Point Made, the Centrepoint podcast by young people, for all people.

Welcome to Point Made, the Centrepoint podcast by young people, for all people. Today you'll be hosted by me, myself, Josh, a Strategy Network fundraiser and an ex resident of Centrepoint, alongside

Anna. I'm the campaigns officer here at Centrepoint and yeah, really passionate about this topic, about voting and making sure young people have their voice.

But before we really get into it, I just want to introduce today's episode. So we'll be looking at voting amongst young people. We will discuss why young people may be feeling disenfranchised, what barriers exist to them voting, and how they could be removed. Ultimately, we want to encourage more young people to analyse whether they want to vote or not, and to register to vote before the general election coming up.

We also want to discuss what to do about the increasing apathy and distrust in the government, all from young people not feeling represented by politics. Now let's give you some stats and some context to this. So according to a large scale consultation by the Children's Commissioner titled The Big Ambition, The Story of a Million Children, 80 percent of young people don't feel heard by the government.

One 16 year old girl said, Most people my age I know feel completely hopeless, apathetic, anxious, and even depressed due to the state of England and the world at the moment. Looking at the stats, younger voters tend to vote more on the left compared to older voters who vote more to the right. If more young people vote, there's more likely to be more support for more progressive parties such as Labour, Greens or SNP.

And this could mean that political parties and leaders are more likely to listen to their voices and cater to them in order to win in an election.

So what are the reasons why young people don't want to vote? One reason might be that our first past the post system arguably led to a situation where young people feel powerless and dissatisfied and believe that their vote doesn't make any difference, so they rather not participate.

Another might be the lack of political education in schools taught to young people. One person we spoke to recently expressed her confusion as to why this is not a compulsory part of the curriculum from primary school age upwards. Another, and this affects many of the young people that we support, is that young people may not have a fixed, abode, or necessary ID to that they require to vote.

What is there that could be done to ensure that more young people continue to vote and do not become disconnected from the political system and their power to affect political change?

Thanks Josh and thanks for asking that question. There's some really helpful reasons there that we're going to explore as we get into our discussion.

But just another thing I thought to add is that another barrier that young people might find with voting is that often we feel like politicians are the same. So they're all, you know, white middle class, or maybe they don't care about the needs of the community. And I think as we look more into different politicians, you do see that they are different, but there are many like assumptions that have been made.

So I think that that can be a barrier.

But enough from us. Before we get into this heated discussion, I would like to introduce you to our panel.

Hi, I'm Amy. I'm 27 and I'm from London. I work in the fundraising department with CenterPoint, um, where I joined as an apprentice in 2022. I have some lived experience of homelessness myself, um, and my only experience of voting is in the Brexit referendum in 2016.

I'm on the panel today because I do think it is important that young people use the voice that they have to affect. Political change, and I want to figure out how we can encourage them to do that.

Hi, I'm Casey. I'm a student. I'm volunteering with Centrepoint in the comms and marketing team. Uh, so, um, I'm on this panel cause I think it's really important that students start voting.

I'm speaking primarily from a student perspective. So I don't have that perspective of young people who've experienced homelessness, but, um, yeah, I think it's going to be an interesting discussion.

Hi, I'm Nadi. I'm 23 years old. I am a previous Centrepoint attendant. Um, I volunteer with Centrepoint to do some of the story work and just, um, anything I can do really.

I'm on the panel today because I personally have not voted, um, Because I've just not seen the importance of it before. And I didn't think that I would make any impact, but after doing my own research, I find that it is really important that young people are educated and young people are kind of informed about the importance of voting.

So yeah, that's why I'm here.

Thank you for sharing the importance and value as to why you're here today and part of this discussion on the panel. I would like to ask you a few questions and the first question being, if you aren't voting, why directly are you not voting or haven't you voted in the past?

So for myself, after the Brexit referendum, I actually, well, me and my family were evicted from the home that we were living in. And so I effectively lost my place on the electoral register. And naturally there was a lot of things going on at the time, things were up in the air. And the next time I thought about voting wasn't until the general election in 2019.

And I just found it really confusing to try and figure out how you get on the electoral register without having an address. I eventually found my way to the form that I had to fill out, but it was too late for me to register to vote. Um, so I haven't voted since then, but I'm gonna try and tackle the process again this year, because this general election is a very important one, I think.

Uh, so I previously haven't voted because I've been too young to vote. I left school in 2019, 2020, so I missed the Brexit referendum and general election, but in the upcoming one, I definitely am going to vote.

I think personally for me, I just never understood, like, What voting was, I never thought that I would, um, make any kind of impact.

Um, I'm not from this country. So I came to this country quite young and there was a lot of like cultural things I had to unlearn. So I wasn't even the system, like the educational system didn't really help me in that matter. And then by the time I was of age to vote, I was like going through my own personal issues.

And I didn't really think like. There was any importance really, but I did my own research and I will be voting in the next general elections because I think it's really important. If I was even for one lesson explained, if they even explained in one lesson like what it was and why we should vote when we are like of age, I feel like I definitely would have voted because it does affect me directly who's in the government and it is affecting us young people, I feel like the most at the moment.

So if I was like taught, I definitely would have done it a long time ago.

Thank you for that.

Yeah, that was very interesting. Thank you. We were talking about some of the reasons. It might be that, you know, we don't feel like politicians care about community needs, or maybe um, it's yeah, like the admin or the education around it, um, or it might be that people just feel disillusioned or apathetic.

I was just wondering from kind of friends or like people you've talked to or representing your own age group, do you feel like, what would you say you're seeing some of the barriers are to voting?

I think for me personally, a lot of it is, um, lack of information and lack of knowledge on like where to go.

Like, for example, right now, before I did my own research, I didn't even know where I would go to vote. I didn't know that you had to register. Um, and I see it within a lot of my community and a lot of my circle. There are not a lot of people that I know find it important to vote. They don't see the importance of it because they don't know where to go, who to go to.

I think it's definitely a lack of information. And yeah.

The people I know don't have faith in the government. They don't believe in the political system as it currently functions. And they also don't think their vote is worth anything. So there's no point in going to do it. Um, and I've, I've tried to explain that if everyone that thought their vote wouldn't do anything went and voted, then maybe some change would happen, but it can be difficult in the face of things like Brexit, where people went out and voted to remain, and we left, and it's a big kind of, It feels almost a bit like a slap in the face.

It's like, Oh, I, I used my voice and it was unheard, but I do think it's important to kind of reduce that however we can, and it's hard to have politicians to feel faithful in at the

moment. From a student perspective, I think there are several reasons why, um, students aren't voting at the moment. I think.

One is because we do feel disillusioned with the government, I think our voices and our concerns about education, especially with university fees, aren't being heard. But, um, besides that, I think there's also a very patronising attitude from some older people where either we, they feel like we don't know enough about what's going on and that we haven't had enough lived experience to really be making decisions.

Or, um, I think recently there's been this whole sort of like culture war going on in Britain at the moment and this, uh, word of woke, and I feel like that's being used to sort of invalidate a lot of beliefs and principles and, um, sort of going off the same sort of idea, like our, um, what we do believe and what we do want to vote for is being seen as a phase as well, like it's just something that we're going to grow out of.

So it's a bit frustrating.

Yeah. Just as someone, um, also like, well graduated a couple of years ago and just from that student perspective, or just from being like a young person, um, I think it's just like when you get put in a box of being like Gen Z or like a snowflake generation, or like we care about justice, but you know, what's that really going to achieve?

Like it needs about, it needs to be about like economic success as well. I think it just like really doesn't take our opinions seriously, but it's like, we're the ones who are going to be like living in this country for the next 50, 70 years. And, like, we're the ones who do want to see a society that does, like, respect and look after, like, people who need it and care for them.

So I think, yeah, when we just get, like, boxed into a specific idea or it's just a phase, it really, like, undermines the fact that we are looking into it, like, we do care, we do have, like, you know, like, there's different justice issues we care about, say, like, homelessness, that we really want to see change.

So in terms of this year, what would you like to see from local and national government?

I do want to see, like, Youth specific plans from government. I feel that the government sort of ignores young people as a whole, because as, as Katie mentioned earlier, we're assumed to not be that serious, to not, to not have these beliefs and attitudes, or if we do, it's a phase.

And I feel like the government uses that as an easy way to not interact with us or pay attention to us as the younger generations. So. Within that and the overall other issues that I'd like to see them, them fix. I think they have got a lot more work to do to actually connect with the younger generations in the country.

Um, just to go off what Amy said, like 100 percent the one thing that I think the government needs to do is look out for the youth because we are going to be the future doctors were going to be the future nurses were going to be the future speakers. And it's like if we're not educated in school from a young age, and we're not told how important it is for us to vote.

Um, and like just helped out and like given the resources that we need. I think that there's never going to change. It's always going to be a thing of older, the older generation voting more than the younger generation. And also I think with youth, um, homelessness, I think that's the one issue that is really neglected as someone who has like personal lived experiences.

I'm very big on educating myself and anything, just me personally, if I need to think about something, I'm going to go and educate myself because the UK, um, schooling system has literally let me down. Um, so I feel like. We need like the schooling needs to be revised and we need more funding for the homeless, um, like communities and the charities that actually want to help.

And we need to educate people that nobody chooses to be homeless, especially not a young person. Um, so it is the government's like responsibility to look after those young people and educate us because once again, these young people that you're neglecting today are going to be your government officials tomorrow.

Yeah, I agree with both of you on all of those points, like that's definitely something, those are things that I want to see as well. Um, decriminalization of homelessness, there's been stuff recently in the news, um, about, uh, People will be arrested if they're begging or if they're nuisance begging, stuff like that.

I think it's, it's really wrong. Um, but also in terms of education, I think we need to be supporting teachers more. Like, not enough teachers are passionate about what they do anymore. And there's such a, um, There's such a, a weight on them to have to keep on doing like loads of work, they're taking on more and more students every year, so the quality of teaching is going down and I think that carries on in the way that you see children behave and also kids, they're not interested in stuff anymore.

Like, and it's really sad cause we're losing, I feel like we're losing a generation of kids in school at the moment who could be really passionate about something, but because the whole education system is so overworked, teachers aren't being paid enough. The workload is just going up and up. Schools are not getting enough funding from government in order to take on More students and, um, that then goes on to university.

You see, you see the same issue with taking on more students for uni and then not enough resources to help with their mental health. Um, yeah, just loads of stuff. Like it starts with one small thing and then it just carries up the line. It is a systemic issue. And, uh, also, Privatization at the moment has gotten out of control in the country.

Uh, our rivers, our, um, our land is just being poisoned by, um, sewage companies that are just dumping their sewage everywhere. And, um, that's something that I personally would like to see an improvement on. But, um, yeah, there's lots of stuff that the list is never ending at this point. Yeah, definitely.

I think just your point about resources there, Katie, it's made me think that that's probably another thing that makes young people feel disillusioned with the government, because when money has to be found, it's youth services that the money is found from.

It's the school system, it's the youth clubs and outreach groups, it's these things that are there to enrich young people's lives that end up getting chopped because, oh, we can't afford that. We need the money elsewhere. And I think that. Also lends itself towards kids not caring because no one cares about them.

And I think that, I mean, it's an ongoing issue, especially here in London. The youth services have been completely decimated and they're non existent. And now people talk about knife, knife crime and youth violence. And why are today's young people the way that they are? And it's, what have they got to be something else?

They have no resources to become what the previous generations have gone on to become. And. It's a lot harder to convince these young people that things will get better because they've been born into this and it's only gotten worse. So definitely resources, um, across the board, to be honest, is something the government needs to sort out.

Sorry, just quick, I think teacher training as well for sort of like issues like homelessness, you know, if there is trouble at home. I remember in my school we had like our pastoral team. That woman worked day and night with all of our students and she had to deal with some really difficult stuff. She was the nicest woman ever.

And, um, teachers are often front line when there is issues at home. And they need to be able to better deal with those situations. And there needs to be support for them, you know, when they do.

I agree with that one. Um, I feel like enough teachers don't get enough support for their mental well being where they should definitely get more support and there should be more resources to support them so they can support the upcoming generations.

Yeah, I think on, um, Amy as well and what everyone was saying just about the government needs to do more. Um, we recently were just looking into it and youth homelessness has increased by 12 percent since the last election. And so like often we're asking our campaigners to email their MPs and often the like most common response from MPs is, you know, the government's doing this.

Um, and then we're saying, like, what are you doing for young people specifically who are facing homelessness? And from the numbers, it looks like only 0. 25 percent of that, like, that amount of investment is actually going to reducing homelessness for young people. So I think, like, my message to the government is I just find it so frustrating that they think that they're doing enough.

And yet we're seeing, like, 136, 000 young people who were homeless last year. You know, it does really affect like people's lives and also their like support for the government and even just like trust. It's like, if you're saying you're doing enough, but yet the stats are rising, like, how can we trust you in that?

Um, so yeah, something really does need to change. But yeah, I guess we've talked about yeah, all of the problems with the government and politics and kind of all of the barriers, but we don't want to leave anyone listening at that position because there is a general election this year, like our vote is important.

So I'd love to just chat about why do we think young people should vote or not, you know, what are kind of our attitudes towards that and, you know, how do you feel like young people can make a difference.

I think, um, Amy touched upon it earlier when she said a lot of people say that, oh, what's the point of voting?

It's not going to make a difference, but if all those people voted, then it would make a difference. Cause I was very much one of those people that said, I'm not going to vote. Like, it's not like they're going to listen to me. It was more like ignorance from my side as well. Like I just didn't. I didn't care enough for it at some point, only because I, like, I didn't have the correct information.

Um, but I feel like it's very important that we educate our young people all the time to let them know that if you want to see change, which a lot of young people do want to see change, and especially those are being affected by like homelessness or are just getting the shorter end of the stick. I feel like we need to tell them that it's important for you to vote and here's why you should vote and here's where you should vote.

And then, yeah, I think we'll definitely see a change once we do that.

Love that. Um, yeah, I think definitely, yeah, it's people want to see change at the moment, like I think now more than ever, and it is coming up to the point where we have to start being the change. It's just important that we take responsibility for our future.

We need to vote more, and there's no such thing as a wasted vote as well, like there's been a whole thing with sort of like tactically voting, so even if you don't really believe in Labour or Conservatives, you go with either of one because they're sort of like the lesser of two evils. And, um, I think you shouldn't be voting for parties that you don't believe in, personally, for me.

So, vote for an independent, vote for Green Party, vote for the Lib Dems, like, just vote. Because it is so important that we start to, like, make these changes.

Yeah, I think For me, like the reason I decided to vote in 2016 was I could, I could hear all the commentary going on and you've got all of these ridiculous claims from the leave side and then remain, obviously for me, I already knew what being in the EU was like, because that's what I'd grown up in.

And I was quite happy for that to remain the way things were because I didn't trust the picture that was being given to me of what would happen when we left. It didn't make any sense to me for us to leave our biggest, our trading block and, and, This beneficial relationship that we'd had for four decades, that people held a referendum to even enter into in the first place in the seventies.

And I just, yeah, I had no faith in what would happen if we left and I decided, right, I'm going down there and I'm going to use my vote to say what I said. And I feel like the referendum is a really good example of what can happen when more people do go out and vote because the margin was so tight on that referendum result, that if.

You know, 100, 000 more people on one side would have gone out and voted, then maybe we would still be in the EU right now. And I think that's a really good illustrator of the power a vote can have, but also something I used to say to myself and my friends that I have to vote, even if it doesn't go my way, if I haven't voted, I don't feel like I can complain about it afterwards.

Because very often people will bemoan things like the cost of living or changes to like the shipping and customs restrictions that came in with Brexit. Not realizing they had an opportunity to do something about it before that happened. And I think that we're in such a transitional period right now in the world that it's going to become a lot harder to hide from the consequences of these big decisions and I do think it's powerful that we will get out there and, and yeah, use our voices to say what we want because they don't know if we don't tell them.

No, I agree with that. How do you feel like with everything we've been speaking about, especially from the teaching side and the youth side and everything, how do you feel like we could influence more youth to vote and get engaged?

School. I think literally every, every, it's, it's a legal requirement for every child below the ages of a certain age to be in school for five days a week.

The amount of hours they're in. And I feel like what better way to reach out to people than the one place that they're going to be at most. And a lot of people don't have parents at home that care about it or know about it. They're going to be in school 100%, and that's the one way you should like, you should get to them.

So I think talks in schools.

I, I think something that was really powerful, I think it was the run up to the 2019 general election where there was the big polarization between Boris Johnson and Jeremy Corbyn and just like this big almost war going on in, in the media for them both to, you know, Garner their support.

And I remember, um, like rappers and celebrities and people who are popular with young people were coming out to show their support for Jeremy Corbyn and appearing in, in content with him online and kind of being there to say I'm behind labor. And I know that similarly, when Barack Obama was first elected in the United States, there was a big push from, from, um, black and ethnic celebrities to encourage, you know, The minority groups to get out and go and vote.

And I think if we had more of that, more role models getting involved to encourage these young people in the spaces that they go where they're not forced to be, then I think that could complement education and things that are provided to them in school because it's like, yeah, my teacher said this, but now JME is saying it, so maybe now I'm going to listen and it sort of reinforces the point.

I definitely think education is a massive element of it. The school system kind of gears you up to be so self centered in a way, like not in the negative way, but you know, you're thinking about your future, what you want to do with your life, where you want to go, and I feel like they should add a societal element there because when you turn 18 and you leave school, you're not one person alone, you're, you know, A person who's part of a society.

And I feel like we should be better prepared to become that when we leave school, rather than just, Oh, which uni do I want to apply for? Kind of thing to become citizens and, and yeah, functioning members of society fully in, in all spheres, political, social, and, and yeah.

Yeah, so just on that, I think, yeah, that's so important because it's like, if you vote just for your future, like, that is important, but you're also voting for, like, a homeless young person's future, or for, like, a doctor in the NHS, like, it's, yeah, it's, like, really understanding our role within society to, like, stand up and stand in solidarity with what other people are doing, and I think especially, like, if you have had a lot of, like, privilege, actually your vote is a way to, like, Vote for a party that you feel like will protect the people that need it, that do benefit from the government or benefit from, yeah, like public services.

So I think, yeah, I just love what you said. It's like really about thinking about us as a community and like standing with each other in that.

Uh, yeah, I completely agree. I think recently within the last sort of like 50, 60, maybe 80 years, there's been a big push in, um, towards individualism where we're not thinking collectively anymore, we're very self focused, you know, we go out and earn money so that we can put food on our tables, you know, there's very little, uh, not.

Complete disregard, but there is little, um, focus on the other people who are inhabiting the world with us. And, um, I think with young people, we need to remember to quote Lord of the Rings. We are part of the world as well, you know. We are part of the world, we are part of this country. We do, should have a say in what happens, and it's important that we do.

I feel just way more inspired about this year. I think it can be so easy to just focus on, you know, what the government isn't doing, and that's super important. But also, like, we are young people in a room, or former young people, so it's just really exciting to kind of talk about the power that we have together.

I think another crucial thing to mention is that the more young people who vote, the more likely we are to have young people or people who represent our views in parliament. I met Nadia Witton last week. week when we were campaigning outside Parliament, um, it was a 136k campaign. You can see it on at center point UK, um, on Instagram.

Um, but yeah, she became an MP when she was 23. She didn't necessarily intend to be an MP, but there was a by election in her local area as activists, they were campaigning and they just said, you know, how many issues can we raise during this time when everyone's focused on who's going to be the next person.

And then she was, and she's 27 now. And, She immediately was like, what's your campaign about? We're so interested in it. And I think that's like one of the best responses we've had from an MP so far. Um, so it's just really interesting. Are there other, um, yeah, people in politics that you're inspired by?

Yeah, I think across the board, it is more, it's, it's really inspiring to see more younger faces appearing in government, not, you know, the stuffy private school type that we've been treated to for so many years that I grew up seeing on the TV in their suits, delivering their speeches. It's nice to see.

Yeah. Politicians like Hamza Youssef in Scotland as such a young man in, in the grand scheme of politics, he's now in charge of his party and is able to make real and lasting change in the country that he lives in. And I think that, yeah, definitely if we get out there and we vote, then we have the power to put people that represent us into the government, people that we can resonate with, that we.

Recognize in ourselves and it will hopefully help them to have more of a focus on the issues that do mean so much to us as the younger generations too. If more people, you know, more of us and our peers, if we all go out and vote, then we can have the power to place people in government that represent us, that, that we can resonate and feel ourselves in.

And it's not just general elections where we have that opportunity. There are local elections by elections, mayoral elections. So keep your eyes peeled for the next chance you have to use your voice because I. Every one of these proceedings is important and they all have the chance to make a change.

Thanks Amy, that point was really, really helpful because there are so many different times that we can vote and use our voice, um, to see change. And just so that everyone knows, there are mayoral elections coming up. So the deadline to register to vote for those and be on the electoral register is the 16th of April at 11.

59pm. So just before midnight, you need to sign up. Um, so yeah, if anything from this conversation has inspired you or shown you that you can make a change, please, please, please sign up. And also if you are worried that you may not have a fixed abode because you are experiencing homelessness, you can use the service that you might be with at the moment to register.

So please don't let that stop you. Um, and yeah, you can always, uh, message us as well and ask questions around that. But before we finish the conversation and yeah, we could talk about this for ages, I would love to just know from each one of you, what is one thing you're going to do to inspire more young people to vote from this conversation.

For me, I definitely, um, I'm going to be pushing because I, I do have like a really wide range of friends and peers that don't vote. I think, I don't think any of my friends vote or have ever voted, um, because of that lack of like, again, um, Being informed. So I think I'm definitely going to be taking people down with me.

Um, when it happens, I'm going to be like sending those messages out, like, Hey guys, you know, that is coming up. Um, and I'll definitely educate like my, my siblings and my close up peers to like, kind of understand why they have to do it. And then just, yeah. Sounds

great. Um, in my friendship group, quite a lot of us vote.

So there's no one that I feel like I'll be. nagging to sort of, you know, find out more about it. Um, there are probably a couple of other people, but I would like those conversations to happen a bit more organically because I, once I start, I don't stop. So

I think. Yeah, I mean, being in a limited sphere of influence, the most power you have is with the people who are closest to you, so I'm going to work on trying to break them down and convince them to go out and vote, but I'm also going to make sure that I register myself so that I can use my own voice in the elections, because not only the mayoral elections, but There's a general election this year and it's going to be very pivotal for for how things turn in the country Um, so yeah, I think i'm just going to be a lot more politically vocal In addition to making sure that i'm registered myself

Amazing.

Well, thank you so much everyone for yeah Just sharing your views for inspiring us and for showing us also what can be hard about You know registering to vote or choosing to vote and also kind of Some of the struggles we might have with the government. I think regardless of what they're doing at the moment, um, we just, yeah, it's really important that we come together, that we have people power, that we believe in the collective, and that we really feel like we, as young people, can make a difference, even if people older than us may not necessarily, like, ascribe to the same views.

So please, please vote, um, or register to vote if you can, and make sure you mark the date. It's the 16th of April, just before midnight, that is your deadline to apply. Um, would really suggest you don't wait until 11pm. And yeah, please. Continue to support this podcast and like, subscribe and share and we will drop some information in the bio that you can look at for links of how to register.

But yeah, thank you everyone.

And that's our Point Made.

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