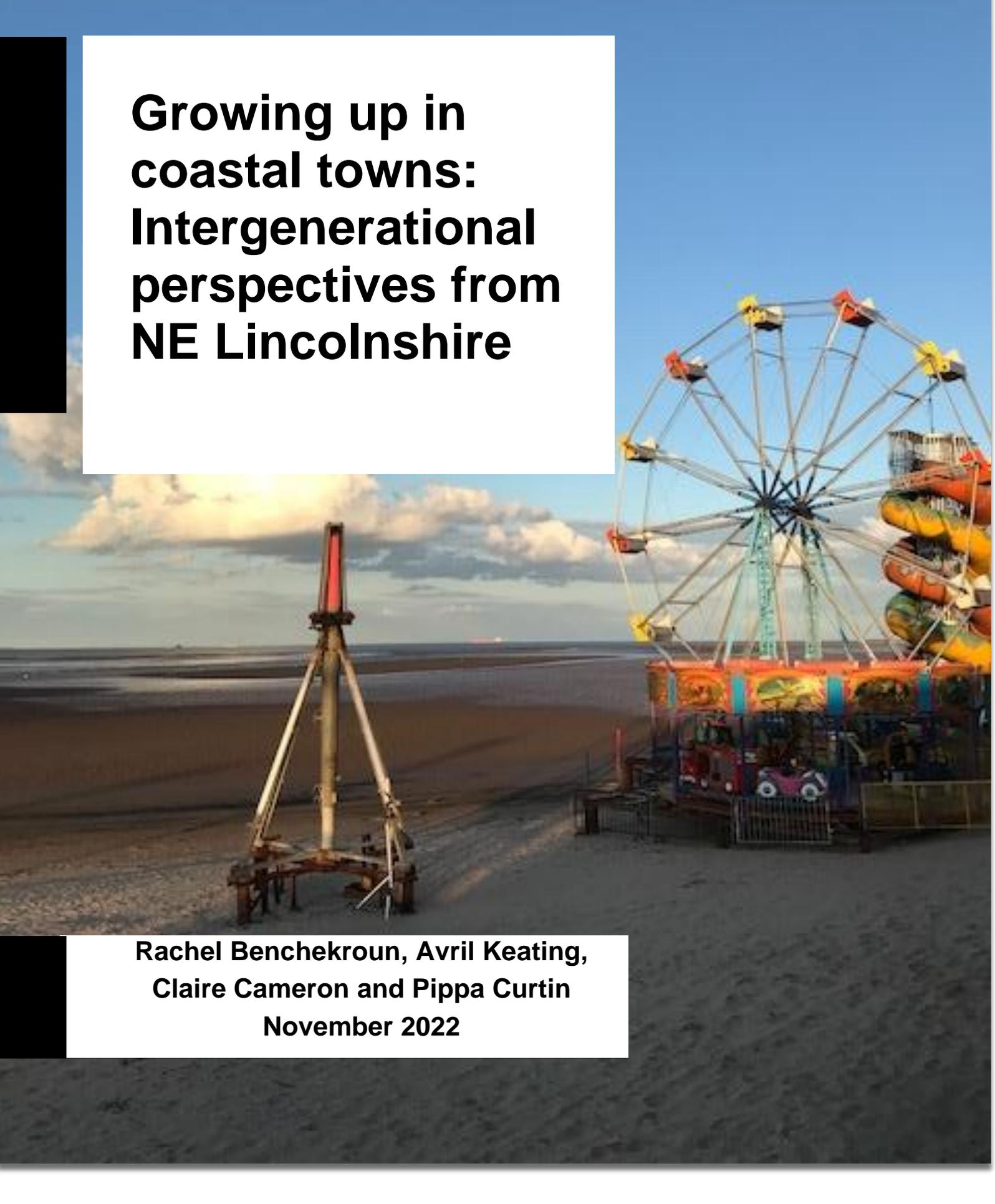




# **Growing up in coastal towns: Intergenerational perspectives from NE Lincolnshire**

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## 1. Introduction

Coastal communities are now home to some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK (CMO 2021, HoL 2019). Young people in coastal towns face obstacles to accessing education, employment, health and wellbeing.

Reducing regional inequalities has been a priority for UK governments. Investing in coastal and rural communities was a key feature of the [Conservative party's 2019 election manifesto](#), and this resulted in the government's '[Levelling Up](#)' White Paper in 2022 (although the status of this agenda is currently unclear [[Longlands 2022](#), [Booth 2022](#), [Ogden et al. 2022](#)]).

Until now, there has been very little research on how young people experience growing up in coastal communities, or their aspirations for themselves and their towns, and (to our knowledge) no research on this topic involving young people or youth workers as co-researchers. Over the last two years, we have started to address this gap with two consecutive, inter-linked pilot projects in North East Lincolnshire. This report sets out the key findings.

### Phase 1: the 2021 study

The aim of our 2021 pilot research project was to find out how key features of coastal towns can impact on young people growing up there. It addressed the research question: *In what ways does growing up in a coastal town impact on young people's experiences, aspirations, and life chances?* The qualitative research explored young and older people's perspectives on the challenges and opportunities of growing up in coastal towns, how young people's aspirations are shaped by their experiences of growing up in a coastal town, and how young people would like to improve their coastal communities.

We collaborated with national organisation [Young Advisors](#) and [Youth Action in North East Lincolnshire](#) to work with young people as Young Researchers on the project. Desktop research indicated that opportunities in Grimsby (a port town) and Cleethorpes (a seaside town) have been shaped by their location, declines in the fishing industry and tourism since the 1970s, the recent development of the offshore wind industry, and the wider context of globalisation and economic recessions. In total, we interviewed 16 young people (16-25) and 5 people aged over 40. This Phase 1 project was funded by the IOE Strategic Investment Board.

### Phase 2: the 2022 study

The 2021 project drew attention to some of the challenges facing young people growing up in coastal towns and indicated two gaps in the study. We addressed these in a second project, thanks to funding from [UCL Grand Challenges](#) and additional funding from the Office of the Pro-Vice-Provost (UK). First, understanding the scale of the economic changes and challenges experienced by coastal towns since the 1970s inspired us to take a more focused intergenerational approach which took account of the changing economic conditions and their impact on young people across generations. To do this, we interviewed 29 older residents who had been teenagers in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as 23 young people aged 16-25 (a total of 52 participants, exceeding our target of 25).

Second, the research design of this phase of the study was shaped by our ongoing reflections on the underpinning principles, values and practicalities of co-producing research (see [Benchekroun & Curtin 2022](#)). We aimed to ensure all partners were involved meaningfully and in every stage of the research. This meant allowing more time to build

relationships and to plan and carry out the research. Our methods and ways of working are discussed in Section 3.

The research questions for Phase 2 were:

1. What do young people aged 16-25 and older people aged 60+ living in coastal towns in NE Lincolnshire see as the challenges for young people (past and present) of growing up where they live?
2. What opportunities and solutions do participants believe could help young people overcome these challenges?
3. How can co-production methodologies facilitate intergenerational dialogue on these issues and develop shared intergenerational understandings of the issues faced by young people in coastal towns?

In this phase of the research we were supported by researchers at the University of Lincoln, who joined our advisory group and shared their relevant expertise in co-production, participatory methods, heritage, rural health and wellbeing (see p.3).

## **2. Background: The challenges facing coastal towns and their youth populations**

Coastal towns in the UK were once thriving centres of commerce, based on traditional industries such as tourism, fishing, and importing and exporting goods. In recent decades, however, many of these communities have experienced a stark economic decline, and residents are likely to experience multiple levels of deprivation (Jakes 2016, Wenham 2020, Bird 2021). Whilst they do include some affluent residential areas, deprived coastal towns tend to be characterised by precarious and low-paid jobs, low quality housing, poor health outcomes, weak educational outcomes, high levels of benefit claimants, and public services struggling to retain staff ([CMO 2021](#), Agarwal et al. 2018). In many cases the restructuring and regeneration of these towns has been further hindered by their geographical isolation and poor transport links, as well as the tendency for governments to focus on tackling deprivation in large urban cities rather than towns or rural areas (HoL 2019).

Coastal towns face challenges including below average pay, low social mobility ([DEMOS 2022](#)) and high rates of out-migration by young people. Geographical mobility is widely seen as a means to achieve social mobility, especially for young people, and not least for those living in coastal, rural and economically struggling towns. Research on internal migration has shown that outcomes for people who move away are better than for people who stay: they are more likely to be employed, to be in a high level occupation and to earn more ([SMC 2020](#)). Recent research suggests that young people who move from a coastal town to a city are motivated by educational and employment opportunities, as well as social and leisure opportunities ([DEMOS 2022](#)).

However, opportunities for geographical and social mobility are not equally distributed: people from higher socio-economic backgrounds and with higher levels of education are more likely to move than people from working-class backgrounds ([SMC 2020](#)). Moreover, high out-migration and low in-migration of these groups impact on the towns and the people who stay, exacerbating regional inequalities.

## North East Lincolnshire

Many of these changes and challenges are evident in the towns and villages where our research participants live, namely Grimsby, Cleethorpes, Immingham and surrounding villages.

From the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, Grimsby was a major centre for fishing and imports/exports. By the 1950s, it was the biggest fishing port in the world ([Burrows 2018](#)). Cleethorpes, adjacent to Grimsby, is known for its beaches, and has been a popular seaside resort since the nineteenth century. Since the 1970s, however, the local area has struggled to deal with processes of deindustrialization, globalisation, the growth of cheap package holidays abroad, the so-called 'Cod Wars' ([Siddique 2020](#)) and EEC fishing quotas ([BBC 2020](#)). Whilst Grimsby and Immingham continue to play a significant role as international ports ([ABP n.d.](#)), and the renewable energy sector is of increasing economic importance (discussed below), high levels of disadvantage nevertheless persist in the local area ([Burrows 2018](#)).

North East Lincolnshire ranks as the 17<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority (out of 326) in England, based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation ([IMD 2019](#)). Unemployment in the borough is above the national and regional averages, and is highest amongst young people ([NEL 2021](#)). Residents are much more likely than the average UK resident to have no or low-level qualifications, be in a low-skilled job, earn below the national average, live in a 'workless household' and be in receipt of welfare benefits ([Nomis Web 2022](#)). Jobs are available but many are part-time, low skilled, low paid, temporary, 'zero hours', and/or seasonal.

Health is poorer than national levels ([NE Lincs Data 2022](#)). The council estimates there to be '25,000 hazardous or harmful drinkers, 5000 dependent drinkers, 15,000 binge drinkers' as well as '1,587 heroin users and 560 crack cocaine users' ([NELincs.gov.uk, n.d.](#)). North East Lincolnshire ranks worse than the national average on a range of child health indicators, including teenage pregnancy rates, rates of smoking during pregnancy, dental decay in children, and rates of death or serious injury caused by road accidents ([PHE 2021](#)).

More than one quarter of children in North East Lincolnshire are living in poverty (26%, compared to the national average of 17%) ([NEL 2022](#)).

As in many coastal communities in the UK, the vast majority of residents of North East Lincolnshire are White British. A small but growing proportion of children and young people (9%) are from BME backgrounds, and a small but slowly increasing proportion (5.6%) have English as an additional language ([NEL 2022](#)).

In recent years, the local council has secured an array of government funding and has launched various regeneration programmes ([NEL 2021](#)). Emerging industries such as the aforementioned renewable energy sector, and the recently announced '[Freeport](#)' status for Humber ports (which include Grimsby and Immingham), have been hailed as significant opportunities for economic development, expected to bring 'thousands of well-paid, sustainable jobs' to the area ([North Lincs 2021](#), [Humber Freeport n.d.](#)), creating a growing demand for highly skilled workers ([Opportunity Centre 2021](#)).

Despite these recent developments, there are still significant challenges for local people, and in particular for young people. For example:

- The majority of jobs in the local area are in Manufacturing, Wholesale and Retail trades, and Human Health and Social Work. Future automation is likely to reduce

jobs, especially in food processing, which currently employs more than 6000 people, and retail is in decline, partly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic ([NEL 2021](#)).

- Many residents do not have the skills needed to take advantage of the high-skilled jobs expected to come to the area in the next 10-20 years ([NEL 2021: 19](#)).
- Concerns have been raised that freeports are likely to benefit global capital rather than local people ([Monbiot 2022](#)), to generate mostly low skilled jobs (many of which would be relocated from elsewhere in the UK, rather than being newly created) ([Billingham and Norman 2021](#)), and to reduce workers' rights ([Crawford 2020](#)).

The Council has noted that 'Understanding the expectations and aspirations of our workforce, and in particular our young people, is essential to creating the opportunities, retaining the talent, and enhancing the 'offer' to businesses who want to invest in a local talent pool.' ([NEL 2021: 19](#)). We hope that our research can contribute to this understanding.

### 3. Research methods

We adopted a co-production approach in our research study. Co-production, sometimes referred to as a participatory approach, encompasses 'research designs, methods, and frameworks that use systematic inquiry in direct collaboration with those affected by an issue being studied for the purpose of action or change' (Vaughn and Jacquez 2020). This approach shaped our choice of methods, which were participatory and promoted 'genuine and meaningful participation in the research process' (Vaughn and Jacquez 2020). Our approach was informed by our shared values, recognising, as UKRI (2019) have highlighted, that 'active participation in research [...] can improve research quality, make it more relevant to society and have significant benefits for those who participate'. As a research team, we recognise each other as equal partners with different and valuable skills and knowledge to contribute to the research.

#### Phase 1 (2021)

In Phase 1 of the project, we recruited four young people (with prior experience of working in consultative and advisory roles) to act as Young Researchers (YRs) and collaborators on this project. Our aim was that the YRs would help us to develop research tools that were appropriate for young people, and then use these tools to conduct interviews with young and older people in their communities. We combined traditional techniques (semi-structured interview questions using an interview guide) with arts- and place-based methods that could be used as a prompt to explore issues in depth.

To support the YRs in their role, we organised four workshops facilitated by the UCL researcher (Rachel Benchekroun) with support and input from the NE Lincolnshire Voice and Influence Coordinator (Pippa Curtin). Two workshops prior to the fieldwork addressed topics including research methods, recruiting participants, interviewing skills, ethical considerations and data management. We discussed and tried out a range of participatory arts-based methods, making some changes before agreeing on how we would use them.

Using the interview guide and activities, the UCL researcher conducted in-depth interviews with each of the Young Researchers (YRs); the YRs then recruited and interviewed young and older people from their personal networks. Two further workshops were held during/after the fieldwork, providing opportunities to reflect together on the emerging data and the research process.

## Phase 2 (2022)

Methodologically, our key aim in Phase 2 was to build on our learning from Phase 1 to embed our co-production approach. As set out in our Theory of Change (see Appendix 1), our objectives were to:

- Support young people to develop their skills, knowledge, experience, confidence and aspirations as Young Researchers;
- Produce valuable learning about co-production;
- Generate rich, in-depth qualitative data addressing the research questions;
- Influence policy in North East Lincolnshire;
- Develop new partnerships which may lead to further collaborative research.

This phase of the study involved collaboration amongst the UCL team, the Voice and Influence Coordinator and the Young Researchers throughout the project, from the design stage through to data analysis and sharing findings. We organized workshops at each stage, allowed more time for the fieldwork (overall and for individual research encounters), adopted additional communication tools, and built in times for regular reflection as a team. We worked collaboratively to discuss and make decisions about our research methods. As a result of our discussions and reflections, we:

- co-ordinated focus groups and/or one-to-one or paired interviews in shared spaces
- reached out to local community groups and schools and with their support facilitated focus groups to coincide with existing group sessions
- facilitated walking interviews as part of a community walk
- promoted the focus groups and walking interviews to the wider public through local radio, flyers and Council webpages.

We found that working in these ways, rather than asking the Young Researchers to recruit and interview participants alone as they had done in Phase 1, maximized opportunities for sharing skills and support and reflecting on emerging data and the research process.

We continued to use four of the five activities from Phase 1 in the Phase 2 focus groups and interviews, with some adaptations, and we introduced a new activity. We also reviewed and added to the questions in the interview schedule.

Using these research tools, in Phase 2 we carried out the following activities to generate data: 1 community walk in Grimsby (interviewing 5 people); 6 one-to-one interviews; 13 focus groups (8 with older participants; 5 with young people). The activities took place in community centres, a local school (with Year 12 students), a leisure centre and the town hall.

The interactive activities generated considerable discussion and reflection on participants' experiences of growing up in their local area, their feelings about their coastal towns, how they think the area has changed over time, their aspirations for themselves and their town, and what they think needs to change. The activities also produced a range of visual data, some of which is included in the report.

To identify the impact on the Young Researchers of their participation in the project, we developed a questionnaire which they each completed online before and after the fieldwork stage. At the data analysis workshop (see below), we also reflected together on the impact of participation at an individual level and broader level. A third questionnaire was completed and analysed at the end of the project.

## Recruitment and participants

Four Young Researchers took part in Phase 1 (2021) and continued their involvement as Young Researchers in Phase 2 (2022). Two more young people who had been involved in the 2021 project as participants joined us as Young Researchers in 2022. All were (or had been) engaged with one or more projects led by the Voice and Influence Coordinator at Youth Action North East Lincolnshire, so they had some experience of co-producing services and were familiar with principles of co-production. Four of the Young Researchers were female and two were male; ages ranged from 16 to 21; all lived in North East Lincolnshire.

Across the two phases of the study, we recruited and interviewed **39 young people aged 16 to 26** (27 of whom were aged 18 or under), and **30 older people aged 60+** (26 of whom were aged over 70). In addition, five participants were aged between 46 and 59. All lived in Grimsby, Cleethorpes, Immingham or a neighbouring village. A summary of the participants' other background characteristics is set out in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

**Table 1: Background characteristics of participants aged 16-26**

<b>Gender</b>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>	<b>Tota I N</b>
	19	17	2	1	<b>39</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<i>White British</i>	<i>BME/mixed</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	37	1	0	1	39
<b>Town/village of residence</b>	<i>Grimsby</i>	<i>Cleethorpes</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	21	12	6	1	39
<b>Education/work status</b>	<i>School/college (uni)</i>	<i>Working P/T (F/T)</i>	<i>NEET</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	26 (2)	10 (5)	3	2	
<b>Disability</b>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Prefer not to say</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	9	23	5	2	39
<b>Highest qualification achieved (or in progress)</b>	<i>Higher education qualification</i>	<i>A-levels or other level 3 qualification</i>	<i>GCSE or other level 2 qualification</i>	<i>Not known</i>	
	10	20	4	5	39
<b>Higher education aspirations</b>	<i>Attending/attended university or planning to</i>	<i>Did not attend university/not planning to</i>	<i>Doesn't know</i>	<i>Not known</i>	
	24	9	2	4	39
<b>Intending to move/return/stay</b>	<i>Move</i>	<i>Return</i>	<i>Stay</i>	<i>Not known/don't know</i>	
	19	4	9	7	39

**Table 2: Background characteristics of participants aged 60+**

<b>Gender</b>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>	<b>Total N</b>
	8	22	0	0	<b>30</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<i>White British</i>	<i>BME</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	30	0	0	0	30
<b>Town/village of residence</b>	<i>Grimsby</i>	<i>Cleethorpes</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	19	5	4	2	30
<b>Employment status</b>	<i>Retired</i>	<i>Working FT</i>	<i>Unpaid carer</i>		
	27	1	2		30
<b>Disability</b>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Prefer not to say</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	10	20	0	0	30
<b>Education level</b>	<i>Higher education qualification</i>	<i>Left school at 17 or 18 and/or obtained other qual</i>	<i>Left school at 15 or 16</i>	<i>Not known</i>	
	3	4	17	7	30

**Table 3: Background characteristics of participants aged 46-59**

<b>Gender</b>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>	<b>Total N</b>
	2	3	0	0	<b>5</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<i>White British</i>	<i>BME</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	5	0	0	0	5
<b>Town/village of residence</b>	<i>Grimsby</i>	<i>Cleethorpes</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	3	1	1	0	5
<b>Employment status</b>	<i>Retired</i>	<i>Working FT</i>	<i>Working PT</i>		
	1	3	1		5
<b>Education level</b>	<i>Higher education qualification</i>	<i>Left school at 17 or 18 and/or other qual</i>	<i>Left school at 15 or 16</i>	<i>Not known</i>	
	0	1	2	2	5
<b>Disability</b>	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>Prefer not to say</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	0	5	0	0	5

## Data analysis

All but four of the research encounters across the two phases of the study were audio recorded, and all were transcribed, as were the research team workshops. Detailed notes were taken of the four interviews for which consent was not given for them to be audio recorded.

We reflected on emerging data in discussions after each focus group. In addition, following the fieldwork stage in Phase 2, we organized a one-day data analysis workshop with the Young Researchers to reflect together on:

- the data produced across both projects
- our experiences of, and the learning from, taking part in the research
- the key messages we wanted to share with local stakeholders
- how we share key messages with local stakeholders.

Alongside this, the UCL team undertook thematic analysis of the data. In the following sections we report on some of the key emerging findings.

## 4. Emerging findings

The key themes which emerged from our interviews and focus groups with young and older residents of North East Lincolnshire were:

1. feeling (un)safe, particularly in specific places and spaces;
2. the lack of things to do and places to go for young people, and concerns about the economic decline of the area;
3. education and employment opportunities for young people, and how these shaped aspirations for the future, both at an individual level and for the local community.

The data from older residents also revealed the extent to which the town and youth opportunities have changed over time.

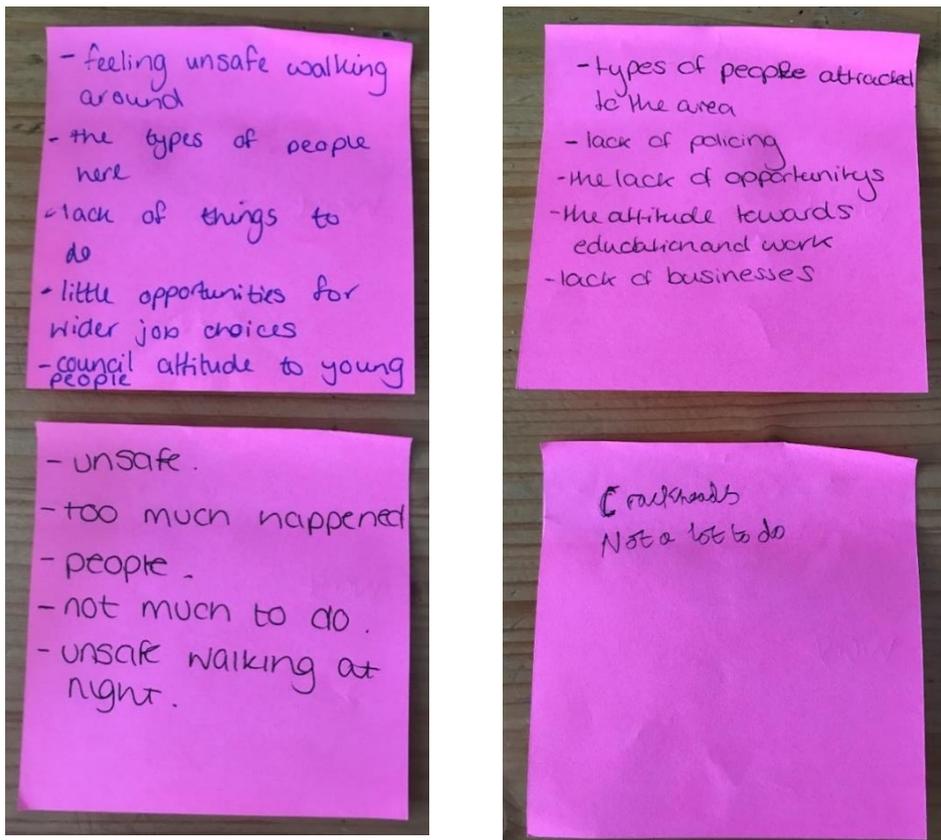
### 4.1 Feeling safe/unsafe

Most of the young people who took part in our study did not feel safe in public spaces in their coastal towns, particularly in the evening or at night. They associated certain public spaces – such as central shopping areas and parks – with drunk and ‘rowdy’ behaviour, drug-taking and other forms of anti-social behaviour. These negative perceptions meant young people chose to avoid certain places in the local area.

In an open discussion, a few young people suggested the lack of a visible police presence added to the sense of feeling unsafe; one said the police needed to do more to ‘*put things in place to make you feel safe*’ (focus group, mixed genders, aged 17).

Young people felt there was a lack of safe spaces for young people to hang out, not least for under 18s. Alex, 17, highlighted the situation for under 18s who identify as LGBTQ+:

*‘I can’t go there [name of gay bar] because I’m not 18 yet but it’s just frustrating that [...] there’s two LGBT safe spaces and both of them are for people over 18. [...] there’s not a lot of LGBT safe places.’*



**Image 1: From activity ‘worst things about your town’: Elena, Freya, Rebecca, Ricky, all aged 17**

In contrast, older participants told us that they had felt very safe as teenagers growing up in the area in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, Pearl, 84, told us: ‘*You did feel safe. You felt you could go out at night and not worry about anything. You could walk places in the dark.*’ Older participants’ recollections of feeling safe as teenagers were very much linked to their sense of living in a strong community where people knew each other and looked out for one another:

*‘everything that you did was freedom. [...] You used to be able to leave your doors open. Everybody helped everybody.’ (Jane, 76)*

When older participants recalled the sense of safety and connection in their community they had experienced as young people, they tended to juxtapose it with not feeling safe now, as a result not only of ageing but of changes in the community:

*‘Being older you might be regarded as vulnerable. [...] As a teenager I’d have gone down there [to the area I now avoid]. I’d have gone anywhere in Grimsby. Getting older you do feel vulnerable. Because the town has changed, and I think it has changed dramatically over a short period of time.’ (Phil, 64)*

*‘I think it is worse now than when I was growing up. [...] it feels more sad now and people don’t mix as much. I feel that it is not safe at night now. I don’t feel safe going out at night now but did when I was younger.’ (Ann, 85)*

Like the young people, older participants identified particular areas that they avoided because they felt unsafe.

Notably, some older participants raised concerns about the safety of young people living in the local area. They perceived that young people today tend to stay at home rather than going out because of not feeling safe outside. This reflected what young participants told us. Several older participants suggested that this was partly as a result of what Colin, 76, referred to as the 'drug situation'.

*'[Grimsby's] changed massively. It's not the same place. As a kid I was quite happy living here, but it's certainly not as safe as it was. The biggest challenges for young people are the drugs.'* (Annie, 70s)

Nevertheless, many of the young and older participants described North East Lincolnshire as a 'friendly' place.

In summary, whilst older residents recalled feeling very safe as teenagers in the local area, there was a consensus amongst young and older participants that their coastal community does not feel safe for young or older people today.

## 4.2 Where young people spend their time and how they feel about local places and spaces

There was a broad consensus amongst young participants that there is 'nothing to do' for young people growing up in North East Lincolnshire. Typical phrases included 'a bit boring', 'not much to do', 'nowhere to go' and 'hard to like'. Maria, 18, felt that many places in the local area seemed to cater more for tourists than for residents. Lisa, 18, felt that such 'tourist places' are 'a bit in your face'. Several young people, such as Amy, 19, described how local places that could be pleasant, such as parks, tended to get vandalized, and that this led to young people either 'hanging around' outside shops or staying at home. For Kristina, 17, the lack of things to do and places to go explained why *'all the parks end up getting destroyed'*. There was a perception, therefore, of a connection between the lack of safe public spaces for residents (in particular for young people), the low level of care shown for existing public spaces, and young people's sense of marginalization.

In general, young people expressed fairly positive views about the beach, describing it for example as 'really pretty' (Lisa, 18) and 'a beautiful place to just walk around [...] one of the most peaceful parts' (Noah, 16). Jon, 26, commented that 'it's very nice to live by the seaside, quality of life is really good', and Liam, 16, remarked that 'it's got a good vibe to it when you go on a hot day'. Stacey, 18, enjoyed going to the beach at night-time when 'you can see all across the sea [...], different lights and everything.' For Kayla, 18, 'it's nice to de-stress and just to sit, sometimes with a book or just chat with one of my friends or something'. Two young participants said they enjoyed spending time in the amusement arcades.

Other young people felt ambivalent about the beach and did not enjoy spending time there. Some of them experienced the beach as part of the landscape rather than a place to visit. For example, Nick, 20, who had moved to Cleethorpes as a child, initially found it 'astonishing' to have the beach on his doorstep, but now felt 'it means nothing' and is 'just another place': *'I'm just used to it cos I live right next to it.'* He added that there was *'not that much to do down there'* other than perhaps buying an ice cream. Several other young participants said they did not spend time at the beach. Tom, 19, told us:

*'it's just dead, there's not very much there. [...] it's just sand. Most of the attractions down the beach ain't open most of the time.'*

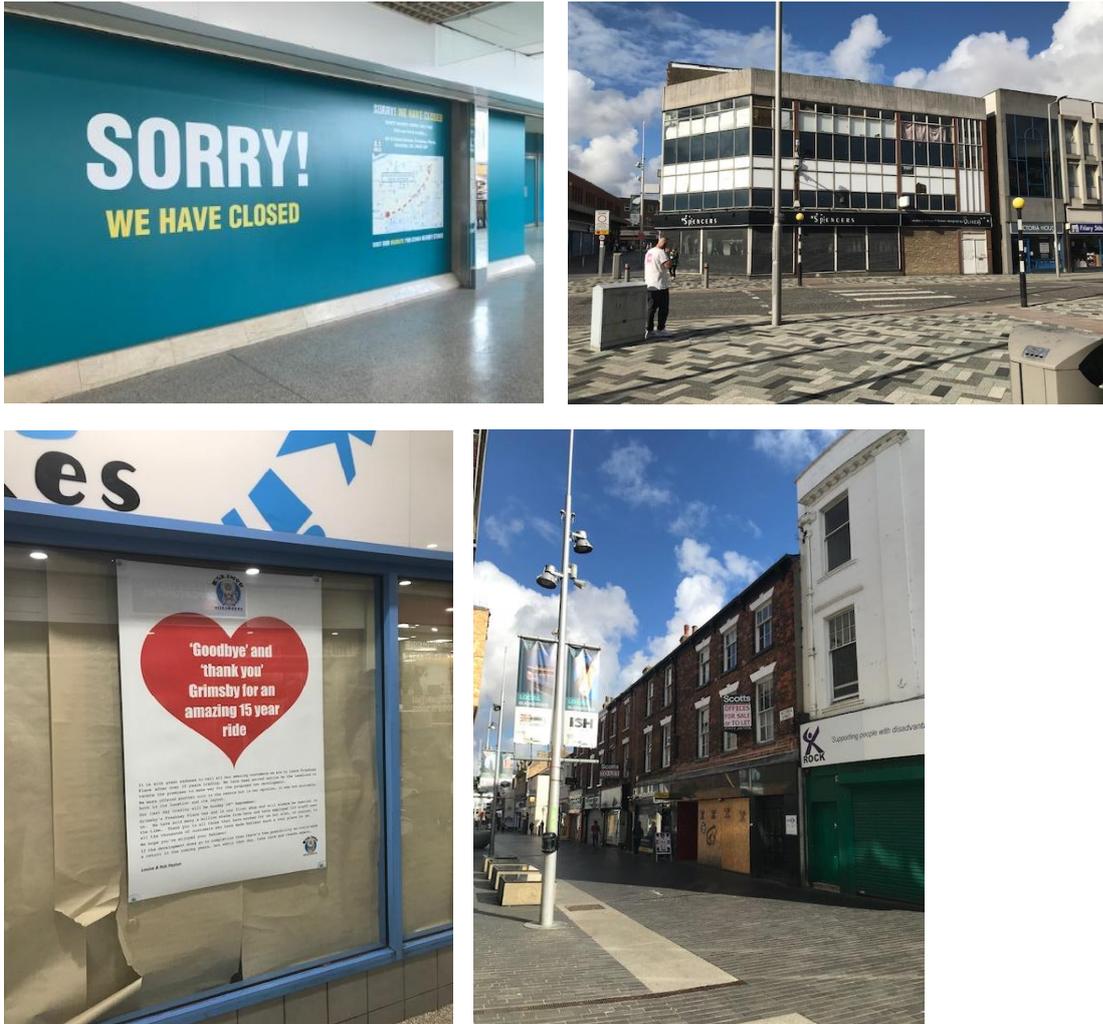
Conversely, the beach was avoided by some during the tourist season because it was crowded, and several people were unhappy about littering which they associated with visitors to the town. A different but equally negative view was expressed in a focus group of 17-year-olds who identified one end of the beach as 'a bit dodgy', where 'you get old kids'; they did not elaborate on why.



**Image 2: Photographs of Cleethorpes**

Young people also appreciated the parks and open green spaces in their coastal towns. However, access to parks was shaped by concerns about antisocial behaviour. Ed, 17, remarked: *'we get a lot of vandalism of children's parks, and litter, and it just makes them very unpleasant to spend time in.'* Several 17-year-old female participants in a focus group described a particular park as being 'full of needles'.

The most popular shops and places to eat were located in the main shopping centre and included Waterstones, HMV, Primark, JD's and McDonald's. However, young people were concerned about the decline of the indoor shopping centre and the town centre more broadly. This was connected to their feelings that there was *'nothing to do'* (Sophie, 16) for young people locally. Participants observed that the closure of more and more shops meant it was *'not very exciting being in this kind of place'* (Noah, 16) so they tended not to spend time there. Ryan, 17, noted *'there's a lot of shops going – every week, there seems to be another vacant shop'*, yet he also remarked that it didn't bother him as he did most of his shopping online. Dan, 23, observed that the decline of the town centre reflected what is happening nationally, and commented: *'It feels like a slow drawn-out death for the area'*. Some young people were concerned that buildings had been abandoned and businesses were not being encouraged or enabled to invest in them and redevelop them – they have *'just been sat there for years'* (Freya, 17).



**Image 3: Photographs of Grimsby town centre on a Saturday morning, showing empty premises (24/09/22)**

One formerly vibrant shopping area was avoided by many young people as they did not feel it was a safe area. However, Maria, 18, said she particularly liked the recently regenerated indoor market there: it *'feels like a community because there's a lot of different kinds of people there [...] both generations existing in the same sphere'*.

Two young participants enjoyed visiting the Fishing Heritage Centre but felt frustrated at the lack of museums in the local area. Alex, 17, commented: *'It can be dull because there's less culture. There's one museum and that's the Fishing Heritage Centre, which I must have been round about seventeen times as a kid. And I love history, I want to study it, so it makes me sad that there's only one real museum.'*

Several young people were nostalgic for Pleasure Island, the amusement park in Cleethorpes which closed in 2016, remarking that it had provided entertainment for families as well as employment for local people. Kristina, 17, commented on the gap left by its closure: *'When it got shut down, it left this big mess on the side of Cleethorpes. It was such a good place to go. There was families and everything. There's not really many places like that anymore round here.'*

## Older participants' perceptions

In stark contrast, older residents recalled being able to spend their leisure time in a wide range of places as teenagers in North East Lincolnshire in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to the beaches and parks, they had enjoyed going to dance halls (some of which were specifically for under 18s), youth clubs, coffee shops, pubs, swimming pools and cinemas. It was also remarkable that there seemed to have been *more* of these kinds of venues. For example, participants told us there had been eight cinemas (as opposed to just one today), and they named 14 different dance halls (and many pubs) which they used to visit. Jim, 80, recalled: *'As a young man, there was lots of little dance halls, all over the place, and all it consisted of was just a record player, playing records. It was on from 7 o'clock to 10 o'clock.'* Patricia, 87, recollected: *'I went dancing seven nights a week as a teenager, and I went to a different place every night.'*

Older participants had fond memories of playing records and table tennis at their busy local youth clubs on Friday and Saturday evenings. Several older participants recollected visiting the coffee shops, 'sarsaparilla' bars for young people, and upmarket department stores (which have since disappeared). Violet, 77, described the experience of walking into the elegant Chamber's coffee shop: *'Coffee and cheese you could smell as soon as you walked in. A trio playing in the corner, a violin.'*

Older participants also recounted going out exploring on bicycles or going for long walks when they were young. They felt they could go 'anywhere', with nowhere being out of bounds. On a large map, Phil, 64, showed us the routes he cycled as a teenager: to nearby villages to visit relatives, to the beach, and down to the docks where he would explore the timber yards and the fish docks. Alison, Mary and Violet, in their 70s, recalled: *'We used to get our bikes out. Bit of bread and jam. You were out all day on your bikes.'*

## Concerns about the decline of the local area

Participants of all ages highlighted the decline of particular places and spaces, often linking this to the loss of Grimsby's identity as *'a booming fishing town'* (Kayla, 18). There was a sense that socio-spatial divisions remained evident (*'the posh areas are still the posh area, the deprived areas [...] are still the same areas'*, as Theo, 50, put it). Shared public spaces were perceived as lacking investment and looking 'rundown'. Participants pointed out that heritage buildings had been pulled down and replaced with 'bland' ones, and green spaces had been lost.

*'Any of our heritage was pulled down to make way for [indoor shopping centre]. They pulled down old pubs, they pulled down really lovely old buildings, the corn exchange. Everything was dragged down to make way for [shopping centre].'* (Annie, 70s)

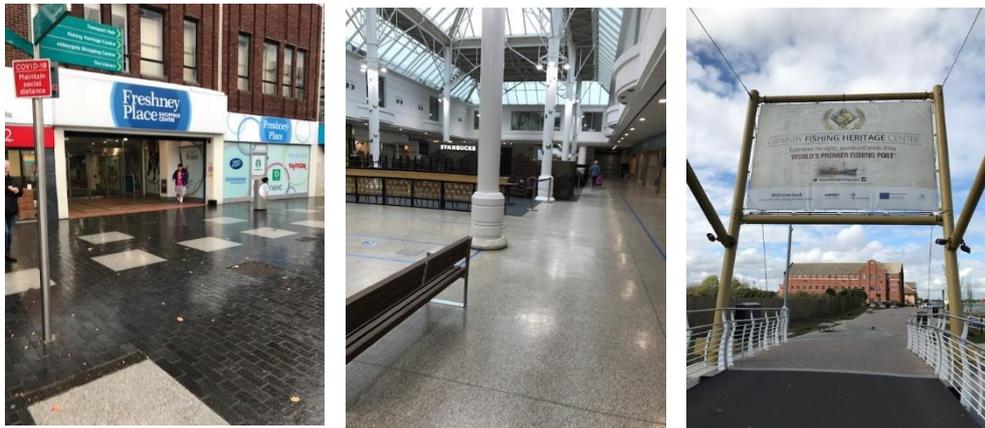
Whilst there was some recognition that the economic decline in evidence was part of the wider national picture, there were strong views that more needed to be done to preserve and invest in derelict buildings. Claudia, 75, was fairly representative in her comment, *'It used to be vibrant and it isn't anymore!'*

Some of the most critical remarks were in relation to the indoor shopping centre and the surrounding streets: *'They've wrecked it. They've made a mess of it'; 'over the years, it's just gone downhill'; 'It's definitely on a downer at the moment'; 'the character that used to be there has gone'.*

The decline of a formerly vibrant shopping street (to the north of the central shopping area), now widely seen as an unsafe area, was the subject of wistful reflections. Phil, 64,

summarized the change: 'You go down [X] Street and it was hustle and bustle, now you go down there and it's sort of a dubious area to go down. Looking back, I don't think it's changed for the better.'

Participants criticised the fact that in Cleethorpes a popular entertainment venue and surrounding houses had been pulled down and, despite promises, had not been replaced with a new venue, but instead with flats.



**Image 4: Photographs of Grimsby**

To summarise, whilst some young people appreciated the beaches and local parks, others felt these places had little to offer and expressed concerns about safety. Whilst there were certain shops young people liked to go to, there was wide concern about the decline of shopping areas. This was echoed by older residents, who revealed that in the 1950s and 1960s there had been a far wider range of safe and sociable places and spaces for young people to spend their leisure time.

### **4.3 Education and employment: opportunities and aspirations**

Since 2015, in England it has been compulsory to stay in education or training until the age of 18 ([gov.uk, n.d.](https://www.gov.uk/n.d)). All participants aged up to 18 were therefore attending school or college (n = 29). Our researchers asked young participants about their plans and hopes for education, employment and life in general at the ages of 18, 21, 25 and 30. Their experiences were very different therefore from most of the older participants growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, for whom the school leaving age had been 15. In the early 1960s, only 4% of school leavers went to university ([Lightfoot 2016](#)), compared to 39% today ([UCAS 2021](#)).

#### **Moving**

The young participants aged up to 18 were still at school or college; some were considering their options for post-compulsory education, while others only had vague plans for the future. Of these, some had clear objectives, often associated with moving to another town or city to pursue higher education, to develop specialist skills and/or to find employment unavailable locally. Many (but not all) felt that North East Lincolnshire did not offer opportunities for good jobs or for the types of jobs they aspired to do, or for the further or higher education that would equip them with the skills to do the jobs they aspired to do. Young and older participants highlighted the precarious nature of most of the jobs available locally: part-time,

temporary, seasonal, low paid, and/or zero hours contracts. Many young participants (n = 19) therefore saw it as necessary to move to a city, or even (perhaps later on) to another country to improve their chances of achieving their objectives:

*'The jobs that we want to do, we can't really do here.'* (Ricky, 17)

*'I just wanna move countries. [...] Just anywhere that's not here. [...] there's no opportunities here, I'd have to go somewhere else.'* (Kristina, 17)

*'I want to move to a bigger city so there's better job opportunities. Then when I get quite a bit older I want to move to America'* (Katy, 17)

For Alex, 17, this state of affairs was a consequence of Grimsby and Cleethorpes' coastal location:

*'this town doesn't have many unique jobs, it's just sort of your average jobs. [...] You've got to go into the city, specifically London, to be able to participate in [specialised] jobs. And that is something we are lacking as a coastal town, kind of on the edge of everything, we are too far away from London. Which I think is such a disadvantage.'*

For these young people, planning to move away to develop their skills and knowledge presented an opportunity to 'get far away from home' (Alex, 17) and discover new places rather than getting 'stuck', as Maria, 18, put it: *'it's a big world out there and I want to experience everything I can, rather than being in an isolated town at the seaside.'*

For Lisa, 18, pursuing higher education outside of North East Lincolnshire was an opportunity to achieve social mobility that had not been available to other members of her family: *'it's like a personal aspiration, I guess because a lot of my family didn't have the choice or the option to go [to uni]. I just really want a career that I can like progress in and have the chance to study something that I really enjoy'*.

Some young people had not developed clear plans for where they wanted to move to, what they wanted to study or what kind of job they wanted to do. However, even in these cases, many who aspired to move away were clear that they did not intend to return to North East Lincolnshire:

[After studying elsewhere] *'I can confidently say that I don't wanna come back.'* / *'None of us want to come back.'* / *'There's nothing here.'* (mixed gender focus group, all aged 17)

Moving to another town or city was therefore seen by many under 18s as a means of furthering their education, developing specialised skills and knowledge, building a career, accessing new experiences, or achieving social mobility, which they did not feel was possible if they stayed in their town.

## Staying

Although a majority of our respondents were making plans to move away, a number of young participants expected to stay in their coastal town (n = 9). Several participants in their early 20s had considered the possibility of moving away but felt they were now more likely to stay put. Jon, 26, and his partner, a graduate, had contemplated moving to a city in the north of England where *'there's more opportunities for her to do what she wants as a job long-term, rather than in a town like Grimsby'*. However, having recently had a baby, they felt that *'at the minute we're rooted here'*. Similarly, Sarah, 23, who was currently completing a

PGCE, had feelings of rootedness in the local community, along with doubts about moving to a city:

*"Will I move to be able to get what I want?" It is tough because this is all I've ever known. I'm not a city person [...] I just think, "I don't see myself anywhere else but here." [...]. It's not about where you live, it's who you're with and I think once you find the right thing, everything falls into place, but it means working hard at it and ignoring the negative comments of people that don't understand.'*

Two participants in their teens planned to pursue higher education without moving from Grimsby, making use of local or commutable options including Grimsby Institute and Hull University.

Some participants in their teens shared only vague ideas about their next steps beyond school or college, and didn't express intentions to pursue training or higher education. Some mentioned possible careers but did not indicate potential pathways; a few said they wanted to move somewhere else. Ethan, 19, explained, *'All I want is a stable job and a steady income because to be honest, I don't really want much out of life, I just want life to be easy.'*

In one school-based focus group, several young people associated 'staying' in Grimsby and Cleethorpes with low aspirations, and expressed concerns about what they saw as the intergenerational transmission of low aspirations. They suggested that some adults have *'no ambition for life, and they give that to their kids.'* The possibility of young people inheriting this outlook was equated with having 'no ambition to leave Grimsby, no ambition to get a better job'. These participants were concerned that a lack of motivation to better themselves would result in young people spending their lives working in a factory.

However, several young people were clear they had made an active decision to stay in North East Lincolnshire and did not want to be stigmatized by it. Ollie, 16, who was hoping to develop a career in politics, said, *"I'd hopefully like to still live in North East Lincolnshire because I like the area. [...] there's enough here. I've grown up [here] and I like the area so why would I want to move out?"* Similarly, Ryan, 17, who planned to train as a teacher, wanted to stay in the local area because of his support networks: *'Granted it may not be the best place to live in the world but it's also not the worst. I'm quite happy here. People I know's here. My family's here.'* Lisa, 18, expressed similar views that she liked living in the community and did not want to move away from family; she also felt that *'there's what I need here to like progress with my life rather than moving away'; 'there's already what I need to like settle down and have a really good job and have a really nice house and I can hit all my like aspirations for life here.'*

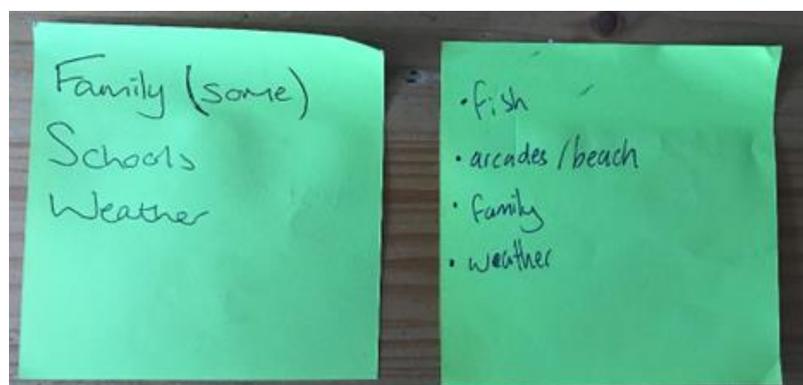


Image 6: From activity 'Best thing about your town' – Ryan (17) and Liam (16)

## Returning

A small proportion of young participants (n = 4) intended to move away to develop their skills and then return to North East Lincolnshire to find employment (or had recently done so). This seemed to be most often the case where young people wanted to take up community-based roles. For example, Kayla, 18, wanted to travel to other towns and cities to train as a youth worker in order to be able to find employment and apply her skills back in her coastal community. She explained that she wanted to 'help the new generation' and 'give them opportunities' as she felt she had been given opportunities herself.

*'I just want to help the youth of Grimsby and to show that no matter where you're from or no matter what background, you can always make something of your life and do amazing things. [...] We shouldn't have less opportunities just because we're at this end of the country or just because we're in this postcode, do you know what I mean, we all deserve the same opportunities, not just the bigger cities.'*

Lisa, 18, suggested that moving to a city was necessary to develop specialist skills and to get a 'higher paid job', but, like Kayla, she felt that it was important for young people to return with their skills to benefit their coastal community. She saw the 'close-knit' nature of her town as conducive to doing community work.

Another strong 'pull' factor for these returners was family ties. Maya, 21, had moved away to study at university and then returned to pursue a graduate level role. For her, returning to friends and family felt like a welcome 'security blanket', since 'making friends in new places' was not necessarily easy and might lead to feeling 'isolated and alone'.

## Educational and employment opportunities for young people in the 1950s and 1960s

Access to education and employment was very different for participants who had grown up in North East Lincolnshire in the 1950s and 1960s. Because of our research design, all of our older participants had either spent their lives living in the local area (n = 30), or had moved away then returned (n = 5). Most had left school at 15 or 16, in some cases with no qualifications, and had started work straightaway. Finding a job had been easy; according to a widely used phrase: 'You could leave a job on a Friday and start a new one on the Monday.' As Sandra, 75, explained, *'You had the choice out there. And you made your choices to suit yourself'*. These recollections reflect the experiences of young people in other parts of the country in the 1950s and 1960s (see Todd and Young 2012).

Wages were paid every Friday, and young people looked forward to going out on Friday and Saturday nights. Work seemed to be strongly gendered, with men working on the docks, on trawlers, or in public transport, while women worked in retail, nursing or care work. However, both men and women worked in food processing factories and did vegetable picking ('spud bashing'). Working on the docks – accessible only 'if your father was a docker' – or in fishing was seen as a great opportunity to earn 'exceptional money', as Simon, 58, pointed out. For those who worked on the trawlers – known as three-day millionaires – returning to shore after days or weeks at sea meant heading straight for the pubs near the docks and on Freeman Street. Women often stopped working once they got married and had children, perhaps returning to work part-time later on. Jane, 76, explained, *'In our day, you all got married early and had your children.'* Several participants had family connections with the armed forces, which meant periods spent living abroad.

Many participants' experiences of school seemed to reflect the critique of the selective education system in the 1950s and 1960s as reinforcing class divisions. Violet, 77, had passed the eleven-plus exam but had not been able to take up her place at the grammar

school because her mother was opposed to it – ‘so that left me nowhere’. Coming from a working class family, she did not feel that university was an option later on. Similarly, Ann, 85, perceived that only the ‘posh kids’ went to university when she was a teenager, and Jim, 80, said that because of his ‘poor background’, university ‘wasn’t even thought of’: ‘It never even entered my head.’ It appeared that many of the older participants would have liked to have had the chance to access further or higher education as teenagers, but at the time there had been an expectation and need for them to earn money at the earliest opportunity instead. Nevertheless, some participants had later accessed training and obtained qualifications through their work, and had worked their way up, and a small number had pursued higher education later on in life. Only Claudia, 75, who had grown up in a working class family like the other participants, had been able to take up her place at the grammar school and then to move away to go to university.

The vast majority of participants aged over 60 had spent all their lives living in North East Lincolnshire. Five had moved away and returned, either during their childhood or as adults, due to a family member’s employment (two of whom were in the armed forces) or their own. Most participants had stayed in the local area having found work, married and started a family at a young age and in many cases bought a house. Participants expressed a strong sense of place attachment, referring to their coastal town as ‘home’, whether they had stayed all their lives or moved away and returned, often linked to strong family networks:

*‘When you’ve been away and you come back and you come back and see the Dock Tower, [you think] “I’m home”.’ (Mary, 70s)*

*‘I’m glad I came back. It was the right thing to do, definitely. I’ve got the same roots again, and more!’ (Claudia, 75)*

When asked what stopped them moving elsewhere, or what had kept them in North East Lincolnshire, female participants in their 70s replied that they were ‘used to this place’, it’s where their family were, ‘being safe’, ‘it’s a habit’, and not liking change. As one participant summarized: ‘I’ve never moved anywhere. Grimsby born and bred, and I’ll die here.’

### **Changes to educational and employment opportunities**

Older participants noted that educational and employment opportunities in the local area and beyond had changed significantly since they were teenagers in both negative and positive ways, largely because of wider (structural) changes, including deindustrialisation, globalisation and the expansion of higher education:

*‘The cod war really crippled Grimsby. [...] We’ve only got one trawler now. We used to have hundreds. When Birdseye shut down – they used to employ about 3000 people...’ (Stan, 73)*

*‘Obviously the total reliance on fishing, then there was the reliance on the frozen foods. Then the powers that be, in their infinite wisdom, farmed it all abroad, and you’re left with nothing. Now you’ve just got the offshore things – you’re fairly limited.’ (Vic, 70s)*

Older participants (and those in-between age groups) also recognised that the constraints of physical geography as a coastal town remain challenging. As Theo, 50, pointed out, ‘it is tough, you’re a long way from an awful lot of fantastic city opportunities.’ He added: ‘we’re at the end of the line, the end of services, the end of the roads, the end of the railway and to get to a lot of places you’ve got to be able to travel.’ Carol, 46, agreed: ‘there’s so much deprivation and so many people hard up living on the edge [...]. We’re at the end of the line for so many things.’

There was recognition that whilst there are now more opportunities to go to university and to move away to study and work, these opportunities were not equally available to all young people. For example, Jim, 80, remarked, *'I know that my granddaughter has worked very hard, gone to uni, earned her degree and is in work, good job. [But] whether that opportunity is there for all young people, I'm not sure.'* Older participants felt that although young people were less likely to take on physically demanding roles, such as in agriculture or on the docks, they faced new challenges that had not existed in the 1950s and 1960s, notably having to work through agencies and being constrained by 'zero hours contracts'. As Stan, 73, observed:

*'In our day, you could walk out of a job and go into another job – well, you can't do that now. And again, what's happened now, you see, agencies rule the roost. If you want a job, you've got to go through an agency – it's not a permanent job. A lot of them get zero hours contracts – that's awful.'*

One participant in her 40s noted that when she had worked at the council, *'you had a job for life and it was always there'* as a kind of 'comfort blanket' providing security and an income in case of ill health, but *'suddenly, everything changed and you're on short term contracts'* without any such protections. There was acknowledgement that the predominance of precarious and low paid work in the local area makes it difficult for young people today to earn enough money to buy or rent their own home, travel in the UK or abroad, or start a family. Jane, 76, noted that *'There is a lot of unemployment. And a lot of areas, people are very poor.'*

Some older participants felt there are 'no jobs' in the local area, whilst others observed that there may be 'enough' jobs but these are not necessarily secure or well paid. Some participants pointed out that young people may need to move away to cities where *'you get more opportunity, more choice, certainly for moving on and developing'* (Theo, 50). Jane, 76, noted, *'They have to go to university if they want to do something to better themselves. You've got to move away to get good jobs'* and added, *'It's very seldom that they move back to Grimsby.'*

The ability to take advantage of opportunities is shaped by access to personal, family and public resources, one of which is transport. This is discussed in the next section.

### **Accessing opportunities: transport**

A major challenge for many young participants growing up in North East Lincolnshire was accessing education, employment and leisure opportunities both within and beyond the borough. A widely used phrase was being 'at the end of the line': as for many coastal towns, it is difficult to reach other towns and cities without at least one change. Even getting to Hull, located across the Humber, was not straightforward.

There was a mix of views from young (and older) participants, however, about public transport within and out of the local area. Some were happy with the buses and trains, whilst others were frustrated. Ed, 17, felt that *'a lot of public transport in the area is in quite a good place at the minute'*. Dan, 23, felt it would be beneficial to *'expand the number of places you can get to from Grimsby'* by rail, which he described as *'very much a dead end from a rail standpoint'*. A support worker at an older people's focus group who joined in the discussion described transport as 'diabolical', with the local bus service and the trains being unreliable. Cars were seen as making a significant difference for those who had access to them. For people living outside of the main towns of Grimsby and Cleethorpes, there was a risk of isolation from services and leisure activities. However, even some of those with access to a

car felt cut off from other places. Luke, 17, described the community as an '*isolated part of the country*', explaining:

*'the roads out of here aren't great. You do sort of feel like it takes five hours to get out of the town. Nobody really wants to come here, it's quite hard to get here. It just feels like you're sort of your own little island.'*

The geographical challenges faced by coastal youth are one of the few factors that have not changed over time. Older participants recalling their youth in North East Lincolnshire reiterated the geographical limitations on travel to other places, particularly given the much lower levels of car ownership:

*'you were at the end of the line – I mean the end of the railway line. If you wanted to catch the train, you had to go to Doncaster to change. You were stuck in a corner of England that was sort of treated as an isolated area'* (Phil, 64)

Visits to places outside of the borough were usually by bus and to locations not very far away, such as Scunthorpe and Hull.

In summary, it was felt by participants of all ages that although educational opportunities and opportunities for social mobility may have expanded over time, young people today face new challenges and obstacles that did not exist in earlier decades, in particular the precarious nature of work. In addition, there was recognition from some participants that education and employment opportunities are not equally accessible to all. Whilst some young people were achieving good school qualifications and planned to move to cities to access higher education, develop specialised careers, and take advantage of diverse cultural activities, others seemed to have fewer options. 'Staying' posed the problem of limited access to work and study opportunities in the region due to geographical isolation and limited transport networks.

## 5. Residents' recommendations: What needs to change for young people in NE Lincolnshire

We asked participants what they felt needed to change in their coastal communities to improve opportunities for young people today. The main messages emerging from the research were that the local Council and key partners need to:

1. encourage young residents to choose to stay in the local area rather than moving away to pursue opportunities elsewhere;
2. improve access to opportunities for those who stay; and
3. position the borough as an attractive place to live, study and work for young people who live elsewhere.

To help young residents decide that they want to stay, or to choose to return after a period of living elsewhere, the borough needs to be a safe place offering exciting cultural and leisure opportunities, education and skills training which can be rewarding, fulfilling and provide pathways to secure and well-paid employment, as well as opportunities for building careers that are secure and well remunerated, across a range of sectors.

Young and older participants had multiple suggestions for how the council and key partners can achieve this. Figure 1 summarises the suggestions that emerged during the research.

**Figure 1: What needs to change to improve the community for young people?  
Research participants' recommendations**

### *More investment in physical infrastructure*

1. Renovate and invest in old buildings
2. Build new buildings
3. Create new attractions - give people a reason to visit
4. Improve public transport to increase access to, from and within the area
5. Make housing more affordable

### *More investment in education and employment*

1. Improve education, training and work opportunities for young people
2. Develop modern apprenticeships to help local people gain the skills needed by new industries
3. Establish local (prestigious) university to attract young people
4. Create work schemes for graduates
5. Offer better long-term, secure, high-paying job roles

### *More cultural venues and activities*

1. Cultural activities, events and sports for young people
2. Youth services and youth groups
3. Museums, bookshops and libraries
4. Cafes, restaurants and bars
5. Vibrant shops in town centre

### *More investment in public spaces*

1. Safer and cleaner parks and open spaces
2. Sociable areas
3. Places where young people can spend time and can feel safe
4. Youth centres and community centres
5. Theme parks

Additional recommendations which emerged from discussion of wider issues included tackling climate change (particularly relevant locally since the area is at high risk of flooding as a result of rising sea levels); educating young people about climate change, sustainability and recycling; and providing more support for people who are homeless. There were also calls for less violence and crime, less drug use, a reduction in unemployment, and less reliance on tourism.

Young participants argued that Grimsby needs to reinvent its identity. It was highlighted that Grimsby is still thought of as a fishing town, and is often associated with negative images in the news and wider media. Young people felt that work needs to be done to counteract the stereotypes which contribute to this negative reputation.

## 6. Conclusions and next steps

To conclude this report, we return to our three main research questions.

- *What do young people aged 16-25 and older people aged 60+ living in coastal towns in NE Lincolnshire see as the challenges for young people (past and present) of growing up where they live?*

As we have shown throughout the report, participants highlighted the lack of safe public spaces and places for young people growing up in North East Lincolnshire, and the lack of leisure opportunities and cultural activities. Participants identified geographical and transport-related barriers to further and higher education opportunities, creating obstacles to the development of the specialised skills needed in emerging industries in the local area and beyond. Participants emphasised the precarity and low pay of the non-specialised jobs that are available in the local area.

- *What opportunities and solutions do participants believe could help young people overcome these challenges?*

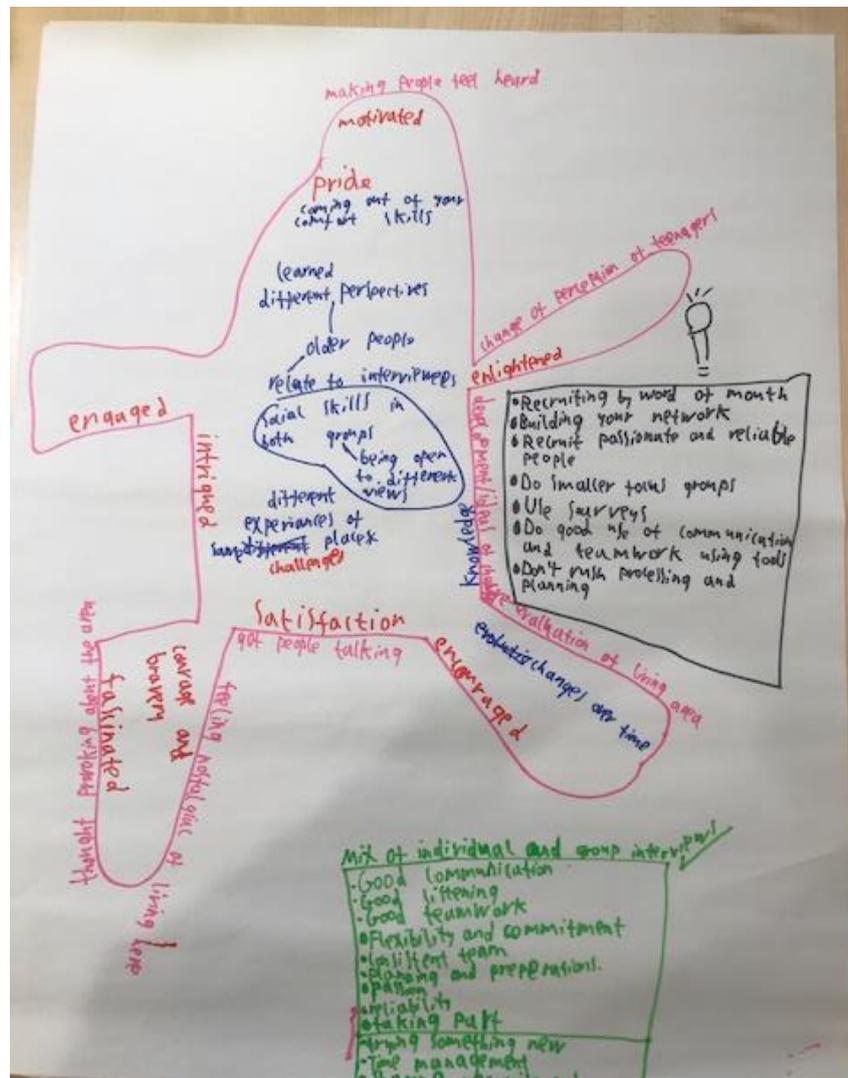
Participants identified a number of opportunities offered by living in a coastal town, including the natural landscape and the sense of connection and community. As indicated in the preceding section, 'What needs to change for young people in North East Lincolnshire?', participants also identified a range of solutions grouped around four broad themes. They would like local, regional and national decision-makers to focus on investing in physical infrastructure, investing in education and employment, developing more cultural venues and activities, and providing more safe public spaces.

- *How can co-production methodologies facilitate intergenerational dialogue on these issues and develop shared intergenerational understandings of the issues faced by young people in coastal towns?*

Bringing together young and older residents in the context of the research study provided unique opportunities for deep discussions and knowledge-sharing across the generations on this research topic. The young researchers (and, in mixed age focus groups, other young participants too) found out about older participants' experiences of being a teenager in the local area in the 1950s and 1960s, whilst older participants exchanged ideas with young researchers and participants about how experiences and services have changed over time. Sharing our findings will provide further opportunities for intergenerational conversations about what has changed, new challenges, and what needs to change to address these.

Our co-production approach, together with the use of participatory activities in our interviews and focus groups, has generated rich, in-depth data, enabling us to address our research questions. We will further analyse the data and will be writing about our contribution to existing bodies of (empirical and theoretical) knowledge in one or more academic journals, as well as blogposts.

**Image 7: Young Researchers' analysis of the impact of co-producing the research project – on them (inside the figure) and on others (outside) as well as key learning**



Moreover, taking a co-production approach to the research has generated benefits at an individual level and a community level, as well as contributing to methodological knowledge beyond the project. The regular surveys of the Young Researchers and the discussion at the data analysis workshop revealed that they felt their involvement had benefited them personally in terms of:

- social and research skills (e.g. organising and carrying out interviews, recruiting participants, developing participatory research methods, building rapport)
- positive feelings (examples included feeling motivated, proud, engaged, encouraged, enlightened, brave, making a positive contribution to the community)

- new knowledge (examples included learning about different perspectives, changes in young people's experiences over time, economic and social changes, information about the local area).

The Young Researchers also identified benefits of co-production to participants and to their community. These included enabling people to feel heard, provoking reflection on what needs to change in the area, changing perceptions of young people and potentially shaping policy and planning in the local area. We also discussed key learning from the project, which may help in the next iteration of the research study.

We have contributed to methodological knowledge beyond the project by sharing our learning along the way. We have presented our reflections on co-producing research at seminars and workshops, recorded videos and written blogposts (please see full list of outputs in Appendix 2) and plan to produce a short report.

We are also creating a short video about our findings in relation to growing up in a coastal town, as well as an infographic and a shorter report, which we will share with local stakeholders and online.

A significant outcome of this project is its contribution to a much larger funding bid to the ESRC, which has been successful, enabling the scaling up of this important research within North East Lincolnshire and in five new sites across the UK. The team are looking forward to the next stages of the research.

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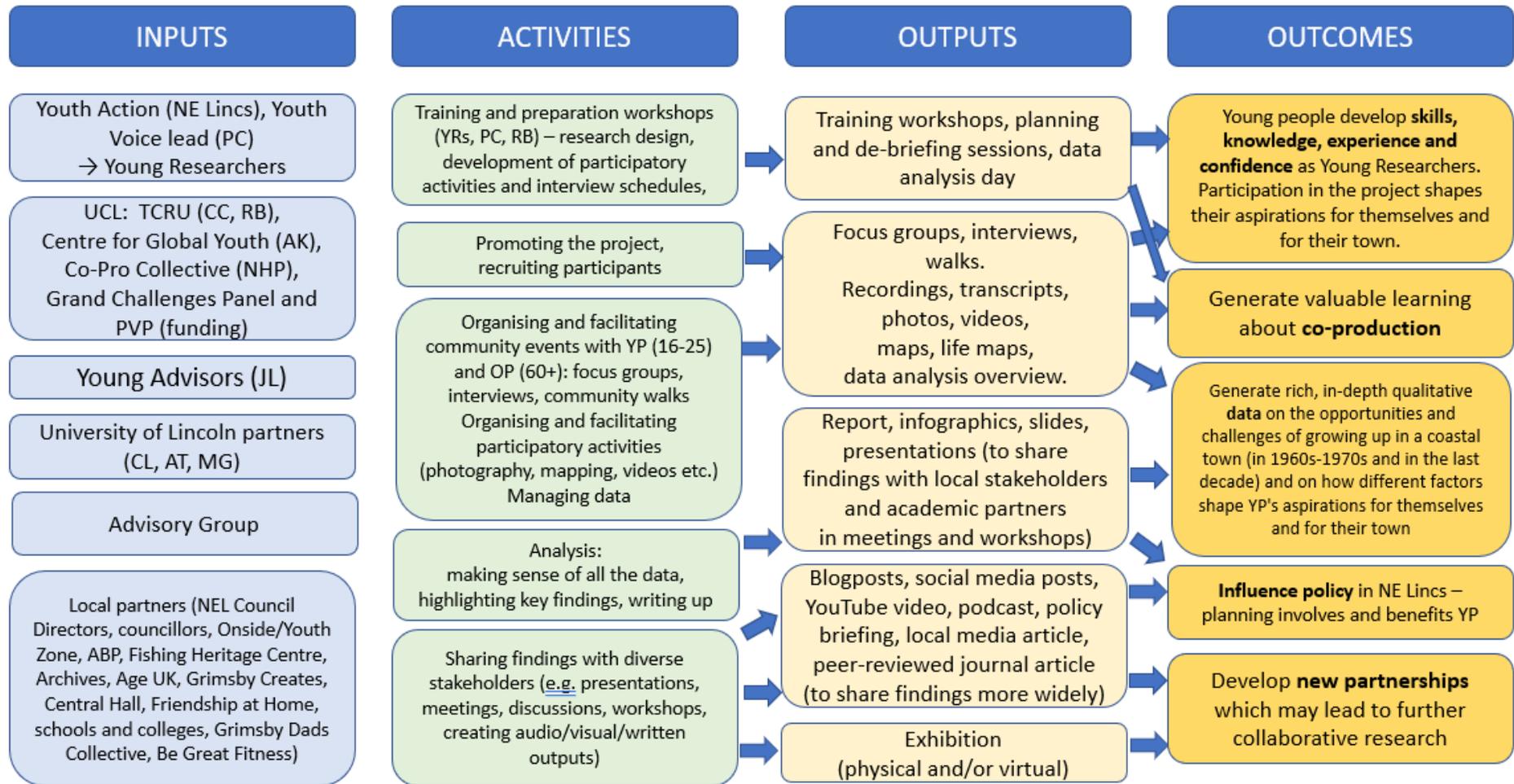
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## Appendix 1: Theory of Change (Phase 2 of the study)



## Appendix 2: Research outputs

### Blogposts/webpages

Benchekroun, R. (2022) [Opportunities, aspirations and mobilities for coastal youth: emerging findings](#), *UCL Centre for Global Youth* (Published online 11/11/22)

Benchekroun, R. and Curtin, P. (2022a) [Researching with young people in coastal towns: What have we learned about co-production with young people?](#), *UCL Centre for Global Youth* (Published online 10/03/22)

Benchekroun, R. and Curtin, P. (2022b) [Intergenerational perspectives on growing up in coastal towns: a new project on coastal youth experiences](#), *UCL Centre for Global Youth* (Published online 08/04/22)

NE Lincs Council (2022) [Growing up in a coastal community!](#), *NE Lincolnshire Council* (Published online 13/05/22)

### Presentations/workshops

Benchekroun, R. (2022) Intergenerational perspectives on growing up in coastal towns (18/10/22) (*UCL Thomas Coram Research Unit – presentation at Childhood and Children’s Services Cluster*)

Benchekroun, R., Cameron, C and Curtin, P. (2022) The contributions and challenges of co-producing research, *Grand Challenges: Removing Boundaries*, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/grand-challenges/partnerships/removing-boundaries> (28/06/22)

Benchekroun, R. and Curtin, P. (2022) Postcards from a coastal town: The contributions and challenges of co-producing research with young people (part of webinar: Placemaking, exploring spaces and places with young people, BERA Researching Youth – Methods Seminar Series) <https://www.bera.ac.uk/event/placemaking-exploring-spaces-and-places-with-young-people> (24/05/22)

### Multi-media

Co-Pro Stories (2022) – extracts from interviews with Molly, Pippa and Rachel:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2d6mfxwpsDE&list=PL1vtHOjD7gN0zv69hASCuk6wfgHC4yrSq&index=70>
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e\\_WAAwaA9fQ&list=PL1vtHOjD7gN0zv69hASCuk6wfgHC4yrSq&index=71](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_WAAwaA9fQ&list=PL1vtHOjD7gN0zv69hASCuk6wfgHC4yrSq&index=71)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qE6DJs7bdY&list=PL1vtHOjD7gN0zv69hASCuk6wfgHC4yrSq&index=72>

Radio interview (Pippa Curtin interviewed by Kofi Smiles on BBC Radio Humberside on 19/05/22 (mins from 10 1:18:20) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0c3sm8m>