



Youth Engagement Report

Presented by Mia Morris

Why I asked my questions

I'm 16. I'm interested in politics. But sometimes it doesn't feel like a space designed for people my age.

- Young people have a voice, but do we always feel confident using it?
- How do people actually find their way into local politics?
- What barriers do councillors experience?
- What would encourage the next generation to get involved?



Why this matters in wales

At 16, my voice already counts.

In Wales, 16 and 17-year-olds can vote in Senedd and local government elections. But having the right to vote does not automatically mean young people feel prepared to participate. Recent Electoral Commission research found that 72% of young people in Wales wanted more democratic education in school, while only 21% reported learning about politics at school in the previous year. It also found that more than half lacked confidence in voting.

The question for me became:

How do we turn the right to participate into the confidence to participate?



Why ask councillors

Because statistics only tell part of the story.

I could've researched:

- How many people vote.
- How many young people register.
- How youths represent councils.

But I also wanted to understand:

- Why does someone decide to stand?
- What makes them stay?
- What nearly stopped them?
- And what would they say to someone like me?

That is why the interviews mattered.





Who I asked

Cllr Bryony Nicholson
Cllr Anne Wilde
Cllr Gareth Wilde
Cllr Maureen Powell
Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby
Cllr Martyn Groucutt
Cllr James George
Cllr Sara Burch
Cllr Diane English
Cllr Richard Griffiths
Cllr Philip Bowyer
Cllr Maurice Barnes
Cllr Chris Holland



What I wanted to understand

I wanted to hear about the experiences behind the role of Councillor

GETTING INVOLVED

What first encouraged you to become involved in politics and public life?

YOUR EXPERIENCE

What has your own journey in politics and local government been like?

CHALLENGES

What difficulties or barriers have you experienced along the way?

YOUNG PEOPLE & POLITICS

How do you think young people view politics, and what might stop them from getting involved?

REPRESENTATION

How important is it that councils and politics reflect different ages, genders and backgrounds?

LOOKING FORWARD

What could encourage more young people to believe that politics and public service are for them?

What you told me

Different answers. Common themes.

- **COMMUNITY:** *Politics often begins with wanting to change something locally.*
- **CONFIDENCE:** *People don't necessarily start out believing they could be a councillor.*
- **REPRESENTATION:** *Seeing the Youth involved can matter.*
- **UNDERSTANDING:** *Local government needs to feel understandable and accessible.*
- **INVITATION:** *Sometimes people become involved because somebody simply encouraged them.*



What I learned

- **Politics doesn't have to start with a political party.**
It can start with caring about where you live.
- **Representation matters.**
If young people never see themselves in the room, it is harder to imagine belonging there.
- **Knowledge creates confidence.**
Giving someone a vote is only the beginning.
- **Being listened to matters.**
Young people don't just want decisions explained to them, we want opportunities to contribute to them

“Young people don't need to wait until they are older to have something worth saying.”





What can be done next?

- How can Abergavenny make local democracy something young people don't just learn about but experience?
- More contact
Councillors and schools/youth groups talking regularly.
- More opportunities
Young people contributing to real Council discussions and projects.
- More visibility
Showing young people what councillors actually do and the different routes into public service.

Thank you

And more importantly, thank you for listening to me.

My research started with a question about:

“Why aren't young people represented enough in politics?”

I think it has left me with a different question:

“What can we do to make sure the next young person who is interested in politics feels there is a place for them?”

