# WHAT WE HAVE BEEN UP TO

## AUTUMN 2026

Northumberland
County Council

From exciting activities to young people's achievements, explore the moments that made Autumn 2026 special.

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County Council

This autumn has been another busy and exciting season for Northumberland's Participation Team, with children and young people taking part in a wide range of opportunities to share their views, develop new skills, celebrate achievements and influence decisions that matter to them. From contributing to senior staff recruitment and leading training for professionals, to attending regional conferences, participating in school visits and getting involved in creative activities, young people have continued to demonstrate the importance and impact of meaningful participation.

In this edition, we celebrate the achievements, experiences and contributions of children and young people from across Northumberland. We hope you enjoy reading about the fantastic activities that have taken place over the last few months and seeing how young people's voices are helping to shape services, strengthen communities and create positive change.

# INTERVIEW PANELS

**Involve me**

We will involve you in decisions made about you, making sure we understand what you have to say and what you feel.

Young people played an important role in the recruitment process for two positions: Head of SEND and Director of Education. By being involved with the interview panels, they had the opportunity to meet candidates, ask questions that they created, and share their views on who they felt would best support children and young people across our services.

Their involvement ensured that the voices of young people were at the heart of the decision-making process, demonstrating the value of participation. It was a fantastic opportunity for young people to develop their confidence, interviewing skills and understanding of recruitment, while making a meaningful contribution to appointments that will impact their lives.







"It is a good experience and I made some new friends."

"I liked seeing the candidates and asking them questions they might not have been asked. It is important for us to have an input on decisions"

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# PUMPKIN PAINTING

As part of our autumn activities, young people in the VMC group took part in a fun and creative pumpkin painting session. The activity gave everyone the opportunity to express their creativity, experiment with different designs, and enjoy spending time together in a relaxed and supportive environment.

The session was filled with colour, laughter and imagination, with each pumpkin showcasing a unique design. It was a great opportunity for young people to build confidence, develop their creative skills, and celebrate the season while creating something they could be proud of.







"It was nice to talk to other young people about what we enjoy this time of year and the plans we have"

"I liked using the acrylic pens to create my design"

# YOUTH CONFERENCE

Young people from across the North East came together at our Regional Youth Conference, hosted at County Hall, to discuss the topic of Mental Health and Wellbeing. The event provided an opportunity for young people representing different local authorities to share their views, experiences and ideas, while exploring the challenges faced by young people across the region.

Through a range of discussions and activities, groups worked together to identify key themes and develop ideas for a regional campaign focused on improving mental health and wellbeing. By bringing young people's voices together, the conference helped create a shared vision for positive change and laid the foundations for a campaign that will raise awareness, encourage support and make a difference for young people across the North East.







I thought the conference was an amazing opportunity to set out the foundations for our regional scheme."

"I think the conference allowed us to create innovative campaigns to tackle the problems that many young people face in Northumberland."

**Involve me**

We will involve you in decisions made about you, making sure we understand what you have to say and what you feel.

**Talented me**

We will help you do the best you can in your hobbies, interests and in school.

**Healthy me**

We will help you have a healthy lifestyle and support you to be physically and emotionally happy.

# KIELDER MARATHON

Members of our VMC group took on the challenge of the Kielder 5K and 10K, showing determination, resilience and a fantastic attitude throughout the event. Thomas completed the 10K in an impressive 1 hour and 16 minutes, while Abdul achieved an excellent 11-minute finish in the 5K. Both young people should be incredibly proud.

The event also provided an opportunity for Abdul to catch up with young people from Thorndale House, who were also participating in the run. Coming together through a shared challenge helped to strengthen connections, create a sense of community and highlight the value of supporting one another. It was a fantastic day of achievement, participation and teamwork.








"At the start, I was a bit nervous. But when there was 100m left I was off like a rocket. I would do it all over again"

"I liked using the acrylic pens to create my design"

# BEGINNING OF SEND VISITS

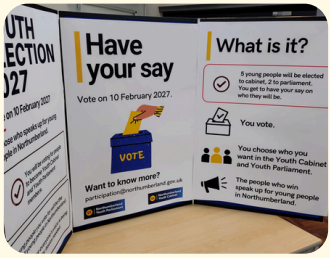
Our SEND school visits have began and provide valuable opportunities for children and young people to share their views, experiences and ideas on the services and support available to them. By visiting schools and engaging directly with young people, we can better understand what is working well, identify areas for improvement and ensure their voices help shape future opportunities and decisions.

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During our first round of visits this year, discussions are focussing on a potential SEND event planned for next year. Young people will play a key role in the planning and preparation of the event, helping to decide what activities, and experiences should be included. Their involvement from the very beginning will help ensure the event is meaningful, inclusive and designed around the needs and interests of children and young people.







"Thank you for today, the pupils all really enjoyed the visit!"

"Thank you very much , our stepping stones class enjoyed talking with you!"




# GETTING CREATIVE

Young people from our Voices Making Choices (VMC) group recently took part in a fun and creative cake decorating session, giving them the opportunity to express themselves and showcase their artistic talents. Using a variety of colours, toppings and designs, everyone created their own unique cake while enjoying time together in a relaxed and supportive environment.




The session encouraged creativity, confidence and teamwork, with young people sharing ideas and celebrating each other's creations. It was fantastic to see everyone getting involved, trying new techniques and taking pride in their finished designs, making the activity both enjoyable and rewarding for all who attended.







"I enjoyed making these as it got me into the halloween spirit."

"We all like taking part in activities that match the time of year"

# PARTICIPATION TRAINING

Two young people from our Voices Making Choices (VMC) group recently took part in a training session for professionals working across Children's Services. During the session, they confidently introduced and led the Placement Game, an interactive activity designed to help professionals better understand the experiences of children and young people in care.




The Placement Game highlights the ups and downs that a cared-for young person may face throughout their journey, encouraging participants to consider the impact of key life events and decisions. The young people did an excellent job sharing their knowledge and experiences, helping professionals gain valuable insight while demonstrating the importance of listening to and learning from the voices of young people.










"I thought it was really good. It was a great example of how the game and the system works, they were all good sports."

"It was good, lots of good ansswers and very impressed what what they already knew."

# SEND CONFERENCE

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The Northumberland Parent Carer Forum SEND Conference brought together a wide range of organisations, services and professionals to provide information, advice and support for parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. The event created a welcoming space for families to learn more about the support available, ask questions and connect with services that can help them navigate their SEND journey.

The conference also offered a valuable opportunity for organisations to work together, share expertise and strengthen partnerships across the SEND community. By bringing families and professionals together in one place, the event helped raise awareness of available support, encourage collaboration and ensure parents and carers felt informed, empowered and connected to the services around them.









"It was a great day, meeting other professionals and providing information to families on how we can support."

"WOW! What an incredible day at the conference."

# CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS

The Celebrating Achievements Event, held at Morpeth Rugby Club, brought together cared for children, young people and care leavers from across Northumberland for an evening of fun, recognition and celebration. Attendees enjoyed a range of activities including Nintendo Switch games, virtual car racing and Pac-Man, alongside delicious food including hot dogs, burgers, chicken burgers, candyfloss and popcorn. With a DJ providing music throughout the evening,




The highlight of the event was the awards ceremony, where every child and young person was recognised for their achievements and presented with a medal. Supported by professionals from across Children's Services, the ceremony celebrated the hard work, resilience and successes of our young people over the past year. It was a special opportunity to acknowledge their accomplishments, and celebrate together.










"We have been so excited about the event all week, thank you for putting it on and making the night amazing."

"I love getting dressed up to celebrate with everyone."










Welcome to
Celebrating
Achievement
2026
















We are so proud




Reserved





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