

Northern Gas Networks

Young Innovators Council



Session 3: Education and awareness strategy

April 2026

Facilitated and written by Solutions for the Planet

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1. Executive Summary

Session 3 of Northern Gas Network's (NGN) Youth Insights Panel (YIC) explored what meaningful education and awareness activity looks like from a young person's perspective, particularly in the context of unequal access to opportunity across different geographies. The panellists were clear and thoughtful in identifying both what businesses should prioritise in their education topics and how those activities should be delivered to achieve real impact.

With additional input from an external witness from Business in the Community, the session began by highlighting that access to opportunity is uneven, shaped by factors such as where you live (e.g., urban vs rural), the school you attend, confidence levels, family knowledge of career pathways, and whether information is made visible and relatable. Many panellists felt that a lack of information holds young people back, and indicated that this can often lead to a lack of ambition and confidence - confidence appears critical. The panel described confidence as something influenced by who supports them, how often they encounter opportunities, and whether they feel those opportunities are "meant for people like them".

The young people also stressed that being informed still matters, even when they do not directly influence decisions. As has been heard consistently from the panel, transparent, honest communication about industries, future plans and challenges was seen as essential for trust and long-term engagement.

When feeding back from their deep-dive breakout discussions, the panel highlighted NGN's key education and awareness priorities as: who NGN are, region-specific career opportunities, the transition to net zero, energy affordability, and STEM pathways. They emphasised that messaging should adapt with age—starting broad and accessible, and becoming more specific and practical as audiences grow older.

The panel consistently favoured depth over one-off activity. The most impactful outreach, in their view, is long-term and relationship-based. For example, they mentioned continued and growing partnerships with schools and communities rather than single visits, because trust grows when the same organisation shows up repeatedly and when engagement feels genuine rather than performative.

They clearly recognised that some places have fewer opportunities and less exposure to employers. They felt that targeting outreach based on need is right in principle, but also clearly reiterated the complexity of this question. Most supported a greater share of activity in lower-opportunity ("cold spot") areas, seeing this as a way to rebalance opportunity rather than create unfair advantage - though views did vary throughout the breakout rooms. Crucially, the panel said that targeting only works if the activity itself is right for those places. They were wary of viewing access to opportunity as something still and constant, responding to the fact that deprivation and access can vary within the same city or region and change over time.

Throughout the session, the YIC valued being asked these questions at an early stage and repeatedly highlighted the importance of being listened to. They see NGN as having the potential to be a trusted, visible and long-term partner through their education and awareness strategy. The strongest message is that fairness is not about equal distribution of activity, but about recognising unequal starting points and acting intentionally to reduce them through clarity, confidence-building and sustained engagement.

2. Overview of session

Background to the Young Innovators Council

2026 is the sixth year of Northern Gas Networks' Young Innovators Council (YIC). The YIC continue to be the voice of young people at Northern Gas Networks, and the business ensures that these young people's thoughts and opinions are put at the heart of decision making.

This year started with 42 YIC panellists, 15 of whom are continuing from last year and the remaining 27 are new to the YIC. This balance of retention and renewal is positive, as a number of long-standing members from previous years have outgrown the age group for this panel. It ensures sustained engagement with youth voice and relevance to the current climate and their unique perceptions. 3 members have since given up their places on the panel so that the number is currently 39 young people.

Background to the Session

NGN delivers a wide range of education and awareness activities across all age groups, from KS1 pupils right through to adults, covering topics from net zero to the Priority Services Register. As the business is developing an education and awareness strategy, it is exploring how its initiatives contribute to community impact, opportunities and workforce resilience. It wants to map and understand its social impact, particularly in areas of high deprivation and low skills across the North East of England.

This includes questioning whether activity should follow data-led geographical targeting and how fairness, inclusion and positive outcomes can be measured. This session aims to help NGN to reflect on where it should focus its time, investment and volunteering efforts. Based on the young people's perspectives, it will consider what NGN's role in local communities should be and what NGN should be educating and raising awareness about going forward.

YIC 2026 Session 3: Education and awareness strategy

Date and time: Wednesday 22nd April, 5:15 - 7:00pm

People involved: 2 S4TP facilitators, 5 NGN facilitators, 1 NGN witness, 1 external witness, 2 observers

Panel attendance: 26

Apologies: 12

Objectives:

- Young people explore how access to opportunities varies across the UK.
- Identify which types of activities genuinely make a difference to young people.
- Understand how impact changes depending on where activities are delivered.
- Gather views on whether focusing work in lower-opportunity areas is the right approach.
- Generate clear, practical insights to help NGN prioritise where and how to invest for maximum impact.

Pre-work

- **READ:** the Overview and Introduction (only pages 1-3!) of this "What is Social Mobility?" report written by the Sutton Trust: <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/What-is-Social-Mobility.pdf>
 - Please feel free to explore the rest of the report as well, but it's a long one!
- **EXPLORE:** Find out about different levels of access to opportunity for young people around the country using this Opportunity Index Map: [Opportunity Index Interactive Map - The Sutton Trust](#)
- **RESEARCH** a business or organisation that you believe does meaningful education outreach in the community, whether that's very local to you, across a region, or around the country.

Agenda

5:15	Arrival
5:20	Welcome, "You said... so we...", session framing
5:32	Pre-work reflection: examples of meaningful business outreach. Group discussion.
5:43	External expert witness presentation: Business In The Community
5:52	Zoom whiteboard: impactful engagement for young people
6:03	NGN expert witness presentation: education and awareness strategy plans
6:12	Breakout rooms: biggest impact
6:38	Feedback from the breakout rooms
6:47	Plenary discussion
7:00	Wrap up, feedback form and finish.

3. Attendees

Young Innovators Council

Aarshiya
Akorede
Akshat
Alice
Anna
Ashford
Divya
Dylan
Ethan
Ifza
Ismail
Jamari
Joe

Josie
Kat
Manahil
Mojisola
Natalya
Nora
Orla
Sophia
Toby
Vallerie
William
Zahra
Zinedine

Solutions for the Planet

Claire Fitton
Fran Isherwood

Youth Insights Programme Manager
Youth Insights Programme Coordinator (Maternity)

Northern Gas Networks

Emma Holman
Hannah Jewison
Jarred Knot
Alex Lawson
Hollie Scott
Kati Sexton
Jenny Wilkinson

Sustainability Reporting Lead
Business Sustainability Lead
Project Manager – Energy Futures
Net Zero Educator
Engagement Coordinator
Customer Care Officer
Stakeholder Lead

External witness

Ola Kolada

Employment & Skills Campaign Director,
Business in the Community

Observers

Carole Pitkeathley
Anisha Poudel

NGN's Independent Stakeholder Group
NGN's Independent Stakeholder Group

4. Key Discussion Points

You said... so we're...

As ever, an invaluable part of the sessions and panel facilitation is that the young people hear directly from NGN about how their insights are influencing business decision-making. Hollie Scott, Engagement Coordinator at NGN, explained that the YIC's Session 2 insights highlighted the importance of clear, honest engagement around the East Coast Hydrogen (ECH) project, recognising that while it focuses on industry, it will also impact local communities, jobs, and the environment.

In response, NGN is focusing on clear, transparent engagement around ECH. It will ensure people are kept informed throughout the project's development, even where decisions cannot be directly influenced, and that information is accessible, honest, and relevant to future generations. This will especially apply to making opportunities visible, being realistic about expectations around the project's progress, and highlighting any environmental impact, and the potential impacts on local families and communities as the project develops.

Pre-work reflections

Organisation	Focus of outreach	Why that is meaningful to the YIC
Sutton Trust	Widening access to higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online platform with high-quality resources increase awareness of university and work experience opportunities. • Targeted especially more disadvantaged areas.
IntoUniversity	Academic support & careers guidance, in particular for YP from disadvantaged backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local learning centres and sustained support benefit young people from lower-income backgrounds. • Structured programmes, e.g., FOCUS programme; long term engagement, continuously working with young children to help them academically. • Education's kind of the bedrock of everything - not saying you need to go to university to do well in life, but helping people who might not have a lot of resources at their disposal, financially or in terms of good schooling, it gives them a stable solid foundation for things to do later in life, no matter what they end up doing.
The JJ Effect	School talks on lived experience of knife crime	Personal stories are highly impactful to young people.
Inspira (Cumbria)	Careers advice for GCSE students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CV and interview skills are useful. • Year 10 is a useful time for contact, people are already getting jobs but not yet in exams.

Pre-work reflections continued

Organisation	Focus of outreach	Why that is meaningful to the YIC
Codswallop CIC	Community cohesion through arts	Creative activities help bring communities together and build confidence.
British Red Cross	CPR, first aid training & teaching resources	Practical life skills and accessible resources.
EthnoSTEMM	STEM support & peer learning	Student-run, engaging, and effective at supporting academic progression.
CATCH (Leeds)	Youth activities, sports, first aid	Community-based provision supports wellbeing and practical skills.
PwC Schools Programme	Paid work experience & contextual recruitment	Targeted programmes can reduce barriers and support fair access to careers.
Reflection Room Therapy (Hartlepool)	Free youth mental health support	Mental health support is vital for confidence, identity, and overcoming trauma.
Shaw Trust	Disability awareness & employment	Highlights the link between mental health, disability, and long-term job prospects.
St John Ambulance	Youth groups, NHS Cadets, volunteering	Strong opportunities for skills development and nationwide engagement.
Mountain Rescue	First aid & mountaineering education	Combines valuable emergency and outdoor skills with what actually interests that group of young people.
Social Mobility Foundation	Supporting disadvantaged young people	Long-term support is key to improving access and social mobility.
Community Learning Partnerships	Helps disadvantaged adults/families to get an education.	Free courses helping families in deprived areas build confidence, improve employment prospects, integrate into local life and ultimately enhance social mobility.

The pre-work reflections show that the young people of the YIC find value in opportunities that have a real, lasting impact on their futures. They place importance on gaining practical skills, accessing fair routes into education and employment, and receiving long-term support rather than short-term interventions. Mental health, community connection, and learning from authentic, lived experiences also emerged as key factors that make outreach from business meaningful and engaging.

External witness presentation

The Young Innovators Council heard from an expert witness from Business in the Community to help frame the discussions in this session. Ola Kolada is Employment & Skills Campaign Director at BITC. He explained the concept of “cold spots” as areas where young people face lower access to education, jobs and life opportunities due to wider deprivation. It was emphasised that where a young person lives can significantly affect their education, career outcomes and long-term prospects, and that this inequality is not evenly distributed. Ola also highlighted the role businesses can play alongside education and government in creating fairer access to opportunities, sharing examples of employers supporting skills development, apprenticeships and engagement with both young people and their families.

The expert witness input centred on social mobility, equal opportunity, and the need for businesses to intentionally invest in young people and places with greater need. This provided a clear foundation for the panel to explore what meaningful engagement could look like in these contexts, grounded in a more informed understanding of the challenges and opportunities.

Whiteboard activity: impactful engagement for young people

The YIC were invited to contribute to a live whiteboard, taking time to reflect individually on:

- What factors have the biggest impact on young people’s future opportunities, and why?
- How will a business like NGN know if they’re having meaningful impact?

What factors have the biggest impact on young people’s future opportunities, and why?

Confidence and mindset

Confidence/mindset: I think this because it allows young people to use opportunities given to them better and learn more from their experiences.

The biggest impact is the confidence/outgoing mindset, the fear of grabbing that opportunity, because they might also want to study with their friends, be trapped in their comfort zone.

Motivation to actually make a positive impact on their life and learn the skills and have the education needed to actually accomplish those opportunities.

Most people think about being "perfect" which wavers their confidence to express themselves as they think that they are not "perfect".

Confidence because even when opportunities exist young people need the confidence to apply, speak up and imagine themselves in certain careers. People with low confidence can block progression as much as low attainment.

Your confidence has a big impact as you may be passed up on opportunities for not seeming like a 'people person' or like you have anything to say.

What factors have the biggest impact on young people's future opportunities, and why?
[continued]

Socioeconomic barriers

Parental income might affect access to opportunities.

Living conditions have a large impact on perception of people from the place. House prices, crime rates.

Cultural/ material deprivation.

I think stereotypes play a large role in young people's opportunities. Both in teenagers being labelled as lazy due to technology and therefore businesses not offering such opportunities, or the stereotype of a lack of opportunities which may discourage young people from searching and actually accessing useful experiences.

Having a strong support system at home, having parents who can relate to your plans for the future can really help guiding you onto the right path.

Networks - the connections a person has contributes to the opportunities they have.

Not living in areas with better schools, transport links, and job opportunities decreases chances of success. Some areas have fewer opportunities or role models.

Education and networking

State or privately educated.

Unless your school provides you with the option to put yourself out there, you never have to. So you don't build the skills for when you do have to.

Education, the experiences you have and how you are supported has a big impact.

School and education, because without the knowledge and documents, most jobs won't be able to accept you.

The university you go to, networks, confidence.

Schools can help students with building confidence in themselves so that they can the mindset to move themselves in their desired direction, career wise.

The schools, as they will have knock on effects improving your confidence and access to skills.

Your school's connections to other businesses and the opportunities they share to you.

What factors have the biggest impact on young people's future opportunities, and why?
[continued]

Access to opportunities, awareness or location

External opportunities.

Area of UK you're from e.g. rural or large city - fewer opportunities in rural communities.

Where you live: as a city dweller I'm not hugely affected but the options in the countryside are really limited.

Access to information and technology, libraries etc.

Lack of awareness of opportunities.

Knowing what opportunities are available (e.g. career options + work experience), and who to ask for help + advice, discourages people from even trying in the first place.

Education and access to meaningful opportunities: without knowing what's going on both in the background and foreground, they can't know or experience things that help their futures.

Access to opportunities/networking, location, background, financial situation, access to career opportunities that are not publicly advertised.

Access to opportunities that will provide people with skills, education and allow their voices to be heard.

Access to technology as our community is becoming more and more reliant on interconnection/globalisation.

Awareness of different programs and career paths.

Transportation can be a big factor as some things require travelling.

Where someone lives is quite important because it can affect access to good schools, jobs and transport.

I think the awareness they have on opportunities, because some aren't well known.

Access to opportunities (e.g. public speaking, networking events, career fairs, work experience etc.) - nowadays it's not just academic ability that determines success, but also workplace skills and experiences that help you get a job and move up the career ladder.

Access to opportunities, awareness or location [continued]

I think access to opportunities because without it you have no experience, and things like public speaking would feel much more intimidating.

I think the biggest factors are where you grow up, your education and you general access to support and networks. For example people in cold spot areas often have fewer opportunities.

Awareness is also quite big because many young people are not aware about the opportunities available.

Across the responses, the young people identified a number of recurring factors that they believe have the greatest impact on future opportunities:

- Confidence and mindset were repeatedly highlighted. Young people said that even when opportunities exist, low confidence, fear of failure, or staying in a comfort zone can prevent participation.
- Background and support systems, including parental income, home support and social networks, shape access to information, resources and encouragement.
- Education and schools play a major role, particularly through the quality of education, the support provided, and schools' connections to employers and external opportunities.
- Access and awareness of opportunities were mentioned most frequently. Young people felt that many opportunities exist but are not visible, well explained, or easy to find, which discourages people from applying or engaging.
- Where you live matters significantly. Young people noted stark differences between urban and rural areas, with rural communities having fewer opportunities, weaker transport links and limited exposure to employers.

The YIC clearly demonstrated that they view opportunity as a combination of visibility, confidence, place and support, not just ambition or academic ability. This suggests that success for any outreach will depend not only on what opportunities are offered, but how visible, accessible and confidence-building they are; particularly for young people in lower-opportunity areas.

How will a business like NGN know if they're having meaningful impact?

The YIC offered clear insights into how NGN should measure their impact on the young people they outreach to through their education and awareness strategy. The common theme being that meaningful impact goes beyond headline numbers and requires evidence of real change over time. While participation data was seen as useful, it was viewed as insufficient on its own.

They suggested that businesses should:

- Actively ask young people for feedback, through surveys, conversations, group interviews and direct questions.
- Track long-term outcomes, such as confidence, skills, motivation, clearer career pathways and progression into education, training or work.
- Return to the same schools, communities and individuals to understand change over time rather than treating engagement as one-off.
- Use a mix of qualitative and quantitative evidence, including before-and-after comparisons.
- Look for signs of increased engagement, such as more young people attending activities, speaking up, responding to surveys or continuing involvement.
- Measure progression, including interest or applications to STEM subjects, apprenticeships or work experience.
- Create engaging, two-way feedback methods, rather than generic or “boring” feedback forms.
- Monitor wider signals of impact, such as improved perceptions of places, word-of-mouth, or increased visibility and discussion.

The panellists framed meaningful impact as something that should be felt by individuals and communities over time, not just recorded administratively. This means that they expect businesses to measure impact in ways that are human, ongoing and responsive, not just numerical.

Breakout rooms

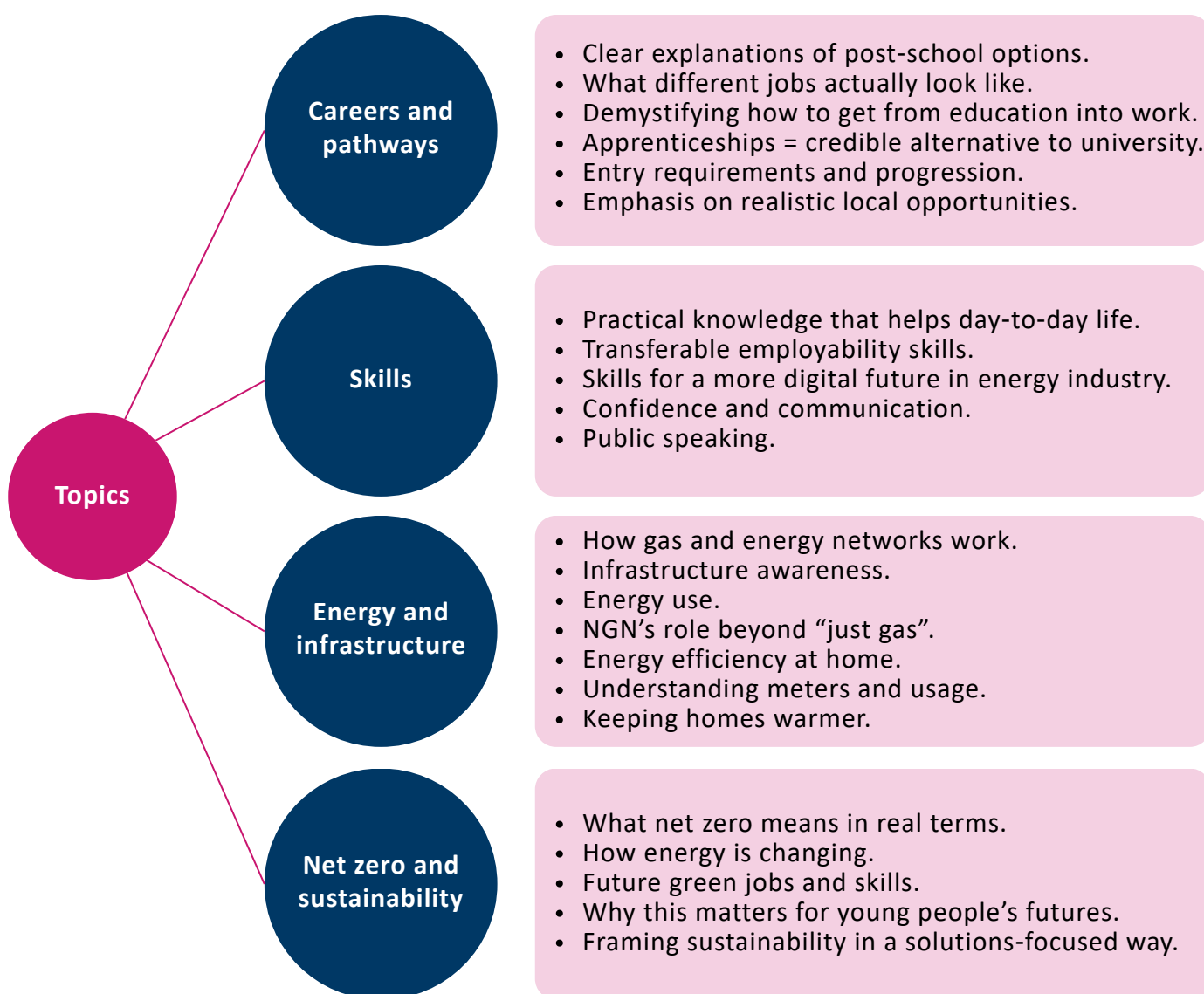
Before moving into breakout rooms for more detailed discussions, the YIC heard from NGN's expert witnesses, Hannah Jewison, Business Sustainability Lead at NGN. Hannah covered a background to NGN's education and awareness strategy, including:

- What NGN currently delivers (CO, PSR, net zero, education).
- Why they are developing a strategy.
- The idea of focusing 50% of NGN's outreach in cold spots.
- Key decisions the business is currently exploring.

This was important context for the YIC panellists, as it helped to explain why the business is coming to them with a strategy that is in its early stages. Hannah's input reiterated that the ideas for the education and awareness strategy are very much still in development, and so hearing from the YIC at this point helps to inform these discussions.

The young people then moved into breakout rooms to explore the questions:

1. What topics should NGN be educating on (in addition to those they HAVE to, dictated by Ofgem)?



2. What kind of outreach do you think would create the biggest impact for young people who are living in cold spots?

Coming to classrooms, even partnering with schools so that you can build a relationship.

Visit schools more than once, so that well people don't forget about it.

Having STEM and net zero activities like hydrogen experiments, engineering challenges or workshops.

Teaching people practical skills; how to read metres or how to keep houses warmer.

Setting up community groups, having a hub that people can come to.

There should be opportunities online as well as in person.

Events, workshops that you can sign up for that you can then also put on your CV for experience.

Case studies about people from the area or in similar circumstances who ended up successful can be quite inspirational.

The resounding message from the YIC was that any and all outreach should be sustained, and relationship-based instead one-off interventions, particularly in areas with fewer opportunities. They identified the most impactful approaches to be:

- Long-term partnerships with schools and communities
 - Building trust so young people feel comfortable asking questions.
 - Embedding content into existing structures (e.g. careers time, assemblies, curriculum-linked sessions).
- Hands-on, engaging activities
 - Engineering and STEM workshops (e.g. hydrogen experiments, practical challenges).
 - Interactive sessions that make abstract concepts tangible.
 - Activities that can be added to CVs or personal statements.
- Lived experience and role models
 - Hearing real stories from people “like them” who have progressed into careers.
 - First-hand accounts seen as more trustworthy and inspiring than purely corporate messaging.
- Hybrid and accessible delivery
- Community-based and informal routes
 - Outreach beyond schools, working with community hubs, youth groups, sports clubs and local organisations, and NEET.
 - Use of social media and digital platforms to reach young audiences where they are.

3. Do you think it's appropriate to focus 50% of NGN's outreach activities in cold spot regions, even though they only cover some of the network? Is this approach fair?

This question prompted the most debate, perhaps unsurprisingly given that it proves a complex question for adults within businesses as well.

Areas of agreement:

- There was broad support for prioritising cold spots due to socioeconomic inequality and lack of access to opportunities.
- Participants widely acknowledged that rural and deprived areas are often overlooked in favour of cities.
- Most felt that targeted outreach such as that described by NGN does help level the playing field, rather than giving unfair advantage.

Differences in opinion

- Some felt 50% is appropriate as a maximum, provided it reflects population size and need.
- Others argued for more than 50% in cold spots (e.g. 60/40), on the basis that unequal starting points justify unequal resource allocation.
- A few voices felt outreach should be proportional to population size to avoid under-serving urban areas where demand is also high.

The YIC acknowledged first and foremost that it is a 'delicate balance', reiterating their earlier comments that these are changeable, fluctuating living situations. If anything, they want NGN to avoid an overly rigid percentage, remaining flexible and responsive to those changes.

Across the breakout rooms the young people stressed that 'fairness' shouldn't be framed as equal treatment, but as equitable impact. This will ensure that outreach in non-cold-spot areas is never significantly diluted because of what might look good on paper.

5. Key Reflections for Northern Gas Networks

Key reflections on **where** NGN could target their education and awareness outreach:

- The YIC clearly understood that where you live significantly affects access to opportunities. NGN should shape targeted, place-based outreach approaches to rebalance access rather than treat all areas the same.
- Affordability and fairness is more important now than ever. NGN could have meaningful impact by educating on how energy transitions and sustainability affect household costs, particularly for those from lower-income backgrounds.
- When reflecting on impact, the YIC stressed that reach alone does not equal success. NGN should look for evidence of:
 - Improved confidence and motivation.
 - Clearer understanding of future options.
 - Progression into further education, training or work.
 - Continued engagement and willingness to participate.
- A blended approach - prioritising cold spots while remaining responsive to need, geography, and population - was seen as the fairest and most effective model.

Key reflections on **what** NGN could educate and raise awareness around:

1. The YIC support an approach where education content changes with age and stage:
 - a. Broad, engaging topics such as sustainability and energy futures for younger ages.
 - b. Increasingly practical and career-focused content as young people get older.
2. Being able to clearly see pathways rather than just abstract ideas helps the young people make informed decisions about education, training and employment.
3. Across the session, the YIC asked for a clearer understanding of:
 - Apprenticeships and vocational routes.
 - Corporate and non-engineering roles.
 - How education links to real jobs.
4. Real examples, lived experience and case studies are especially powerful in making careers feel believable and attainable.
5. Transferable life and employability skills should be embedded into this careers work, e.g., interview skills, CVs, communication, teamwork and confidence-building.
6. The YIC still want to see net zero and sustainability explained in practical, positive terms, focusing on what change looks like in real life and how it affects current and future generations.
7. Affordability and fairness: how energy transitions and sustainability affect household costs, particularly for those from lower-income backgrounds.

Key reflections on **how** NGN could shape their education and awareness outreach:

1. Education works best when it is progressive and relevant.
2. Long-term, relationship-based outreach with communities as well as schools has the greatest impact.
3. Hands-on activities, workshops, STEM challenges and opportunities that build CVs were seen as particularly effective, especially when combined with trusted, familiar voices rather than unfamiliar one-time visitors.
4. Impact should be assessed by speaking to young people themselves, preferably in person or through open, conversational formats, not just standardised forms.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1: 'You said... so we're' slides from the Session.

East Coast Hydrogen [5 mins]



You said...

You said that you'd like to know about anything that affects your future in terms of jobs, apprenticeships, and long-term life choices.

So we're ...

Ensuring that we make the job opportunities created by East Coast Hydrogen visible.



East Coast Hydrogen



You said...

That you would like NGN to commit to clear, honest, and continuous communication.

So we're ...

We will ensure our communications are clear and the project is explained in the simplest terms, without the use of acronyms or technical terms.



East Coast Hydrogen



You said...

That the environmental impact was a major hook, referencing the improvement to carbon emissions and how it helps future generation to live more sustainably.

So we're ...

We will ensure our communication channels include environmental benefits and will assess the environmental impact of the project as it progresses.



Appendix 2: full details of whiteboard activity responses ‘How will a business like NGN know if they’re having meaningful impact?’

I think NGN will know if they’re successful because the idea of the place will change as non locals will hear about the place and see it as a destination or a place to live rather than not knowing it.
The number of people in poverty before and after the intervention of NGN.
They could measure trends on engagements, it would give them an insight on what’s not working and what is.
Setting out a public response, e.g., a poll or interactive task like a quiz to make it engaging, but also is useful and could get both sides to learn new things about the other. This could include what the people want (would you rather?) and the people would know what you offer and explore. But not a feedback sheet, those are typical and to be honest quite boring to do.
A bit of a far stretch, but usually companies that have a good, useful goal tend to get a lot of media traction and more people openly talking about it, so perhaps checking social media can help, or even asking general public.
A business like NGN will know if they are having a meaningful impact through more engagement. More people replying to surveys, more people speaking up and attending meetings
Return to same schools maybe and speak to people.
Regular check in helpline, so that people can always be contacted if needed.
Businesses could measure their outreach by going back to the places and people they helped (e.g., schools) and asking/surveying who used their guidance.
Could track individual progress.
By comparing numerical or qualitative figures to see their progression.
They could ask how it has affected that person or their family, or just look for feedback in general. Trying to connect with the community and stuff like that.
Asking people personally and having conversations with young people (preferably in-person) to learn more about their thoughts and feelings.
Group interviews with young people and open questions.

Appendix 2: *[continued]*

<p>I think a business like NGN will know they've had a meaningful impact if they focus on long term change, not just the amount of people they reach. I think it's more than the statistics and more about the skills, confidence and clearer pathways into education.</p>
<p>A business will be able to tell if they're having an impact if they can show long term outcomes.</p>
<p>They can see if their having a meaningful impact by looking at the outcome.</p>
<p>Schools can help students with building confidence in themselves so that they can the mindset to move themselves in their desired direction, career wise.</p>
<p>Do a before + after interview session - see how much people's confidence, motivation and access to opportunities had progressed, how they feel more at ease about their career prospects + ambitions.</p>
<p>Progression, an increase in applications to STEM subjects, apprenticeships, or work experience programmes.</p>
<p>NGN should ask questions about whether their programmes improved confidence, skills or future goals.They can also measure things like how many people took part , how many continues into education or jobs, and whether participants felt the experience was useful.</p>
<p>Feedback surveys and asking individuals for their opinions.</p>
<p>Administering mass questionnaires or Likert scales will help NGN understand people's opinions or strengths of opinions about their level of contribution. This would be an easy method to analyse and establish general trends as well as answers could be categorised due to it gathering numerical/quantitative data. This could be administered through various social media outlets to increase its reach.</p>
<p>They could measure impact by surveying young people and asking them what they think directly.</p>
<p>Feedback from young people getting them to answer surveys to see if they had an impact they could ask has their situation improved compared to similar students.</p>

Appendix 3: full details of plenary Q&A activity

Questions for Ola Kolade from Business In the Community

Question: Are there companies that you specifically find apprenticeship and job opportunities with, or do you talk to the young person about what they want and then find the company that works for them?

Ola's response: We predominantly talk to the businesses about the types of apprenticeship opportunities they offer and then we encourage them to use partner organisations to make sure that young people know those opportunities exist. Because quite often, some young people might not, so it's mainly making sure that all types of young people are aware that those opportunities are live.

Question: You were talking about spreading awareness of different careers; how would you go about spreading awareness of careers to people who might not have even heard of the careers yet?

Ola's response: What I would say is for businesses to start from what they know. I think a part of it is how businesses invite young people into their spaces through-project based exercises. You can give young people a challenge and they have co-working teams to resolve that. It gets them thinking about the different skills you need. The feedback they use is actually you're really good at communication... or perhaps problem solving is what you're good at, we might have someone who works in our digital or our tech space. So I think it's through those kind of exercises.

The other thing I'll say is, it's how do you meet different communities where they are. Some businesses are doing quite innovative things like partnering with folk football clubs. If there's a young person who has dropped out of school, isn't really working at the moment - it's about identifying what young people currently do. How can a business be at a football stadium during the match, actually talking about the opportunities that that they have? So I think it's a mixture. Of businesses bringing people into their workplaces, but also kind of going out and connecting with young people where they are.

Question: How do you plan on actively engaging young people and keeping them engaged?

Ola's response: Most of our work is mainly done through businesses. What we say to businesses is it's a great opportunity to engage young people of a specific age group, but also it's thinking outside the box. There's a programme called 'See it, be it', for example. What it seeks to do is, whilst a young person's at school from Year 7 to Year 11 they have opportunities to talk to employers right through education - because we know when that happens, young people are less likely to become unemployed or to drop out of school. So in my view, every young person should have the opportunity to connect with an employer throughout their school life. If I was to ask you [YIC] how many times did an employer come to talk to you at school, or how many times did you connect with an employer, I can imagine the numbers wouldn't be that great. So it's about how do we ensure that young people have work experience. And it's not just a 2-week thing you do in Year 10. But actually it's something you do consistently throughout your education, and that should help with engagement even post-school as well.

Questions for Northern Gas Networks

Question: What barriers do you think young people have to face when trying to enter your into industry?

NGN response: Within our industry, there are so many different jobs. A big group of our workforce is out doing physical engineering, digging holes. At the same time there's the back office function, accountancy, legal, human resources, communications and so on. We're diversifying all the time; it's becoming cyber security, robotics, engineering. I think the biggest barrier we've got is the perception of being a gas industry and what is its future. What is the future of energy, and fossil fuels and cleaner, greener energy and power. There's still a bit of uncertainty. How do we decarbonize and what is net zero? There's still a bit of scepticism about whether we will still exist, what's the longevity of a career in the energy industry and what is that career?

Question: How do you use technology in the gas industry?

NGN response: It depends on the process that we're undertaking. We do use a piece of equipment like using a big metal stick to put a hole into the ground to find a gas leak. But then we also do use robotics. We've used gas detection dogs in the past. We've used a variety of different technologies to find gas leaks.

We also do quite a lot of pressure management: so actually being at the face of the pipe work, the above ground installations; but we also do online pressure management through the smart systems that we utilise as well as the technology we use to monitor different pipes. We're using different sensors inside pipes so we can monitor the pressures.

We're always leveraging what is currently existing. We do quite a lot of different work in enabling future technology and working with different parts of the industry. We also work closely with electric companies to understand what they're doing. We're all energy, we all want to share what we're doing as best practises. So it's an ever evolving space.

Question: Are there any jobs involving coding and computer science and digitalisation?

NGN response: The new jobs and new skills that are emerging, we need to expand and grow our data engineering, coding, analysis teams. It's definitely what our IT and cybersecurity team are certainly looking at.

We also have real IT Wizards who work to help make sure all our geographical mapping systems are accurate and our open data portal. So it it's an area in the business that is only going to grow.

This is where there's areas that we struggle because you have Sky, you've got Google... are the wages are bigger, are they more interesting, are they fancy? There's a bit of an image. It's probably a really good area we could do a bit more to partner with the the universities to create that flow into the business to create opportunities.

Questions for Northern Gas Networks [continued]

Question: Is there any kind of education background that NGN is looking for? Do you think it's a broad field where people who might be polar opposites could still work in the same kind of category?

NGN response: I think there's some very diverse viewpoints within NGN and there's a whole range of educational backgrounds. For example, our CEO started as an apprentice. So you definitely don't have to have degrees. You don't have to have a million qualifications to work with us. For example within my team, the sustainability team, a couple of us do have degrees - but my degree is in zoology, someone I work with has a degree in geology. There are also a lot of very different views. It's a place where a conversation about net zero can bring out very polar opposite views within the office, but that just adds to the fun. Diversity brings in different perspectives. One of our health and safety team was in the RAF and was in Afghanistan - that lived experience and being able to apply lived experience to the current situation. It really helps you understand communities and customers in different perspectives, and to make decisions. The more differences we have encourages really healthy discussion and debate and helps us make great decisions - and this is exactly why this group [YIC] is absolutely magnificent at helping us understand different perspectives.

Question: What apprenticeships or work experience opportunities do you offer?

NGN response: We do a yearly intake for apprenticeships. These roles range from operational, and in office. Work experience is still very new, and was trialled last summer, with a new roll out this coming summer. Each year a number of apprentices join our business across a variety of roles, from engineering and innovation, to finance and business administration:
<https://careers.northerngasnetworks.co.uk/>

Question: How do you apply for work experience?

NGN response: We've now got a dedicated email address for all work experience enquiries to go to: NGNWorkexperience@northerngas.co.uk

Question: Are there any chemists on site? Would they be part of the work experience scheme?

NGN response: Yes we do use Chemists to understand the quality of our gas, it's CV value, the amount of odorant in the gas. We also use chemists for some of our environmental projects, such as when we are taking down our big gas holders we have to assess whether the soil/water, etc. contained in them is contaminated. We would use a chemist consultancy for this usually, so we'd collect samples and send them off for testing!

Question from S4TP for the YIC

Question: Do we think young people are all thinking that long term at this point, when it comes to their career choices?

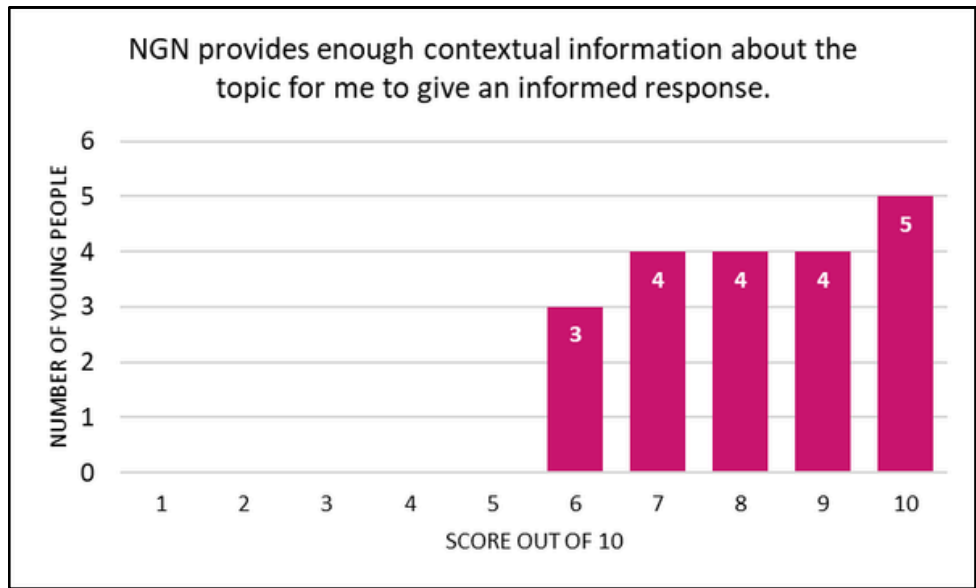
YIC response: Most young people don't think far ahead about careers yet, mainly because of limited experience and guidance. A lot of schools don't dig deeper into the career choices, mostly the most common ones like doctors, dentist, nurse - I want to work in the airport industry but they don't talk about that.

YIC response: I think they are thinking long term, especially with the uprise in sustainability engineering. I think in the future there will be a larger demand for sustainable innovation, especially with climate change and the goal of net zero. I think young people will expect a lot of work and high salary in this sector.

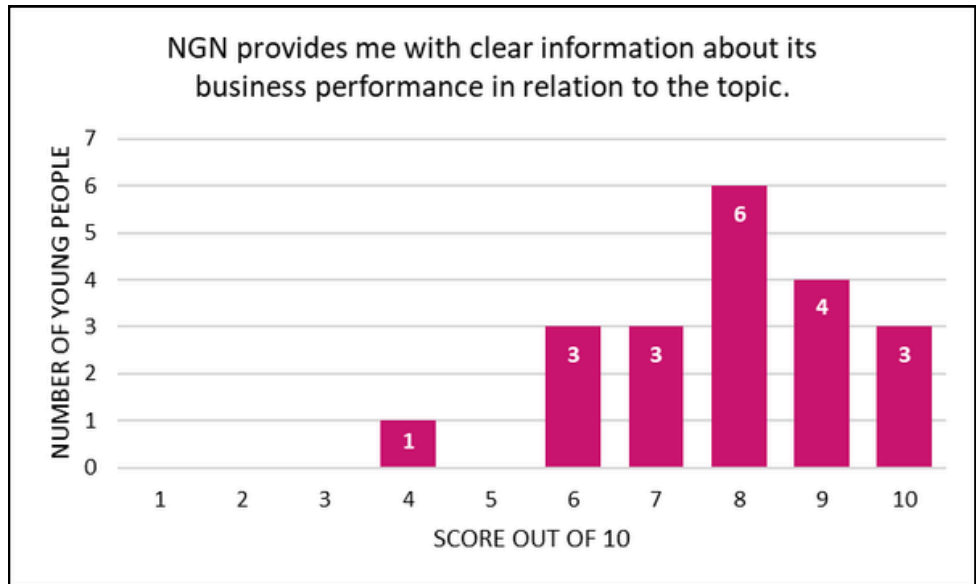
YIC response: I think most people think ahead but not into the specifics, for example some people want to go into engineering and be an engineer but they aren't sure of what area they could be in after 10 years, or if they have a specific industry in mind (for example gas) they might not know what exactly they would like to go into at first (so they would want to understand and explore everything).

Appendix 4: Post Session Feedback Survey on NGN Engagement. As of 6/5/2026, ? of the ? who attended have completed the survey.

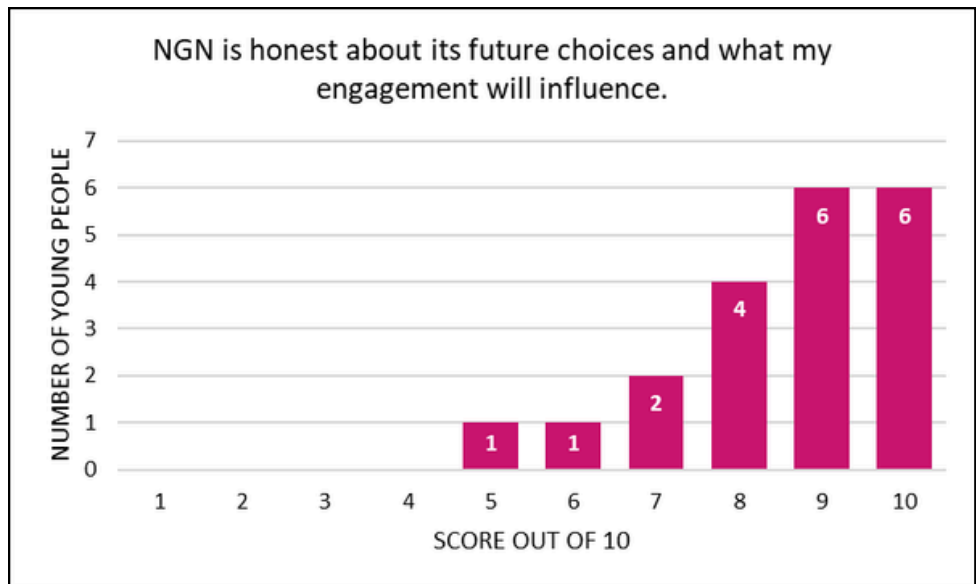
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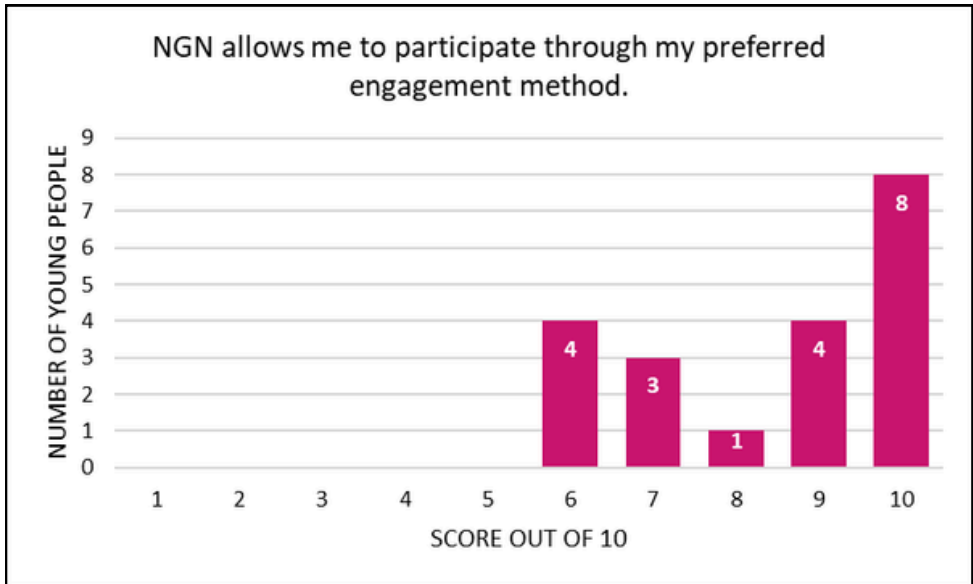
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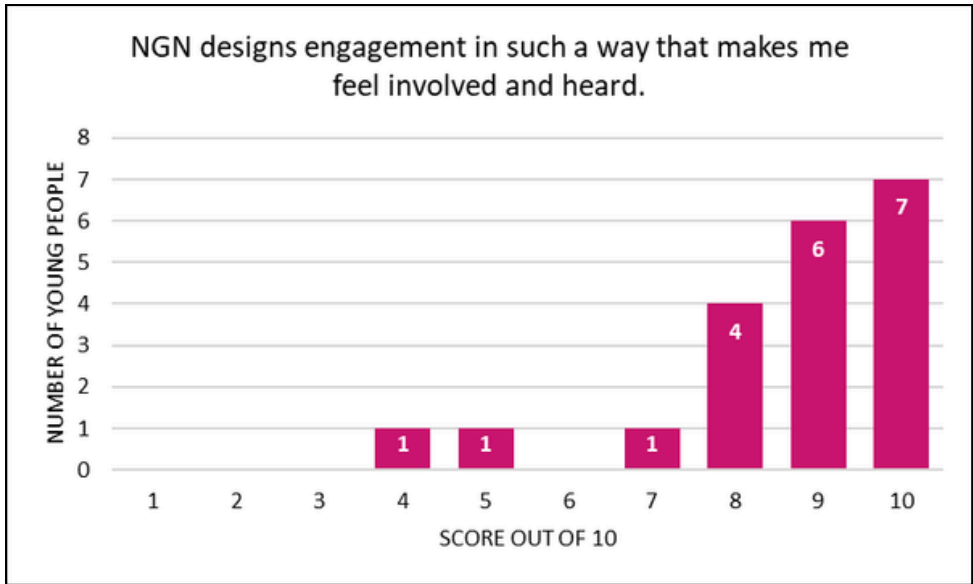
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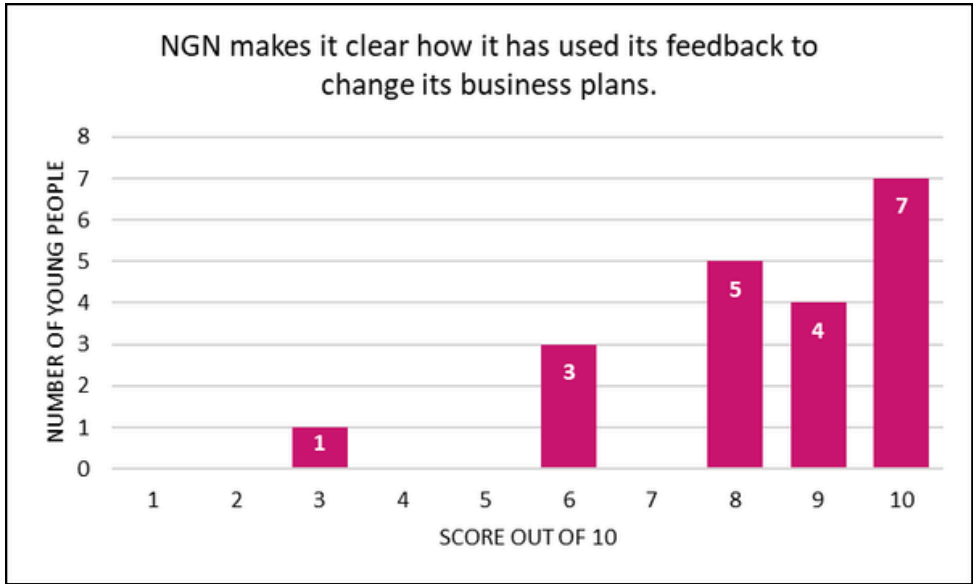
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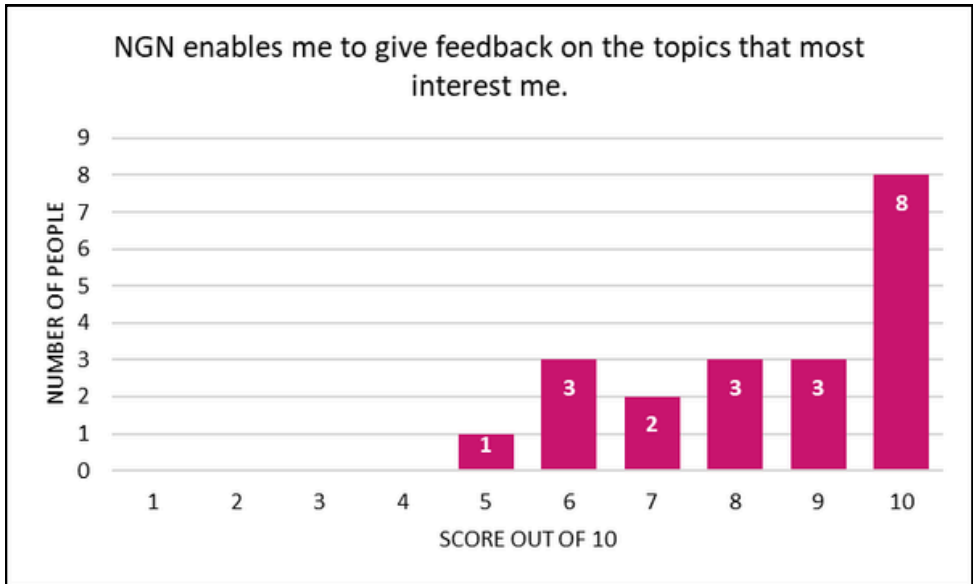
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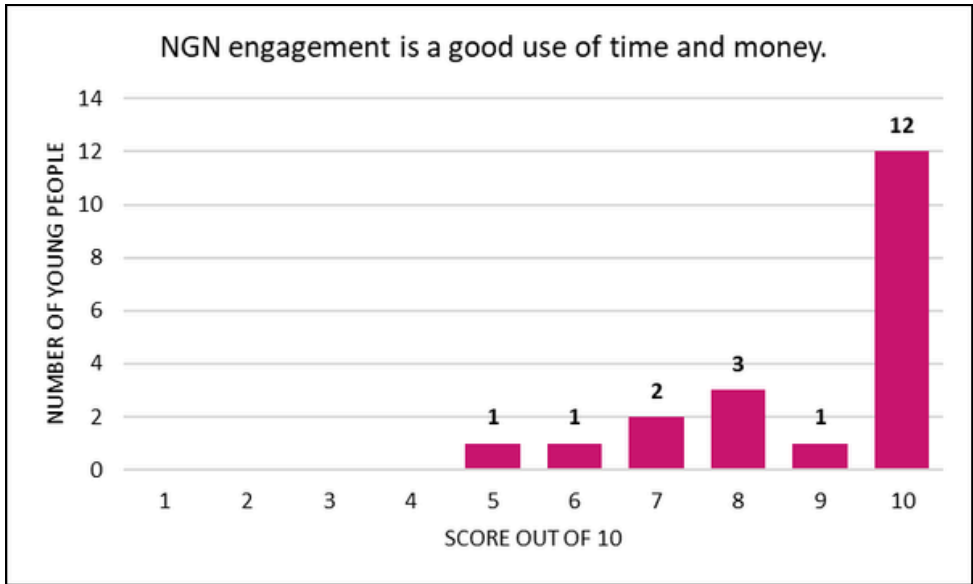
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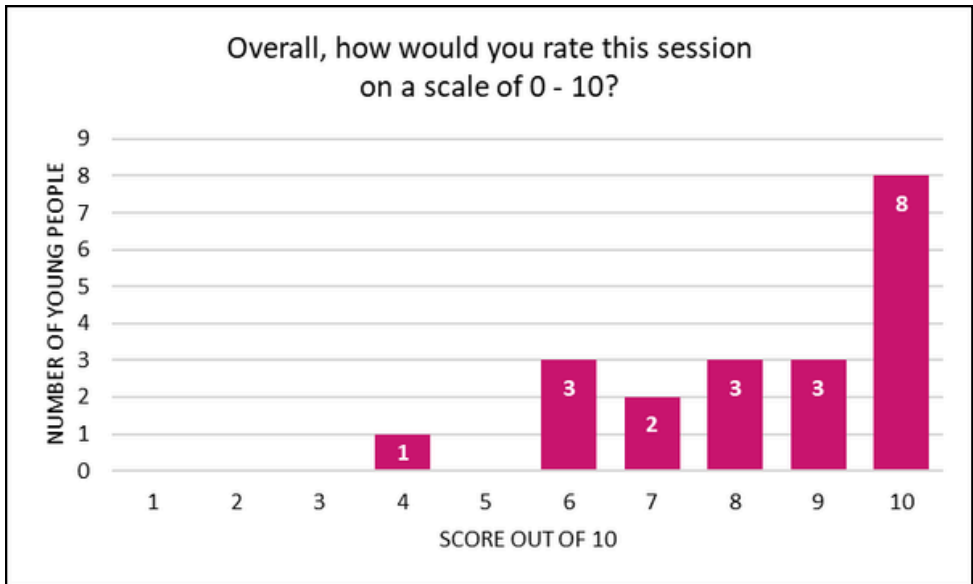
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Appendix 5: Responses to the question ‘Are there any ideas that you didn't get a chance to say during the session, or that have occurred to you since the session?’

I think especially towards young people in the NGN YIC, the majority will be looking to apply for university as we are always on the lookout for opportunities like the council to learn more than what we learn in school and so we have something to write about on our university application. Work experience would be extremely popular and beneficial for young people associated with NGN in order to kickstart their careers. Apprenticeship advertising would be more beneficial as a presentation in a college that specialises in physical engineering or trades work.

I thought putting 50% into more disadvantaged areas was a good idea - in the breakout room we discussed whether this risks giving some areas a disproportionate advantage, but I don't believe this would be the case. Allocating resources like this would be evening the playing field by increasing awareness of these topics and jobs in the company, making opportunities more accessible in areas which need them the most.

I think since NGN is based in Leeds, if they would like I'm sure lots of schools across Bradford and Leeds would love to apply for their work experience this summer, I cant wait to apply and see what it's going to look like.

What if NGN does more online meeting with schools to tell them about their work, it will work well in rural and urban areas.

I think focussing more time and resources on disadvantaged areas with low social mobility is a really good idea. It has the potential to improve the aspirations and confidence of young people in the area, who otherwise may not of heard of the jobs or opportunities.

Appendix 6: Responses to the question ‘What was the most interesting or thought-provoking part of the session for you?’

The discussion on the distribution of help in cold spots.
The discussion on whether NGN should allocate 50% of its resources to 'cold spots' to try and boost knowledge and safety.
Definitely the opportunities for young people in cold spots. This is because, I have experienced this myself and know of companies and universities preferring students from cities like London.
The Q and A, both the questions and answers were things I hadn't thought of so it was interesting to hear them.
Hearing different opinions of people (e.g., in cities vs rural areas) in the breakout rooms. As someone from a rural area, I have experienced first hand the lack of opportunities for young people in my area, which makes it really difficult to have big aspirations: all of the 'big' careers, work experiences, and summer placements only seem to be available in larger cities.
How NGN is trying to reach NEET young people.
When we were discussing what type of outreach would create the biggest impact on young people who live in cold spots.
Talking to Ola [BITC witness].
Realising young people in more rural areas have less opportunities and reflecting on what we can do to change that.
Reflecting the huge disparity in opportunities for young people between different areas, and just how much of an impact this can have on their future and career prospects.
The contrast between cold spots compared to hot spot areas like London or the South.
Where we worked together and shared ideas.
I found interesting that Newcastle is one of the places that has the lowest opportunities in the UK. I live in Newcastle.
The idea of focusing on 50% in cold spots of the UK.
How much money should be invested into undeveloped areas who may be falling behind.
The group task.
The school you go to determines a lot of opportunities you get in life.
The discussion on whether it's appropriate to focus 50% of NGN's outreach activities in cold spot regions.
I thought it was very thought-provoking when we went over just how disadvantaged other parts of the UK are, where there are cold spots. I also thought it was valuable to discuss the different things that affect a young person's opportunities.
Discussing how to make NGN more local in rural areas.