

Our Turn to Talk  
Episode 15  
Inside a Ministerial Roundtable

**Emaan:** Hi, I'm Emaan. I'm 16, and today I'm here with a group of young people, and we just had a roundtable with the minister, Stephen Morgan.

**Elliott:** I'm Elliott. I'm 16, and I'm from Young NCB.

**Emma:** I'm Emma. I'm 13, and I'm part of Young NCB.

**James:** Hello. I am James. I am a member of Young NCB, and I'm 15.

**Irfan:** Hi, I'm Irfan. I'm 13, and I'm part of the Young Anti-Bullying Alliance.

**Adib:** Hi, I'm Adib. I'm 13, and I'm representing the Young Anti-Bullying Alliance.

**Tomas:** Hello, I'm Tomas without an H. I'm representing the Young Anti-Bullying Alliance, and I'm 14.

**Labiba:** Hey, I'm Labiba. I'm 14, and I'm with the Belonging Matters Programme.

**Elliott:** Hello and welcome to Our Turn to Talk podcast. It's a space for young people to share their views and experiences. Today, we are talking about a roundtable on the subject of thriving with Minister Stephen Morgan. This was attended by members of the Young NCB, members of the Belonging Matters Programme, Young Anti Bullying Alliance, and a member of the FLARE group. [...] Firstly, I'm going to hand over to Emma to talk about what Young NCB is.

**Emma:** Young NCB is an advisory group that gathers the voices of children and young people to help improve the lives of children and young people. We help advocate for changes in policies that better suit children and young people, using our own experiences to make a difference. We are a group of around 20 young people aged 11 to 25 who meet six times a year in London to support the work of the National Children's Bureau. We also do other activities, like hosting and planning events, or speaking to decision makers, like we have done today at a ministerial roundtable. Elliott, can you tell us what a roundtable is?

**Elliott:** Can do Emma, a roundtable is a discussion-based event where young people meet to discuss a specific topic. In ones like the one we have taken part in today, professionals and decision makers meet to discuss a topic which they would like to get more information on from the people with expertise. They can be used to hear about lived experiences and get a clearer understanding of a certain topic. Today, we took part in a roundtable with Minister Stephen Morgan, who is working on the government's opportunities mission, which is to break down the barriers to opportunity for all children and young people. Within this goal, they want to make sure every child is achieving and thriving in school and developing the knowledge and skills they need for life. I'm now going to pass over to James, who is going to explain the purpose of today's roundtable.

**James:** Thanks, Elliott. The purpose of this roundtable is to discuss the topic of thriving, specifically why people thrive in school, and how we can get more people to thrive in school. As Elliott said, this roundtable was with minister Stephen Morgan, who is a Labour MP for Portsmouth South and the Minister for Early Education, this means he is responsible for behavior and preventing bullying and exclusions in schools, safety, online safety and prevention of serious violence in schools and post-16 settings, mental health support in schools, school attendance, including register of children who are not in school, school food, including free school meals, and early years. He wanted to hear from us on the subject of thriving in education, as we are still in school and have firsthand experience of the current system. As a result, we would have quite a bit to add to the conversation and add a point of view otherwise not available to the roundtable.

**Emaan:** So, I just wanted to ask you guys, was this your first time doing something like a roundtable? And how did that feel?

**Labiba:** If I be honest, I was so nervous, because it's my first time. I thought it was going to be so serious, but when we started talking to the Minister, it was so chill, and I was at ease and knowing that I could voice my opinion without feeling judged and more easier.

**James:** This was my first time doing a roundtable, in particular. Although I have done meetings under a similar format before. I must admit, bearing in mind there was a Minister present, I was quite nervous to begin with. But everything turned out fine in the end, and I feel like I succeeded in what I wanted to.

**Tomas:** Similar to James, I haven't really done a roundtable exactly, but I've done similar things for Young Anti-Bullying Alliance, so it wasn't that bad. It felt quite exciting, but I was also a bit nervous, I think mostly because there was more important people involved with the government that was there.

**Adib:** So, guys, what was it like being in a roundtable with a Minister?

**Irfan:** So, I thought the Minister would be quite serious, but I found out that he was quite down to earth and relatable, which made it easier to talk about serious topics, and it felt quite familiar.

**Emaan:** I feel like we're so lucky to have this opportunity, and that the Minister was so genuine, and you can see that he actually cared about what we had to say, and you feel like you were finally heard, because when one my friend said something, he wrote it down, and he even mentioned that he has a roundtable on the topic of technology later on. So, it just all made sense. And it was just really nice to have that experience.

**Emma:** Emaan, what did you enjoy most in the roundtable?

**Emaan:** Thank you for the question. What I enjoyed most was the fact that I felt like I belonged because everyone around me had the same views, and we all said things that we were all thinking about in our minds. And I feel like it's like we all have the same ideas, the goals, and I feel like we're a minority right now, but I feel like we should work to be making this a majority.

And it was just really nice to hear everyone's own perspectives on this topic and how everyone's experiences have been, and just hearing it from other different people that you have never met before is, like, really nice. And yeah, it was a really good day.

**Tomas:** So, Adib, I think we already know all of this already, but just to reiterate, what were the biggest issues mentioned during the roundtable?

**Adib:** Thank you, Tomas. So mainly what was mentioned is achieving, thriving, belonging and inclusion. There were a lot of different subtopics that came after everyone contributed, but those were just the main overarching themes that the Minister asked us and wanted us to talk about.

**Labiba:** Oh, so guys, what do you think you got out the roundtable?

**James:** Thanks for the question. Labiba, I came here to make my voice heard, and I feel like I succeeded in that whilst being able to see the points of view of multiple the other attendees.

**Tomas:** Really good point, James, I think I got a lot more insight into how the country is run and how different Ministers did these type of things. I think unfortunately, not a lot of people get access to this kind of information, and it's extremely important that we get stuff like this out there and let people know that this is how things are done.

**Irfan:** So, I can see that everyone's keen to answer this question. Why is it important that the government listens to young people's voices?

**James:** Thank you, Irfan, for the question. I feel that there are two ends to this conversation, our end and the government's end. On our end, the reason the government needs to listen to us is because we are affected the most by the changes they make. Therefore, if these changes are not positive, we are the ones who would be negatively affected the most. And on the government's end, every party's goal is to get into power. If they want to get into power, they need to get the most votes. We are the next voters. If they want to get into power, they need to make us happy with their decision-making.

**Labiba:** So, I think it's important that the government listens to young people, and the youth's voice, because they're the ones that are experiencing it firsthand. So, if the youth are voicing out what the problems are, I think it's easier for the government to tackle the problems and to improve.

**Emaan:** Good point, Labiba. I feel like the young people have so much potential and that we can do so much with it, but we can't if the government does not listen to our voices. We're the ones who go to school every day. Like adults want to remind us, they've got their degrees, they've got their education, they've got everything. They're set for life. It's us who are growing up, living in this world, and we have no say in the world we're going to be living in. We are living in it. But you know what I mean, in the future.

**Elliott:** Thank you. Emaan, I believe that is important for the government to listen to young people, because we are the future generation of adults within society, as well as we're the ones that are going to be experiencing changes and the effects of them.

**James:** So, everyone, what else do you believe the government could do to listen to the voices of all children and young people, and how do you feel we can make sure everyone feels connected to the work of the government?

**Emma:** I feel like the government could hold more frequent meetings for if more issues come up in the future. Also, accessible emails links for all young people across the UK to state their issues.

**Irfan:** Good point, Emma, I think the government can be more appealing to the younger generation. For example, they can use online surveys and websites to appeal to the younger generation and let them voice their opinions on policies that they think will affect them.

**Adib:** So, I think that the government should spread what we've done, what we've talked about, in the roundtable, uh, internationally. So, I think we could speak to other countries. Some examples are Estonia, Finland and Canada. So according to the PISA rankings of 2022, which is basically about assessments and how students do.[\[1\]](#) And there's a direct correlation between how well students do in assessments and how they do in school, because if they don't feel happy in school, then they won't have any motivation to do good in assessments. So, through that, you can see direct correlation, and therefore we can learn from these kind of countries to make our education system better so that our children are happier.

**Tomas:** Really amazing point there Adib. I think England as a country could really learn from those other places. And oftentimes, I think I said this earlier, people are very uneducated about issues like this and how the government is run in general, and so bringing awareness to this, giving lessons, making videos, promotional content for schools to use will be extremely helpful and will have a really, really great impact on the country.

**Elliott:** Okay, so final question, guys, what advice would you give to young people speaking with the decision makers?

**Emma:** The advice that I have is to be confident, and if you have anything that concerns you in the topic, then you should definitely bring it up, because every contribution is helpful, and remember that anything you say is also helpful to advocating for other children in education as well.

**Emaan:** Great point, Emma. So, I wanted to say that I agree with everything she said, and also that you shouldn't be scared to say something if it's on your mind, if it's a concern, you should address it, and that when you say something that you are scared to say someone else might have also been scared to say it. So, it's like everyone's thinking the same thing. And when it's a topic like this, I feel like a lot of people can relate, and if someone probably listens to this, they could also think I was thinking the same thing. So never be scared to say something, because you wouldn't have that thought to want to say it if it wasn't valid.

**Tomas:** Great point. It's really important that you're honest to yourself. Don't, don't just say what you think will benefit you, but what will benefit the country, the nation as a whole. I think also if you really want to drive in your point, giving examples can help a lot, not only about yourself personally, but with people around you, your friends, your family. Like James, for example, doing the roundtable gave, his brother as an example, very often, and I think really helped his points.

**Irfan:** So, some advice I would give is for young people is that be confident and be yourself and also try to get the most out of yourself as you can, so it's a good improvement for the country.

**Emaan:** Thank you for listening to our podcast. We hope you enjoyed it, and I hope you're inspired to take any opportunities that you get.

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[1] [Europe: PISA results by category 2022 | Statista](#)