

# One year as Shaw Trust's Youth Participation Ambassador

2023 - 2024

By Leah Bailey



We will always include  
**young people**

in decision making processes that  
affect them, wherever possible.

Young people will be  
**equal partners**  
and recognised as  
**experts**  
on their own lives.



youth  
participation  
pledge

shaw trust

## Five things I have learnt during my one year as a Youth Participation Ambassador.

- I learnt tips on how to be more confident when chairing a meeting, which has really helped my development of chairing the steering groups.
- I learnt how to write a relevant agendas for meetings, which lines up with my work and sets out what each meeting should achieve.
- I have learnt how to travel on a train for work, which has made me more independent in my travels and time management.
- I have been able to work independently and with others more competently through a range of different tasks, which has developed my different working styles more efficiently.
- Most importantly, I have learnt about youth participation, how important it is, how to do it, how to encourage others to do it and how to politely and effectively advocate for young people.

Throughout the report I will provide an account of my experiences throughout my time as a Youth Participation Ambassador and share and highlight my learning and findings.

Firstly, I would like to introduce myself and my role. My name is Leah Bailey, and I was the 2nd Youth Participation Ambassador (YPA) for Shaw Trust. I had followed on from the previous YPA, Raphi. Thanks to his dedication and brilliant findings, Raphi had given me a good place to begin. My role as a YPA is to ensure that young people are being heard in services across Shaw Trust. Allowing young people to be a part of decision-making processes that affect them and promoting this to staff and management across the charity. I have seen for myself the impact that Shaw Trust has on young people like me, it has transformed my attitude to what I can shape my future to be like. I am pleased to have joined the Shaw Trust and champion the pledge.

## My key achievements as Youth Participation Ambassador (YPA).

- Writing more than 10 blogs which are published on the Shaw Trust website, highlighting what I have done, where I have been and the amazing youth participation work.
- Collaborating with colleagues, managers, young people and marketing colleagues to design, create and launch the Youth Participation webpage. [Check it out here!](#)
- Building and developing the staff steering group, which meets monthly and really makes change happen.
- Writing training sessions for young people to ensure they are ready to have their voice heard.
- Continued to promote the pledge, create flyers and posters, talking at meeting and challenging others to embed it, including on job descriptions and through recruitment.
- Getting involved in bid writing, supporting multiple successful bids.

If you asked me when I was 16 years old, if I could see myself in the position that I am in today, I would be shaking my head in disbelief. I lacked confidence, motivation and felt as though professionals were not truly listening to me and my needs. After being referred and gaining support from my Youth worker, Katie Downes, who works for Shaw Trust. I felt supported, listened to, and started to have more faith in myself. I was determined to study Health and Social Care at college. This was when my passion for helping others started to spark. During my second year of college, Katie called me about the position for YPA and that was when my door of opportunity started to open.

## Five things I am proud of in my one year as a Youth Participation Ambassador (YPA).

- I am proud of gaining such a unique role where I can visit different regions, meet new faces and make a difference. Before I applied for this role, I did not think I would step out of Norfolk, but this role has so much to offer, I was able to travel across the country visit new places and meet new people. I am so happy that I was able to meet so many staff members and young people along the way. By creating those links and sharing experience, I was able to fulfil my duties as a YPA.
- I am proud of the things I have learnt along the way such as being able to plan and chair a meeting efficiently, improving my soft skills and a passion to want to help others. This has not only helped me grow as a YPA but as a person. I can transfer these skills into future employment.
- I am proud of the barriers I have overcome to make it here. It has not been easy, as I have had a big journey alongside working at Shaw Trust with lots of challenges in my personal life, I am happy I made it this far.
- Creating the staff steering group has been wonderful, I can see the development from the first meeting to now. It was insightful to hear staff advocating on behalf of their young people and a great way to network with other services. It helped me reach out to young people too.
- I am proud of the products that have been created during my time at Shaw Trust especially the webpage. What was once a bunch of scribbles on paper is now live and with content about youth participation. We have also created strong and engaging marketing. The same with the staff steering group, this was once an idea which became reality and a regular once a month meeting.

## April 2023

During April, I took the time to familiarise myself with Shaw Trust and the staff members there. Shaw Trust allowed me to start part time as I was still finishing my college course. I introduced myself to the Norfolk team in person and other staff members across the country through Teams. I began networking with colleagues, this helped me build a basis for my staff steering group. Additionally, I completed the mandatory training required for my role, ensuring that I was well-prepared to fulfil my responsibilities.

## May 2023

I had just started to get to grips with what my role entailed. I worked with colleagues in Norfolk to organise a focus group with young people to understand their experience of transitioning to secondary school, this helped shape the successful recommissioning of the Norfolk Service. It also helped improve my facilitation skills and my confidence with speaking to young people. The engagement and enthusiasm of the participants was heart-warming, and to thank them, we treated them to snacks and juice.



Using one of my two volunteering days offered by Shaw Trust, I was given the opportunity to visit Banham Zoo to volunteer. It was nice to be able to spend some time with the Norfolk youth team, central team and those from the Work and Health Programme. I look back at this time and remember how much I enjoyed getting out of a typical work setting and being able to volunteer for my childhood zoo. It was surreal to think I was de-weeding a snow leopard cage that I spent so long as a child looking through from the outside. It's amazing that Shaw Trust allows us to have two days a year of volunteering for a place of our choosing. I really encourage volunteering and think it's a brilliant way to give something positive back to the community, learn new skills and connect with others. There are many benefits to this, and you feel good doing it.

## London City Hall – Peer research conference.

This was a significant milestone for me as a YPA, marking my first independent journey. I met our Assistant Director, Matt Joyce, at the event. This helped relieve the nerves I had, as it was my first time travelling on the train out of my home county. The London City Hall was hosting a peer research conference. This was about young Londoners who have designed, developed, and trialled their own youth-led approach to the barriers that young people in London are facing.

It was great to see how my peers in London had empowered each other. Getting to hear about the different pieces of research that had taken place and the journey the young people have taken to get to where they are now.

## June 2023

At this point I had completed my college course and was able to become a full-time member of staff. Despite being nervous, I embraced this change as it allowed me to grow. This transition allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of adult work life, providing me with valuable insights and perspectives on the world of work. During this month I chaired my first steering group. I feel that there was a lot of personal growth between April and June.

### **First staff steering group.**

Reflecting on my first staff steering group, I remember when I would feel a wave of nerves hit me however I am now able to chair them more confidently. Staff steering groups became a normal part of my work routine. I have now established a monthly staff steering group, where we address the needs of young people, set priorities and learn and collaborate.

My line manager Mike, supported me on the call, helping to take away some of the anxiety as I knew there was someone there to step in in case it got too overwhelming. The meeting was a call on Teams, five staff members joined the call. I remember being nervous and tripping up on my words as I was speaking about my role and why they are joining the call. Everyone was kind and supportive, which settled my nerves. It was nice to hear their roles and what services they deliver, and how these compliment the YPA objectives.

It makes me proud to have my first piece of work up and running, from ideas collated together on a page, to now, a fully functioning steering group.

### **Meeting with Judith for the first time.**

I met with Judith Denyer for the first time, (Judith is the Director of Children & Young Peoples Services). She is very lovely and has a particular interest in youth participation. It was nice to be able to share what I planned to do with Judith and gain her support. To see her passion for the service was infectious.

### **Attended Norfolk & City of London team meeting.**

Attending my first Norfolk & City team meeting at the Time and Tide Museum in Great Yarmouth was a memorable experience for me. I was initially nervous, feeling like I had little to offer as I did not have much experience at the time, but the warm welcome and kindness of the team quickly put me at ease. It was reassuring to witness the tight-knit dynamics of the team and hear about the diverse experiences of the youth workers, making me excited to contribute and be a part of the Shaw Trust family.

### Five new skills I developed during my one year as a Youth Participation Ambassador.

- I am now able to present information on Teams and in person to different audiences including young people, staff, and leaders. I am confident to chat in front of large groups now and able to draw people into the conversation.
- I am now able to understand learning to create session plans to teach others. Also to create activities and sessions that are fun and engaging for young people.
- I am now more confident in using Microsoft Office including teams/word/PowerPoint etc. I know this is a key skill that will be needed for any job I do.
- Organising my own diary and being punctual when attending meetings and organising my time. Time management when it comes to planning travel for work and working hybrid. This is the first time I had a job where I was able to work from home, I prepared with a setup, avoid distractions around me and being able to work efficiently.
- Being more confident when talking to professionals and being able to note take and report feedback.

### Five positive things about Shaw Trust's Children and Young People Services (CYPS).

- Everyone wants to provide the best services for young people, staff are constantly looking for new ways to get creative and do things better. They carry out surveys and receive feedback consistently to develop and improve services.
- Service users are encouraged to be more autonomous and independent and make their own decisions while we are supporting them.
- Working for CYPS is rewarding and you can see that the staff have a drive and passion to want to support young people.
- Staff are looked after really well, and you can see that staff are happy and there to help.
- CYPS is flexible around the young person they are supporting and encourages resilience as well as signposting to whatever support they may need.

July 2023

### Presented in CYPS all managers teams meeting.

At the CYPS all managers' teams meeting in July, I had the opportunity to introduce myself and share the progress I've made in my role. I talked about developing a staff steering group to better understand their experiences and support their efforts for the young people we support. Additionally, I shared my experience with the first face-to-face young people's focus group meeting held in May, highlighting the importance of incorporating their perspectives into the youth development activities that we offer. I also provided guidance to managers about how they can include youth participation in job adverts, job description, interviews and appointments.

## Nottingham Homes2Inspire (H2i)

During my visit to Nottingham, I had the privilege of exploring three homes at Homes 2 Inspire - Rupert House, Wendover House, and Layton House. With the kind and supportive assistance of Rebecca Lillie, the Quality Assurance Manager for H2i, I dove into conversations with the dedicated staff members to gain insight into their roles and the impact they have on the young people in their care. By getting a valuable insight into how the staff support young people and how they practice youth participation.



I was given the opportunity to interview staff and witnessed first-hand how passionate and committed staff are to these young people. The staff empowering young people and giving them opportunities to take the lead in the design and creation of their personal and shared space. This reflected H2i's commitment to creating a true sense of home for the young people.

Overall, it was wholesome to hear the transformation of young people who are overcoming barriers in care to where they are now. Homes 2 Inspire and their staff are truly making a difference in the lives of those they support, and I feel privileged to have witnessed this.

## September 2023

### Wakefield Information, Advice and Guidance fair (IAG)

In September, I was able to lend a helping hand to the Information Advice & Guidance (IAG) Team at the leisure centre in Wakefield. It was a pleasure to meet and work alongside two wonderful staff members - Sam Hampson, the Digital Careers Adviser, and Tanya Taylor, Team Manager.

Upon arrival, Sam and I set up the stall. Sam representing Connexions and myself representing youth participation. Sam showcasing business cards, a mini roller banner, and a prize draw box to engage the young people. The prize draw was for a pair of Beats headphones, which added an element of excitement and drew a crowd of eager young people to the stall.



Working alongside the IAG Team and witnessing their dedication to providing valuable support and guidance to young people was a truly admirable experience. The collaborative effort to empower and inform young people about their career options and enabling them to make informed choices themselves.

I managed to get young people to fill in the questionnaire, results were then shared with the staff steering group at the next meeting. This was useful and allowed me to collect data of what young people are looking forward to in the future and the challenges they are worried they'll face.

## #HelloYellow

Hello Yellow is a national awareness day by Young Minds which brings awareness to Youth Mental Health. I created a slide to discuss young people's mental health. As we are all aware, mental health services are scarce and mental health difficulties are on the rise. Young Minds also has a range of resources for young people seeking mental health support as well as adults. I brought this up at a team meeting, raised awareness about this by sending emails out to all staff and adding it to our internal communications portal.

### Five things I found challenging in my 12 months as a YPA.

- I found approaching big groups tricky as I felt awkward at first but with plenty of practice and support, that subsided a little bit as I got more experience.
- I found setting up the young people steering group challenging as I had only set up the staff steering groups previously. It was tricky to get young people engaged and all in one space. Although this was difficult, I was able to get feedback, and this could be a potential steering group to run with the next YPA.
- How to interest young people into joining the young people steering group. This was difficult as I had many opportunities speaking with staff than young people face to face. We used different methods such as word of mouth from staff with young-people-facing roles to contact young people about the steering groups.
- At first, I found it challenging working from home, but I then found different strategies that helped me such as background noise, a surface for my laptop next to a plug and somewhere where I am unlikely to be disturbed.
- I found getting used to hearing and speaking more corporate language was challenging at times, but I made an acronym sheet to help me with words and phrases.

## October 2023

### Havering Careers Fair

During my visit to Romford in Havering, I helped assist at the Moving on Career's Fair. I had the pleasure of meeting Sham Motin, the service manager for CYPs in Havering. It was inspiring to see the local employers, colleges and universities come together to showcase opportunities for 16- to 18-year-olds in the Havering Borough. I helped set up the Shaw Trust careers advice stall, sharing valuable information with the young attendees, being interviewed about my thoughts on the venue and youth participation was an enriching experience. Witnessing the enthusiasm of young individuals striving for success and exploring the different career paths within the Havering community was inspiring.



### City of London Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) Day

I attended a community Centre in the City of London, where Matilda, MYPs and the City Youth Forum organised an event aimed at engaging young people. The focus of the activities were recycling and reducing food waste, it was an interactive gathering, with a catering company offering delicious vegetarian food and juice for all attendees.

The hospitality company provided lessons on table presentation and napkin folding. This empowered those who took part with professional skills. Additionally, one stall ran by young people taught attendees the art of embroidery, sparking creativity and hands-on learning while another taught the skills and provided an opportunity to plant and grow a tomato plant.



The highlight of the day was a competition that offered the young people a chance to win a visit to the London Tower Bridge tour, this was appealing to the young people attending. I was pleased to witness the enthusiasm and engagement of the young people throughout the event, eagerly participating in the various workshops and competitions.

I encouraged the young people to join in with the activities, ensuring they were registered and actively involved in the different sessions. I had the opportunity to interact with them, offer guidance, and support their involvement. I believe it is important for young people to be introduced into the community, by attending a free activity day where they can learn new things about the community and have fun doing so.

## October 2023

### The creation of the webpage

This was the month that the webpage was created and live. The month before, we were designing the webpage and deciding what content we could add to it. The purpose of this webpage is to recognise the importance of Youth Participation and that Shaw Trust shows this in what we do.

We wanted to include different ways to communicate the pledge; the representation of young people across the different regions and have a contact section so that the reader can get in touch if they have any questions or want to liaise with us.

We wanted the page to look youthful and colourful.

Now moving forward to April, we are waiting for our updated version with a blog section, survey results and a video of young people speaking the pledge. As we get more content, there will be more tweaks carried out on the webpage as we go on.

## December 2023

I started to add “Young People inspiring others” on my staff steering group meetings to commemorate young people’s achievements. I feel this is important as an advocate for young people, that achievements are celebrated. I think it’s nice for staff to discuss young people doing incredible things.

Back In July, we ramped up by collaborating with different staff across Shaw Trust who have a young-people-facing job. This is to gain results on barriers that young people may face. We created this questionnaire with the intent to understand what barriers young people are facing and things they are looking forward to.

We wanted this information to come directly from young people so that we had a true understanding of their perspective.

## January 2024

January was significant for the trial of the online young people steering group. This was the first online young people’s steering group to have taken place since the creation of the YPA. The idea of having an online steering group with young people every six weeks, is to get input straight from young people themselves. The next YPA will be able to use our learning to take this forward.

### Gloucestershire visit overnight.

This was my first overnight visit, I spent two days in Gloucestershire to get a taster for the different services that we deliver there. Tim, who is the Assistant Team Manager in Gloucestershire, kindly planned visits and chauffeured me throughout my stay. He introduced me to the staff and young people and explained all the services.

The day I arrived, I had the opportunity to speak to a young person who was previously supported and her youth worker at The Main Place. I could see just by looking around the centre that it was very youth-led, there was information on the wall and activities you could complete to win prizes. There was a pool table, quiet rooms, and a classroom. She spoke about her story, the time before, during and after support, it was truly inspiring to hear how this young lady got support and engaged in services. The youth worker was friendly and encouraged the young person to be autonomous throughout it all. After the young person left, Tim, a couple of the youth workers and I had some fish and chips and a chat about our roles. This was a lovely experience and a nice start to my visit.

On the second day, we travelled to Trevone House to meet Matt, who runs the Work It Out (WIO) programme for young people. We spoke about how Young People are involved in the programme. Matt explained how it is not mandatory for young people to attend lessons, so that there is no pressure, and the young people choose what lessons they do. The young people do get incentivised for attending lessons and are paid monthly for every lesson they attend. The Young People are given tasks and challenges with a fun approach to learning, by trying different learning styles and communicating how they feel, what works, and what doesn't.

Next on the list was Youth Justice colleagues at The Vibe Youth Centre! Although the young people are in a challenging situation, the young person is always put first, and supported to understand the crime and how it affected any potential victims. The team try to meet any additional needs with support such as the substance misuse team. I gained feedback from the young person about their experiences with professionals such as police and/or being in custody.

Up next was The Birches, which is the activity place. This is where they have resources for physical activities such as kayaking, woodwork, and the bike repair shop. It teaches young people skills and resilience training. It was nice to speak to staff about what their roles are and how they use youth participation in their work.

## March 2024

### Chairing meetings AQA.

I created a session plan that gives young people the skills and information to chair meetings. I used my learning from my first staff steering group through to now, to inform this, noting things I struggled with. They will also secure an AQA Unit Award Scheme to evidence their learning. This structure enables young people to enhance their skills in session planning and leadership for a successful meeting. Utilising this session plan participants can acquire the necessary knowledge and practical experience to excel in chairing meetings and earn their AQA accreditation.

This has been a brief overview of my journey as a Youth Participation Ambassador for Shaw Trust. Through my experiences, interactions, and projects, I have seen the power of youth participation and the positive impact it can have on young people's lives. I am grateful for the opportunities I had to engage with young people, collaborate with staff, and champion the pledge. Thank you for following my journey.

That leaves me here, where my journey as a YPA comes to an end. I have spent time this month reviewing my work, preparing for the next YPA to join Shaw Trust and pick up from where I left off. I have written him or her a letter that they will receive on their first day on the job. This report has given me a chance to reflect all the way back to the beginning of my journey.

This role has given me great opportunities, amazing skills and the chance to be a part of something amazing. I am grateful to have been a part of the Shaw Trust family. I wish everyone the very best in the future and welcome the new YPA when they come along.

### Thanks and acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone that supported me, and the youth participation work I have been doing. Thanks to those who have supported me directly, by attending meetings, inviting me to events and sharing my work, and thanks to those who supported indirectly, involving young people and championing their voice.

Thank you to all members of our Youth Participation Staff Steering Group, this work would not have been possible without your support, patience, and input. You have all been amazing. Special thanks to members Jim Asbury, Andrea Forbes, Becks Lillie, Toni Nixon, Serena Sale, Leisa Taylor, Mike Pepperell, and Rob McKenzie for continuous support of me and the steering groups work.

Thank you to CYPS Senior Management Team for making this possible and investing in young people's voices.

Thank you to all the colleagues and teams I met with, visited and supported. Special thanks to Gloucestershire, Homes 2 Inspire and Norfolk teams and also Rebecca Main and my original Youth Worker Katie Downes for her inspiration and continued support.

Thank you to the young people I had the opportunity to speak to, including those I met when visiting regions and those who took part in focus groups and steering groups and those who helped by working with members of the staff steering group.



**shaw trust**



Shaw Trust  
Youth Participation  
Ambassador

[Youthparticipation@prospects.co.uk](mailto:Youthparticipation@prospects.co.uk)  
[www.shawtrust.org.uk/pledge](http://www.shawtrust.org.uk/pledge)

26<sup>th</sup> April 2024

To our new Youth Participation Ambassador.

### **Congratulations & welcome to Children and Young Peoples Services**

If you have received this letter, I want to say a massive congratulations to you for being accepted for this role. Your efforts have been truly recognised and I am sure you will do some amazing things during your time at Shaw Trust.

I want to briefly introduce myself; my name is Leah, and I was the previous Youth Participation Ambassador (YPA). I was once a young person being supported by Shaw Trust before joining this role, probably like yourself. I want to wish you luck during your journey as YPA, you will do great things!

This role is so unique and rewarding. Get creative and use the tools around you. I highly recommend utilising staff members to reach out to young people and find different ways to communicate with young people. It may be a little nerve wracking at first, reaching out to staff members and young people, but I promise you, you have a good network around you.

During my time as YPA, I set up a youth participation staff steering group (YPSSG) which takes place once a month. This is amazing for gaining insight into what Shaw Trust does, what young people need and accessing staff experiences. This was voluntary so the staff who attend are eager to expand our work on youth participation and advocate for young people.

Don't be afraid of to give feedback or ask questions. Remember you have this job because Shaw Trust wants to know what you think. If there is a term you don't understand, ask, and if you have an idea, say it! Your voice matters. I have created an acronym sheet which you will find in your folder to help you with common language. You will also find lots of work, templates, drafts and resources in your folder ready for you.

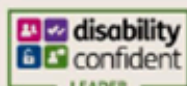
Shaw Trust allows you to take 2 volunteering days each year, this is a great way to work with staff members and build relationships and also get involved.

Take opportunities and run with them.

I wish you the best in this role and I'm sure you will smash this!

Kind Regards,

Leah Bailey (Previous Youth Participation Ambassador)



[shawtrust.org.uk](http://shawtrust.org.uk)