

Why not involve Young People in our Project

When I was at the YMCA, I was struck by how the old people were always trying very hard to work out what young people wanted. In a lightbulb moment, it became clear – why don't we get them to organise it instead.

The idea called "Oversight" was developed as a means for young people to have a say in how things are planned, run, and improved. For young people, it involves sharing ideas, giving feedback, and helping guide decisions that affect them. It's about being trusted to lead, speak up, and shape projects in ways that reflect their needs and experiences.

At first, the old people came up with lots of reasons why it would not work – and yes, they are probably similar to those you are thinking right now reading this – but overtime they came forward with ways of overcoming these hurdles by mentoring and encouraging the young people to succeed.

I would like us to consider this approach for the community aspect of our plans – the community garden and heritage zone to name but two. The community aspect has hardly started and now would be a good time to consider its introduction.

Hartshill Academy emphasises its HART values—Heart, Ambition, Respect, and Tenacity—and encourages students to take on leadership roles, work in teams, and contribute to school life. I wonder if this could be extended out into community leadership by some of their ambassadors.

I believe that Hartshill Academy runs the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme – again is this a possible target audience.

Involving young people in our church's project team can **significantly strengthen our grant application**—especially when applying to funders like the National Lottery, National Churches Trust or the Church of England's Net Sero Fund, who value community engagement, sustainability, and legacy.

- **Fresh perspectives:** Young people bring creativity, digital fluency, and new ideas that can energise our project.
- **Legacy and sustainability:** Demonstrates long-term thinking—engaging the next generation to care for heritage and community spaces.
- **Community relevance:** Shows our church is inclusive, forward-looking, and rooted in the needs of all age groups.
- **Stronger funding case:** Funders want to see diverse, intergenerational involvement and capacity-building.

Practical Ways to Involve Youth

- **Youth advisory group:** Create a youth-led sub-team to contribute ideas, especially around digital engagement, events, or sustainability.
- **Creative roles:** Involve them in designing posters, managing social media, filming project progress, or creating digital heritage content.

- **Skills development:** Look at training in heritage research, event planning, or eco-auditing—this builds their CVs and confidence.
- **Intergenerational workshops:** Pair youth with older volunteers to share stories, record oral histories, or co-lead community events.
- **Eco champions:** Engage them in energy audits, biodiversity surveys, or climate-focused activities tied to our Net Sero goals.

How to Frame It in Our Application

- **Highlight co-creation:** Emphasise that young people are not just participants—they help shape the project.
- **Show impact:** Describe how their involvement builds skills, confidence, and a sense of agency.
- **Include quotes or pledges:** If possible, include a short statement from a young person about why the project matters to them.
- **Link to outcomes:** Tie youth involvement to funder priorities like inclusion, sustainability, and community resilience.

Youth Engagement: Building Legacy and Leadership

Our project actively involves young people from the local community as co-creators and contributors, not just participants. By integrating youth into our project team, we aim to:

- **Empower the next generation:** Young volunteers will help shape the project's direction through a youth advisory group, contributing ideas on sustainability, digital outreach, and heritage storytelling.
- **Develop skills and confidence:** We will offer training in areas such as event planning, digital media, eco-auditing, and oral history collection—building transferable skills and boosting employability.
- **Foster intergenerational collaboration:** Youth will work alongside older members of the congregation and community, sharing perspectives and building mutual understanding through shared heritage activities.
- **Strengthen community relevance:** Their involvement ensures the project reflects the interests and needs of younger residents, helping our church remain a vibrant and inclusive space for all.
- **Support long-term sustainability:** By engaging youth now, we lay the foundation for future leadership and stewardship of our church and its heritage.

This approach aligns with funder priorities around inclusion, capacity-building, and legacy. It also reflects our commitment to nurturing a sense of agency and belonging among young people in our parish.