



Kailo Prioritisation Event Insights from Young People

25th November 2025

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Insights from Prioritisation Event 25th November 2025

Introduction

In November 2025, 28 local young people came together with the Kailo team and community partners to explore some of the big issues affecting young people's mental health. These issues had been highlighted by young people in our Kailo early engagement workshops, led by Citizens UK over the summer and autumn. During the session, young people shared honest reflections on how these challenges impact their lives and those around them, reaching a consensus on an impact score out of 10. They used an 'emotions tree' to look at the topics from different perspectives and then mapped out who holds influence to make change happen, and how much energy they think exists within those groups right now. This helped us think about what's possible and where this project could make a real difference. The insights of the young people on power and influence reflect their spheres of experience, and a complete picture will also include insights from partners working inside the system. The ideas captured in this report will shape the next stage—the Small Circle—where a smaller group of young people will explore their chosen opportunity area in more depth, supported by local stakeholders who can help them identify and access levers for systemic change. In this way, the Small Circle will create an intervention that tackles one of the issues shaping mental health that matters most to local young people.

Opportunity Area 1: A Sense of Belonging

How might a sense of belonging affect a young person's life?

IMPACT SCORE: 8/10

- Lack of belonging might make people feel that help and resources are not for them and might discourage people from seeking help.
- Young people might see others accessing opportunities that exclude them, and this can exacerbate feelings of isolation, and feeling like you're not as valued as others.
- Some people might feel stuck, but if they're isolated people might not be able to see or help them, and they don't have the ability to reach out for help.
- Feelings of isolation in individuals destroys personal connections and perpetuates erosion of community bonds, because isolated individuals are less likely to give back to a community that they feel doesn't include them.
- A sense of belonging can make people feel free to be themselves, to be authentic. They can move, be active, do what they want without fearing judgement.
- Some people might feel like they must wear a mask or fake a persona to be included, so they are hiding themselves so that they can have friends. This can make friendships feel insecure and uncertain.

- A person's true sense of belonging is under the surface; you might not be able to tell how someone really feels. Someone can look like they're doing well and succeeding, but they might still feel that they don't fit, or they haven't found their true place.
- Discrimination is closely linked to losing a sense of belonging. For instance, not having spaces to practise religion freely, or being singled out as a group that's not provided for, as if your needs are not as important (this was an example about the loss of a women's Muslim prayer space in St Pancras Library).
- This feeling can have a ripple effect into other areas of your life. Not being considered or provided for in a public space can make it difficult for you to access it. In the example given, lack of religious consideration in an important community study space has now presented a barrier to education which should be an opportunity and a right for everyone. Being let down like this has a negative impact on someone who is trying to grow and achieve to meet their potential, it can feel like sabotage and mixed messages.
- The idea of a sense of belonging can be used to deliberately oppress and exclude other people. For instance, groups who band together and hang national flags are gaining their sense of belonging by racist intimidation of non-white communities. This division enhances a sense of belonging for some, while destroying it for others.
- Isolation can lead to clinical mental health problems like depression and anxiety.
- A sense of belonging is a dynamic thing; you might have it and then you might lose it. It's something that can change through life depending on your circumstances.
- Some young people who have no sense of belonging would rather tap out completely, rather than engage with things that seem too hard. It takes too much energy.
- Sometimes opportunities to connect are there, but it's not enough, some people will need more active help to access them and to start to feel like they are included and valued.
- Feeling a sense of belonging is seen by some young people as a precondition of everything else. It's a root cause of confidence, self-esteem and being able to access opportunities.

A sense of belonging: how much power and energy is there to make a systemic change?

POWER ↑	Holds final decision-making power	Local MP	MPs	Council Leader Faith group & community services leaders coming together Youth
	Actively participates in decision-making	Party representatives	Youth Clubs London Mayor	Councillors
	Can have a major influence on decision-making			Council
	Views are taken into account by decision-makers		PTA Adult residents	Counsellors/ therapists Adults Schools Faith Leaders/ representatives
	Can draw attention to the issue		Teachers PTA	Young people, friends (petitions) Youth clubs
	Can offer support	Teachers	Parents, family, friends FYA/ Youth Clubs Young people	
	POSSIBILITY FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE	Currently pursuing other interests	Undecided/ neutral	Champion
	→ ENERGY			

CURRENT POWER AND ENERGY SCORE: 5/10

- There is lots of personal energy among young people, friends, community groups, faith leaders, some school staff, who care about young people and can support them to belong. Individually, these people and groups have the power to support young people. Collectively, they can also raise awareness, get attention, and if they can gain access to the right platforms and networks, can have some influence.
- Youth have ultimate decision-making power too but not in terms of policy. A sense of belonging comes from vibrant community built by youth. Systemic change cannot wholly address issues of belonging.
- However, the ability to harness this personal and community power is limited by lack of resources and infrastructure at community level. Some institutions like schools and governments have their attention elsewhere and are prioritising other issues. To bring about systemic change, the decision-making power would need to be brought on board, and this could unlock the potential within the community to build more of a sense of belonging for local young people.

Opportunity Area 2: Financial Pressures and Employment Barriers

How might financial pressures and employment barriers affect a young person's life?

(This could include difficulty finding work, a sense of being 'locked out' of opportunities, unaffordability, family financial stress, feeling uncertain about careers)

IMPACT SCORE: 8/10

- Changing this would have a big impact but it's not everything – there is a lot else that impacts mental health. Financial pressure is a huge part of this though and if this was eased, then maybe they could focus on the other things that impact mental health.
- Young people can be hindered because they have no knowledge or skills about the subject. Basic financial knowledge is not taught in schools and there is a lack of professional networks and advice.
- Young people are lacking opportunities because they don't have the 'seed' money to break out of the intergenerational poverty cycle.
- Lack of financial resources brings pressure and stress. There is a lack of stability, people are juggling multiple jobs and zero-hour contracts. Travel costs to reach prospective workplaces limit people's options. It feels like there is a long way to go and it's hard to hang on.
- Dealing within this issue brings fatigue and it can impact your sleep.
- Some people achieve financial stability and can make it after a struggle, but others are bankrupt.
- People who have managed to success can be a mentor to people who are still struggling.

Financial pressures and employment barriers: How much power and energy is there to make a systemic change?

Holds final decision-making power	Mayor of London Local committee		Council
Actively participates in decision-making			
Can have a major influence on decision-making	Teachers		
Views are taken into account by decision-makers			QCCA (VCS Group)
Can draw attention to the issue	Influencers Local businesses		Banks
Can offer support	Teachers Sports clubs	Teachers	FYA/ VCS Group
POSSIBILITY FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE	Currently pursuing other interests	Undecided/ neutral	Champion

CURRENT POWER AND ENERGY SCORE: 6/10

- There is local support but less sure how much support there is on a bigger system level. We found this really heard as a table to unpick the power dynamics and understand how much change could realistically happen at a system level. Identified lots of opportunity for local level support, but less clear on bigger than this.
- Community youth groups like FYA and QCCA, banks and The Council were seen as champions, who can support individuals, draw attention to the issues or in the case of the Council, hold final decision-making power.
- Teachers, sports clubs, local businesses and committees and the Mayor of London were also identified as holders of some power and influence, either to support, draw attention or as being a major decision-maker, however these were perceived as currently pursuing other interests, with less energy to focus on this problem for young people right now.

Opportunity Area 3: Housing and the Built Environment

How might housing and the built environment affect a young person's life?

(This could include pressure and stress from overcrowded housing, mould and disrepair, overcrowded public transport, access to green spaces and the outside, especially in winter)

IMPACT SCORE: 7.5/10

- A safe and positive home means safety and being able to bring people in rather than being outside which is a risk. It offers recharging and resilience, family, connection, warmth, safety, community, peace.
- Camden has the second-highest average house prices; rent is high as well as the cost of living and energy bills. People are struggling to pay rent or mortgage. The house prices increase when you turn 18.
- There is the risk of eviction/ rent hikes and a sense of insecurity in the neighbourhood.
- The quality of housing is not good. Mould is a problem, and it is hard to get the Council to refurbish properties. Exam students are in overcrowded conditions.
- Most young people are not thinking about housing now or are oblivious. They are comfortable at the start or might be content with their house even though it's inadequate.
- Comparison with others can make people dissatisfied with what they have.
- Some people have given up because of poor housing, they are not trying, or they might be suicidal.
- There is a range of consequences, drivers and impacts.

Housing and the built environment: How much power and energy is there to make a systemic change?

Holds final decision-making power	Landlords	Government	
Actively participates in decision-making	Keir Starmer	Local Authority organisations	
Can have a major influence on decision-making	Figures of authority Rich people Lobby groups Local MPs		
Views are taken into account by decision-makers	Sadiq Khan		Community/ local stakeholders/ businesses Protestors
Can draw attention to the issue			Local people
Can offer support			Charities/ philanthropists/ community centres
POSSIBILITY FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE	Currently pursuing other interests	Undecided/ neutral	Champion

CURRENT POWER AND ENERGY SCORE: 7/10

- Communities have a lot of energy but not as much power
- Stakeholders need to listen
- There is energy but too much to deal with
- More representative processes
- There is power to make a change if the government focused on it

Opportunity Area 4: Self-esteem, resilience and hope

How might self-esteem, resilience and hope affect a young person's life?

(This could include school stress, conflict with teachers and peers, feeling misunderstood or powerless, compliance with norms, unsure sense of self)

IMPACT SCORE: 7/10

- This could be a 10 if we do it right but could be lower if not effective. Responsibility needs to be shared (not just on young people) and needs to be specific to the individual. Risk of harm if you get it wrong (e.g. toxic positivity). It depends on what methods we use to improve resilience/ esteem, and it can change between people – depends on how we do it.
- Can put a lot of reliance on the young people themselves to make the change.
- Conflict with friends leads to isolation and feelings of resentment. The impact of other people can sabotage you.
- Benefits if people are surrounded by positive influences/ people. Having one reliable person in your life can make a huge difference. Resilience is built from a support system.
- A resilient person could keep getting back up and trying again.
- Someone might not know where to start. Confusion makes them feel less confident.
- Factors that have negative impacts are lack of support, tension in school life, being online too much, comparing self to others. Someone who feels lost might not be prepared to try and can feel overwhelmed.
- School stress has a big impact – reducing school and exam stress is very important.
- Comparison with others who seem to be doing better can lead to low self-esteem and feeling powerless. It can feel overwhelming seeing other people trying and wondering, why me?
- Someone with low self-esteem has a long way to go, it affects their confidence and opportunities.
- People can feel like there is a path that they should follow and might be successful, but this might not be what they truly want.
- People at the top of the 'food chain' can feel confident. Some might be at the top compared to others, but at what cost?

Self-esteem, resilience and hope: How much power and energy is there to make a systemic change?

Holds final decision-making power	Government Education Secretary 10 Downing Street	Department of Education ICB	
Actively participates in decision-making			Council Some young people
Can have a major influence on decision-making	Headteachers	Councillors School Board	
Views are taken into account by decision-makers	Young people's representatives	Headteachers	CAMHS Young voices
Can draw attention to the issue	Firms/ corporate organisations Parents Mental Health		CAMHS Young voices Hive
Can offer support	Teacher (having to do multiple roles) Hive volunteers, peers	Friends, family, some parents Government School boards Food banks	Youth leaders, faith groups Friends Charities, early intervention 1:1 support
POSSIBILITY FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE	Currently pursuing other interests	Undecided/ neutral	Champion

CURRENT POWER AND ENERGY SCORE: 5/10

- Low energy as people are tired and overwhelmed
- More energy for self esteem as responsibility is placed on individuals to make a change, rather than issues that government must address directly, like housing
- Lots of energy among young people and taking things into our own hands and supporting others.
- Energy varies significantly between stakeholders - the ones with the power (e.g. government) have the least energy.
- Self-esteem is not what people immediately think of when they think about mental health.
- Finances impact energy and ability to act.

Opportunity Area 5: Safety

How might safety affect a young person's life?

(This could include public spaces not feeling safe, being affected by/ scared of youth violence, knife crime, peer pressure to do things that feel unsafe, lack of trust in others, racial discrimination, bullying or harassment)

IMPACT SCORE: 7/10

- An everyday occurrence, there is no getting away from it
- On edge, can't relax
- Safety is a human need
- Can affect our physical health as well.
- It's about our perception of our safety – anxious/ anxiety disorder
- Everyone is different in how they feel about safety
- There are people who could help and seem ready to catch if someone falls. Community centres and charities can provide safe spaces in their sessions and can raise issues to decision-makers. Parents and teachers can help. They can support a person going up or down, by motivating, pressuring or reasoning with them
- Some leaders could support but are distracted by other things. Others could be ignorant of the issues and unaware of the damage they are causing – e.g. young people might be ignored or denied the help they need.
- Children and young people might grab on to their parents for security in a dangerous area and so limit themselves. People can feel vulnerable about crime, and feel like they need to be constantly alert, protecting themselves and their belongings. People might become nervous or scared of going out, anxiety leading them to avoid socialising. Perhaps someone has been aggressive or threatening, made them feel unwelcome.
- Peers might seem supportive but could be motivating you to do something unsafe.
- It can seem like policies and laws are made to help us, but we are still not really climbing up.
- The everyday environment can feel so busy – crowded roads, cyclists, pedestrians – you need to be vigilant.
- Some people are facing the consequences of a lack of safety.
- Someone on the edge could be reaching out for help or might now know how to ask.
- Someone who is safe can inspire - or deter us if it's something we're against.

Safety: How much power and energy is there to make a systemic change?

POWER ↑	Holds final decision-making power	Leaders	Leaders	
	Actively participates in decision-making			Parents
	Can have a major influence on decision-making			Charities
	Views are taken into account by decision-makers		Community centre workers	Teachers Charities
	Can draw attention to the issue			
	Can offer support		Community centre workers	Parents
	POSSIBILITY FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE	Currently pursuing other interests	Undecided/ neutral	Champion
	→ ENERGY			

CURRENT POWER AND ENERGY SCORE: 5/10

- Young people might be scared or unwilling to speak out, or they care more about other things
- Parents – influence and role model to their children
- Teachers – they care a lot, have power in school but not always outside school
- Leaders – care more about money and other priorities.

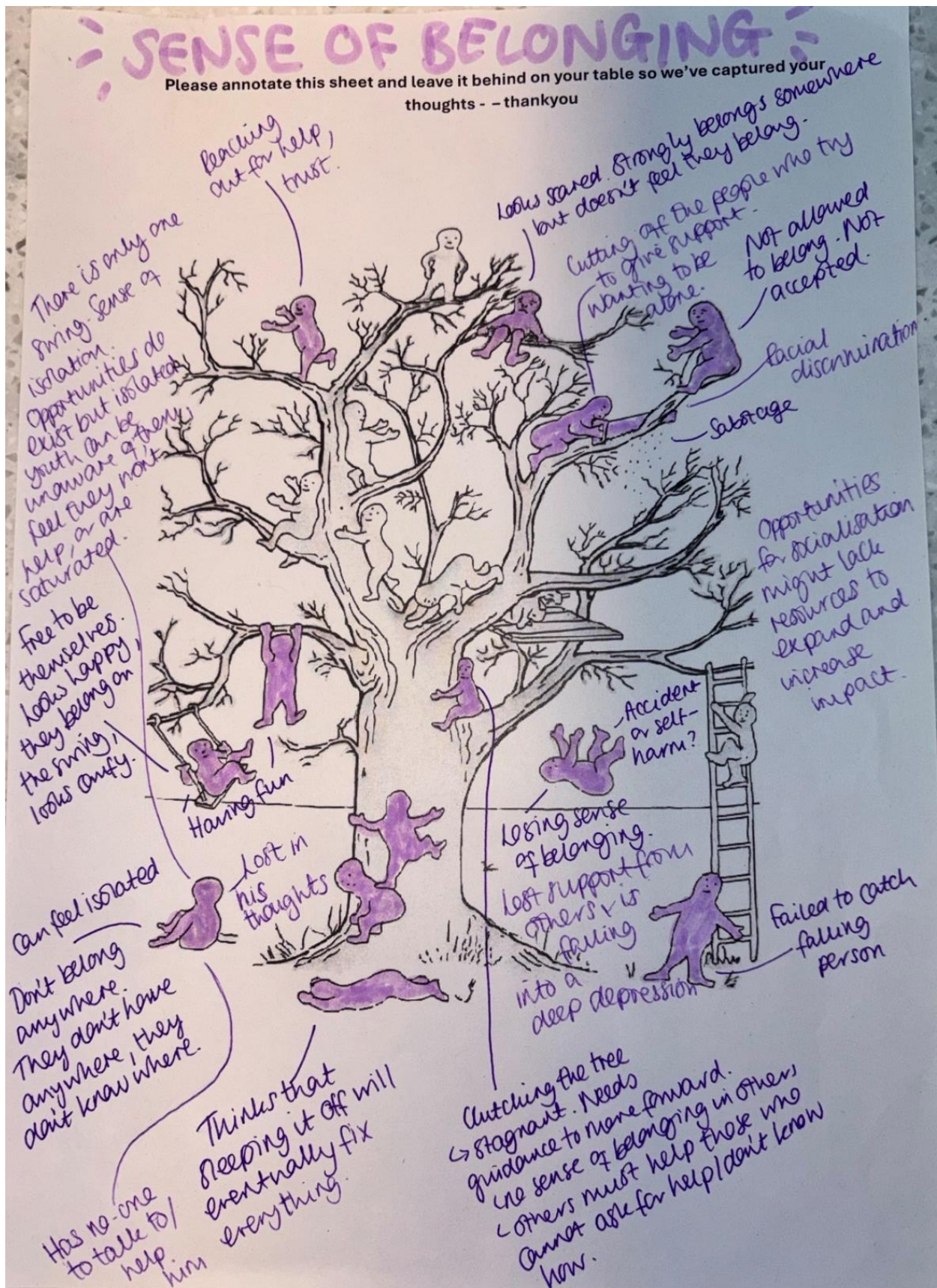
Conclusion: Where There Is Most Potential for Systemic Change? Summary insights from young people.

Opportunity Area	IMPACT		POWER & ENERGY	
<p>A Sense of Belonging</p>	8	<p>A sense of belonging is seen by young people as a foundation for confidence, self-esteem, and access to opportunities. When it's missing, isolation can lead to anxiety, depression, and disengagement. Exclusion—whether through discrimination, lack of inclusive spaces, or feeling resources aren't for them—creates barriers and erodes community connections. Belonging allows authenticity and security, while its absence forces people to hide their true selves and can ripple into education and life chances. For some, belonging feels like a precondition for everything else.</p>	5	<p>Young people and community groups have strong personal energy and care deeply about creating belonging, but their influence is limited without resources and systemic support. Schools and government are seen as focused on other priorities. To unlock real change, decision-makers would need to engage and work alongside this community energy.</p>
<p>Financial Pressures and Employment Barriers</p>	8	<p>Financial pressures and employment barriers have a major impact on young people's mental health. Lack of financial stability creates stress and fatigue, while limited access to financial education, networks, and seed funding keeps many locked in cycles of poverty. High living costs, insecure work, and travel expenses add further strain. While some succeed after long struggles, others face severe setbacks, showing how deeply financial challenges shape opportunities and wellbeing.</p>	6	<p>Young people saw strong local support from community youth groups, banks, and the council, which were identified as champions with some decision-making power. However, systemic influence beyond the local level is unclear. Other stakeholders, including schools, sports clubs, local businesses, and the Mayor of London, hold some power but were perceived as focused on other priorities, resulting in limited energy for change at present.</p>

Opportunity Area	IMPACT		POWER & ENERGY	
<p>Housing and the Built Environment</p>	7.5	<p>A safe and positive home is essential for security, connection, and resilience, yet many young people face poor housing conditions, overcrowding, and insecurity. High rents and living costs in Camden create financial strain, with risks of eviction and inadequate housing quality, including issues like mould. While some young people may not think about housing until later, these challenges can lead to stress, dissatisfaction, and even severe mental health impacts. Housing conditions have wide-ranging consequences for wellbeing and opportunity.</p>	7	<p>Communities show strong energy and willingness to act but lack the systemic power to make large-scale changes. Stakeholders need to listen and create more representative processes. Young people felt that while there is potential for change, it depends on government focus and prioritisation to unlock real impact.</p>
<p>Self-esteem, Resilience and Hope</p>	7	<p>Self-esteem and resilience are vital for wellbeing but can be fragile and easily undermined by stress, comparison with others, and lack of support. Positive relationships and having even one reliable person can make a big difference, while school pressures and social expectations often add strain. Building resilience requires shared responsibility and careful approaches—done well, it can transform lives, but if handled poorly, it risks harm. Low self-esteem affects confidence and opportunities, making this a significant challenge for young people.</p>	5	<p>Energy around self-esteem and resilience is uneven. Young people show enthusiasm and often support each other, but those with systemic power—such as government—are seen as least engaged. Overall energy is low, partly because people feel tired and overwhelmed, and because self-esteem isn't widely recognised as a mental health priority. Financial pressures also drain capacity to act.</p>

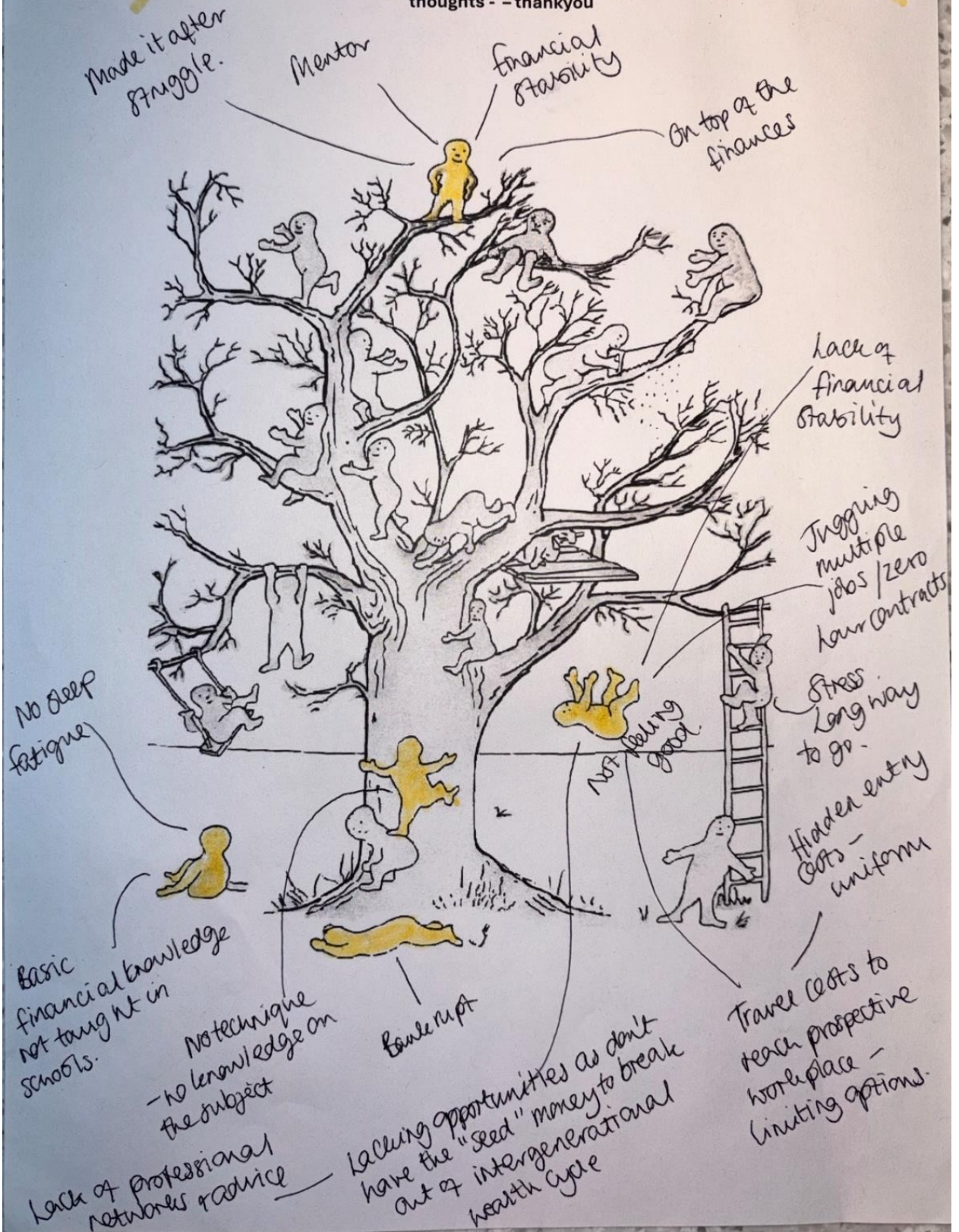
Opportunity Area	IMPACT		POWER & ENERGY	
Safety	7	<p>Safety is a constant concern for young people and affects both mental and physical health. Feeling unsafe can lead to anxiety, hyper-vigilance, and even social withdrawal. Experiences range from fear of crime and busy, crowded environments to pressure from peers to take risks. While some support exists through parents, teachers, and community spaces, systemic responses often feel distant or distracted. Perceptions of safety vary, but the need for safe spaces and reliable support is universal.</p>	5	<p>Young people felt that while parents and teachers care and can offer support, their influence is mostly limited to the home or school environment. Leaders were seen as focused on other priorities, and some young people may feel reluctant to speak out or are more concerned with other issues. Overall, energy for systemic change in this area is low and fragmented.</p>

Appendix: Emotion Tree Notes from Workshop Discussions



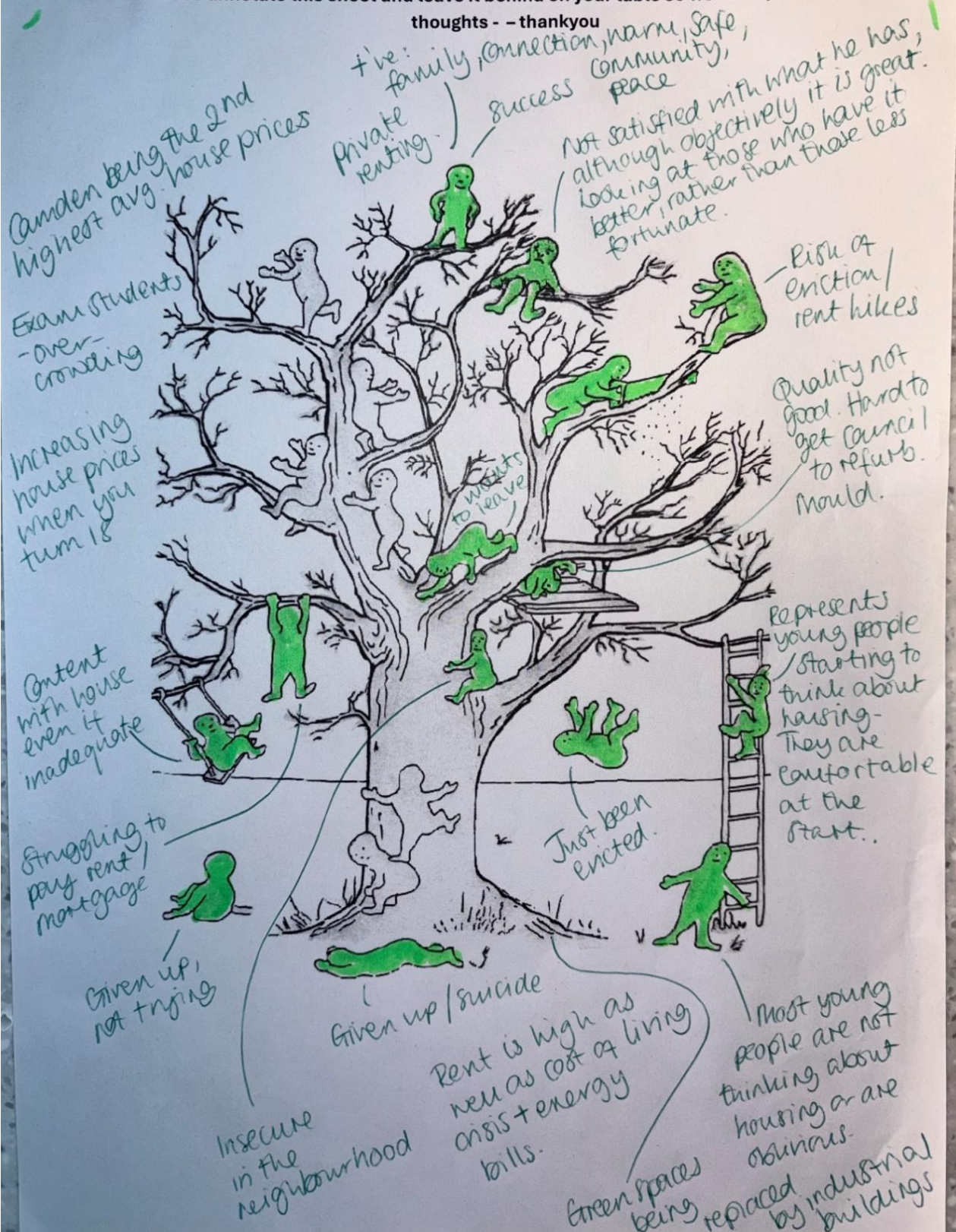
FINANCIAL PRESSURE & OPPORTUNITY

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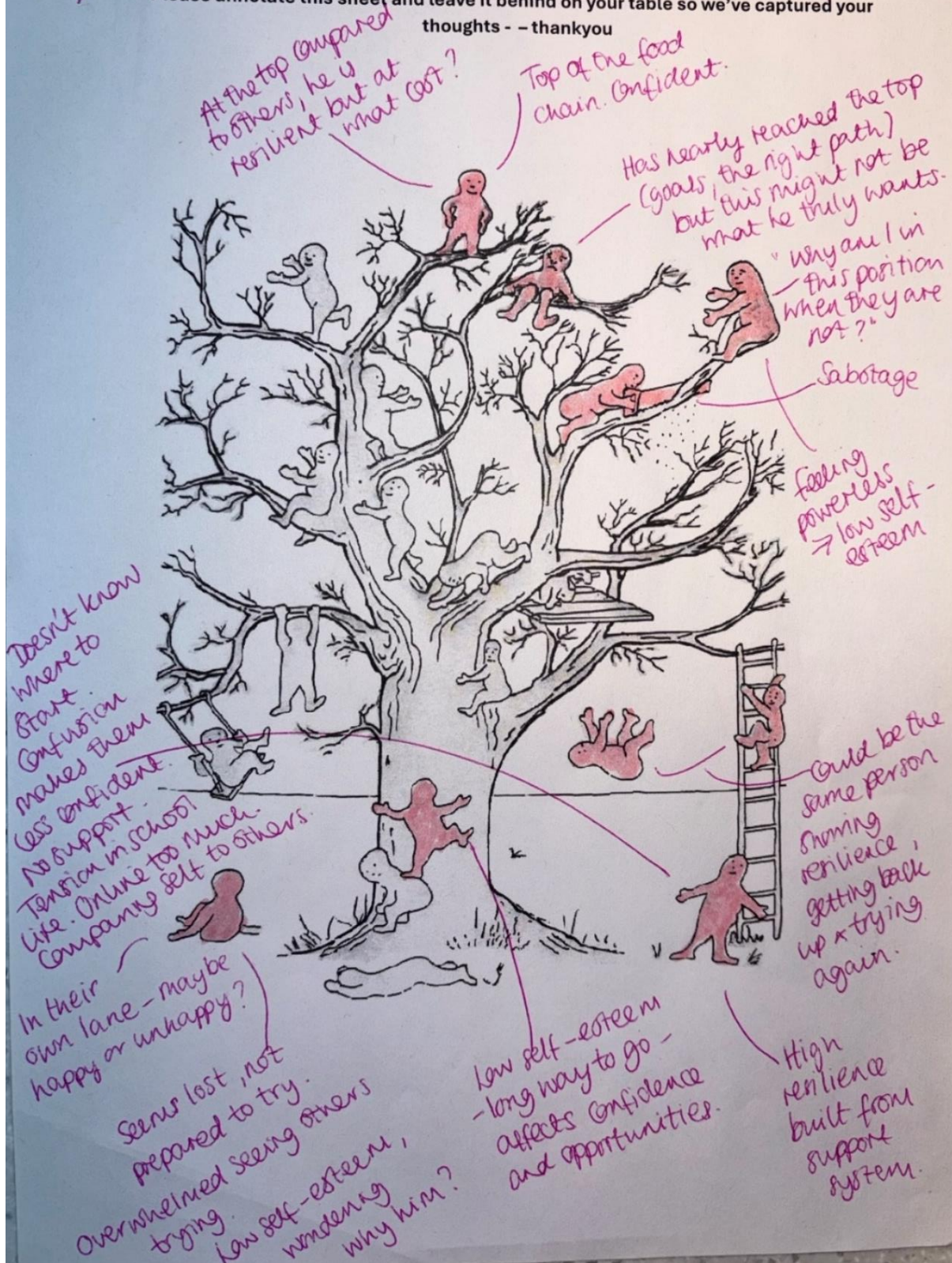
HOUSING & BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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SELF-ESTEEM, RESILIENCE & HOPE

Please annotate this sheet and leave it behind on your table so we've captured your thoughts - - thank you



Acknowledgements

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Holborn Community Association

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Kooth Digital Health

Queens Crescent Community Association

T&D Camden

The Hive

The Muslim World League London

UCL Partners

Young Camden Foundation