

Keeley Wilkinson has been a Young People's Engagement Officer for the past two years. Keeley's role is based within Lancaster City Council's Community Connectors Team. The Community Connectors aim to connect residents with services within the council and make the council more accessible. Keeley is the sole young people's engagement officer within this team.



What experience did you need to obtain your role?

Before taking up this position, I worked and volunteered for a variety of third sector organisations where I gained valuable experience working with children and young people with various needs across multiple settings. This enabled me to understand the services available locally for children and young people and make connections that are beneficial to my current role. The role is part-time which allows me to run an organisation alongside it that supports adults and young people who are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing.

What does your role involve?

My role covers three broad areas:

- To connect with partners and organisations across the district working with children and young people, learn about their work, and offer support when needed.
- To work directly with children and young people across the district to find out what matters to them and how we can connect and support their ideas and needs.
- To work alongside other council services and offer support in relation to their workstreams for children and young people.

Previous examples of projects I have been involved in include:

- Unlocked Experiences - developing an art trail across the district to celebrate young people's resilience during the pandemic.
- Support sessions for organisations working with children and young people to safely support the restarting of their services following the first lockdown.
- Aspirations events for primary school children in partnership with the Carnforth Integrated Care Community to support understanding of different career pathways.

What have been the best bits and challenges of your role?

I enjoy the variety of my role and every day is different. I meet new organisations, groups and young people, listen to their needs and help connect them with others.

I started this role in May 2020, at the peak of the first lockdown. This was a challenging time to meet colleagues and learn about the organisation. For the first few months of this role, I supported the council's response to supporting vulnerable residents via welfare phone calls and visits. Following this reallocation, I started my new role at a very uncertain time for services. However, I overcame this challenge by reimagining the position and what was possible. I began contacting organisations and services remotely to see what support could be offered in the immediate future.

Top tips for people wanting to become a Young People's Engagement Officer:

- Reach out and find out what volunteering opportunities are available in the local area to develop your experience and skills and work with various groups.
- Develop your connections and learn about what is offered in your local area.