



Young Achievers' Awards 2024

Awards Programme, 15 March 2024

together for
children
SUNDERLAND

**Sunderland
City Council**



Introduction

The Sunderland Young Achievers' Awards have been shining a spotlight on deserving and talented young people since 1993. Over the years we have gathered to celebrate the remarkable accomplishments of the thousands of bright minds and talented individuals who have demonstrated outstanding dedication, resilience, empathy and community spirit.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes to our generous sponsors, whose support has helped us bring the awards to life and shine a spotlight on the incredible talents and achievements of our young people. To our nominees, your dedication, passion, and hard work have not gone unnoticed. You represent the wonderful things being done by young people in Sunderland and tonight, we honour you.

We also extend our sincere thanks to the nominators who recognized and championed the exceptional individuals being honoured tonight. Your belief in their potential has helped to shape this gathering into a celebration of success and inspiration. We welcome you all to the Sunderland Young Achievers' Awards.

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Our past winners

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Being a winner of the Andy Neal award and the academic achievement award was amazing. It showed me that even though I had been on a difficult journey and I had to overcome multiple hurdles to get on track, I could still do incredible things.

Chantelle, past winner

”

“

Since winning the award, I have never looked back. As well as continuing with my local advocacy groups, I have been part of the national group, FLARE, for the past year. We are a SEND group and get to advise the government about all sorts of issues. The photo shows me in September 2023 on a video call with the minister, David Johnston OBE. I did a 5 minute speech about an issue close to my heart and he responded very positively.

Winning the award was very special to me because I feel as though all my hard work was recognised and it raised the profile of young people with disabilities in Sunderland. When I was invited back in 2022 to make a speech, I feel as though I did a good job of showing people that you can overcome your barriers. I never thought I'd be on that stage speaking to hundreds of people.

Sam, past winner

”

Tammy Banks

The Sunderland Young Achievers Awards are a highlight of our city's calendar, and I am honoured and excited to be a part of them. The awards celebrate the incredible accomplishments, talents, and positive contributions of young people in our community.

Thank you to everyone involved in organising this event, from our colleagues at Together for Children to our generous sponsors, this couldn't happen without you.

Our winners represent just a fraction of the remarkable Young People in Sunderland, they, along with the nominees are hugely inspiring.

Congratulations to all the young people for their outstanding efforts, you're amazing, thank you for being you.

Tammy Banks

Chair of the Together for Children Board



Cllr Williams

The Young Achievers' Awards evening is one of the highlights of the year and I am honoured to be able to join in the celebrations and to recognise the wonderful achievements of Sunderland's young people. We have been overwhelmed with the level of entries received and the range of remarkable achievements young people across our city are showing. It's truly heartening to see the spirit of determination, resilience, and compassion amongst our children and young people and to hear first-hand about the impact they are making in our community.

The Sunderland Young Achievers' Awards allow us to honour some of these outstanding individuals whether they've triumphed over adversity, demonstrated bravery, worked hard to improve or dedicated themselves to helping others, each one of them exemplifies the very best of what Sunderland stands for - unity, strength, and resilience.

I also want to extend a special thank you to everyone who took the time to nominate these remarkable individuals, the Together for Children team for organising the event as well as offer a huge thank you to our wonderful sponsors who have made this event possible and shown continued commitment to our families. To all the nominees

To all the nominees, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering commitment to making our city a better place. Your passion, dedication, and drive are truly awe-inspiring, and tonight, we celebrate you.

Councillor Linda Williams,
Member for Young People, Learning and Skills



Our performers

During tonight's ceremony entertainment was provided by three incredible groups:

Mill Hill Rock Band

The Mill Hill Rock Band formed in September 2021. The thirteen, Year 5 and 6 children have a wide range of skills including guitar, keyboards and vocals. They rehearse every Thursday after school and have built up a repertoire of 9 songs.

They enjoy performing and will be visiting other Primary Schools in the summer term. Last year, they wrote their own song about mental health (Tell Someone) and this year they have written and recorded their own song (Wear Your Rainbow with Pride) about individuality which will be released in June to celebrate Pride.

Lampton Street Dance Crew

Lampton Street, street dance project provide fun street dance classes for 8–25 year olds. All classes are designed to allow all members to experience street dancing and learn basic techniques of the styles. Young people take a lead in putting together routines for stage performance and competitions. They also have creative control of music and outfit designs. Creating an encouraging community of young people who are striving towards their goals, allowing them to thrive and learn basic life skills.

Over the years they have performed, locally, nationally and internationally.

Sunderland Youth Choir

Sunderland Youth Choir is a group of passionate young singers from across the city aged between 7–18. The group rehearse once a week at Sunderland's City Hall where they develop vocal technique and skills, sing together and have fun!

As a group they have performed at many fantastic events and venues, including Sunderland Empire, The Fire Station and Summer Streets Festival, to not only make the audience smile and families proud, but to also inspire other young people to do what they love - sing!

If you would like to know more about Sunderland Youth Choir please contact Liam Huitson: liam.huitson@togetherforchildren.org.uk

Our sponsors



The Sunderland Young Achievers' Awards would not be possible without the support of our wonderful sponsors - not only do they help us deliver the night of celebrations but they also play an important role in helping us narrow down the hundreds of nominations we receive to decide our final winners.

Each award is judged independently by a panel made up of event sponsors and Together for Children's team. Our sponsors give us their valuable time to review each nomination individually and have the difficult task of scoring each entry.

The scores are then counted and the winners and highly commended nominees for each category are announced to the panel. If two or more young people have the same score, judges have an opportunity to discuss the nominations and decide the outcome.

The young person with the top overall score out of all categories is named as the overall winner of the Sunderland Young Achievers' Awards.

A huge thank you to our sponsors for not only making the night possible but for your judging skills, goodie bag donations and for showing your commitment to the young people in Sunderland.



Arts and Culture Award

sponsored by  CultureHouse
Sunderland

Highly commended

Anastasiia Vasylchuk

Anastasiia and her family relocated to the area shortly after the outbreak of Russian invasion into Ukraine. Nastiiia as she is also known, worked hard alongside her older sister Yuliia, to improve her English and settled in well to Gillas Lane School.

After only a week into the new school Nastiiia asked if there was a piano she could play. There was, but it was this dusty, old, disused and unloved instrument. She sat at the piano and played. Time simply stopped still when this gifted pianist took to the keys. Members of staff and children came out of their classrooms to see where the music they could hear was coming from.

Now with the donation of a baby grand piano, Nastiiia continues to impress everyone with her talent.

Winner

Caleb Adams


For Thornhill Student Caleb, music is his passion. He's a singer, drummer, self-taught guitarist and also has a special skill that only one in ten thousand have - he's pitch perfect. He can detect with perfect accuracy any note played, even if four different notes are played at the same time.

He is a member of the young musician's project, which is a group who bring young people together to start playing and writing songs together. The group also supports the development of confidence, wellbeing and the development of their musical skills.

He came to the group struggling with neurodiversity and struggling to find a place with like-minded people, and he has grown to become a central group member.

Sport and Physical Activity Award

The Connor Brown Award

sponsored by  everyone
ACTIVE

Highly Commended

Amelia O'Connor

Amelia has autism and dyslexia which causes great challenges with her working memory, organisation and sensory overload. Despite these challenges she loves to bounce! She has demonstrated a great commitment in training for 9 hours a week on the trampoline and in the gym.

Taking things seriously, Amelia wanted to get to another level and start competing. She moved quickly through the stages coming 1st in the Northern Region Schools, 1st in the Zonal round and 3rd in the national competition.

Amelia took part in the English Championships in Telford where she placed 3rd in the final.

Winner

Mahian Mahfuz

Mahian is a star sports person at Young Asian Voices (YAV) and has been proactively involved in volunteering in community sports activities, sessions, and tournaments since he was 9 years old. He is also very much respected and regarded as a role model amongst his peers due to his leadership skills, helpful nature, brilliant humour, confidence, and interpersonal skills. He is a star cricket player and has been selected to be involved in Durham Cricket talent pathway initiative.

Mahian demonstrates utmost respect to elders, peers, diversity, and different sporting abilities, and comes up with creative ways to help develop his peers' sporting abilities. He keenly continues to be involved in, and support YAV sessions, delivery and set up of cricket as well as football coaching..

Achievement in Learning

sponsored by



Highly commended

Mujtaba Rahimi

Fleeing from the Taliban, Mujtaba arrived as an unaccompanied asylum seeking child in November 2022. Speaking not a single word of English he had to rely on translation apps to communicate with carers.

Starting at Red House Academy in January 2023, he had to learn quickly and his attitude to learning is a testament to him wanting to achieve in his life.

Away from the classroom Mujtaba continues to learn, doing extra English lessons during holidays and is now having to rely on translation apps much less frequently.

He is now also helping another young person who has moved into his care home showing how far he has come.

Winner

Andrew Pinheiro

After a difficult start to life, Andrew left school with no qualifications to his name. Determined to change this, he made the decision that he needed to do something about it. However, having Dyslexia and Dyscalculia, education was a challenge and this left Andrew feeling reluctant to engage.

Identifying an interest in engineering, an apprenticeship opportunity came up at New College Durham. After successfully being accepted on to the programme, he now works for Leibherr as an apprentice engineer, while also attending college to complete the academic side of the work. Attending both work and college independently, the work is challenging, but Andrew is showing real determination to complete the course.

Young Carer Award

sponsored by



Highly Commended

Joshua Oakley

At only 12 years old, Josh has an adult role in his day-to-day life, looking after both of his younger siblings. His brother William had Autism and ADHD, his sister Elizabeth is also on the spectrum for Autism, and mum who has PTSD. The role he plays is so important; from helping William with homework, keeping him calm, keeping him safe while out and about and helping him with his rugby - the list is endless.

With rarely a complaint, Josh is a selfless young man whose efforts have certainly not gone unnoticed.

Because of everything, he has to take a bit of a back seat much of the time and the only thing he asked for his 13th birthday was "a little bit of time".

Winner

Molly Mackings

Molly is a beacon of compassion and dedication. From being a carer for both her mum who battles Multiple Sclerosis, her brother and another family with disabilities, she still manages to make the daily, hour-long taxi journey to college where she studies to become a Veterinary Nurse.

Alongside mum, Tara, Molly played a pivotal role in the foundation of Tailored Leisure Co. which is a not-for-profit organisation making physical fitness and mental health wellbeing inclusive for all.

Her endeavours have helped create pathways for families with disabilities to access improved health opportunities and foster a community where everyone, regardless of ability, can thrive. Molly's story is not just one of volunteerism; it is a narrative of empowerment, resilience, and a relentless pursuit of making the world a more inclusive and compassionate place for all.

Health and Wellbeing Young Champion

sponsored by **Sunderland
City Council**

Highly Commended

Wellbeing Warriors

The Ryhope Junior School's Wellbeing Warriors have worked tirelessly over the last few academic years to help achieve the bronze and silver Sunderland Mental Health Charter Mark awards. They are an active group who recognise that their voice can be heard, and they consistently give up their own lunchtimes and playtimes so that they can meet, discuss and share their suggestions with the rest of the school. They regularly provide updates to the children, families and staff in weekly 'Shine' celebration assemblies. In addition to this, they have led tours of school to governors, teachers and parents as part of open evening and whole school events.

Winner

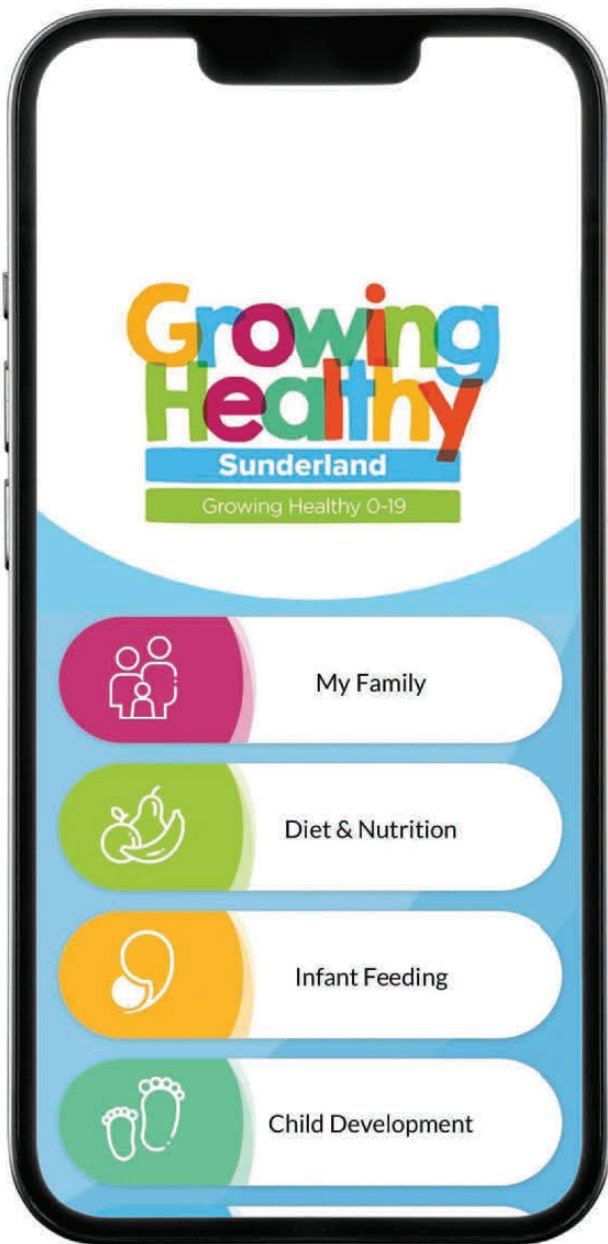
Isaac Bates

Isaac has turned himself around from being excluded from his previous school to being a role model and peer at the Link School where he has attended for over a year.

The past 12 months has seen Isaac develop in many ways especially in regard to health and wellbeing. He is a member of Wearmouth Boxing club which he attends 4 evenings each week. His commitment to this form of training has been exemplary and he is now using his free evening time to run 2 miles or swim.

Isaac is the Link School Mindful warrior representing learners from key stage 1 and 2, and supporting mental health and wellbeing.

Attending weekly mindfulness sessions with the school mindfulness practitioner, he supports her with ideas to then support the school community.



Our app is available for free from the App and Google Play Stores, it's full of useful information and you can have your questions answered with our Health Chat service.

The app has a area for parent/carers of school age children and you can find lots of links for health and wellbeing information for children aged 5 to 19.

The Growing Healthy Sunderland 0–19 app offers information to support the health and development of expectant mothers, children, young, people and adults.

Advice is tailored to Sunderland and can include:

- Antenatal care
- Child health/development milestones
- Infant feeding
- Perinatal, infant and child emotional health
- Advice on being a dad
- Making sure your child is ready for school
- Children with special educational needs
- Local support and activities



Local Community Award

sponsored by **gentoo**

Highly Commended

Matthew Armstrong

Being from Sunderland, Matthew both represents and supports the young disabled community within Sunderland and surrounding areas within the North East. Matthew has been involved with Grace House since his childhood. Coming to Grace House in the first instance as a service user, he has progressed to a volunteer and inspirational young leader, supporting youth groups, and taking under his wing other disabled young people who come to Grace House regularly or for their very first time.

Matthew always displays a sunny disposition. He is never without a smile on his face, being jolly and full of fun from the minute he enters the building to the time when he has to go home.

Winner

Washington Youth Council

Washington Youth Council are a group of young people aged 12–17 who work together with the aims of representing young people living in Washington, giving young people a voice and promoting positive images of young people.

From appeals for donations of toiletries to making hampers for women who have escaped domestic violence and arranging visits to attractions for family fun days, there's no limit to what they do.

The group selflessly donate their free time to benefit others. They work really well together and are extremely passionate about what they do. They throw themselves into any activities and are always eager to achieve the goals that they set for themselves.

Proud sponsors of the Local Community Award



We wish everyone a fantastic evening as we pay tribute to the achievement of so many amazing and inspirational youngsters and the incredible contributions they make to life in Sunderland.

gentoogroup.com

Connor Brown Award



Outstanding achievement and contribution in all physical activities

This award is given out to the someone who has always shown 100% commitment. To someone who always has the right attitude, give praise and encouragement to their team, and will put the team ahead of themselves. This is for someone who will go above and beyond to help others achieve their goals.

Connor was a big fan of all sports and would always participate with enthusiasm, the right kit and attitude. Win or lose he would be kind to himself knowing he done his best and congratulate his opponent(s).

Winning isn't always the best part of the sport, taking part, being part of the team, self-discipline, physical strength, mental health, and healthy body is what creates a good sports person.

The Connor Brown Award is to represent a good sports person for their outstanding achievement and contribution in all physical activities.



Youth Voice Award

sponsored by  North East and North Cumbria

Highly commended

Change Council

Change Council are a group of young people, split into two age ranges 12–15 and 16–25. They work within their groups, and sometimes as one large group to improve services for children and young people who are cared for, or care experienced in Sunderland. The group raise awareness of the issues faced by cared for and care experienced young people in Sunderland and ensure their voices are heard.

The group have done a lot of work over the last year which has amplified the voice of young people in Sunderland.

They were instrumental in having Sunderland City Council be the first in the North East to voluntarily make 'care experience' a protected characteristic and call upon its partners to do the same.

Winner

Lincoln Conlin

Lincoln has faced so much adversity in his life, but with the support of his foster carer he has progressed into an outstanding and influential young person who is supportive to others.

Lincoln is someone that is easy to talk to, can recognise challenges for care experienced young people, but rather than dwell upon this he will consider and reflect to motivate change. This has not always been an easy journey for Lincoln and reflecting on his own life events means he will speak about his own lived experiences.

Having been invited to Westminster to share his experiences of being cared for, Lincoln also appeared on a BBC Radio 4 documentary about children living in care. Lincoln is a polite and articulate young man with a bright future.

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- Sexuality or gender identity
- Grief
- Confidential advice

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Young Environmental Champion Award

sponsored by 

Highly commended

Ryhope Rangers

At Ryhope Junior School you will find the Ryhope Rangers! This is a special group of pupils who care about the environment and improving the use of sustainable resources both in school and the wider community. The Ryhope Rangers are a made up of a representative from each class in school from years 3–6.

Different members are elected into the role each year with some children having consecutive yearly memberships. The group meet regularly to discuss current issues and explore options on how to make things even better for children and families.

Winner

Anya Marshall

Anya is a proud member of The Environmental, Green and Sustainable (EGS) young people's group. EGS brings together young people from primary, special, and secondary schools alongside reps from Sunderland Youth Council, detached youth work settings, Sunderland College, and the University of Sunderland to provide a forum where young people's opinions regarding climate change can be heard. Members are supported to meet and discuss climate action; participate in Low Carbon volunteering opportunities and feed into the city's plans.

Anya has been involved in the EGS Group from the very beginning and has attended every group meeting since. She is a dedicated member of the group and embodies what it means to be an environmental champion.



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Personal Growth Award

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inspiring people and changing lives

Highly commended

Ella-Mai Whittle

In the words of her mum, Ella is the strongest, most caring young person she has ever known. Being on the SEN register from early years of school, facing the struggles of everyday life, she finds 'normal' activities such as going to school, communicating, noise and lights a real battle. Ella finally got a diagnosis of a learning disability at the age of fifteen.

With a love of music, she has built up the confidence to stand on stage and sing in front of an audience, which is a huge milestone that led to her winning the Principal's award.

Always putting others before herself, despite struggling to speak to others and socialising, Ella witnessed an elderly gentleman fall over. She ran over, collected his walking stick and helped him to his feet. She is a very selfless young lady.

Winner

Eli Gibson

First one through the door, last one to leave. That sums up Eli when he is volunteering at the Box Youth Project where he has participated for the last seven years.

Eli's mum became seriously ill unfortunately ending up in hospital. He had to take responsibility for his younger sister and making sure they both got to school each day, ate well and kept on top of the housework.

It was at this time that Eli was also invited to become a young volunteer. He was thrilled to be asked and really threw himself wholeheartedly into the role, attending three nights every week.

He has shown great resilience and determination alongside an unwavering commitment to helping to improve the lives of others through volunteering.



Hopespring is an award winning charity based in Sunderland specialising in delivering quality services to children, young people and their families and providing therapeutic education and care. We have two Therapeutic Schools across three sites, and an Ofsted Registered Family Centre.



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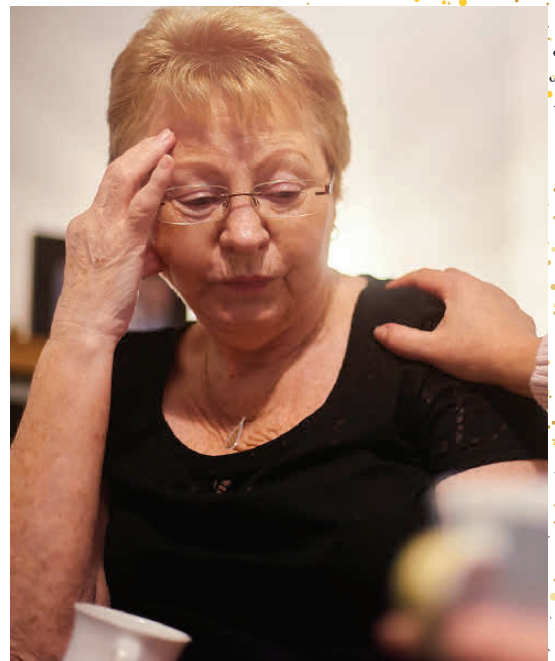


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someone, anyone,
we are here for you...**

At Sunderland Carers Centre we provide support for people who look after others. That doesn't mean professional carers. We support people who care for their husband, wife, mam, dad, son, daughter, sibling, friend or other relative. We offer information, advice and guidance to carers in and around Sunderland – and it's all confidential, non-judgemental and impartial.

The Carers Centre is a 'centrepiece' for carers in the city, assisting directly when and where we can and linking people with other organisations when more appropriate, to ensure every user gets the support they require.

For more information call us on 0191 549 3768 or visit: www.sunderlandcarers.co.uk



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- Free events and sessions for under 5s
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- Help and support on everything from finance, to work and health and wellbeing

For more information visit:
www.togetherforchildren.org.uk/familyhubs

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With events and advice for all ages, My Best Life is an easy way to explore and discover exciting family-friendly activities and support services happening in Sunderland's Family Hubs and online.

Available in over 100 languages.

www.mybestlife.org.uk

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Together for Children Youth Groups

Sunderland Youth Council (SYC)



SYC are a group of young people aged 11 to 19 (up to 25 with a special education need or disability (SEND)) who act as a voice for young people across the city. They campaign on issues voted for by Sunderland's young people through the Make your Mark ballot and State of the City Debate. In the past this has covered topics including homelessness, young people's mental wellbeing and free school meals. The group meets every Wednesday evening in the city centre.

If you'd like to get involved, please contact: youthvoice@togetherforchildren.org.uk

Cozmic 3piphany



A group of young people aged 11 to 19 who identify as LGBTQ plus or who are questioning their sexuality and or gender. The group discuss and tackle issues relevant to them including inclusivity, mental health and equality and help shape services across the city. They meet fortnightly on a Thursday evening in the city centre.

If you would like further information or would like to join the group please contact youth voice at: youthvoice@togetherforchildren.org.uk

STARS



STARS is a group of young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) aged 11 to 25 who represent the voices of young people across the city. The group also actively encourage people to question their viewpoint and look beyond what they first see. The group discuss and campaign on issues relevant to them such as education, inclusivity and accessibility and help shape services across the city. They meet fortnightly on a Thursday evening between 4–6pm.

If you are interested in joining the group or would like more information, please email: youthvoice@togetherforchildren.org.uk

Change Council and Change Council Mini



Change Council and Change Council Mini are groups of young people aged 12 to 25, or 7 to 11-year-olds respectively, who are currently cared for or care experienced. The group help shape the future services by sharing their lived

experience and perspectives on issues that are important to them. Change Council meets every Wednesday evening between 5–7pm and Mini Change Council meet monthly on a Monday between 4.15–5.30pm both are held at TfC venues.

If you are cared for or care experienced and would like to join Change Council or Change Council Mini please e-mail: youthvoice@togetherforchildren.org.uk

Young Commissioners

Young Commissioners are volunteers aged between 12 and 19 years old (up to 25 with SEND). The group share their own experience and opinions on how services can better help children and young people and they make suggestions for additional services or provisions. Young Commissioners receive full training and meet alternative Thursdays between 4.30–6.30pm.

Find out more at: youthvoice@togetherforchildren.org.uk



Our thanks

Many thanks to the R&B Group for their continued support of the Sunderland Young Achievers' Awards. They interviewed our nominees to produce the wonderful films and created the staging for the event itself.



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