

Title: Our Turn to Talk- Episode 2, General Election
Group: Lucie, Oliver, Aminah, and Evie

Aminah: Hi everyone, welcome to the second of our special General Election episodes of the Our Turn to Talk Podcast Series. This podcast series is made by the children and young people working with the National Children's Bureau, or NCB as we call it.

My name is Aminah and I'm a proud member of the NCB where my role is being a Young Research Advisor.

I'm now going to pass on to my fellow co hosts today who will introduce themselves.

Lucie: I'm Lucie, also a Young Researcher Advisor.

Oliver: I'm Oliver, I'm also a member of the Young Research Advisors.

Aminah: The purpose of today's episode is very important following the General Election. We are here to discuss the progress being made to improve the lives of children and young people, what current issues we as a youth face today, and how the Government can work with children and young people going forward. Finally, how can we influence and bring changes with this new Government.

Thank you for listening and we hope you enjoy this episode of the Our Turn to Talk Podcast.

Oliver: We are here to reflect on the General Election results and think about what kind of issues affecting children and young people that we'd like the new Government to take into account. The Labour Party have won a majority in Parliament and Keir Starmer, the leader of the Labour Party is now the Prime Minister. If you'd like to find out more about the election, the results, and the Labour Party's manifesto you can listen to episode 12 of Our Turn to Talk which focuses on this.

Lucie: Thank you Oliver, I'll start us off. First, I want to reflect on the progress that has been made recently towards improving the lives of children and young people. After this, we'll think about what else can be done to address the problems children and young people are facing and how the new Government can work.

I believe that although progress has been made towards a better life for children and young people, there is still much more to be done concerning both the state of an average young person's life, such as education with issues concerning quality and accessibility, regardless of wealth or background, and mental health support in schools.

There are also issues with healthcare, such as NHS waiting times and funding, and environmental issues, such as implementing regulations on pollution, single use plastics, and pressing forward recycling programs and the use of green energy, as well as many other

essential aspects. Additionally, there needs to be a significant increase in youth involvement in political processes, such as decision making, empowerment and effective policies to ensure their voices are heard. Also, increased engagement through direct communication, social media campaigns and surveys and questionnaires are needed for youth involvement. Finally, we need to amplify youth voices through protests and public speaking, debates and petitions and engagement with local MPs to cement our involvement in our country's choices.

By ensuring every young person has a fair chance to succeed, regardless of their background, the Government can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all children and young people.

Oliver: Now, we're going to think about what issues we'd like to see the Government prioritise moving forwards. I'll kick us off.

The environmental crisis, mental health (including the impact of social media), and crime (including gangs). I think these are the biggest issues facing children and young people today because with the environmental crisis, for example, in my opinion I don't think that previous governments and politicians have been doing enough to stop the increase of these issues and because of this we know that things are getting worse. The environment is a big issue for young people because currently and in the future there will be lots more natural disasters, like floods and fires, and this will affect people living here. There are a few changes to the law I would like to see so that it's illegal to spill sewage into UK waterways and put fines in place for companies or people guilty of this. I want to see a quicker move towards reusable green energy, so that we more frequently make use of technology like wind turbines and solar panels. In France it's the law for car parks with over 80 spaces to have solar panels. I think it's also really important that we think about how to reduce carbon emissions and grow public green transport that's free, like in Luxembourg. A final thing I'd like to see done to protect our environment would be to stop the selling of single-use plastic, move towards more reusable solutions like tupperware and reusable bags, and use reusable materials like paper and lithium. Lithium is a rare earth material used in batteries.

Similarly, I think there is limited availability of appointments at mental health services for children and young people so it feels hard to get support or help. Mental health is also being impacted by social media because of the pressures of how to look 'good enough' which is just not realistic or important. If I were in charge I would introduce some policies to improve the mental health of children and young people. I would set up more youth groups and encourage young people to spend time with their friends by putting a ban on using phones in school. I'd ask social media companies to do something about young people spending too much screentime on their apps and devices. I think this would encourage young people to be more active, which would bring down obesity levels and spend more time outside which would positively impact their personal and social lives. I'd also set up more support inside schools and colleges so that there is easier access to support, rather than having to go through our parents or doctors. Crime and gangs is an issue which I think affects a lot of young people. With crime and gangs I think that due to no support for growing mental health issues and a growth in a digital social life,

many people will turn to gangs as a way of fitting in and finding friendship because the leaders of these gangs prey on the most vulnerable. I'd like to see the new, or future, Government's put initiatives into place that will educate young people about the dangers of knife crime and the impact violence on the streets has on families and people. If I were in charge in order to reduce crime, I would make new laws which would reduce gangs and illegal drugs related crimes and give more support to people who might be struggling with addiction. I would like to make sure that the police are effective in keeping everyone safe and are free from corruption.

Aminah: A lot of our work with NCB focuses on how we can make sure children and young people are able to share their voice and gives us an opportunity to have a say in decisions. For example, my work with the Young Research Advisors means that I am able to shape NCB's, and other organisation's, research projects to make sure that our opinions and views are able to shape research methods and activities, and how we interpret and share findings. I want to think about how the new, and future, government could work with children and young people going forwards so we are able to have a say in the decisions that affect us.

I think that the Government should listen to the voices of children and young people, and involve them in decision-making processes to ensure that they create policies that address young people's needs and concerns. It's important that the Government listens to young people, so our ideas can be taken into account and young people's perspectives are included. As well as improving how decisions are made this will boost young people's self-confidence and self-esteem. If the Government listens to us, policies will be better because they will have been shaped by what we need. For example, if the Government speaks to more children who are seldom heard (this means that they aren't always included in decision-making or asked to share their opinion) then they will be able to better support them.

I would like to see the next Government involve us in decision-making by making an effort to hear from all children and young people, in every part of the country. The Government should talk to young people about what they think about a specific topic and hear their views and opinions on it and ask them what they would change. I'd like to see children and young people being spoken to about their school lives and exam stress.

The Government could advertise opportunities to share your opinion on social media and think about how they can get into contact with as many young people, for example, by asking them to fill out a questionnaire about how elections are affecting you.

I would also like to highlight that we can also take action in lots of different ways to have our voices heard by the government. For example, we can attend protests, take part in public speaking and debates on elections, sign petitions, stand up for what we think is right, and talk to our local MP.

Every child should have a fair chance to succeed regardless of their background and upbringing. This is why it's so important the Government reaches out to children and young people from all diverse backgrounds to ensure they know how to best support children and young people.

Lucie: In summary, while significant progress has been made in improving the lives of children and young people, more work is needed in education, healthcare, and political involvement. In our opinions key issues persist, including the environmental crisis, mental health, and crime. We would like to see future governments and political parties actively involving young people like us in decision-making, we want our opinions to be listened to, and to make sure that we have inclusive policies that reflect the needs of all children and young people with a diverse range of backgrounds. Our involvement will foster better policies and boost our confidence and self-esteem.

If you enjoyed our podcast, we encourage you to listen to past episodes to get a greater understanding of young people's perspectives on politics and other pressing issues. If you're interested, follow NCB on social media to become more involved in the action we take part in. You can find this information in the episode description. Thank you for listening!