



# OUR SHOES TRAINING



In partnership with

Surrey Youth  
**VO!CE**

**CHARITIES**



**SURREY**  
COUNTY COUNCIL

# Introduction

“Our Shoes” is a collaborative initiative between young people in Surrey and Surrey County Council. Our mission is to empower young voices — ensuring they are heard, respected, and included in shaping the services and communities that affect them.

To achieve this, we have created a series of training programmes designed to bring together young people from all walks of life and the adults who work alongside or support them. These sessions foster mutual understanding, trust, and shared learning.

Through structured discussions, young people share their lived experiences, offering valuable insight into the challenges and realities they face today. This helps those who work or volunteer with young people to engage more effectively, with empathy and awareness.

By taking part in Our Shoes training, charity professionals, volunteers, and community partners gain a deeper appreciation of diverse experiences and perspectives. This shared understanding helps build more inclusive and compassionate organisations — reducing unconscious bias, strengthening relationships, and promoting meaningful change within the community.

## About our training

With a strong focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), the award-winning Our Shoes training—developed in partnership with Surrey County Council (SCC)—offers a series of courses designed to empower teams and equip them to engage with every individual they encounter with empathy and understanding.

The aim of the courses is to give insight into a child or young person’s point of view in a range of situations. By seeing situations from their perspective we can begin to understand how our actions, words or inaction can affect young people.

Our behaviour, and how we interact with young people has a direct effect on how they will respond and interact with adults and professionals.

By attending Our Shoes training, each delegate has the opportunity to gain an understanding of the emotions that children and young people feel in a range of situations.





# POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE COURSES

## BY YOUNG PEOPLE FOR YOU, FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

We have collaborated with young people over the last decade, to develop the courses that we offer today. Each young person has helped us to create courses that are powerful and effective.

In return we provide support and employment so that young people can move forward with their lives, experience the world of work, and find some benefit from their experience.

Employing, and paying a young person is a step towards a better future for them, and an opportunity for you to help the next young person that you work with.



# ELEVATE AND EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE

Equality, Diversity  
and Inclusion

# Is it for me?

At the heart of everything we do are the children and young people we support – whether through our work, volunteering, or everyday interactions. Their voices, experiences, and perspectives guide and inspire our approach.

Our Shoes training has been specifically developed for those working or volunteering with children and young people within charities, community organisations, and support services. The programme helps deepen understanding of diverse experiences and strengthens the ability to engage meaningfully and effectively with young people from all backgrounds.

By taking part in Our Shoes training, participants learn to recognise and challenge unconscious bias, develop more empathetic communication, and create environments

where young people feel heard and respected. This not only enhances inclusion but also leads to better decision-making and stronger, more trusting relationships.

Every one of us interacts with young people at some stage – and the way we approach those moments can have a lasting impact. Our Shoes training equips professionals and volunteers with the insight and confidence to make those interactions positive, supportive, and empowering, helping young people to thrive both now and in the future.



## HIGHLIGHTS

**A Decade of Collaboration:** Our Shoes is built on over ten years of working closely with young people. Their experiences and feedback have shaped a programme that reflects their real and diverse needs.

**Deeper Understanding:** Our Shoes helps professionals and volunteers better understand how young people experience challenges, encouraging reflection, empathy, and stronger, more supportive relationships.

**Championing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:** Our Shoes supports organisations to embed equality, diversity, and inclusion, creating environments where everyone feels respected, valued, and able to thrive.



## BENEFITS

**Culture and Behaviours:** Our Shoes supports the development of inclusive, compassionate, values-led cultures. It helps organisations embed diversity, empathy, and respect into everyday practice, improving how teams work together and engage with young people.

**Building Trust and Confidence:** The programme strengthens meaningful relationships with young people by promoting active listening and genuine connection. This helps staff and volunteers build trust, improve communication, and create positive interactions.

**Better Outcomes for Young People:** Our Shoes encourages participants to recognise and respond to young people's voices and feelings, leading to more informed decisions and better support.

# Our Perspective 1

A child or young person's perspective can be quite different depending on their experiences. How a child or young person behaves in a situation can be determined by their experience which means that the more knowledge adults have, the better they can engage with a young person in a wider range of situations.



Improve your understanding of the impact of your interactions for a child or young person experiencing mental health difficulties and/or concerns.



Gain knowledge to improve services for children and young people.



Hear young people's experience and perspective of accessing emotional well being and mental health services.



## WHAT IS OUR SHOES - PERSPECTIVE?

Our Shoes – Perspective Training invites professionals and volunteers to embark on a journey of understanding and reflection through a series of scenario-based learning experiences. The training explores how young people - particularly those with additional needs or disabilities, those experiencing anxiety or mental health challenges - experience and navigate the world around them.

By gaining insight into these lived experiences, participants develop a deeper awareness of the barriers young people may face and learn how to respond with empathy, sensitivity, and respect.



## LEARNING AND OUTCOMES

**Understand:** Better understand what it can be like for young people with diverse backgrounds or needs, in different situations.

**Recognise:** Key challenges that young people face in their lives, and how that changes young people's perspective on a situation.

**Labels and Stereotypes:** Experience what it's like to be labelled or pre-judged as a young, vulnerable person.

**Adapt Practice:** Help professionals to embed the voice of a child in all the work that they do, to improve outcomes.

# Our Perspective 2

Additional Needs and Disabilities are not always obvious, especially in high pressure situations. Even experienced staff can make assumptions without knowing the full story of the person they are engaging with. Our AND module helps equip staff to better understand, and to deal with young people in an empathetic manner, no matter what their situation might be.



Recognise how AND might affect a young person's understanding of what is being asked of them.



Gain knowledge to improve interactions with young people from all walks of life.



Hear from young people about their experience and see how such experiences create different perspectives on everyday life.



## WHAT IS OUR SHOES - AND?

Our Shoes - AND Training is a module designed to highlight the experiences of young people with Additional Needs and Disabilities in a range of real-life situations.

By taking part in this training, staff and volunteers will gain a deeper understanding of how to engage with and support young people in ways that promote dignity, inclusion, and positive outcomes for everyone involved.



## LEARNING AND OUTCOMES

**Empathise:** To better understand how different situations can be stressful for young people with AND.

**Reduce Discrimination and Bias:** This training addresses unconscious bias and helps staff recognise, and mitigate these biases in their decision-making processes.

**Adapt Practice:** Recognise ways in which staff can support young people with AND, during their day.

**Language:** Improve understanding of the impact of words and actions.

# Our Perspective 3

Our Shoes - LGBTQ+ training aims to highlight issues faced by young people who are part of the LGBTQ+ community. This training gives staff who engage with young people, a better understanding of what it is like to be an LGBTQ+ young person, navigating life.



Improve understanding of the impact of words and actions, for a young person from the LGBTQ+ community.



Gain knowledge to improve practice during the working day.



Hear young people's perspective and experiences in a range of scenarios.



## WHAT IS OUR SHOES - LGBTQ+?

Our Shoes - LGBTQ+ is a training module that highlights the experiences of young people from the LGBTQ+ community. It helps professionals become better equipped to support, and understand these young people in various situations.

This course could also help to reinforce a culture of tolerance and open-mindedness towards LGBTQ+ young people across the community.



## LEARNING AND OUTCOMES

**Language:** How language used could be seen as insulting and impact how a young person may see, or feel about themselves.




**Understand:** Staff will better understand what it can be like for a young person growing up in fear of judgement or discrimination.

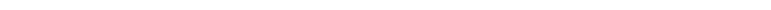
**Recognise:** Day to day challenges faced by young people, and how these challenges can impact their ability to cope with situations, and how they perceive the world.

# Our Perspective 4

Our Shoes - Respect is a course that stands on its own or serves as a key complement to Our Shoes - Perspective. Our Shoes - Respect is dedicated to recognising the voices of young people, especially those with care-experience.



-  Improve practice to get better responses from young people.
-  Engage, Encourage and Empower young people in every interaction.
-  Include the voice of young people from all backgrounds, in all activities.



## WHAT IS OUR SHOES - RESPECT?

Our Shoes - Respect training focuses on 'listening to young people and taking them seriously'.

Our Shoes - Respect has been developed in collaboration with looked-after young people and care leavers in Surrey to help professionals understand their experiences, and what it is like to access various services.

Attending Our Shoes - Respect will enhance delegates capability to listen, consult and respect the views of young people, and care leavers.

## LEARNING AND OUTCOMES

**Language:** How language that we use can make young people feel uncomfortable, excluded, and anxious.

**Communication:** The importance of understanding that people can hear and interpret information differently, and not in the way intended.

**Emotion:** Understand frustration, vulnerability, and the feeling of helplessness, experienced by young people.

**Adapt practice:** Improve your practice by using the voice of the young person in all the work you do.

# Our Shoes 5

Our Shoes - Intro to Participation is designed to highlight the importance of participation in the practice of professionals. Participation is about being ready to listen to children and young people, to support them to express their views and to be ready to take those views into account when making decisions with and for them.



Improve your practice to enable children and young people to be heard.



Listen to what children and young people say.



Include children and young people in decision making - give them power.



## WHAT IS OUR SHOES - PARTICIPATION?

Participation is about creating opportunities to listen to children and young people, supporting them to share their views through conversation, activities, and creative expression. It means ensuring their voices are genuinely heard and taken into account when making decisions with and for them.

True participation also means giving children and young people a real say in matters that affect their lives - sharing power, responsibility, and decision-making to help shape better outcomes together.



## LEARNING AND OUTCOMES

**Understanding:** Learn what participation means and develop an understanding of participation theory.

**Adapt practice:** Learn about the benefits of participation and how to embed it into everyday practice.

**Recognise:** The importance of allowing young people to have a voice and to participate in decisions that affect them.

# Our Perspective 6

There are over 376,000 young adult carers in the UK. Over 50,000 young carers spend 50 hours or more a week on their caring role. Carers can be as young as 5 years old, and it can take up to 10 years before they are identified even though they will be present in every school, college, university and workplace across the country.



Build a deeper understanding of what it means to be a young carer — someone who, often from an early age, takes on responsibilities for supporting or caring for family members, including siblings or parents.



Explore the daily pressures young carers face and recognise how even well-intentioned external support can sometimes add to their challenges.



Hear directly from young carers about their lived experiences — what caring involves, how it affects their education, wellbeing, and social lives, and why greater awareness and understanding from all of us can make such a difference.



## WHAT IS OUR SHOES - YOUNG CARERS?

Our Shoes – Young Carers Training has been co-developed with young carers to help professionals understand what being a young carer involves.

The training highlights their responsibilities, the challenges they face, and the impact caring has on their wellbeing and daily life.

By completing this module, professionals will be better prepared to recognise and support young carers with the empathy and opportunities they need to thrive..



## LEARNING AND OUTCOMES

**Understand:** What it can be like for young carers in different situations and environments.

**Recognise:** Some of the key challenges that young carers face throughout their time as a carer.

**Adapt practice:** Listen to and understand young carers and change practice to help support them.



# Partnership

As well as delivering our own courses we can also support your service with development of programmes that fit your specific needs so that benefits and outcomes can be tailored to your requirements.

Our team includes people from all walks of life and experience backgrounds. Our care-experienced staff and apprentices have been instrumental in developing our training content - which means that we offer a unique insight that your team can benefit from.

We can tailor our services to your requirements providing consultancy, workshops, and a range of other services.

Surrey County Council will be delighted to partner on any project that supports care-experienced young people, and those with AND, emotional wellbeing, mental health or any other needs.



Our Shoes, has recently secured celebrity backing from care-experienced British Olympian Fatima Whitbread. Fatima said

“Well done on achieving a great concept for our young people.”



# How to Book

The Our Shoes training modules have been designed to stand alone so that you can enter the series at whatever point is best for your business.

However, in order to get a complete overview of all of the subjects and issues, we recommend completing the full series, ideally in the order outlined in this brochure.

Our highly experienced team is available to discuss your needs, and to help you to get exactly what you need. If you would like to tailor the training, or discuss anything in more detail, please contact us on the details below.

If you are ready to learn more about the Our Shoes series, please get in touch.

## Contact Us

**Emma Storer**

Email: [emma.storer@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:emma.storer@surreycc.gov.uk)

**Gina-Marie Munday**

Email: [ginamarie.munday@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:ginamarie.munday@surreycc.gov.uk)

Follow us on social media to support and keep up to date with the work of children and young people accessing Surrey services.



**@ourvoicesurrey**

# OUR SHOES TRAINING

**ENGAGE,  
ENCOURAGE,  
EMPOWER**

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Surrey County Council

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