



Youth Board Impact Report 2025-2026

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1. Introduction

The Youth Board is a group of young wheelchair users who each represent a different area of the UK. Meeting several times a year, both in person and online, they make sure their voices are at the heart of every decision Whizz Kidz makes.

This report will detail just some of the projects the Youth Board have worked on this year and the wider impact this has had, both for Whizz Kidz and the Youth Board, and for the wider disability advocacy landscape in the UK.



There are currently 13 members of the Youth Board, as we said goodbye to Caitlyn at the end of March 2026.



Abigail



Alice



Alex



Amber



Ava



Caitlyn



Charlie



Emily



Laura



Philippa



Poppy



Rebecca



Rue



Tomos

2. Youth Board Manifesto

In 2023, the Youth Board formally launched their manifesto. The manifesto shares the key issues that the Youth Board stand for and the issues that mean the most to them. It expresses what they believe and the changes they would like to see. Their manifesto includes for priorities:

- **Priority 1 – Employment**
- **Priority 2 – Education**
- **Priority 3 - Travel**
- **Priority 4 – Accessibility**

This report centres around the four manifesto pledges, as well as exploring the Youth Board's online presence and awards and accolades in 2025-2026.

3. Employment

3.1 Youth Futures Foundation

The Youth Futures Foundation are the national What Works Centre for youth employment, with a specific focus on marginalised young people. Their vision is a society where every young person can achieve good work. They aim to do this by finding and generating high-quality evidence to better understand youth unemployment and inactivity and solutions to address this. The Youth Futures Foundation have significant influence in the Youth employment space. In 2024, they received eight mentions in Government White and Green Papers, engaged 1000 employers with their evidence to embed inclusive practice, and saw more than 9,000 users access their Youth Employment Toolkit.

Through their Youth Employment Group, the Foundation feeds into Government the issues faced by young people accessing work. They are the Secretariat for the APPG for Youth Employment. Amber and Rebecca attended to explain the Making the Grade research and report and its recommendations, particularly around the importance of supporting wheelchair users in work placement opportunities and into higher education. They discussed barriers faced during the transition period from secondary to tertiary education and work and how these could be improved.

3.2 The King's Trust Lunch and Learn

The King's Trust believes that every young person should have the chance to succeed, no matter their background or the challenges they are facing. They help young people from disadvantaged communities and those facing the greatest adversity by supporting them to build the confidence and skills to live, learn and earn.

The Youth Board were invited to speak at a colleague meeting at the Kings Trust to showcase wheelchair users working in the sector. They explained adaptations that could be made including during the recruitment process and after someone starts employment.

Ella and Poppy described their experiences of work and the barriers they faced and gave solutions as to how these could have been overcome. The King's Trust have supported over 1.3 million young people across the UK, making this a key influencing moment for the Youth Board.

4. Education

4.1 Making the Grade Launch, Resources and Webinar

On the 5 June 2025, the Youth Board launched their Making the Grade report, which shared recommendations for making the school experience more accessible and inclusive for young wheelchair users. The report is based on more than 200 survey responses from both young wheelchair users and their families and from school colleagues.



The launch event took place in Portcullis House and brought together Members of Parliament, education professionals, and disability advocates to address the inequalities facing young wheelchair users in the UK education system. Youth Board Members Caitlin, Rebecca and Amber spoke at the event and drew cross-party attention, with several MPs committed to championing the report's recommendations in Parliament.

Making the grade
Youth Board Report for Young People

01

Only 10% said they had received wheelchair skills training in the last 12 months and only 15% said they had received training on supporting young wheelchair users.

In another question, only 51% of people who work in schools said they had received enough training to support young wheelchair users. Meanwhile, only 41% of young wheelchair users thought people at their school have had enough training to support them and only 31% of young people said people at their school understood their needs. This is a significant gap: how can we expect school colleagues to support young wheelchair users when no standard training is provided?

When young wheelchair users were asked what training they thought would help school colleagues to support young wheelchair users, the main topics were:

- Understanding young wheelchair users and their needs
- Specific training around disability awareness
- Basic understanding of wheelchair users and wheelchair maintenance

When school colleagues were asked what training they thought would help the majority of responses from mainstream schools were wheelchair skills training (including opportunities to have a go at using a wheelchair to understand lived experience), general training about the best ways to support young wheelchair users and understanding specific needs.

Some people also said they would like more information around how to adapt or make the curriculum, and specifically PE, more inclusive.

02

Language

Only 67% of young wheelchair users said school colleagues speak to them in a respectful way, nearly a third of responses said 'some' school colleagues speak to them in a respectful way and unfortunately 4% said school colleagues do not speak to them in a respectful way.

Meanwhile only 30% of school colleagues said that they know the preferred terminology when talking to young wheelchair users and 31% said they did not know the preferred terminology when talking to young wheelchair users.

"I feel that some people at my school treat the child differently to others e.g. the way they talk to them, like they are much younger but it's their physical ability that's different not their age. It's frustrating because I work very hard with the child to push their boundaries and others don't."
(School colleague survey, mainstream school)

Recommendations

We think the following would make things better in school.

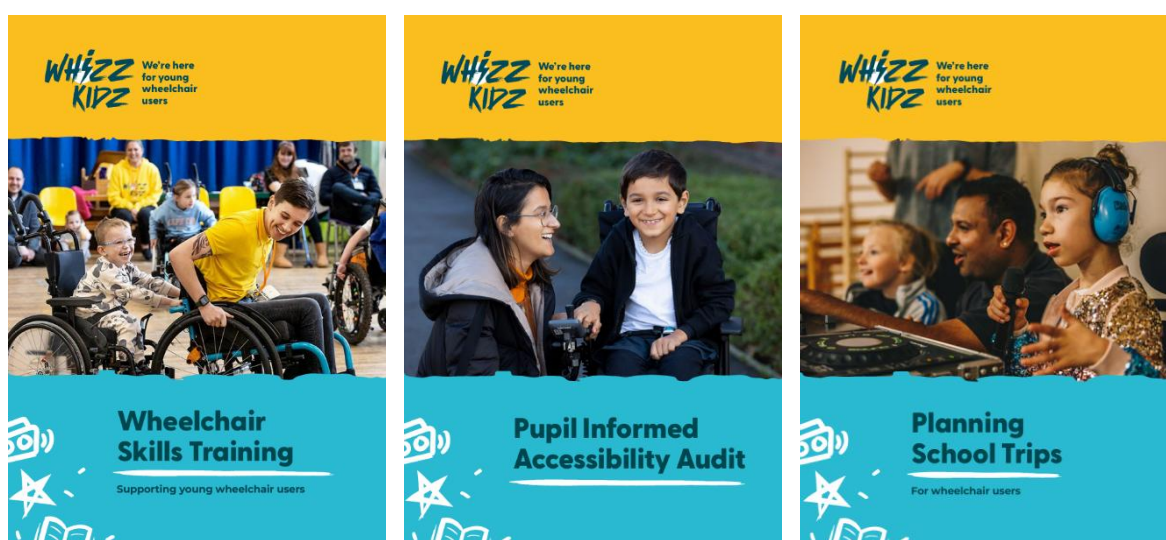
- All school colleagues should be provided with training on how to best support young wheelchair users within their setting. This will ensure schools move beyond accessibility towards equity and inclusion. Best practice examples and case studies should be provided demonstrating a whole school approach implementing appropriate language, approach and awareness of individual needs and preferences of the young wheelchair user.
- Young wheelchair users should be offered wheelchair skills training within their setting and support on how to advocate for themselves to enable them to receive the best education possible.
- Schools should develop an established process for the sharing and updating of information pertaining to young people's needs with all school colleagues. This process should be reviewed annually to ensure it is working and fit for purpose.

“We believe inclusive education isn't just a moral obligation — it's a social and economic imperative. Better access now means more disabled young people

progressing into higher education, employment, and active citizenship. We can help make that happen.” – Youth Board at the launch event.

To supplement the report and provide some solutions to the issues raised within it, the Youth Board then created some guidance resources to support school colleagues in including young wheelchair users in school. The resources cover a variety of topics such as accessibility, wheelchair skills, planning school trips and inclusive PE. The resources were debuted at an online webinar with more than 40 education professionals in attendance. The Youth Board discussed the key take aways from the report, shared some of their personal school experiences and introduced the resources they had created.

“ ‘Hearing lived experiences has been invaluable. I will be listening carefully to the young people I work with to help them avoid some of the issues raised during the session. [It will] increase staff awareness and confidence through training and support.’ – Webinar Attendee



4.2 Other Education work

- **Westminster Insights Forum:** Rebecca presented at the Westminster Insights Forum as part of a panel discussion, talking about access to education for young wheelchair users and the barriers faced. Crucially, Rebecca highlighted that it doesn't always have to cost money to improve education – sometimes it is about perceptions of wheelchair users and training for school colleagues and other pupils.
- **Festival of Education:** Amber attended the Festival of Education joining the panel at the event to discuss accessing education as a wheelchair user where she presented the findings of the Making the Grade report. The Festival of Education host over 300 speakers and over a thousand attendees.
- **Kidz to Adultz Wales and West:** Alex joined the Whizz Kidz team to present the Making the Grade research and share its recommendations. There were around 30 delegates in the audience – both professionals and families.

- **Fair Education Alliance Youth Summit:** Emily attended the Fair Education Alliance's Youth Summit where 150 young people congregated to share their views around education and policy work. Emily was introduced to Zack Polanski, leader of the Green Party, at the event too.
- **Twinkl:** The Youth Board welcomed Pete Hamblin from Twinkl, a publishing company specialising in books and resources for schools, at one of their quarterly Youth Board weekends. The Board are supporting with chapter reviews and content for a new Key Stage Two book which will be published later in 2026. Twinkl serves more than 6 million customers and offers over 1.5 million resources via its website. 5. Travel

5. Travel

5.1 BBC Coverage on Buses

Rebecca and Alice represented the Youth Board and Whizz Kidz on BBC One London evening news in January 2026 where they talked about wheelchair priority spaces.



By law, wheelchair users have priority in these spaces – it is the only safe space that they can travel in on the bus. Despite this, there had been some incidents in London where this ruling had not been enforced; more than 1,500 complaints had been made to Transport for London about buses being accessible to wheelchair users in just the past three years. Rebecca highlighted the need for more awareness amongst the public and better training for drivers.

“It makes you want to not travel, which then obviously restricts your social life and your work life and opportunities. Having someone with a position of authority to state what the rules are can really help.”

As of 2024, BBC One remains the most-watched television channel in the UK, with a 55% reach of viewership.

5.2 Beyond Fare Event

In December 2025, Whizz Kidz hosted the Beyond Fare Event with Tom Gordon MP in Parliament. More than 20 organisations were represented on the day – from Transport for London to Guide Dogs UK to the Disability Policy Centre – and 10 MPs called into the event too.

Alice, Rue and Amber from the Youth Board shared some of their own experiences around bus travel, whilst Bus Users UK, and Transport for All each shared research from their own organisations. Wokingham Borough Council talked through the changes they made to offer free any time travel. The move was largely down to the council listening and acting on the feedback shared by disabled residents living in in the Borough.



Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, shared that the two pilots carried out in Manchester had been a success and said Manchester hoped to implement the change full time should funding allow. Since the event, it has been announced Manchester will make all bus travel free for disabled pass holders at all times of day from 1 March 2026.

5.3 Other Travel work

- **National Centre for Accessible Transport:** Rebecca attended the National Centre for Accessible Transport Commission meeting in the House of Lords. The session focused on the Railways Bills which was being debated in Parliament by MPs at the time.
- **Access and Inclusion Briefing:** Rebecca attended an online Access and Inclusion briefing for Regent Street and Haymarket where she was able to share views on pedestrian access on behalf of the Youth Board.
- **GWR Accessibility Review:** Amber attended a GWR accessibility review at Cheltenham Spa to look at new station plans. Cheltenham Spa train station had 2.4 million entries and exits in 2024/25.
- **Rail Delivery Group:** Rue accompanied the Minister for Railways, Lord Henty, on a journey with the CEO of the Rail Delivery Group Jac Starr. There was an issue on arrival with ramps and so it demonstrated first-hand the need for a review of the processes and systems of booking. Rail Delivery Group is the British rail industry membership body that brings together all passenger and freight rail companies, Network Rail and HS2.
- **Transport for Wales:** Alex joined the Transport for Wales panel representing young wheelchair users. He attends regular meetings offering insight into the barriers

young people face in travel. He also completes site visits to review new designs and accessibility features to provide feedback.

6. Accessibility

6.1 A-Z guide for Tesco

Through our ongoing partnership with Tesco and the Accessible Supermarket Forum, the Youth Board have worked closely to develop an A-Z Guide for in store colleagues about working with wheelchair users.

It offers useful hints and tips on how to work with wheelchair users across all stores – from smaller Tesco Express shops to larger Tesco Extra stores – and promotes independent shopping. It explains where the barriers are so that colleagues can help shoppers more effectively. The guide has been launched on their internal training platform which is available to their 340,000 colleagues across 3,000 stores on the UK.



The guide covers everything from assistance dogs to baskets and checkouts to recruitment for new colleagues.

6.2 Better Places: Anthony and Wheeliam's Street

Better Places are a series of children's picture books, learning resources and content to help children think about how places can be made better for disabled people. They offer a fun, light-hearted and interactive insight into the everyday barriers that disabled people face, with the opportunity for the reader to put them right. Ben Andrews, the author of Better Places series Anthony and Wheeliam's Street, has been working in partnership with the Youth Board for some time. As a non-wheelchair user, Ben reached out to Whizz Kidz for feedback on the text and illustrations.

In March 2026, Ben joined the Youth Board at their Youth Board Weekend to think about what could come next now the book has been



published. They looked at how they could develop learning resources and school visit experiences linked to the book, with the Youth Board potentially facilitating with their own lived experiences. Ben and the Youth Board plan to continue working together, refining their ideas and bringing greater awareness and understanding about disability to young people.

“A big thanks to the Youth Board for being so open with their contributions, insights and helping to get Anthony and Wheeliam’s Street to the place it is” – Ben Andrews

6.3 Other Accessibility work

- **Hey Duggee:** The Youth Board met and collaborated with the team at Hey Duggee, a popular pre-school children’s animated TV series, looking at the designs for their new character who is a wheelchair user. Six of the Board members provided written feedback on this. Hey Duggee has been streamed 1.36 billion times on the iPlayer platform alone, indicating its considerable popularity.
- **Tesco Digital Accessibility Conference:** Ella and Alex spoke at the Tesco Digital Conference about the accessibility of technology in stores.
- **National Youth Strategy:** The Government launched the National Youth Strategy which would be co-designed with young people. The Youth Board discussed the consultation as a group and contributed their ideas and feedback into our organisational response.
- **Halfords:** The Board provided constructive feedback to Halfords to help ensure their services and products work better for wheelchair users.

7. Online Presence

On the Whizz Kidz website, the Youth Board web page has received 931 visits. Additionally, their reports and documents have been downloaded widely:

- The Making the Grade report was downloaded 90 times.
- The Youth Board Manifesto was downloaded 78 times.
- The A-Z of Going to University was downloaded 72 times.
- The Youth Board Recruitment pack was downloaded 63 times.
- The Beyond Fare report was downloaded 57 times.

Whether as a group or as individuals, the Youth Board have featured a total of four articles on the website, with articles on their Making the Grade parliamentary launch, their A-Z guide and the Hear by Right approach.

Over on the Whizz Kidz social media, the Youth Board have featured in several posts over the course of 2025-2026. The table below shows the success of just some of the posts and the reach they garnered.

Post	Facebook Views	Facebook Engagements	Instagram Views	Instagram Engagements
Caitlyn's goodbye	2,841	49	2,904	48
Ava's introduction	4,998	52	1,322	54
Rue's story	3,666	31	903	36
Poppy's introduction	2,354	30	1,017	28
Amber's story	12,564	77	1,521	54
Youth Board Meeting	2,684	27	2,693	48
Youth Board and Tesco	2,232	38	3,452	77
Rue Rail Travel	3,055	51	2,272	74
Making the Grade	1,275	25	1,300	45
Message from the Youth Board	1,157	15	685	14