

Large-scale Intergenerational Big Education Conversations led by Young People in Blackpool

CASE STUDY



Right to Succeed (RtS), a national charity that supports communities to improve the lives of young people, has pioneered large-scale Big Education Conversations (BECs) in Blackpool to support youth leadership and multi-stakeholder engagement to drive long term improvements in education. The BECs were designed to address key local issues such as youth unemployment and the relevance of school curricula to life skills and employability.

In November 2022, a BEC was hosted at **Blackpool Tower** bringing together over 150 people including **over 100 diverse young people**, including those with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), and those with experience of elective home education (EHE), pupil referral units (PRU) or homelessness. **Blackpool Youth Council** led 15 group conversations, resulting in 114 postcards of ideas for big changes for the future of education. It was a chance for people in different parts of the system to step back and look at some of the big questions around education, opening a different kind of conversation between young people and adults about the scale and vision of change that was needed.

A second BEC was held at the end of 2023 at **Montgomery Academy**, and was attended by **Bridget Phillipson MP**, who was the Shadow Minister for Education at the time. It included over **60 people including 30 school pupils**. The involvement of a high-profile politician provided a unique platform for students from Blackpool to express their views directly to policymakers.

"There is SO much negative press about Blackpool it was powerful to talk about the positive changes being driven in Blackpool and to have a good news story to tell". Sarah Smith, Programmes Director, Right To Succeed

The Blackpool BECs have driven positive change over the past two years. Youth Advisors from NEET backgrounds now play active roles on influential boards like the Blackpool Education Improvement Board and the Employment and Skills Board, and have contributed evidence to a House of Lords Select Committee on education. Schools are collaborating more with young people, parents, and employers to co-design careers plans and enhance curricula, improving career readiness and practical skills. This work builds on insights from the BECs which highlighted the need for curriculum reform, stronger school relationships, and better life skills support.

SNAPSHOT

WHO?

- **Organisers:** Right to Succeed, a national charity focused on system change in education.
- **Hosts:** Youth Advisors and Blackpool Youth Council.
- **Participants:** Young people, parents, headteachers, teachers, community members, employers, and policymakers.

WHERE?

- The first took place at Blackpool's iconic landmark, the Blackpool Tower and the second at a secondary school, Montgomery Academy.

WHY?

- To drive systemic change in education through youth leadership and community engagement.
- To address issues such as youth unemployment and the relevance of school curricula to life skills and employability.

HOW MANY?

- Over 200 attendees across two large-scale events, including over 10 young people at the 2022 BEC and 64 participants at the 2023 event.

"Blackpool's Big Education Conversation was an inspiring day for everyone involved and it was great to see young people taking the lead. It's the responsibility of the adults in the room to listen and I look forward to hearing about follow up action that the Blackpool Education Improvement Board will take."

Kath Benson, Mayor of Blackpool Council

LOOKING AHEAD:

Blackpool has received funding to develop an employment-focused 'Connected Curriculum' and a town-wide support framework for young people. With intergenerational collaboration at its core, Youth Advisors will co-create a Leadership Blueprint, co-chair the Employment & Skills Board, and shape programme workstreams.