



Young People Test New Models of Big Education Conversations

CASE STUDY

The **Big Education Conversation Project Council** was set up to play a key role in developing and leading Big Education Conversations (BECs) in England. This diverse group of **25 young people, aged 13-19**, was supported by **Big Change, Leaders Unlocked and Youth Leads UK** to design, plan and run different models of Big Education Conversations in a range of settings. Project Council members developed activities and conversation prompts, carefully selected a range of participants to ensure a diverse exchange of perspectives - including students, parents, teachers, policymakers, and local councillors - and secured suitable venues such as schools, alternative provision settings, and community spaces.

The BECs were designed to foster open dialogue and encourage sharing of experiences and insights about what education is really for. They addressed big issues that matter to young people, such as mental health, exam stress, and curriculum relevance. One reflection was, "We are too focused on our future, never able to live in the moment," highlighting the pressure on students to achieve.

Participants expressed the need for a **more dynamic curriculum** that includes practical life skills and supports emotional well-being, and called for **empathy-driven behaviour systems** that acknowledge students' diverse needs.

The Project Council developed innovative approaches and resources to support other young people to lead BECs. This included the [Standing Debate guide](#), a format for engaging participants in discussion in an active and inclusive way. They also participated in workshops with the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) to consider how young people's perspectives can be embedded within education policy making. The [final policy report by IPPR](#) recommended greater use of participatory mechanisms, such as BECs, to include the views of parents, educators and young people in education policy development.

The Project Council's work has shown that BECs have the **potential to increase student agency** in education and drive changes that create a more supportive, responsive, and inclusive educational environment.

SNAPSHOT



WHO?

- **Organisers** The Big Education Conversation Project Council supported by Leaders Unlocked and Youth Leads UK.
- **Hosts:** Project Council Members (25 young people aged 13-19 from across England).
- **Participants:** Young people, educators, policymakers, community leaders, and parents.

WHERE?

- Various locations across England including London, Leicester, and Hull.

WHY?

- To promote youth-led dialogue and amplify young people's voices in education system change.
- To address critical issues such as mental health, exam stress, and curriculum relevance.
- To foster a more empathetic and supportive educational environment.

HOW MANY?

- Hundreds of attendees across multiple events, involving diverse groups of young people and community members.

"The Big Education Conversation offers an invaluable platform for students to voice their hopes and concerns, allowing us to listen and learn from their experiences."

Educator

LOOKING AHEAD:

"It was really fun to host a Big Education Conversation! We had teachers, students, parents and a local councillor sharing their opinions about education and their hopes for the future. Anyone can host a Big Education Conversation - the change starts with you!"

Amreece, Project Council Member