

YOUTH TALK

We're listening



**DELIVERING
GREATEST IMPACT**

Our strategy

2022 - 2028

www.youthtalk.org.uk

Charity no: 1063572

Updated March 2026

OUR VISION

Every young person can
talk to someone who can
help with whatever is
worrying them

WHO WE ARE

*library image

Serving St Albans for 28 years

For over 28 years Youth Talk has offered expert, confidential one-to-one counselling to 13-25 year olds. Our self-referral model and the ability for young people to access the service at no cost makes us accessible to all.

Thanks to our supporters, volunteers and fundraisers we have helped to change countless young lives.

OUR MISSION

To provide the best possible
mental health support to
young people in St. Albans
and surrounding areas

OUR STRATEGY

Over recent years, young people have faced increasing pressure and uncertainty. At Youth Talk we continue to see rising demand for our free, confidential counselling service.

Since launching our original strategy in 2022, we have made strong progress, including building our local profile, growing the service and our income whilst also successfully securing bigger and more modern premises suitable to support our ambition.

Demand for support continues to increase, while funding has become increasingly challenging. In particular we have seen our statutory income from Hertfordshire County Council withdrawn.

In response, we extended our strategy by one year, taking us through to 2028. Our updated strategy builds on what we have already delivered and sets out how we will continue to grow our services and be there for young people who need us, now and in the future.

(Updated March 2026)



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OUR AREAS OF FOCUS

Our original strategy centred on four key areas which were informed by an independent review, local need, existing provision, and the views of young people and stakeholders. As we have grown our priorities have been updated to reflect what we have delivered, what we have learned, and where we will focus next.

1. GROWING THE SERVICE

Our overarching aim remains to **DOUBLE** the total number of counselling sessions - growing from 3,833 sessions in 2022-23 to 7,666 by 2028.

By the end of December 2025, we had delivered 5,497 sessions across the calendar year, demonstrating strong progress towards this ambition.

We will:

- Grow our counselling, including expanding our face-to-face/online service into Harpenden and build further on our Saturday service
- Develop our group counselling offer, providing additional ways for young people to access effective support
- Strengthen our GP partnership-based work, in particular expanding our service with local Primary Care Networks (PCNs)
- Grow our trainee counsellor programme

What young people say



"You are all fantastic and I will always be grateful for the help. Services like this are so important and I feel very lucky to have been able to benefit from it".

2. EXTENDING OUR REACH

Not all young people are equally likely to seek support when they are struggling. In England, suicide remains the leading cause of death for people aged 15–35, with boys and young men accounting for around three-quarters of these deaths. They are significantly less likely to access mental health services, often facing barriers to support.

Research shows that early intervention and appropriate support can prevent many young lives being lost. As a result, we will research, understand and identify creative ways to extend our reach with boys and young men. We will listen to young people, parents, families, teachers and others who care for young people.

We will:

- Focus on understanding and reducing the barriers to accessing counselling for boys and young men
- Listen directly to young people's views and experiences to shape how support is offered and develop and test approaches that make our services feel accessible, relevant and acceptable
- Explore what resources can best support parents and other trusted adults who young people might turn to when they are struggling.

By doing so, we aim to ensure more young people can access support at the right time.

What young people say



*library image

"Thank you so much for your support. I have felt more understood & listened to here than any other mental health service".

3. PLATFORMS FOR GROWTH

To deliver our ambitions, Youth Talk must have strong foundations in place. This includes the systems, people and infrastructure needed to support growth, maintain safety and quality, and ensure the organisation remains resilient and sustainable as demand continues to increase.

We will continue to develop:

- Clinical and operational systems that support safe, efficient and high-quality delivery
- Fundraising capacity and capability to grow and diversify our income
- Data, insight and learning to inform decision-making and service development
- Ambassadors, Volunteers and community support as a vital part of our long-term sustainability
- Opportunities to listen to young people and expand our Youth Panel

In addition we will identify suitable and responsible ways we can use developing areas of technology to improve efficiencies and grow our work while maintaining our high quality and impact.

4. NEW PREMISES

Securing new premises was a key ambition of our original strategy and has been successfully delivered.

What young people say



"Thank you so much for your services and support. I have felt more understood & listened to here than any other mental health service".

THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGE

Youth Talk is operating in an increasingly difficult financial environment. Demand for our services continues to grow, while fundraising continues to be increasingly challenging for all charities.

In particular, in 2025/26 we lost funding from Hertfordshire County Council resulting in a reduction to our income of almost £140,000 per year.

Despite this significant knock back we have managed to continue to grow our income - but going forwards it remains **the greatest challenge we face as an organisation**. In our original strategy we set ourselves the most ambitious financial plan to date knowing that we have a profound duty to urgently respond to rising need and ensure we do everything possible to be there for our local young people.



At a time of rising need and tougher funding conditions, our refreshed strategy reflects our responsibility to do all we can to be there for young people who need our help and support.

Jackie Fowler, Chair

In response we took a deliberate and proactive decision to invest in our fundraising capacity. This investment remains essential to diversify our income, strengthen our community and individual support, and build a more resilient and sustainable funding model for the future.

The equation remains simple: **the more funds we raise, the more young people we can support.**

BUT WE CANNOT DO IT ALONE

In our 28 year history, never more than now have we needed our local community to come together in support of our local young people.

Our ambition is bigger than ever before because the challenges and opportunities demand it.

But to realise our ambition we need to deliver an exponential growth in our income - we can only get there by working together with **YOU**.

We have to do it - our local young people are relying on us all. However you can help, we want to hear from you.

Get in touch today.

SCAN
ME!



THANK YOU

Visit us at: www.youthtalk.org.uk

Contact us at: info@youthtalk.org.uk

Help us to be there for local young people

A regular gift to Youth Talk
ensures we are there when a
young person needs us most.

Donate at:

www.youthtalk.org.uk/donate

Youth Talk is a registered charity

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