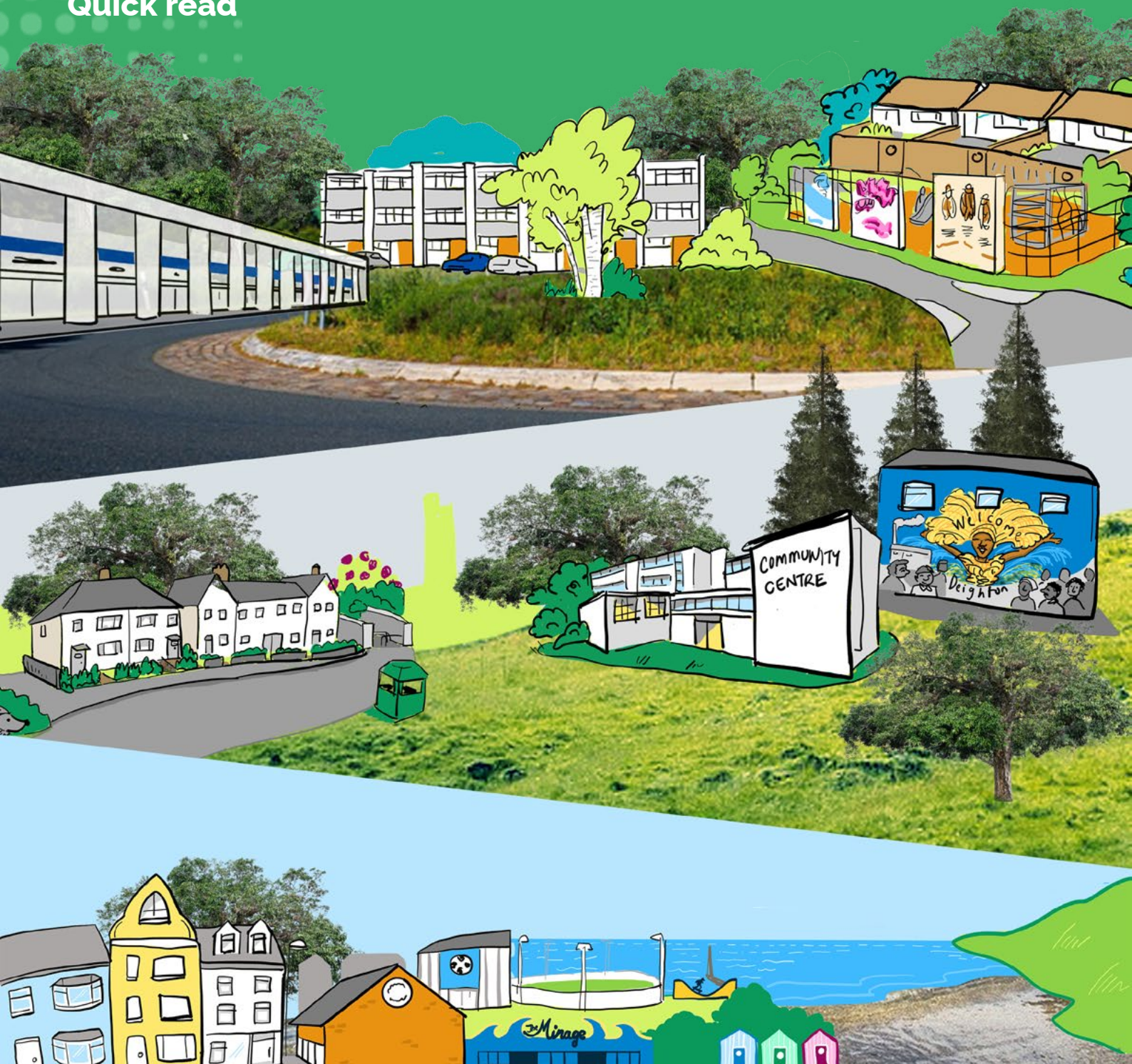


Young people as researchers and change-makers in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the UK

Quick read





Acknowledgements

Thank you to the young people, artists, designers and adult community members who worked with us on this project and the local stakeholders and schools who provided support for this research. We would also like to thank the local and national advisory groups for providing critical questions, suggestions and guidance.

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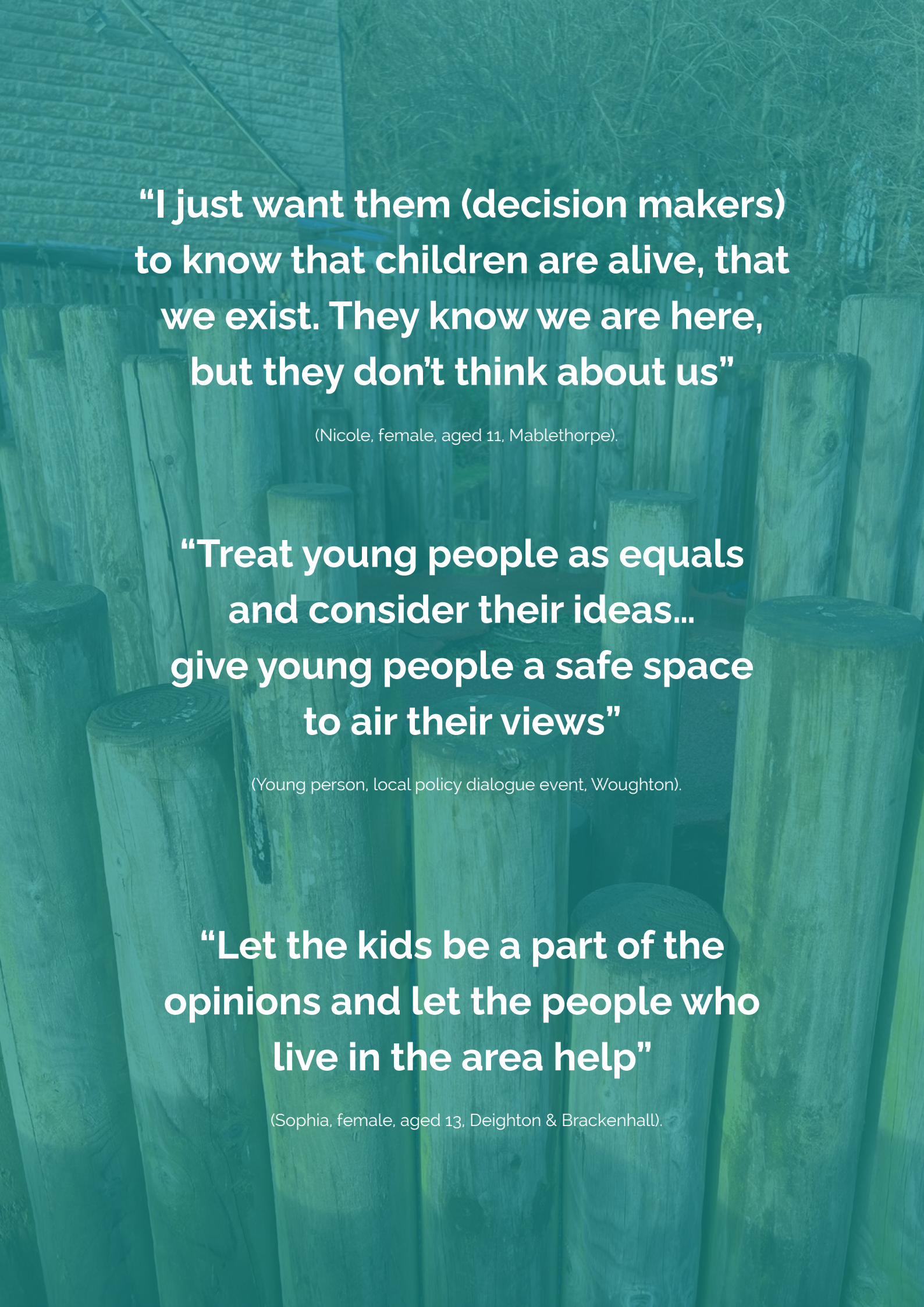
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**“I just want them (decision makers)
to know that children are alive, that
we exist. They know we are here,
but they don’t think about us”**

(Nicole, female, aged 11, Mablethorpe).

**“Treat young people as equals
and consider their ideas...
give young people a safe space
to air their views”**

(Young person, local policy dialogue event, Woughton).

**“Let the kids be a part of the
opinions and let the people who
live in the area help”**

(Sophia, female, aged 13, Deighton & Brackenhall).

Research aims

Our research, conducted with young people in three economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods in England explores:

- The role of local neighbourhoods in young people's lives; what supports and what challenges them to flourish in contexts of economic disadvantage and marginality.
- How young people can be actively engaged in local action and decision-making and the methodologies and methods that support the generation and exchange of knowledge with young people.

Findings

A total of 257 young people aged 10-15 participated in the project. This included a core group of fifty-four young people who worked with us as co-researchers and change-makers, a role which involved their co-shaping of the project, its methods, outputs, community change projects and dissemination activities. Across the three study neighbourhoods, young people shared with us how they access public space; the activities they do outside school; the adults in their communities who support and advocate for them and their aspirations for their neighbourhoods. They also shared the challenges they experience in accessing safe public space, their experiences of anti-social behaviour and gang violence, and how youth clubs and services have been defunded and the negative impacts on their physical, social and emotional wellbeing.

Findings were curated with young people using audio-visual media (animation, film, zines) and shared with third sector, government and elected representatives at a series of local policy-dialogue events which included identifying and agreeing priorities for social change. Actions arising from these events include:

- The launch of a Young Leaders Award enabling young people to develop accredited community leadership skills.
- The active commitment of a local MP, informing Labour's commitment for a national network of Young Futures hubs.
- The acquisition of a Youth and Community Hut for use as a youth centre, enabling young people to organise and attend activities, where no provision had previously existed.
- The inclusion of young people's voices in a new Multi-Agency Safety Hub to improve safety in the area.
- The incorporation of young people's views in violence reduction plans to ensure their perspectives inform the approach.
- The championship of young people's voices by the local Mayor, ensuring their inclusion in the 2050 City Plan.

Recommendations



Young people have five key recommendations for local and national decision-makers:

1. Young people need to feel part of a community, for opportunities and a sense of belonging.

For this they need:

2. Safe, healthy outdoor and indoor spaces to meet and participate locally.
3. Well-maintained local green space.
4. To be involved in local and national decision making.
5. National and local decision makers to champion children and young people.

Our study, and these recommendations, highlight the importance of listening to and including young people's perspectives in local and national decision-making. It contributes new knowledge about what young people need to flourish and offers novel methods to support young people in generating knowledge, identifying priorities for change and engaging collaboratively with decision makers. However, further action is needed to ensure that young people's recommendations and voices are sustained at national and local level in accordance with their rights (UNCRC, 1989). This includes their rights to express their views and be listened to when people make decisions that affect them (Articles 12 and 13); an adequate standard of living (Article 27); develop to their full potential (Article 6), protection from violence (Article 19) and opportunities to relax and play (Article 31). Whilst responsibility for the rights of children lies primarily with the Government who have specific responsibilities and are legally obliged to protect and uphold their duties to children, all those delivering public services must ensure that the best interests of children are considered when making policies and designing services.

To meet these obligations, *in accordance with young people's views and suggestions from children's right's organisations*, our recommendations include:

- The appointment of a Cabinet Minister for Children to champion the voices of children at the highest level.
- The full incorporation of the UNCRC into domestic law.
- Making Child Rights Impact Assessments a statutory requirement for all new policy and legislation.

Further information

To access the art outputs made by young people and read the longer report see:

Project Website:

<https://chillprojectuk.wixsite.com/chill-project>

Nuffield Website:

<https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/childrens-lives-in-changing-places>



Read, watch and listen to words, images and music by young people to communicate the findings of the research to policy and decision-makers.



"We are more than our headlines" was co-produced with young people capturing their experiences of growing up in Deighton & Brackenhall through their art, music and words.

[Click here to read the Scrapbook](#)



[Click here to read the banners](#)



"10 things young people in Mablethorpe need from their town" was a booklet written and designed in consultation with young people.

[Click here to see the animated film](#)



An animated film - "It's all about the beach town" - was created using young people's art, words and music to highlight how they feel about and what they need from Mablethorpe.

In Woughton, a series of banners was created with young people as a travelling exhibition to showcase the research project.

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- The Youth Panel, Deighton & Brackenhall
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Report designed by Dr. Maria Jesus Alfaro-Simmonds, www.alfarodesign.co.uk

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CHILL is a Nuffield Foundation funded project seeking to understand young people's experiences of growing up in their neighbourhood through arts-based methods and working with young people as co-researchers in their own areas.

