

The background is a complex collage. On the right side, there is a vertical strip showing a traditional windmill and a boat with colorful gear. The rest of the image is filled with a dense, abstract pattern of various colors and textures, including green, blue, and white, resembling a woven fabric or a digital glitch effect.

# **Growing up in coastal towns: Intergenerational perspectives from NE Lincolnshire**

**Rachel Benchekroun, Avril Keating,  
Claire Cameron and Pippa Curtin  
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## Acknowledgements

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Second, we are very grateful to the organisations and agencies in North East Lincolnshire who helped make this co-produced project happen. In particular, we would like to thank Emma Lingard, Associated British Ports, Grimsby Town Hall, and the school, community and youth groups who very kindly hosted our focus groups (we will not name them to maintain confidentiality of participants). Our thanks also to ABP Archives and North East Lincolnshire Archives Team.

Third, we would like to thank the members of our ~~Advis~~ Advisory Group





### **North East Lincolnshire**

Many of these changes and challenges are evident in the towns and villages where our research participants live, namely Grimsby, Cleethorpes, Immingham and surrounding villages.

From the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, Grimsby was a major centre for fishing and imports/exports. By the 1950s, it was the biggest fishing port in the world ([Burrows 2018](#)). Cleethorpes, adjacent to Grimsby, is known for its beaches, and has been a popular seaside resort since the nineteenth century. Since the 1970s, however, the local area has struggled to deal with processes of deindustrialization, globalisation, the growth of cheap package holidays abroad, the so-called 'Cod Wars' ([Siddique 2020](#)) and EEC fishing quotas ([BBC 2020](#)). Whilst Grimsby and Immingham continue to play a significant role as international ports ([ABP n.d.](#)), and the renewable energy sector is of increasing economic importance (discussed below), high levels of disadvantage nevertheless persist in the local area ([Burrows 2018](#)).

North East Lincolnshire ranks as the 17<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority (out of 326) in England, based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation ([IMD 2019](#)). Unemployment in the borough is above the national and regional averages, and is highest amongst young people ([NEL 2021](#)). Residents are much more likely than the average UK resident to have no or low-level qualifications, be in a low-







## Recruitment and participants

Four Young Researchers took part in Phase 1 (2021) and continued their involvement as Young Researchers in Phase 2 (2022). Two more young people who had been involved in the 2021 project as participants joined us as Young Researchers in 2022. All were (or had been) engaged with one or more projects led by the Voice and Influence Coordinator at Youth Action North East Lincolnshire, so they had some experience of co-producing services and were familiar with principles of co-production. Four of the Young Researchers were female and two were male; ages ranged from 16 to 21; all lived in North East Lincolnshire.

Across the two phases of the study, we recruited and interviewed **39 young people aged 16 to 26** (27 of whom were aged 18 or under), and **30 older people aged 60+** (26 of whom were aged over 70). In addition, five participants were aged between 46 and 59. All lived in Grimsby, Cleethorpes, Immingham or a neighbouring village. A summary of the participants' other background characteristics is set out in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

**Table 1: Background characteristics of participants aged 16-26**

<b>Gender</b>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>	<b>Tota I N</b>
	19	17	2	1	<b>39</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<i>White British</i>	<i>BME/mixed</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	37	1	0	1	39
<b>Town/village of residence</b>	<i>Grimsby</i>	<i>Cleethorpes</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	21	12	6	1	39
<b>Education/work status</b>	<i>School/college (uni)</i>	<i>Working P/T (F/T)</i>	<i>NEET</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	26 (2)	10 (5)	3	2	
<b>Disability</b>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Prefer not to say</i>	<i>No answer</i>	
	9	23	5	2	39
<b>Highest qualification achieved (or in progress)</b>	<i>Higher education qualification</i>	<i>A-levels or other level 3 qualification</i>	<i>GCSE or other level 2 qualification</i>	<i>Not known</i>	
	10	20	4	5	39
<b>Higher education aspirations</b>	<i>Attending/attended university or planning to</i>	<i>Did not attend university/not planning to</i>	<i>Doesn't know</i>	<i>Not known</i>	
	24	9	2	4	39

**Table 2: Background characteristics of participants aged 60+**

<b>Gender</b>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>No answer</i>	<b>Total N</b>
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## Data analysis

All but four of the research encounters across the two phases of the study were audio recorded, and all were transcribed, as were the research team workshops. Detailed notes were taken of the four interviews for which consent was not given for them to be audio recorded.

We reflected on emerging data in discussions after each focus group. In addition, following the fieldwork stage in Phase 2, we organized a one-day data analysis workshop with the Young Researchers to reflect together on:

- Ø the data produced across both projects
- Ø our experiences of, and the learning from, taking part in the research
- Ø the key messages we wanted to share with local stakeholders
- Ø how we share key messages with local stakeholders.

Alongside this, the UCL team undertook thematic analysis of the data. In the following sections we report on some of the key emerging findings.

## 4. Emerging findings

The key themes which emerged from our interviews and focus groups with young and older residents of North East Lincolnshire were:

1. feeling (un)safe, particularly in specific places and spaces;
2. the lack of things to do and places to go for young people, and concerns about the economic decline of the area;
3. education and employment opportunities for young people, and how these shaped aspirations for the future, both at an individual level and for the local community.

The data from older residents also revealed the extent to which the town and youth opportunities have changed over time.

### 4.1 Feeling safe/unsafe

Most of the young people who took part in our study did not feel safe in public spaces in their coastal towns, particularly in the evening or at night. They associated certain public spaces – such as central shopping areas and parks – with drunk and ‘rowdy’ behaviour, drug-taking and other forms of anti-social behaviour. These negative perceptions meant young people chose to avoid certain places in the local area.

In an open discussion, a few young people suggested the lack of a visible police presence added to the sense of feeling unsafe; one said the police needed to do more to ‘*put things in place to make you feel safe*’ (focus group, mixed genders, aged 17).

Young people felt there was a lack of safe spaces for young people to hang out, not least for under 18s. Alex, 17, highlighted the situation for under 18s who identify as LGBTQ+:

*‘I can't go there [name of gay bar] because I'm not 18 yet but it's just frustrating that [...] there's two LGBT safe spaces] ] ] b safe'ö P*



Like the young people, older participants identified particular areas that they avoided because they felt unsafe.

Notably, some older participants raised concerns about the safety of young people living in the local area. They



**Image 3: Photographs of Grimsby town centre on a Saturday morning, showing empty premises (24/09/22)**

One formerly vibrant shopping area was



In stark contrast, older residents recalled being able to spend their leisure time in a wide range of places as teenagers in North East Lincolnshire in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to the beaches and parks, they had enjoyed going to dance halls (some of which were specifically for under 18s), youth clubs, coffee shops, pubs, swimming pools and cinemas. It was also remarkable that there seemed to have been *more* of these kinds of venues. For example, participants told us there had been eight cinemas (as opposed to just one today), and they named 14 different dance halls (and many pubs) which they used to visit. Jim, 80, recalled: *'As a young man, there was lots of little dance halls, all over the place, and all it consisted of was just a record player, playing records. It was on from 7 o'clock to 10 o'clock.'* Patricia, 87, recollected: *'I went dancing seven nights a week as a teenager, and I went to a different place every night.'*

Older participants had fond memories of playing records and table tennis at their busy local youth clubs on Friday and Saturday evenings. Several older participants recollected visiting the coffee shops, 'sarsaparilla' bars for young people, and upmarket department stores (which have since disappeared). Violet, 77, described the experience of walking into the elegant Chamber's coffee shop: *'Coffee and cheese you could smell as soon as you walked in. A trio playing in the corner, a violin.'*

Older participants also recounted going out exploring on bicycles or going for long walks when they were young. They felt they could go 'anywhere', with nowhere being out of bounds. On a large map, Phil, 64, showed us the routes he cycled as a teenager: to nearby villages to visit relatives, to the beach, and down to the docks where he would explore the timber yards and the fish docks. Alison, Mary and Violet, in their 70s, recalled: *'We used to get our bikes out. Bit of bread and jam. You were out all day on your bikes.'*

### **Concerns about the decline of the local area**

Participants of all ages highlighted the decline of particular places and spaces, often linking this to the loss of Grimsby's identity as *'a booming fishing town'* (Kayla, 18). There was a sense that socio-spatial divisions remained evident (*'the posh areas are still the posh area, the deprived areas [...] are still the same areas'*, as Theo, 50, put it). Shared public spaces were perceived as lacking investment and looking 'rundown'. Participants pointed out that heritage buildings had been pulled down and replaced with 'bland' ones, and green spaces had been lost.

**summarized the change:**



PGCE, had feelings of rootedness in the local community, along with doubts about moving to a city:

*“Will I move to be able to get what I want?” It is tough because this is all I’ve ever known. I’m not a city person [...] I just think, “I don’t see myself anywhere else but here.” [...]. It’s not about where you live, it’s who you’re with and I think once you find the right thing, everything falls into place, but it means working hard at it and ignoring the negative comments of people that don’t understand.’*

Two participants in their teens planned to pursue higher education without moving from Grimsby, making use of local or commutable options incl





There was recognition that whilst there are now more opportunities to go to university and to move away to study and work, these opportunities were not equally available to all young people. For example, Jim, 80, remarked, *'I know that my granddaughter has worked very hard, gone to uni, earned her degree and is in work, good job. [But] whether that opportunity is there for all young people, I'm not sure.'* Older participants felt that although young people were less likely to take on physically demanding roles, such as in agriculture or on the docks, they faced new challenges that had not existed in the 1950s and 1960s, notably having to work through agencies

car felt cut off from other places. Luke, 17, described the community as an '*isolated part of the country*', explaining:

*'the roads out of here aren't great. You do sort of feel like*









**new knowledge (examples included learning about different perspectives, changes in**





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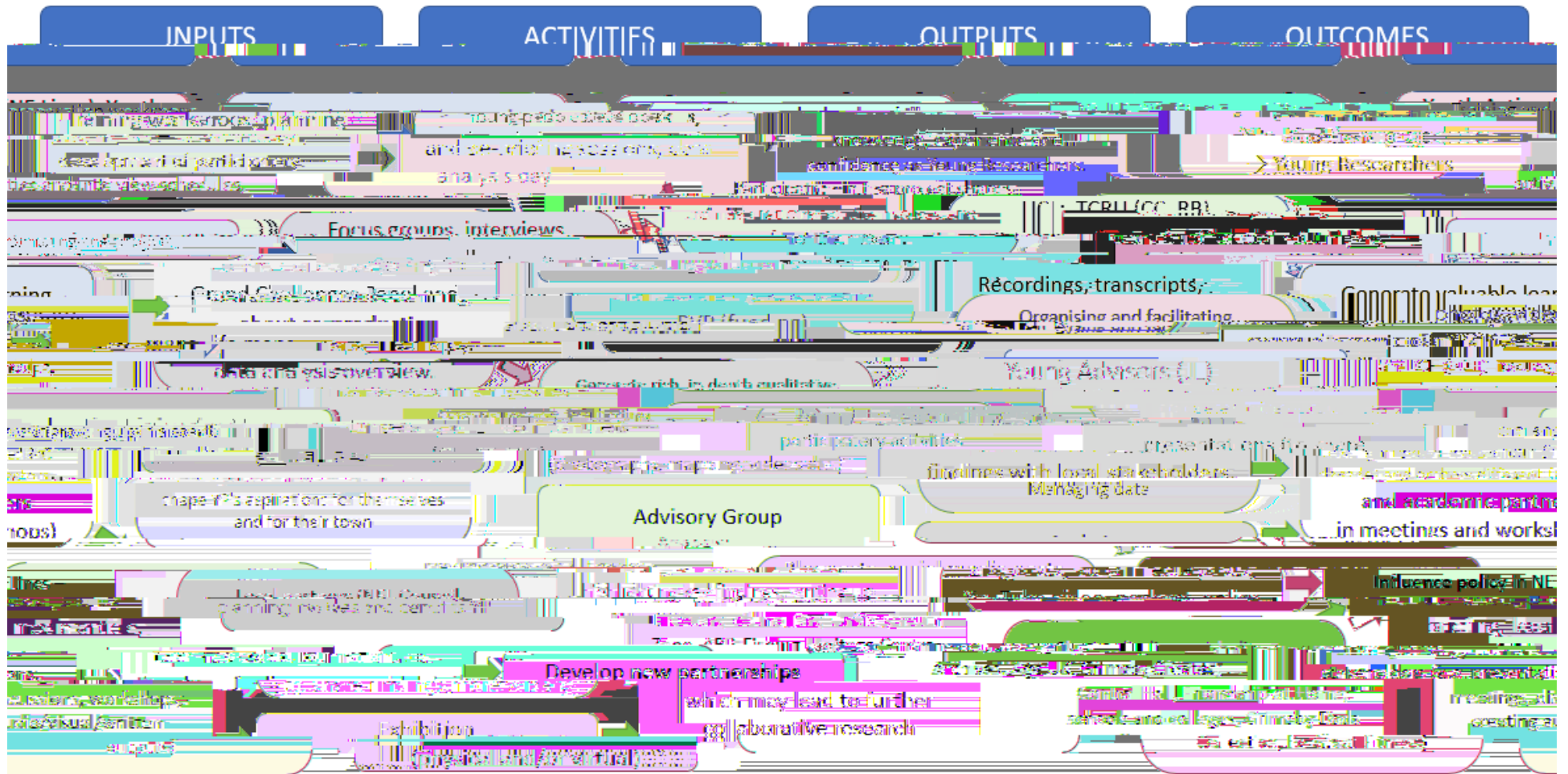
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UK Research and Innovation (2019) *UKRI Vision for Public Engagement*. <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UKRI-1610202-Vision-for-public-engagement.pdf>

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## Appendix 1: Theory of Change (Phase 2 of the study)





## Appendix 2: Research outputs

### Blogposts/webpages

Benchekroun, R. (2022) [Opportunities, aspirations and mobilities for coastal youth: emerging findings](#), *UCL Centre for Global Youth* (Published online 11/11/22)

Benchekroun, R. and Curtin, P. (2022a) [Researching with young people in coastal towns: What have we learned about co-production with young people?](#), *UCL Centre for Global Youth* (Published online 10/03/22)

Benchekroun, R. and Curtin, P. (2022b) [Intergenerational perspectives on growing up in coastal towns: a new project on coastal youth experiences](#), *UCL Centre for Global Youth* (Published online 08/04/22)

NE Lincs Council (2022) [Growing up in a coastal community!](#), *NE Lincolnshire Council* (Published online 13/05/22)

### Presentations/workshops

Benchekroun, R. (2022) Intergenerational perspectives on growing up in coastal towns (18/10/22) (*UCL Thomas Coram Research Unit – presentation at Childhood and Children’s Services Cluster*)