



Durham Youth Council

UK Youth Parliament Election

Candidates

2024/2026



Durham Youth Council

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Contents

Candidate List	03
Candidate Manifestos	04
Voting Information	13
Important Information	14
Ballot Form	15
Contact Information	16

Here are your UK Youth Parliament Election Candidates 2024/2026

Alfie Dixon Clark
Chloe Starbuck
Caitlin Richards
Lucas Wainwright
Maanashi Raj
Thomas Leyland
Rafael Bethapudi
Piotr Stelmaszczyk
Charlotte Foster

QR codes to video versions of each candidates' manifestos can be found in the top corner of their manifesto pages, or you can watch a playlist of them all here:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLip2e-dBIRJeb6Gm8CAFZxo4w5aq41g1Q>





Alfie Dixon Clark

Introduction

Hello there! My name is **Alfie Dixon-Clark** and I am 16 years old. I am running for the position of Member of Youth Parliament because I believe young people everywhere have a **voice that deserves to be heard** no matter what.

My experience and skills

I have developed experience in **public speaking** as I have given speeches many times for nearly 4 years and since I was 8, I had been running my own homework support group.

In person I only speak when it's necessary which also makes me a **good listener**.

I believe this makes me an ideal candidate because I will easily be able to listen to you and **pass on your message**.

What I plan to do if elected

If elected I would aim to:

1. **Provide a voice** for young people to be heard and deliver their messages.
2. **Help** young people to feel **safe and happy** across the Northeast. I am very passionate about having a **bright and hopeful future** and to be able to achieve this we must start in the present to **feel protected and accepted** everywhere we go.
3. **Encourage** young people like me to not underestimate themselves and to have more **confidence** in their own ability despite any prejudice opinions others may have against them.

Closing statement

I think these aims will have a positive impact on young people because it is so, so, sooo important that your generation has a voice that can be heard and it does matter.

Thank you for reading my manifesto and feel free to get in contact me with any question about my ideas by contacting me at Durham Youth Council via our Facebook (County Durham Youth Council) or email address youthvoice@durham.gov.uk



Chloe Starbuck

Introduction

Hi everyone, my name is Chloe Starbuck and I'm running to be one of County Durham's Members of Youth Parliament (MYP) because I am passionate about making sure YOU have a voice. I believe that we are all entitled to an opinion, regardless of race, religion, sexuality, gender or background. We are the future, and we need to make our voices heard.

My experience and skills

In Youth Council, I've worked on lots of projects, including the Big Debate; I am a team player and always listen to everyone and I am not afraid to stand up for what is important to us.

Overall, I have been given the opportunity to help and provide positive changes across the County for all young people. I will never be afraid to stand up for what is right, and what truly matters.

What I plan to do if elected

- Cost of living crisis – I am keen to hear how the cost of living crisis is affecting you, and I am eager to support young people through it. This includes ensuring young people have access to free sanitary products in school and a good standard of meals.
- Mental health – 3 in 4 young people experiencing mental health problems aren't receiving the care they need and deserve. If elected, I will raise awareness of mental health issues and provide support for young people.
- Spaces for young people – I intend to improve spaces for all young people to socialise, learn and develop skills, for example, music and art.

Closing statement

Thank you so much for taking the time to read my manifesto! I hope you consider me to be your Member of Youth Parliament. Please feel free to get in touch with me if you have any questions via our Facebook (County Durham Youth Council) or email address

youthvoice@durham.gov.uk



Caitlin Richards

Introduction

Hello! My name is Caitlin Richards, I'm 15 years old and attend Wolsingham School. As a young person, I know that we can be misunderstood by those in positions of authority, which is something I am keen to challenge. I want to make positive, impactful changes by listening to the young people in our communities. We deserve for our voice to be heard and I am determined to make this happen as a Member of Youth Parliament.

My experience and skills

I have been a member of Durham Youth Council since it was first set up in 2020. Through this, I took a leadership role in our team for 'A Big Debate'- an event at County Hall Chambers for Y5 students to learn about debating, and gain confidence. This helped us understand what is important to Y5 students, and we took these insights and used them to inform the direction of campaigns and projects. I am the editor of our Durham Youth Council newsletter and I work hard to have an understanding of all of our campaigns and events, and I truly care about raising awareness of who we are as a youth council, and what we do. In school, I am a Prefect and Student Leader, and I take part in our annual musicals and showcases.

I have gained experience communicating and working with young people through my participation in these things. I feel confident that I can accurately represent the young people of our County on a national level as I am organised, hard working and passionate. These are traits I believe are important for a Member of Youth Parliament to have.

What I plan to do if elected

- Raise awareness of the work done by Durham Youth Council in a way which will be accessible, and well-received by young people, such as through social media. This will allow more people to be informed of what we are doing for them, and how they can get involved with us.
- Continue organising 'A Big Debate' annually, to encourage children involved to grow in confidence, and develop their communication and critical thinking skills. I also want to provide other opportunities for young people to develop important life skills. Along with benefiting them, this will give us a better understanding of what those in our community want and need from us as a Youth Council
- Create accessible mental health resources for young people, made by young people, following a consultation. This will help us understand how to help those who need it. This will include a campaign that will be shared on social media and in schools/youth groups

I have chosen these as my priorities as I believe they will provide plenty of support and good opportunities for the young people of our county. My main aim is to ensure that every young person is not just listened to, but understood.

Closing statement

Voting for me means voting for a candidate who genuinely cares about the young people of the County, somebody who wants all voices to be heard. Every decision I make will be made in the interest of you, the young people of County Durham. I hope you consider voting for me for Durham's next Member of Youth Parliament. If you have any questions regarding my manifesto, email me at YouthVoice@durham.gov.uk



Lucas Wainwright

Introduction

Hey Durham! I'm Lucas, and I'm eager to be your next MYP. Why? Because every young person deserves a voice in decisions that shape our lives. With your vote, let's make our opinions heard at every level, from those managing our schools to those running our country.

My experience and skills

About me: at age 3, I lost my left foot in an accident. It was a tough start, but it fuelled my determination to overcome challenges and embrace life with a positive outlook. I want to bring that same resilience to the issues we face and make a positive impact.

As a young leader at SG Forest School, I've connected with diverse individuals and contributed to a better environment. I take pride in fostering inclusivity, ensuring everyone feels valued, and enjoy seeing the positive impact of the outdoors on their mental well-being. Through various challenges, including conquering the O2 London arena for LimbPower and participating in the Newcastle Sleep Out for the SVP, I've raised funds for important causes. In recognition of my voluntary contributions, I recently received an Angel Award from MP Liz Twist.

My journey so far has shaped me into an empathic leader with excellent communication and problem-solving skills. Active roles in the school council and SVP group have sharpened my public speaking and teamwork amidst diverse personalities. I firmly believe that these qualities make me an ideal candidate.

What I plan to do if elected

Elect me as your next MYP, and I will champion:

Affordable, Safe, and Accessible Recreation to Tackle Growing Youth Social Isolation: Let's make fun, healthy activities accessible to all! I'm passionate about affordable options like sports centres and free access for kids during holidays. We'll highlight cool outdoor spaces, clubs, and promote 'Exergamer' activities. Let's spread the word in local media about how these spaces boost well-being and bring our community together for a safer, more exciting place.

Personal Development and Life Skills to Empower Your Future Aspirations and Decisions: I'm passionate about ensuring you are well-informed and prepared for your future. Join me in navigating the changing landscape, where AI and the expanding Northeast space industry play a significant role. Through social media, initiatives, and local collaboration, let's shed light on accessing opportunities, embracing development, and promoting lifelong learning. I'll also focus on vital life skills like personal finance, investment, and work experience. Together, let's pave the way for a future where youth thrive in a dynamic world.

Anti-Bullying Initiatives, Safe Spaces, and Improved Facilities for SEND Students: I'm all about making schools safe and welcoming for everyone! Let's advocate for better support and resources, let's normalise safe spaces. We'll collaborate with schools and groups, promoting inclusivity, mental well-being, peer support, and addressing bullying both online and in the classroom. Let's engage directly with students to understand their experiences and concerns, shaping policies to address the challenges faced by those who may feel vulnerable in school.

Closing statement

While these issues are close to my heart, I'm eager to hear your thoughts, promote the issues that matter most to you. Your opinions will guide me in the work I commit to, if elected. I'm here to represent your voice and turn your aspirations for a better future into action.

Remember, your vote for me is a vote for a stronger youth voice in Durham.

Together, let's make a difference.



Maanashi Raj

Introduction

Hi, my name is Maanashi, and I'm running for the position of MYP because I care a lot about how we, as young people, should have a say when it comes to issues which impact us. I think it's important that we can have control over decisions affecting our generation, because young people are the future, and it is only right to give those in power our perspective.

My experience and skills

I've been a member of Durham Youth Council since 2021, therefore having lots of experience in working with other young people to encourage positive change. I've also had leadership roles at my school and worked on various projects for my local community. In addition, I've built on my teamwork skills and resilience after years of being a swimmer and dancer. These skills are essential for me to work hard and communicate ideas effectively with other MYPs.

What I plan to do if elected

If elected, I would aim to:

1. Help support young people in taking care of their physical and mental well-being.
2. Raise awareness of current environmental issues in the UK.
3. And of course, share your views and what you think are the greatest issues which need to be faced.

I think these aims will have a positive impact on young people because issues concerning Health and the Environment have shown to be ones that you, the young people of County Durham, find most relevant. This is based off the results of the last Make Your Mark Ballot.

If you vote for me as MYP, I will ensure a brighter tomorrow for all young people.

Closing statement

Thank you for reading my manifesto, and I hope you consider me for your MYP of County Durham. Feel free to get in contact with me to ask any questions about my ideas by contacting me at Durham Youth Council either via our Facebook (County Durham Youth Council) or email address youthvoice@durham.gov.uk



Thomas Leyland

Introduction

Hi, I'm Tom Leyland and I'm running to be our County's Member of UK Youth Parliament. I feel that County Durham's young people deserve to have their ideas, opinions and concerns elevated to a national level and if I am elected as a member of the Youth Parliament they will.

My experience and skills

To be an effective Youth Parliament member you require strong communication, teamwork skills and the ability to action change.

I've honed my teamwork and leadership skills throughout my years of being an Air Cadet, competed in multiple public speaking competitions and I'm a founding member of the Durham Youth Council and its Young Inspectors program which have brought great change for County Durham's young people. All of these have given me years of experience of the core attributes required to be a successful member and this paired with my resilience, confidence and an eye for detail allows for your needs to be thoroughly acted upon with a vote for me.

What I plan to do if elected

- Ensure practical improvements in support for all young people in their post 16 and post 18 decisions.
- Work to greatly improve the reliability, accessibility and overall quality of County Durham's public transport.
- Most of all, encourage and cultivate a county where, in all possible aspects, young people will form important changes now and in the future.

These specific plans have been decided because not only do they identify some of the largest challenges in the county but also follow some of the greatest issues young people have voted on nationally in 'Make Your Mark'. Voting for me enables tangible improvements in areas that truly matter to you.

Closing statement

Thank you for your time. It's important that we have our voices heard nationally through passionate and determined young people. If you have any questions feel free to contact me via youthvoice@durham.gov.uk or our Facebook ([County Durham Youth Council | Facebook](#)).

Thank you for voting. And have a good day.



Rafael Bethapudi

Introduction

Hello, my name is Rafael Bethapudi, and I am running as a candidate for Member of Youth Parliament, and as one of the representatives of the many young people across County Durham. Currently, I attend St. Leonard's Secondary School and enjoy several extracurricular activities, such as playing for cricket teams and playing multiple instruments. I truly believe that we, the younger generation, are at the cutting edge of change, and our voices matter the most; we cannot watch on the side-lines as those who are older than us make decisions for young people, which affects us the most.

My experience and skills

As I have been a member of a cricket team for almost 7 years now, I have grown and developed in the spirit of teamwork and can take on the role of a leader. Additionally, I have been elected as a member of my school's council twice, again proving that I have what it takes to step up and assume a position of leadership.

What I plan to do if elected

If I were to be elected, I would primarily focus on achieving these 3 goals:

Firstly, acting as a bridge between the younger generation and those in a place to make change, to ensure that our voices, views and opinions are being heard. Secondly, working to improve opportunities for young people in the form of democracy and debating, therefore enabling us to discuss, and share what we are passionate about with one another, and the many across the country. Thirdly, I would aim to make young people more prominent in the community, whether that be by seeking that before changes, we should be consulted, or, when decisions are being carried out, we young adults can be involved in taking things further, and improving what has already been decided.

Closing statement

I look forward to your vote, and remember, as a candidate for MYP, I am your candidate, your representative, working for our common goals. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at youthvoice@durham.gov.uk



Piotr Stelmaszczyk

Introduction

Hi, I'm Peter Stelmaszczyk, a 17-year-old student at Durham Johnston Sixth Form. The reason I'm running for Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) for County Durham is simple: I want to see a positive change in the lives of young people, and I believe that through my forementioned experiences of running various events and societies, I possess the necessary qualities of confidence and leadership which make me the best candidate for this position – I hope your vote can help me achieve this goal.

My experience and skills

I'm passionate about Music and Martial Arts, having significant experience myself when it comes to piano and judo. I find that sports and musical instruments are both great ways for young people to learn how to confidently express themselves, while having fun as well as gaining beneficial skills such as determination and time management.

My experience as a member of the County Durham Youth Council and the Sixth Form Head Student team have allowed me to develop my communication, teamwork and listening skills, allowing me to effectively be a voice for my community. I also run multiple clubs and societies at my school which often require planning and preparing events, overall further improving my organisation skills.

What I plan to do if elected

These will be my top three priorities after being elected:

- Improving the availability of enriching extracurricular and super-curricular activities within County Durham for young people to discover and get involved in, because **everyone deserves the opportunity to try new experiences.**
- Increasing the awareness and support for mental health in schools and local communities by establishing a peer support training scheme, because **everyone deserves to be helped.**
- Most importantly, listening to the current needs of **you**, the young people of County Durham, because **everyone deserves to be heard.**

Closing statement

Thank you for taking the time to read my manifesto.

I hope that my words have helped you make a clearer decision for which candidate is the best choice and convinced you to vote for me and give me the opportunity to show you how much of a positive impact I can make.

If you have any questions for me about any of my ideas, feel free to contact me either via Facebook at County Durham Youth Council or email: youthvoice@durham.gov.uk



Charlotte Foster

Introduction

Hi, my name is Charlotte Foster, and I am currently in year 11 at St Leonard's. I am running for the position of Member of Youth Parliament for County Durham. You might be aware that over recent years young people have gradually become more involved in decision making. In this role I will strive to make sure that your voices are not just heard but listened to.

My experience and skills

I have a variety of skills, which I have acquired through my time on County Durham Youth Council. I joined the Youth Council when I was in year 7 and since then I have been involved in several projects relating to topics such as mental health, the environment, history, politics, and public services for young people. All of these consultations and projects have given me a rounded perspective on the issues affecting young people in County Durham.

What I plan to do if elected

I am passionate about schools providing young people with the skills they need for life not just academic grades. This is why when I am elected, I will prioritize:

- Improving Education and Learning for young people.
- Ensuring young people have better knowledge of Jobs, the Economy, and Benefits.
- Improving young people's awareness, knowledge, and their access to Culture, Media, and Sport.

The aim of these objectives is to make sure every young person leaves mandatory education with the knowledge, skills, and experience they require to feel confident and prepared for life beyond education.

Closing statement

Thank you for taking the time to read my manifesto. I am sure you will agree that our time spent in education needs to better prepare us for the world beyond education. If you have any thoughts, ideas, or suggestions I would love to hear from you. Please get in touch using the email below:

youthvoice@durham.gov.uk

Voting Information

Our elections for the next Members of Youth Parliament, MYP, will be happening in 2024.

The MYPs represent young people of County Durham in the houses of Parliament.

They represent young people regionally and nationally.

The number of MYPs a local area qualify for, is dependent on the percentage of the population in that area that are young people. County Durham has a high proportion of young people; therefore, we have 3 MYPs that remain in office for 2 years.

MYPs are aged 11-18 years old, to run for MYP for County Durham, a young person must, live, attend school, work or volunteer in County Durham and be a member of Durham Youth Council. New members to Durham Youth Council are eligible to run in the MYP elections, regardless of how long they have been a DYC Councillor, if they haven't missed any manifesto or campaign deadlines.

All young people aged 11-18, that either live, volunteer, work or attend school or college in County Durham are eligible to vote for County Durham's MYPs.

Voting takes place from 29th January – 5th February.

Use this form to place your vote.

For more information, or help, email us at youthvoice@durham.gov.uk

Important Information

Read the following information carefully. If you fail to follow the instructions, your vote might be classed as 'spoiled' and will not be included.

To vote, you MUST be:

Aged 11-18 years old.

Live, work, volunteer OR attend, school, or college in County Durham.

To vote, you MUST provide us with:

Your full name.

Date of Birth.

School/College or Youth Organisation/Group.

Your home postcode.

Valid email address.

We ask for this information so that we can confirm your identity if we need to, and ensure you only vote once. This ensures that voting is fair.

If you'd like to place your vote, complete the Ballot Form.

Complete your information.

Read all the candidate information carefully.

Place your vote.

Return Ballot Form to Durham Youth Council

YOU CAN ONLY VOTE ONCE.

Voting lines open on January 29th 2024 at 9am

Voting lines close on February 5th 2024 at 9pm

Alternatively, vote online:

<https://forms.office.com/e/tAnzkAfY1Q>





Ballot Form

For those wishing to vote on paper, use this form and return it to Durham Youth Council Rep.

Full Name	
Date of Birth	
School, College or Youth Group	
Home Post Code	
Valid Email Address	

I Vote For... (please select only one)

Candidate	Please tick
Alfie Dixon Clark	
Chloe Starbuck	
Caitlin Richards	
Lucas Wainwright	
Maanashi Raj	
Thomas Leyland	
Rafael Bethapudi	
Piotr Stelmaszczyk	
Charlotte Foster	

Contact information

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Company Information

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