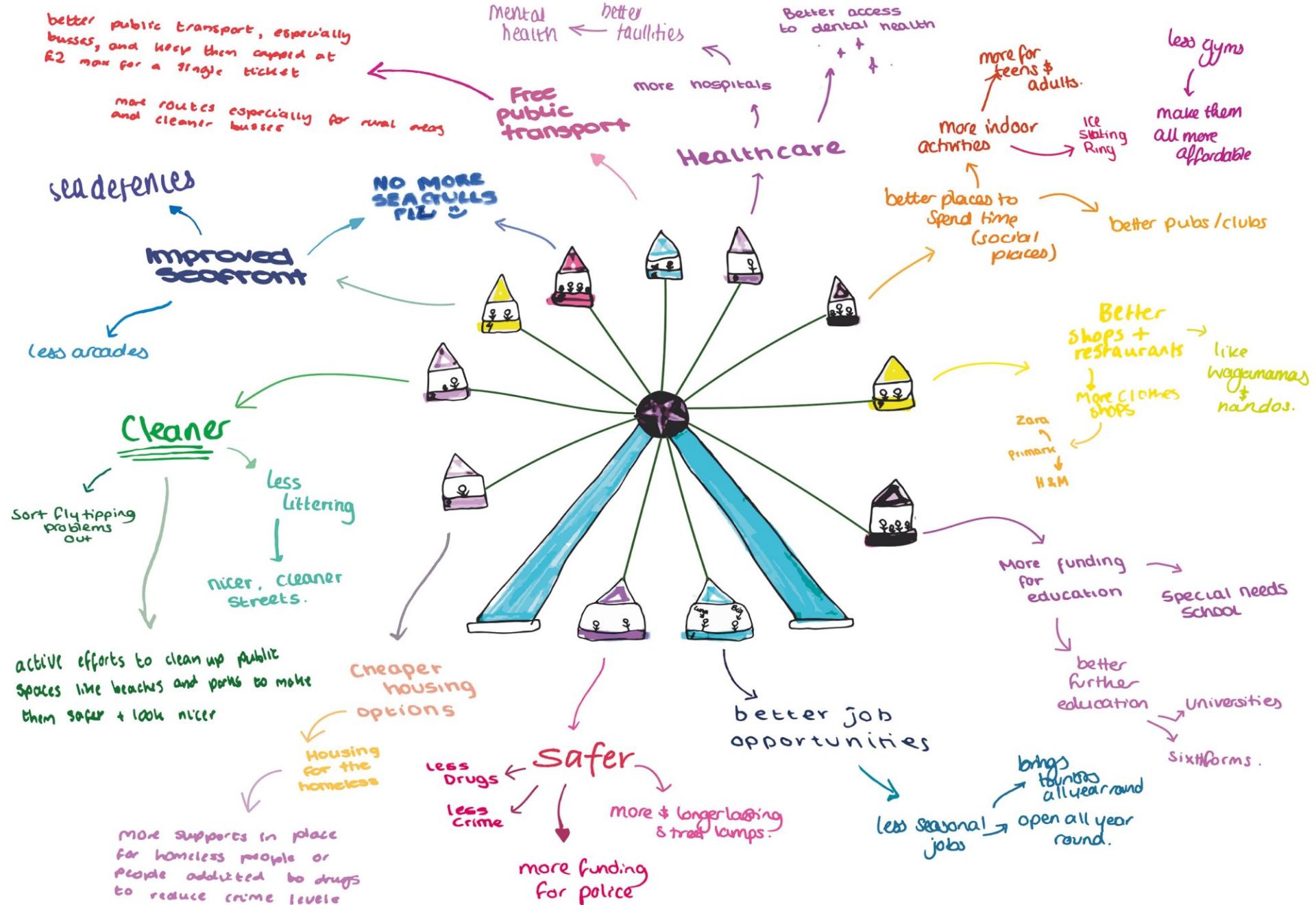
# Recommendations for the APPG (so far)

- **Include young people** aged 15-25 in local planning and in local decision-making.
- **Lobby for funding to (re)open youth clubs and create youth-friendly infrastructure** in public spaces: won't solve everything, but it's a start and a comparatively easy.
- Prioritize **prevention and diagnosis of mental health** for young adults living in the most deprived coastal communities of England.
- Reduce high concentrations of poverty in coastal areas, particularly for children.

# My town in 2030

What young people in the East of England told us they want for their towns

This visual was co-produced with students from East Norfolk Sixth Form College, LivingMaps Network and UCL)



# Forthcoming findings in 2026

## Employment

- Are coastal youth less likely to get “good” jobs?
- How are coastal communities preparing young people for Green Jobs? What are the barriers, challenges and opportunities?

## Housing

- What are young people’s experiences of finding independent housing in coastal communities? (quantity, quality, and experience of insecure accommodation and being unhoused).

## Youth inclusion in local decision-making

- To what extent are young people included in place-based policy initiatives? A case study of Barrow-in-Furness

## Research team

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## Publications to date

- Keating, A., Clark, E., Whewall, S., Yue, Z., Cameron, C., Murray, E., & Jivraj, S. (2025). *Young people & coastal communities: Local policymaker and practitioner perspectives: Interim report from the UCL Coastal Youth Life Chances project*. London: UK.
- Murray, E.T., Keating, A., Booker, C., Cameron, C., Whewall, S., & Jivraj, S. (2025). Is it the place or the people in the places? Exploration of why young people in deprived coastal communities of England have worse mental health than their peers inland. *Wellbeing, Space and Society*, 100307. Doi: [10.1016/j.wss.2025.100307](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wss.2025.100307).
- Keating, A., & Whewall, S. (2025). *Not settling for the lacklustre life? The role of local employment opportunities in youth mobility aspirations in coastal towns in England*. Presentation at the seminar series organised by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.
- Murray, E. T., Keating, A., Cameron, C., Benchekroun, R., Whewall, S., Booker, C., & Jivraj, S. (2024). Residence in coastal communities in adolescence and health in young adulthood: An 11-year follow-up of English UKHLS youth questionnaire respondents. *Health & Place*, 87. doi:[10.1016/j.healthplace.2024.103239](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2024.103239)
- Keating, A., Benchekroun, R., Cameron, C., & Whewall, S. (2024). Movers, returners and stayers: the role of place in shaping the (im)mobility aspirations of young people in coastal towns. *Journal of Youth Studies*. doi:[10.1080/13676261.2024.2337932](https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2024.2337932)

## Publications in progress

- Keating, A., Yue, Z., Jivraj, S. & Murray, ET. **Exploring spatial inequalities in educational outcomes: Are young people in coastal communities less likely to get a degree-level qualification?** Under review with *British Journal of Sociology*.
- Whewall, S., Keating, A., Cameron, C. & Clark, E. **Youth belonging and social exclusion in English coastal communities: Experiences from the East of England.** *Journal of Youth Studies*
- Cameron, C., Clark, E., Jivraj, S., Keating, A., Murray, ET & Whewall, S. **Coastal places and children's leisure time: Social infrastructure and children's wellbeing.**
- Keating, A., Clark, E., Whewall, S., Yue, Z., Cameron, C., Murray, E., & Jivraj, S. (2026). **Coastal youth and housing: A short report.**