



RISE

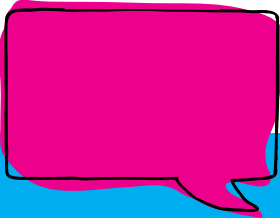
GIVING NEW EMERGING COMMUNITIES A VOICE

PRODUCED IN COLLABORATION WITH:

CHANGEMAKERS

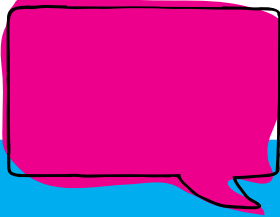
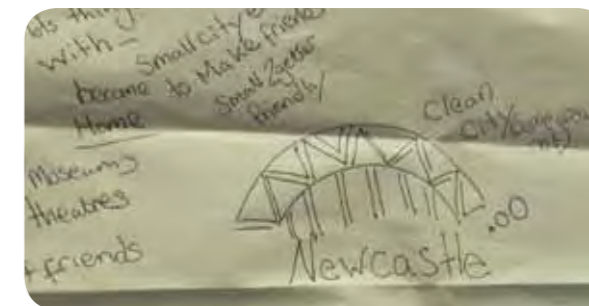


PRAISE FOR RISE:



Listening to young people and responding to what they see as their issues and priorities is what Children's Services should be about. I'm really excited about the work that Lusi is taking forward, it will help some of the most vulnerable children in Newcastle to engage and feel part of our city.

John Collings, Executive Director of Children's Services



Newcastle is changing rapidly. Lusi's project is an important step in making sure that the city is in touch with young people who have come here from around the world and can meet their needs. Now it will be up to us to respond!

It is interesting that many of the concerns these young people have are common with all young people in the city – crime, leisure time, public transport and the environment. The Participation Unit will continue to work with the young people Lusi has brought us into contact with and help them get the changes they need to make their lives in our great city as successful and enjoyable as possible.

Lusi herself is an amazing advocate for young people and a fantastic role model. I would like to thank her for the incredible effort she has put into this project and the skill, patience and commitment she has given.

Nick Brereton, Investing in Children Co-ordinator



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SETTING THE scene...

In recent years many young people from various cultures and backgrounds have moved to Newcastle.

Newcastle City Council is keen to improve its understanding of the needs of these young people and see what can be changed within its policies and practices to make things better for them.



Participation Unit (part of Children's Services, Newcastle City Council) aims to improve services for ALL young people by ensuring that their voices are heard. As part of the Future Leaders Programme commissioned by CHANGEMAKERS the RISE project is a way to support the Participation Unit to achieve this aim.

Through creative workshops with young people from new emerging communities we set out to find what their needs are and what changes they want to make in Newcastle.

HOW?

The workshops were carried out with over 40 young people from new emerging communities in 4 different groups. The workshops were half-day or full-day depending on the availability of the young people. These included creative writing (anonymous letter writing), drama, badge making, t-shirt making as well as group discussions. Through these workshops we explored their identities and perceptions of Children's Services, what they can access and what they would like to change in Newcastle.

This book will show these findings and be a medium of expressing the hopes and aspirations of these young people from new emerging communities, and will make a difference in the way that Children's Services and other bodies work with young people from new emerging communities.

WHAT WE

found out...

After carrying out all of the workshops and talking to young people we identified that there were common themes emerging where a change needed to be in place.

These included:

- SAFETY
- EDUCATION
- TRANSPORT
- ENVIRONMENT

as well as a range of other individual concerns.

Each of these issues was mentioned heavily in the feedback that the young people gave through the workshops.

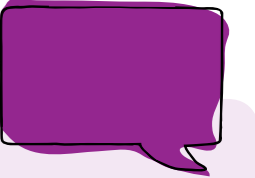
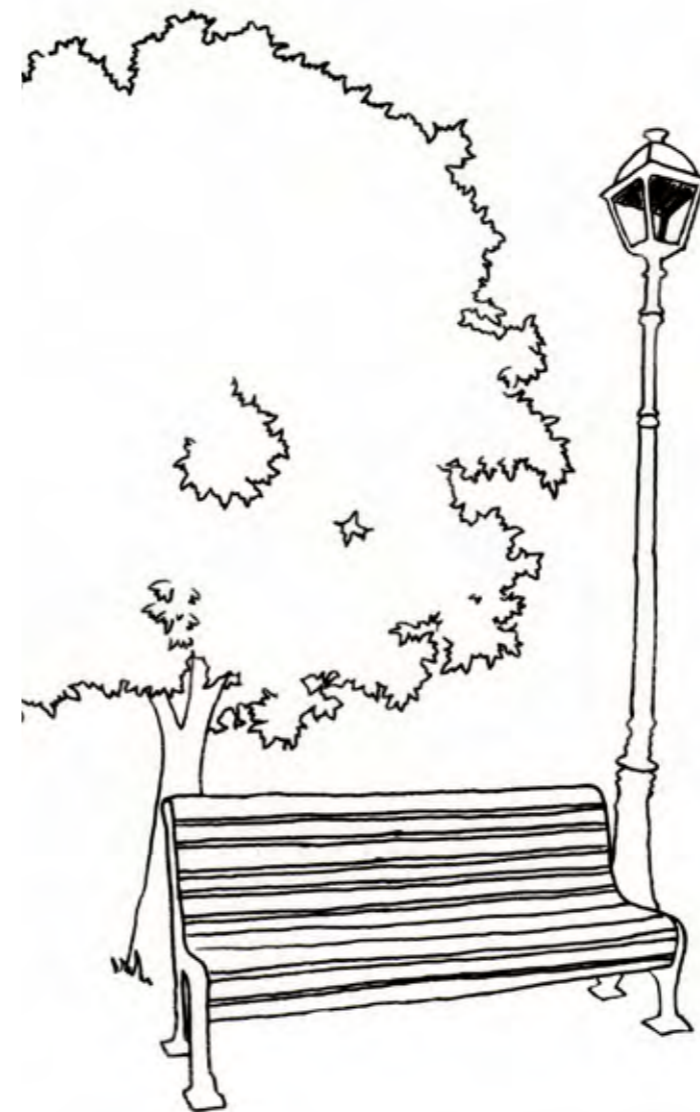
There were both positive and negative comments as well as solutions to some of the issues.



THINKING ABOUT

safety

Safety was by far the largest subject discussed in most groups.



Many young people thought the city was generally peaceful and the people were friendly, with comments like:

I like hanging out in the city centre.
I like looking at the shops.

I feel safe where I live.
Girl, 17

However, they also spoke of racist encounters and abuse. A group of young people described frequent experiences of racism in their streets, explaining how this made their life in Newcastle worse and that this was the reason why they did not like going out of the house and going to school:

I don't like Newcastle. People shout at us. 'Go away'. I feel worried about people out and about, esp. Fenham. English drunk people shout at us.
Girl, 16

I live in Byker, the first street I lived on there was fight every day, it's not safe.
Boy, 19

When asked why they thought people were racist some young people said that parents and friends have a big influence on people and they can form decisions only based on what they are told, not a real experience.

People think 'lots of people are racist, so why shouldn't we be like them, if we are like them they won't hurt us', do you know what I mean?
Boy, 16



“
 The city needs to tell and show that it's safe and then people will feel that too...
 Girl, 19
 ”

They also said that that sometimes people were racist because they wanted to feel superior:

They feel like they are not as good as some people from other countries, so they become racist towards them to bring them down where they are and not let them move forward.
 Boy, 17

Young people also mentioned that violence can be triggered by racism but sometimes it can go so far that the reason for being violent is forgotten. Most young people agreed that media often exaggerates facts and encourages racism by only telling negative stories about immigrants. Media also causes fear and exaggerates threat in the city, as sometimes it is not as dangerous as it can seem, and because there is a lack of trust between everyone:

The city needs to tell and show that its safe and then people will feel that too...
 Girl, 19

Old people, they can't protect themselves, when they are alone, and when they see me because I come from another country, or maybe just because I'm young, they get scared of me because they think I might hurt them, that I will damage them and get some money, because they know that I know they can't protect themselves.
 Boy, 16

Some young people really enjoyed being in parks:

I hang out in the park with my friend, we enjoy spending time together. The park is better than the street.
 Girl, 16

At the same time others expressed real fear of going into parks, especially in the evenings:

Leazes park is ok, but I would never go to Walker Park on my own in the evening because it's dangerous.
 Boy, 18

In the future, I would like to make Benwell, Cruddas Park and Walker a peaceful area for everyone.
 Girl, 20

It was clear that young people were concerned about the safety especially in their own areas like Heaton, Walker and Byker, rather than in Newcastle city centre. Young people also thought there was prejudice against them and that media played a big role in forming people's opinions about young people.



education



We spoke to young people about their experiences at school, about what they liked and what they would want to change. Some talked about how important it was to go to a good school, and how this helped them to find friends and integrate more.

A 15 year-old boy described his experience in Benfield school, explaining how he received support from everyone there, easily made friends, that there were extra-curricular activities provided, like sports and music and how this totally changed his experience of Newcastle making it positive.

My school was very welcoming. I got lots of support from my teachers when I didn't speak any English. There was lots of things to do, many opportunities like sports and music.

Girl, 19

However not everyone had similar experiences at school. Some young people did not receive any support from their teachers and were bullied all the time by other pupils because they did not speak the language. This also meant that they could not complain to the teacher as they could not explain what was happening to them. This negative experience dissuaded some young people from returning to school and because education is not very important in some cultures their parents did not encourage them which meant that this group of young people missed out on traditional education so in the future these young people may have less chance in successfully following their chosen career path.

I don't like going to school because it's boring and people don't like me there, I have no friends there.

Girl, 17

Some young people started learning English in a very informal environment in classes provided by CSV (Community Service Volunteers), and found this to be a very positive experience, however here they did not have the opportunity to study other subjects like Maths, History and Sciences. Both teachers and students at CSV confirmed that learning in this style was much more accessible and that the young people were keen on coming to the lessons there.

Other young people studying ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) at college explained that there were not always classes available for everyone and that some were not allowed to progress to the next level because the rest of the class was behind. A 19 year-old girl also said:

If you are an asylum seeker and you are over 18 you can't go to school or to college for six month, so you can't learn English for a long time.

It is a government policy to not allow asylum seekers to go into any form of education until they have been in the country for more than six months unless they are under the age of 18.

Young people who are asylum seekers and who have received offers from universities have no access to public funds, are not allowed to work and have to pay foreign fees to study, which means they are unable to continue their studies and progress and instead have to spend their time either volunteering or not doing anything at all.

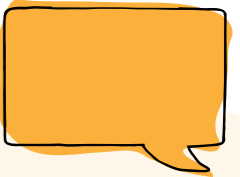
I think opportunities should be given to continue studying for those who can't afford to pay (those with low income).

Boy, 20

There was also a concern about accessing any form of education by young people who have just arrived in Newcastle.

So I am still not going to school, because they told me they can't take me to a college or to a school, because I'm 15. I really want to study but instead I have to volunteer until I am 16.

Girl, 15



Some young people explained that when at school, their ability was judged only by their knowledge of English, immigration status and the fact that they come from a different country, however their knowledge of the actual subject, i.e. maths, is not assessed and they are automatically put in lower sets, which discourages them from studying.

A young person said:

There should be extra support for young people who are new in the country and at school, so they don't feel left out because they don't speak very well.

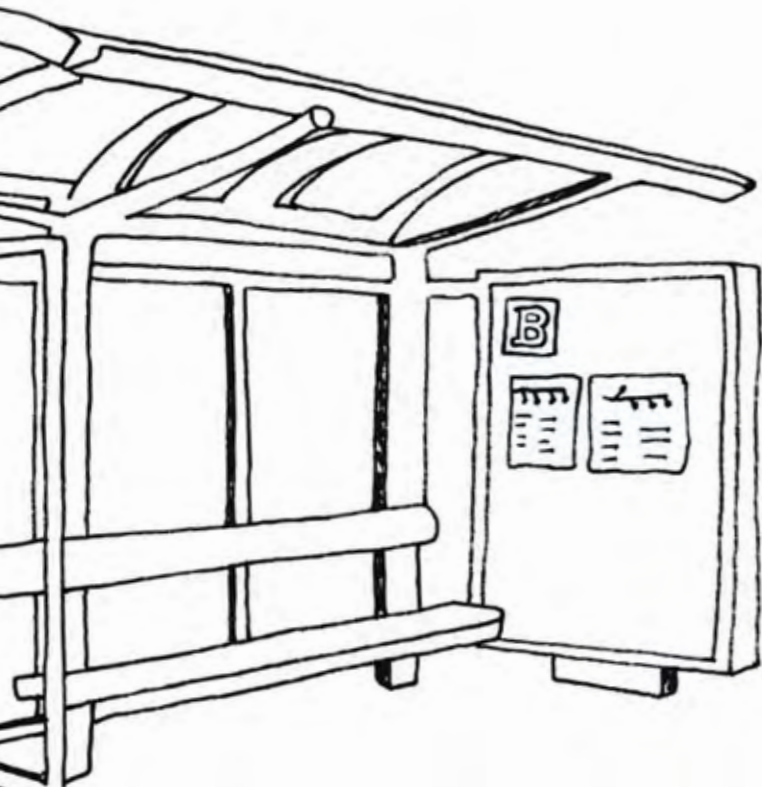
Boy, 15



THINKING ABOUT

transport

From the workshops it was clear that transport was an important aspect of young people's lives and the fact that it actually exists was a very positive factor according to some of the young people.



One young person said:

Metro gives opportunity to go outside of Newcastle and explore!

Boy, 15

Despite this many young people have also complained about the high prices for transport.

If you are a young person and you are over 16 but don't go to school or college you have to pay much more money for travelling because somehow they assume that you will have more, but it may be that you can't afford to go to college.

Girl, 19

Other young people also noted that bus drivers' attitudes are not very pleasant. Some had even experienced racism, either because of the way they were spoken to, especially those whose English was not very good, or because the bus driver would not stop the bus when they saw the young people stopping it.

The young people also spoke about infrequent services in some areas like Walker and long waiting times especially in the evenings, which meant that they did not feel very safe when going home late in the evening.

Some young people also spoke about it being difficult to find out anything about the bus services and discounts as no information was readily available when they had just arrived in the city, and they did not know where to go to seek help.



Another girl noted that being an asylum seeker makes paying fares more difficult:

As an asylum seeker you just get money for food and not for transport, so where are you supposed to find money to travel?

Girl, 17

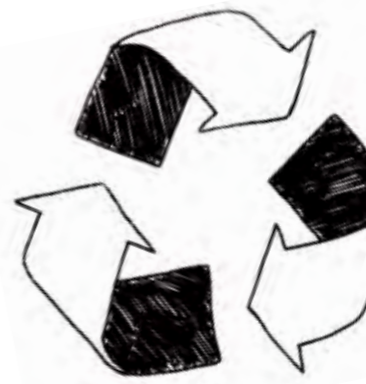




I like the city. There are beautiful parks, flowers everywhere and monuments.

THINKING ABOUT

environment



Many young people seemed to be concerned with the environment, both noticing the positives and the negatives.

Young people considered the city to be clean in most places and all enjoyed going to parks. However some young people were worried about the dirt in some streets, especially outside the city centre, in areas such as Fenham and Benwell.

When asked what improvements could be made within the city one young person replied:

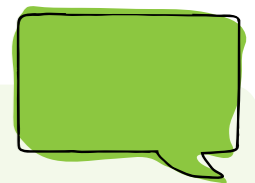
Get rid of smelly, dirty backstreets.

There were many complaints about rubbish in the streets and about how unpleasant this made their experience of Newcastle. It was obvious that young people really did understand what the issues in their city were and were keen on pointing these out. One young person explained what they would say if they had the opportunity to speak with a person who could make a difference for 60 seconds and this was one of the issues raised by her:

You say Newcastle is the most environmentally friendly city. I don't believe it! I need more information about recycling, more practical methods for people to get involved in the environment.

Girl, 20

It was concluded that young people do not receive enough information about recycling and some households are not provided with recycle bins. This concerned one of the participants, as she really cared about the environment and thought that this prevented her from improving the situation in the city. She also explained that the 3 'R's (Reduce Reuse Recycle) were very important to her and Newcastle City Council should make moves to encourage people to act on them rather than just talk about them.



When asked what could be done to make the city a better place a young person said:

If they could make the city a bit more cleaner it might be better.

Boy, 18

Again, this was a suggestion from many young people as they saw this as a real issue affecting their everyday lives.

young people



Besides the main four issues raised by the participants, there were other individual concerns raised.

ASYLUM CLAIMS

Some asylum seeker young people shared their experiences in Newcastle and their fears and worries.

A 15 year-old girl told us how she was forced to live on a minimal amount of money every day because her family had to save up to pay a solicitor:

And for our family [three people] we are getting £120 and we are collecting money for the next appeal because we don't know what is the decision is. So we are keeping £100 and we are spending only £20 for whole week...

She then added:

So sometimes we are not sleeping and we are keeping praying everyday.

Poverty amongst young asylum seekers and their families is a common issue as many have to live on just above £30 a week and some are made destitute and left with no support.

One of the main issues raised by the participants was that some young people come into Newcastle as unaccompanied minors, which puts them under a lot of pressure, especially because they are so young.

You stay in one small room in a house, and you have your asylum case, alone, and you go to learn English, it's really hard and depressing.

Girl, 17



I think it would be better if there was for example a Lebanese community that met maybe once a week so that when new Lebanese arrivals come to the country they could be part of that and could easily adjust. This is helpful because if the new arrivals can't speak English, they don't feel left out.

Girl, 19

LEISURE

When asked what could improve their experience in the city some participants said that more leisure activities would benefit young people and also keep them off the streets when they are bored.

I think the council should get young people more involved with activities, like sports and dance.

Boy, 17

After being told that there are already many of these activities provided others added:

Young people might not be aware of them.

Boy, 17

Or they might be activities that they don't like...

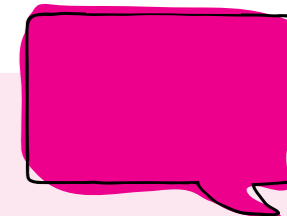
Boy, 18

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

From the information that we received from the young people, it was also clear that a lot of the young people who come here on their own, or are just new to the city and have no support network, would feel more comfortable and would find it easier to integrate if there were community groups or support networks available to them, or information was given about the groups that existed.

I would like to find some people from Russian community because it's interesting to find out how they are overcoming the problems in this country, we share the same culture and language, it would make life better here.

Girl, 19



solutions

As well as telling us what they thought about Newcastle the participants told us what improvements could be made to enhance the experience of those young people who come here from other countries.

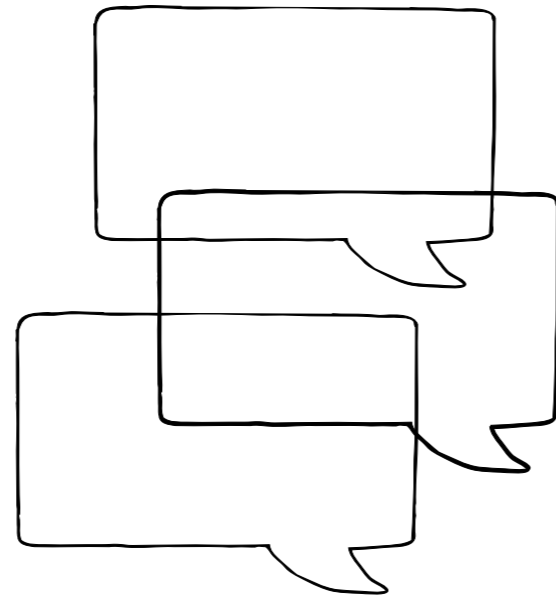
SAFETY

To tackle the issues of racism some young people have suggested creating events locally with communities, schools and other institutions to raise awareness about young people who come here from other countries, especially about the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees, as many participants believed that in most cases racism was due to people's ignorance.

Another solution to reducing aggressive behaviour in the streets, especially when people are drunk was to increase the number of police in the streets, not only in the city centre but especially in residential areas, like Byker, Heaton and Fenham.

However, others suggested that increasing the number of police in the streets could also be intimidating to some young people, as most have had a very negative experience of police in their countries, so more community education from the police was welcomed by the young people.

Some participants suggested that increasing the positive messages in the media and reducing the negatives about young people and especially young people from new emerging communities, and spreading the idea that the city is safe as well educating people about being safe, could really improve the situation in Newcastle.



EDUCATION

Extra ESOL classes were suggested by the participants in most groups as many thought that learning English was essential to integrating into the community. Young people thought that there were not enough classes to support all young people, especially those who had just arrived and were over 18 and therefore not able to attend college or school.

The participants also suggested that providing more accurate information about education services in the city to the new arrivals would be very useful and less young people would miss out on receiving appropriate education

It was noted that non-traditional education was very effective but more subjects, like history and sciences needed to be introduced to allow for a route of progression.

Another point that was raised by many was that additional support needs to be provided to young people in schools who don't speak English well. However, this should be done in a more unpretentious way, rather than "patronising" as some young people described it.



TRANSPORT

The main solution with the transport issue for young people was reducing bus fares, as many young people, especially asylum seekers could not afford to travel within and outside the city.

Awareness raising sessions for bus companies was suggested as a way of tackling racism and prejudice amongst the bus drivers.

ENVIRONMENT

One participant suggested that more interactive sessions for families and children on environmental issues and recycling would improve the understanding of the environment and could potentially reduce the amount of rubbish and dirt in the streets and make Newcastle an environmentally friendly city as it strives to be.

Others suggested that there should also be more information about recycling and recycling bins should be provided in all streets in the city.

COMMUNITIES

More information about support networks, especially about community groups in the region, should be available to the new arrivals which would create more integration and help them find their place in the city much easier.

Meeting somebody like a youth worker who really believes in the young person and supports them throughout seemed crucial to many participants, as this was very encouraging and helped them get through difficult times. Young people suggested that there should be more workers like that in place to give more support to vulnerable young people, like asylum seekers.

final thoughts

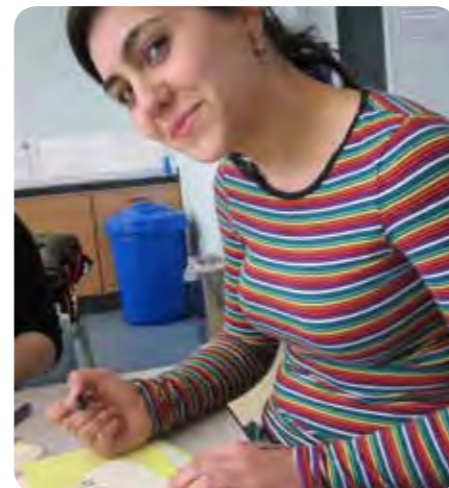


The Rise project has been an exciting opportunity for me and my colleagues to meet and work with a diverse group of young people from many countries. The young people have expressed their views which have inspired thought, both from a personal and professional stand point. I am hopeful and confident that these views will be heard, that the dialogue will continue with young people from new emerging communities, and that action take place in making Newcastle a better place for these young people.

Lizzie Spencer
Champion for Future Leaders Programme
Project Worker for Newcastle City Council

The process of creating and delivering the Rise project as well as working on this report has been a real learning experience for me and has really inspired me to continue working with young people and strive to improve things for myself and others in my community. I think as someone who has come to Newcastle from a different country I can say that this project was very personal to me and I believe that the work that we have completed will leave a legacy and the voices of these young people will finally be heard!

Lusi Manukyan
Young Advocate for Future Leaders Programme



acknowledgements

Thank you to:

ALL PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

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