



# IMPACT REPORT

2025

**IF YOU  
DON'T DO  
POLITICS,  
POLITICS  
WILL DO  
YOU**



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## MY LIFE MY SAY

Impact Report 2025

# MY LIFE MY SAY

My Life My Say is a youth-led, non-partisan movement on a mission to encourage young people to participate in democracy and get every single young person voting.

We're recognised as one of the leading drivers of youth engagement in the UK, reaching over 6 million young people since 2013, increasing access to democracy, and affecting real change that benefits the greater good.

We have worked with many notable decision-making institutions in the UK to help enhance young people's engagement in decision-making processes, including local and national government, as well as leading the Give an X and v.16 campaigns.

In 2018, the Cabinet Office announced My Life My Say as a Democracy Champion, particularly for our Democracy Café methodology. In a short timeframe we have built an exceptional reputation for empowering young people, and proven our ability to strategically influence policy and empower young people in the UK.

We have garnered the praise of the UK Government, Mayor of London, UN Youth Office, US Embassy in London, Mayor of Los Angeles, and European Parliament, amongst many others.



# A YEAR OF GROWTH, LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP

Welcome to the My Life My Say's 2025 impact report, a celebration of another incredible year for the charity.



This past year has been a powerful reminder of what is possible when young people are trusted, supported, and given meaningful opportunities to lead. At My Life My Say, we are incredibly proud of our team, our trustees, and the young people at the heart of everything we do.

Across the UK, trust in democratic institutions continues to decline, while many young people feel disconnected from political processes that directly shape their lives. Rising inequality, misinformation, and economic pressure have deepened feelings of exclusion, particularly among underrepresented communities. Yet young people are not disengaged; they are eager to be heard and to play an active role in shaping the future. This context has made our work more vital than ever.

Throughout 2025, our focus has been on deepening youth leadership and widening access to democratic engagement. We created inclusive, accessible

spaces where young people could share their experiences, build confidence, and engage with the issues that matter most to them whether through our Democracy Cafés, the Next Gen Conference, or The Squad. These moments of connection are not just events; they are starting points for long-term participation and leadership.

This year also saw young people's voices shaping national conversations about their futures, including through our work supporting the National Youth Strategy consultation and the Votes at 16 campaign. Thousands of young people contributed their insight, experiences, and ideas, reinforcing the importance of listening to those most affected by political decisions.

We continued to innovate, delivering our most ambitious Next Gen Conference to date and investing in pathways that support young people beyond their first point of engagement. At the same time, we strengthened our foundations for growth by investing in governance, welcoming a new



Chair and new Young Trustees to our Board.

This Impact Report reflects a year of growth, learning, and leadership, and our ongoing commitment to restoring trust, strengthening

participation, and building a more inclusive democracy shaped by young people themselves.

We want to say a heartfelt thank you to our team, supporters, partners, and most of all the young people who inspire us every day and make our work possible.



Young people are not disengaged; they are **eager to be heard** and to play an active role in shaping the future.

Words by Melisha John, co-CEO and Dan Lawes, co-CEO.



# A PIVOTAL YEAR OF IMPACT AND GROWTH

## A note from the Chair



Words by Joe Rich,  
Chair of the Board

I'm delighted to introduce the 2025 Impact Report as the newly appointed Chair of My Life My Say. I'm thrilled to join this organisation as Chair at the end of such an exciting and pivotal year for the organisation. A year which saw My Life My Say reaching new heights through engaging more young people in the democratic process than ever before; influencing national policy by delivering young peoples' voices directly to government and leading the Votes at 16 campaign with key partners, which is set to deliver the biggest change for young

people in generations! As I step into this role, I'm excited to help My Life My Say continue to build on these successes in strengthening our reach, deepening our impact and building a democracy which truly works for everyone. 2026 is set to be another incredible year for the charity, as we look to expand our programmes, elevate even more young voices and continue to innovate alongside the communities we serve. A massive thank you to all of the young people, partners and supporters of My Life My Say who continue to make this work possible.

## Introducing our new Trustees

# YOUTH-LED AT EVERY LEVEL

Hi, I'm Lucy and I'm a trustee for My Life My Say. As a former Squad Leader and Squad Ambassador, I'm so honoured to be joining the team, bringing my experience of these programs to the board! Looking ahead to 2026, I can't wait to be able to shape the growth of the organisation even further and look for ways to enrich democracy even more than we already have done. Young people are at the centre of MLMS, and I'm so excited to be able to be a young person contributing to the growth of democracy!

Lucy Newman

I'm Halima, one of the newest members of My Life My Say's Board of Trustees. I am proud to introduce the 2025 Impact Report, highlighting a year of meaningful engagement and growth. Joining the Board at this pivotal moment, as we face an increasingly challenging yet promising democratic landscape, shaped in part by the v.16 campaign, My Life My Say remains committed to placing young people at the centre of decision-making – not as an afterthought, but as active agents of change.

Halima Fahm



Words by Lucy Newman (left) and Halima Fahm (Right), Trustees

# MEET THE TEAM



**MELISHA JOHN**

Co-CEO (Operations and Governance)



**DAN LAWES**

Co-CEO (Growth and Partnerships)



**JOE RICH**

Chair of the Board



**LENNOX OHEMENG-ANTWI**

Trustee



**PARIS HABIB**

Squad Community Manager



**REMI OLOKUN**

Social Media Lead



**LUCY NEWMAN**

Trustee



**METE COBAN**

Trustee



**GEORGE SOMERS**

Engagement and Impact Officer



**RIANNA TYME**

Executive Assistant to Co-CEOs



**HALIMA FAHM**

Trustee



**CÉCILE LAVAL**

Trustee

# MEET THE BOARD



# YEAR IN NUMBERS

29

DEMOCRACY CAFÈS

50

EVENTS DELIVERED  
IN 2025

13

SKILL BUILDING WORKSHOPS  
FOR SQUAD LEADERS

1,643

YOUNG PEOPLE  
ENGAGED  
FACE-TO-FACE

74%

OF EVENTS  
OUTSIDE OF  
LONDON

28

EVENTS WITH DECISION  
MAKERS IN THE ROOM

2 MILLION+

IMPRESSIONS ACROSS  
SOCIAL MEDIA

# Deliver You

## Leading the National Youth Strategy Consultation

2025 also saw My Life My Say take a new step as an organisation in working directly with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to lead the National Youth Strategy Consultation. A consortium of My Life My Say, #iwill and Savanta fed over 20,000 young peoples voices into the strategy, ensuring policy which affects young people is not created without young people. My Life My Say also led on the creation of the 'Deliver You' brand, giving the consultation an authentic, youth-led vision and identity.



As part of the consultation, My Life My Say hosted 9 Democracy Cafès, one in every region of England, collecting young peoples' thoughts, experiences and recommendations for their local areas to directly inform the strategy. Young people highlighted above all else, a lack of investment in local youth spaces and a desire for young

people to be taken more seriously in decision making spaces. This desire was reflected in the National Youth Strategy published in December 2025, with a package of investment for youth spaces and a commitment to continue to work with young people to shape policy. The consultation stands as a lasting example and model as to how government can interact with young people differently; in a way which is authentic, honest and actually hears young peoples' lived experiences and priorities.

Powered by



MY LIFE  
MY SAY

#iwill Savanta:

# Deliver You

MORE FUN THINGS TO DO

IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH

BETTER JOB SECURITY

REASONABLE COST OF LIVING

ADVICE ON DRUGS & ALCOHOL

IMPROVED ONLINE SAFETY

WHAT'S YOUR  
ORDER?

THE NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY



## A new era for Democracy Cafès

The consultation also allowed My Life My Say to introduce a new format of Democracy Cafès, in which more intimate, smaller DeCafès are used as focus groups, collecting crucial qualitative research on young peoples' perspectives. Through the DeCafè model, which sees young people engaging in a youth-led and casual environment and co-creating solutions between peers, these focus groups are able to reveal lived experiences and create more innovative solutions than a traditional format.

**100%**

of participants agreed the DeCafè event was more engaging than a traditional focus group.

**100%**

of participants felt their voice was directly heard by DCMS via the DeCafè.



This is a 10 year plan to ensure every young person across the country has people who care, places to go and things to do, and are seen and heard. We will put young people back in charge of their own destinies.

The rapid evidence assessment, Democracy Cafès, the online focus groups and the development, promotion and results of the National Youth Strategy Survey were vital in understanding what it is like to grow up in 2025, and therefore, what the strategy needed to address.



Words by Lisa Nandy MP,  
Secretary of State for  
Culture, Media and Sport.

## Putting young people in the driving seat

An evolution for My Life My Say



This is exactly why we founded My Life My Say: to make sure young people are given a seat at the table in the decisions that shape their lives. What began in a classroom 13 years ago at the University of Greenwich has grown into an organisation trusted to coordinate the Government's National Youth Strategy consultation – a powerful example of what youth-led movements can achieve when young people are given the tools, trust and space to lead. I am incredibly proud of how My Life My Say has evolved, while staying true to its founding values and continuing to put young people in the driving seat of change.



Words by Mete Coban MBE, Deputy Mayor of London and Founder of My Life My Say





## It's Time for an Update.

Welcome to v.16, a national campaign to lower the voting age to 16 in all UK elections, led by My Life My Say.

v.16 is a landmark campaign to update our democracy by delivering a historic extension of the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds across the U.K. The campaign, led by My Life My Say, stands as a testament to the power of young people



when they're handed the reins and given the chance to make their voice heard.

By presenting Votes at 16 not as an overhaul or revolution, but simply as a necessary update, v.16 was able to achieve a new level of engagement from MPs across parties and work in step with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to deliver Votes at 16 in a way which is authentic and builds trust with young people.

June 23<sup>rd</sup> saw v.16 launch across the country, with events in Westminster bringing MPs from across parliament, including the Minister for Democracy, together to support the campaign and an event in Manchester launching the campaign to the wider public in the historic Peoples' History Museum. The energy and enthusiasm across these events was a hallmark of the success to come.



# Campaign Design

When we click youth-led, we mean it. ↗

In designing the v.16 campaign, it was essential that the look, feel and voice were authentic and honest to both the young people currently locked out of the democratic process, and the incredible organisations and leaders already driving the fight for Votes at 16. That's why My Life My Say set up a youth steering group of 16 young people, aged 16 and 17, alongside an expert advisory group of industry leaders, academics and partners who know Votes at 16 and its history better than anyone else.

Together these groups shaped every aspect of the campaign, ensuring v.16 was grounded in lived experience as well as those with deep expertise, giving the campaign the credibility to reach those who can affect change.

The dual approach meant that the campaign reached the underrepresented and unengaged young people whose voices most need amplification in debates such as Votes at 16, but also united the democracy sector behind a common goal of extending the franchise. In securing the backing of organisations across the sector, including NUS, NYA and the Electoral Reform Society, v.16's pressure on elected officials to commit to Votes at 16 came not from one organisation, but from a coalition.

This collective, youth-led approach stands as a testament to the power of collaboration and partnership, and genuinely placing young people at the forefront of change.



## v.16 in the Media

Keeping young voices at the heart of the debate.

On July 17<sup>th</sup>, the Minister for Democracy announced a new elections strategy at a v.16 roundtable hosted by My Life My Say, reaffirming the government's commitment to Votes at 16. At this pivotal moment for UK democracy, v.16 aimed to place young voices at the heart of media coverage of the announcement, ensuring those who will be most affected by the decision are heard.

On July 17<sup>th</sup>, v.16 campaign ambassadors appeared on BBC News, created content for ITV and BBC's TikToks, interviewed live on LBC and Times Radio, took part in debates on Sky News, Heart, Capital, RTS and Newsnight, with My Life My Say and the v.16 campaign being referenced across wider media.



“ Being part of the v.16 campaign steering group was an amazing experience. I learned to debate, defend, listen, and create a campaign I'm proud to have been a part of. As the only Welsh person in the group, I enjoyed sharing my lived experience voting at 16 in the 2021 Senedd elections with other young people. Thanks to MLMS for this opportunity!



Words by Ruby Llewelyn, v.16 Steering Group Member

In working to platform and amplify these young voices, the v.16 campaign placed the positive arguments for Votes at 16 and building trust with young people at the forefront of the debate delivered by those with actual lived experience- making sure the narrative wasn't shaped on young peoples' behalf but by young people themselves.



# Across the Line

The future of the v.16 campaign.

Looking ahead, My Life My Say will continue to ensure that young people's voices are placed at the heart of what is likely to be the most significant legislative change affecting youth democratic participation for a generation: the extension of the franchise.

Through the v.16 campaign, we will support young people to shape the conversation around this reform, ensuring their lived experiences and perspectives are heard within government as an Elections Bill is introduced, debated, and scrutinised.

This work will combine youth-led engagement, structured dialogue with decision-makers, and responsible media participation, enabling young people to contribute meaningfully to a national discussion about the future of democracy.

By centering young voices from across the UK throughout this process, MLMS aims to ensure that any changes to the electoral system are informed by those they most directly affect.





# WIDER ENGAGEMENT

From football pitches to cafès: participation in action.

## National Voter Registration Day

Every year My Life My Say coordinates National Voter Registration Day (NVRD), the final day people can register to vote in upcoming elections. The day aims to make noise and share voter registration messaging to as many young people as possible, but to also engage new partners who wouldn't typically work in democracy spaces.

In 2025, NVRD took on sports. In activating our 'Don't Sit on The Sidelines' campaign, My Life My Say hosted a football match between charities, influencers and politicians, encouraging young people not to sit on the sidelines and register to vote.

By taking democracy to a traditionally non-political space, NVRD 2025 was able to engage new influencers and partners reaching a combined following of 1,347,144 people with '*Don't Sit on the Sidelines*' messaging. This was supported by a My Life My Say advertising campaign which reached 252,385 young people with voter registration information.

NVRD 2025 stands as a testament to the power of partnership and bringing politics and democracy to spaces it doesn't normally reach.

## Democracy Cafès

2025 was a huge year for My Life My Say's signature engagement method: Democracy Cafès. Across 2025, the organisation delivered 29 Democracy Cafès, reaching everywhere from rural villages to urban city centres, providing access to a casual, youth-led environment to discuss politics and lived experiences to young people in their local cafès.

Alongside engaging young people in political discussion, 2025 saw a new focus on deepening the impact of Democracy Cafès outside of the session itself, innovating a new model for DeCafès.

Over two-thirds of Democracy Cafès in 2025 had a decision-maker in the room, listening to the conversations that were taking place: ensuring that young peoples' voices aren't just heard, but they're actually listened to. This year, My Life My Say partnered with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, multiple local councils, city mayors and more to deliver Democracy Cafès to directly inform policy- authentically placing young people at the heart of decisions made about them and ensuring that the impact of a DeCafè doesn't end when the conversations does.



# MY LIFE MY SAY ONLINE

2025 was a year that saw us focus on collaboration and leveraging My Life My Say's relationships on social media. This year we have collaborated with DCMS, Lisa Nandy MP, Ayamé, Sharon Gaffka, UK Youth and many more, reaching wider audiences and seeing our biggest growth online yet.

In light of 2025's biggest successes on social media coming in collaboration with the likes of Zack Polanski, Dr Vee Kativhu & Sophie Pender, in 2026 My Life My Say will look to double down on working with popular individuals in the creation of content for our channels in order to encourage further growth of the organisation.

Taking inspiration from platforms that have seen great success in recent years on social media with both podcast (eg. Diary of a CEO, The Rest is Politics) and unique format content (eg. SubwayTakes, The Career Ladder), the 2026 strategy for My Life My Say's



social media output places more emphasis on the creation of original content series in conjunction with activists and influencers as the primary route to engage young people in democracy.

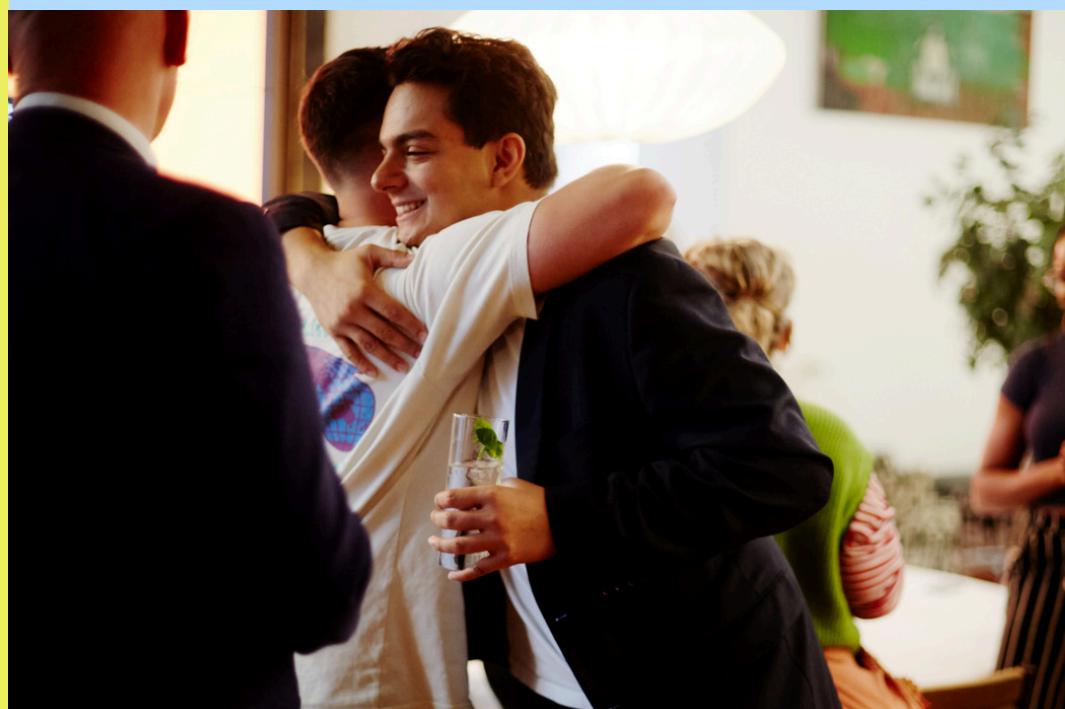


Words by Remi Olokun, Social Media Lead

# BUILDING IN PARTNERSHIP

At the core of everything My Life My Say does, is a network of incredible partnerships fuelling our mission to get every young person engaged in democracy. From grassroots organisations to international charities, leading brands and public bodies, My Life My Say's work in 2025 would not have had the scale, success or impact it did without the energy, enthusiasm and expertise these partners bring. In September 2025, My Life My Say and Freuds came together to host an event at Freuds HQ titled: Authenticity in Action: Connecting with young audiences. Having worked together

closely during the Give an X campaign in 2024, both MLMS and Freuds were keen to highlight how leading brands could benefit from collaboration with My Life My Say and the young people the organisation works with. My Life My Say were also able to share exclusive polling carried out with Opinium, which gave our brand partners that were in attendance a clear insight into the thoughts of the very young people they hope to connect with. The success of the evening and the conversations that were had leave us hopeful that we will be able to continue to build on these valuable partnerships in 2026.



A huge thank you to all of our partners who made 2025 the incredible year it was.

# PARTNERSHIPS

phf Paul Hamlyn Foundation

COMMUNITY FUND

J R Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust

CITY BRIDGE TRUST

BEN&JERRY'S

MISSION 44

lime

#iwill

UK YOUTH

FREUDS

MINISTRY

Hogan Lovells

FBB  
FOOTBALL BEYOND BORDERS

38Degrees

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

nus  
national union of students

UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH

CHATHAM HOUSE

YOUTH LEADS.

RISE  
COLLECTIVE

CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

PLATF FORM

SKATE CABAL

SB

ELECTHER

BADU

TONY'S CHOCOLONELY

BITE BACK

plexal

THE WICKERS CHARITY

NH  
YC

93

AND MANY MORE...



The Squad Leadership Programme and Ambassador network exists at the heart of everything My Life My Say does, equipping the next generation of young leaders with the skills, opportunities, and support to influence their communities and develop as leaders, whilst keeping the organisation's work in the service of young people.

Since early 2024, the programme has scaled from 10 Squad Leaders and 10 Ambassadors to 73 Squad Leaders (either completed or currently on the programme) and 35 Ambassadors, with the majority of this growth taking place in 2025.

The growth of the programme reflects an increasing demand in this space, and the ever-growing reach of the organisation, with the opportunity to join the programme finding new leaders across the UK this year. As we enter 2026, we're excited to continue building The Squad and cement it as the best youth political leadership programme in the UK, fuelling My Life My Say's work as it continues to expand across every region of the UK.



Words by Paris Habib,  
Squad Community  
Manager





# 630% INCREASE IN SQUAD LEADERS SINCE 2024

"I owe so many incredible opportunities to the programme, which have really built my confidence in the world of youth democratic participation and taught me the value of saying 'yes' even when it means stepping out of my comfort zone.

Most importantly, the community that [The Squad] has built is truly amazing and it was so heartwarming at NextGen Conference to see so many people who have genuinely become my friends through the Squad."



Quote from Corinne Baker,  
Squad Leader Sept 24 - Sept 25,  
Squad Ambassador

# SQUAD DAY 2025

2025 also saw the first Squad Day in the programme's history, bringing together 35 Squad Leaders from across the UK for a full day of skills-building, connection and collective purpose, hosted in partnership with The British Library. The day focused on equipping young leaders with the practical tools to strengthen their campaigns and communities, with sessions on public speaking, misinformation and community organising, alongside space for honest conversations and peer learning. Squad Leaders connected with experienced organisers and partners, gaining insight into how to turn passion into impact whilst navigating the challenges facing young people today.

The uniqueness of The Squad Leadership Programme is that it offers so much more than skills and opportunities; it fosters real community and connection between its participants, and Squad Day 2025 was evidence of this.

Beyond the sessions, Squad Day helped build a sense of belonging and momentum between its attendees, reinforcing the power of youth-led leadership and collaboration with peers, leaving Squad Leaders energised, confident, full of fresh ideas and perspectives and ready to drive change in their local communities.



The UK's biggest youth politics conference.

# NEXT GEN 2025

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, My Life My Say hosted NextGen 2025 at Ministry of Sound, bringing together over 800 young people for a day of politics, democracy, skillbuilding, community and connecting young people directly with decision makers. Set against a bleak backdrop of youth apathy (MLMS and Opinium polling in 2025 showed 63% of young people don't think major parties can improve their lives), NextGen 2025 sought to prove that despite record levels of disengagement, if you actually give young people the chance to show up and be heard, they do care about politics.

98% of surveyed attendees said they felt more positive about the future of politics and democracy as a result of attending, with a huge boost in political engagement levels before (attendees self-rated an average of 3.69 engagement levels before) and after (average of 4.53). NextGen 2025 was evidence that if you bring together the people young people actually want to hear from, and take them to a space where young people already are (in this case a nightclub), politics doesn't have to be boring or dull, it can be exciting, engaging, and most importantly authentic.





# THE BIGGEST NEXT GEN YET

NextGen 2025 sought to make the conference more engaging than ever before, focussing speakers and themes on culture, music, sports and social media, proving that everything truly is political. From world-famous DJs, to the leader of the Green Party Zack Polanski, to Lord Heseltine, the youngest MP in the House of Commons and the UK's most followed TikTok creator, Over 30 speakers took to the NextGen stage to share a common message: young people do care about politics, you're just not hearing them.

NextGen 2025 also featured a greater focus on connecting young people directly with decision makers, using the conference as an opportunity for attendees to directly shape the policies which affect them. Dedicated Democracy Cafès with DCMS and MHCLG allowed young people to inform the National Youth Strategy and Votes at 16, with 72% of attendees saying they had the chance to directly influence a decision maker at the conference.



2025 was the biggest NextGen to date, cementing it as the UK's biggest youth politics conference. We're so excited to continue to build and grow NextGen even bigger and better in 2026 and beyond.



Words by George Somers, Engagement and Impact Officer

# THE HEADLINES

800+ young people attended NextGen 2025.

41% attended from outside of southern England (including Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and outside of the UK).

98% felt more optimistic about politics and democracy as a result of attending.

97% say they'll attend NextGen 2026.



[NEXTGEN] GAVE YOUNG PEOPLE A PLATFORM TO DIRECTLY SHARE OUR VIEWS WITH MPS, POLICYMAKERS, AND CHARITY LEADERS. THE DISCUSSIONS FELT INTERACTIVE RATHER THAN TOKENISTIC, AS DECISION MAKERS ACTUALLY LISTENED. IT FELT EMPOWERING TO KNOW OUR INPUT COULD INFLUENCE FUTURE POLICIES.

NextGen 2025  
Attendee



# AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

We're pleased to say that 2025 saw My Life My Say's work to engage young people in democracy recognised through the receipt of the following awards:

- You Already Vote So Vote Campaign (with Ogilvy) won Gold for Social Good at the Effie Awards.
- You Already Vote So Vote Campaign (with Ogilvy) won Bronze for Innovative use of Influencers at Cannes.
- Give an X Campaign highly commended for Communications Campaign of the Year at Third Sector Awards.
- Give an X Campaign highly commended for Big Impact Award at Third Sector Awards.
- Give an X Campaign shortlisted for Breakthrough of the Year at Third Sector Awards.



## THANK YOU

A massive thank you to all who have supported our mission in 2025.

A huge thank you to everyone who has supported our work in 2025, as we continue the crucial mission to strengthen democracy. From the partners who take our work to new heights, the funders who make everything possible, our incredible board of trustees and staff delivering our mission day-to-day, and of course the young people, steering group members and squad leaders who are the powerhouse fuelling My Life My Say, ensuring our work remains in the service of young people. Together, we're building a democracy which truly listens to and empowers young people, and we can't wait to continue to do so in 2026.



Looking forward

## SHAPING THE FUTURE OF PARTICIPATION

Looking ahead to 2026

As we look ahead to 2026, we are acutely aware of My Life My Say's potential for impact in a space receiving increasing national attention. As one of the leading voices in youth democratic engagement, we have a unique opportunity (and responsibility) to shape the future of participation and ensure young people's voices are heard where it matters most.

2026 will be a year of intentional investment, growth, and strategic focus. Building on the development of our new strategy, we will prioritise strengthening our long-term sustainability while protecting our youth-led identity. This includes embedding strong

governance, operational resilience, and robust impact measurement across the organisation, alongside investing in the systems, skills, and partnerships needed to support sustainable growth and diversify our income.

By shifting from rapid delivery to future-focused planning, we will deepen our understanding of what works in youth engagement and create new pathways for young people to lead and influence change. As we step into this next chapter, we remain committed to leading with ambition and purpose, amplifying youth voice, strengthening participation, and shaping a more inclusive democracy for young people across the UK.



Words by Melisha John and Dan Lawes, co-CEOs

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