



Guide to Running a Youth Climate Cafe

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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| What is a Climate Café | 3 |
| Story of the Climate Café Approach | 4 |
| Key Recommendations for Developing a Youth-focused Climate Café | 6 |
| Top Tips Summary | 8 |
| Steps to running a Climate Café: Before the Day | 9 |
| Steps to running a Climate Café: On the Day | 10 |
| Five Key Steps | 12 |
| Reflections | 13 |
| More Information | 14 |



Based on our experience of leading youth-focused climate cafés, this guide shows how to adapt a climate café approach for a young audience, helping to encourage climate communication and conversations among young people. The guide provides an accessible route and step-by-step infographics to help people design their own climate café for young people.

What is a climate café?

The concept of the climate café is straightforward: people coming together to have meaningful conversations about the climate crisis. The purpose is to produce insightful discussions around emotions, concerns, and ideas about the climate crisis, as well as bringing people together so that they feel less alone.

The climate café is a gathering of people in a warm and inviting community space that is free of judgement, with a facilitator to help guide the conversation with a focus on climate crisis and what that means for each one of us. It's a place for sharing and creating connections with others through the expression of worries and feelings.

It should be a comfortable and respectful place, with attention being paid to inclusion and equity allowing everyone to express themselves, however that may be - all feelings are welcome, anger, sadness, happiness, it's a space where you can be yourself, judgment-free. Of course, whilst always being mindful and respectful to others.

Adapted from: [Climate Cafés \(2022\)](#)



Story of the Climate Café Approach

The concept of a climate café, which is still under development as a methodology, was influenced by the organisation *Climate Reality Project* in 2015 after a leader of the group, Jess Pepper, gave a presentation in Scotland. Pepper observed how her presentation led to local people making to engage in climate conversations throughout the event ([Climate.Cafe, 2022](#)). This experience provided the seeds of inspiration for the climate café approach.

Influenced by [Jamie Jauncey's \(2015\)](#) work on "death cafés", climate cafés were adapted from the same core concepts ([Climate.Cafe, 2022](#)). The point is liberation - to take challenging subjects that often leave people alone or scared and create a safe and humble space to share emotions over a cup of tea ([Jauncey, 2015](#)).

The climate crisis is becoming more prevalent, as is people's need to discuss what this changing world will mean to them and how it will affect their futures. The climate café was therefore developed to help people look into complex and difficult emotions, allowing space to open up ([Climate Psychology Alliance, 2022](#)). The climate café model allows for those that are not necessarily involved in climate activism to fill an unmet need to come together and engage in conversations without judgment. It can be a stepping stone in bringing communities together in their common fear, love, or concern for ecological well-being ([Climate & Mind, 2022](#)). The focus is discussions of emotions, feelings, and concerns. There should be no guest speakers or talks, it should be a conscious flow of conversation, with space for all to talk and share ([Climate Psychology Alliance, 2022](#)).

According to [Climate & Mind \(2022\)](#), the underlying principles of a climate café are:

- That it is agreed in the climate café space that "human-induced climate change is real, and it is a problem".
- That climate cafés are "welcoming and non-intimidating" spaces.
- That climate cafés are inclusive spaces where all are welcome, "regardless of age, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, immigration status, carbon-footprint, experience/knowledge about activism or climate change".
- That climate cafés focus on "local empowerment", focusing on the topics and actions most important to different local communities.
- That climate cafés balance discussions around "grief, fear, despair, and sadness" with doses of hope and action.

Since 2015, climate cafés have begun to pop up internationally, but most recently the approach has been adopted by *Climate Reality* to help host climate conversations at COP26, creating spaces to share climate stories and motivate the conversation to keep flowing ([Climate.Cafe, 2022](#)). The main space was hosted by *First Bus Glasgow*, visitors could join the space throughout the event, have a coffee, and participate in climate-focused discussions. There were also pop up cafes throughout the city that were in partnership with *Climate Crisis Film Festival*, and also allowing participants the option of joining virtually ([Climate.Cafe, 2022](#)).

Similarities have been drawn between climate cafés and the World Cafe methodology that is often used to facilitate discussion around difficult topics and community change processes to collect qualitative data ([Lohr, Weinhardt and Sieber, 2020](#)). Although a more structured methodology, used in research and decision-making, the World Cafe prioritises inclusionary practices. Facilitators keep conversations open yet intimate, creating conversations that incorporate each person's knowledge and views. This is encouraged through a warm and inviting space with tea and coffee to create a sense of ease ([Lohr, Weinhardt and Sieber, 2020](#)).

To date, regarding the query of whether young people are able to adapt to these difficult conversations – their generation being the most likely impacted by the changing climate, there has been minimal useful and informative investigation which suggests or offers guidance on how to tackle this. This guide, therefore, presents an important step towards understanding how to successfully develop spaces for younger people to be involved in - often challenging but critical - climate conversations.



Key Recommendations for Developing a Youth-focused Climate Café

Community Partners:

Partnering with an organisation that is embedded within the local community can help to connect the organisers with other young people in the community. You may be entering a community that is not your own and by creating a partnership with a familiar figure you are facilitating links to the community. Working with a community partner that you have worked with before or already have links with is preferred.

Shared Vision:

Make sure all those involved have a shared vision of what the event will be and involve. Techniques such as creating a visual document which outlines the shared vision at the beginning of the process, that can be checked before each planning meeting, will help to keep you on track.

A shared vision is ideally achieved by the first meeting. We recommend that you take time in your first planning meeting to discuss the ideas behind a climate café experience, and what your personal vision for your youth-focused climate café is. Your shared vision for the event could include shared values, such as ensuring everyone's voice feels heard during the planning process and during the actual climate café event(s).

Language is powerful, so remember that not all organisations or young people involved will understand the terminology you might be using to describe your vision for a climate café. Be clear and concise in your explanations of your goals.

Designing your Climate Café:

The space should be warm and welcoming. Thought should go into the decorations, posters, seating arrangements and food placement. Various tables can be laid out with books, posters, food and drink. Seating spread around the room allows visitors to the café to mingle and look around the space before the discussion starts.

The traditional climate café approach will have to be adapted to fit the needs of young people. The traditional method itself relies on people feeling comfortable enough to share and get involved in the conversation. Younger people often feel less comfortable in new settings where they are asked to share. Therefore, it is recommended that the discussion is not the first or only activity of the event. Give time for people to mingle at the beginning and engage in simple activities, opening up a more informal setting.

When designing a climate café for young people, there can be additions to the discussion event such as engagement activities. Not everyone enjoys or feels like they can engage easily in conversations about their emotions. Having other activities, such as seed planting activities, throughout the event allows everyone to get involved and for those that are more nervous to engage in one-on-one conversations.

Starting the Discussion:

When starting off the discussion, provide everyone with a brief explanation of what a climate café is. This will ensure everyone to be on the same page and feel comfortable. Visual aids can be an effective technique to help get everyone engaged. For example, coming up with shared agreements together that could then be drawn into a mind map is a great way of creating a safe space. Shared agreements might include statements such as: listen when others are talking, be respectful of others experiences, and do not assume how much others know.

Smaller groups work better with younger people as it is less intimidating. Having smaller groups of around 4-6 people where you can talk freely works best. Although this will vary depending on the size of the event and if you have multiple people leading the discussion or discussions.

Leading the Discussion:

An informal structure which allows conversation to flow naturally is important. Opening up the conversation by introducing yourselves and an easy question to answer, such as what your favourite green space is, opens up the discussion and allows everyone to feel more comfortable.

Don't feel restricted or bound by specifics: allow conversations to flow freely. However, remember that the climate crisis is an overwhelming topic and not everyone knows how to broach it. If you are struggling to get people involved, try asking simple questions or asking people to talk to the person next to them about something easy that everyone can engage in. See our prompts on **page nine**. You could also asking them to come up with a question to ask you. Remind everyone that it is not about how much you know, but that it is more about your personal experience and how you are feeling. There are no right answers!

It is important to remember that the climate café is not a space for learning, but rather a space to create connections and conversations that allow one to feel heard and understood. However, to facilitate discussion you can have specific topics in mind to bring up during the discussion such as "connection to nature" or "local community work". It's good to have background research on topics that you can revert to, or to have bullet points that you prepared to help move conversations along. Do not feel bound by these topics or points you have prepared though. If the conversation is moving in a different direction, let the young people express and talk about what comes naturally about the climate crisis and just help guide this. If the conversation begins to lull you can bring it back with one of your prepared prompts.

TOP TIPS FOR A YOUTH CLIMATE CAFE



SHARED VISION

Have goals and objectives set from the very beginning stages to help establish a shared vision.



LANGUAGE IS POWERFUL

Remember that not everyone will understand the research terminology, be clear and concise.

FEELING HEARD

Young people want to feel included and heard. Although the method is adapted to fit a younger audience it is important to not be patronizing and to give them opportunities. Young people are insightful and creative.



ACTIVITIES

Visual aids and activities make the event more fun and inviting to a younger audience. This will help to keep them involved and interested.



CONVERSATIONS

Allow conversations to flow and move in different directions.



SPACE AND INTENTION

The space you create will set the intention for the day, be warm, inviting and comfortable in the space that you chose.

Steps to running a Climate Café: Before the Day

Step One:

The first step is setting your goals and aspirations for what you wish the climate café to entail. This should be informed by the methodology and guide. Creating these goals before you enter a partnership will allow you to keep in line with the method and not have the process run away from you. Creating a shared vision.

Step Two:

Decide if you wish to work with others (such as local businesses or organisations) in the community to create partnerships. This can be important for opening up doors to the community, but remember the complications and compromises which can happen when working with partnerships (see recommendations).

Step Three:

You need to decide if you need external funding to run the event. If you have a community partner, they may be able to help with this. If you are a student, your school or university may also be a good place to get guidance on accessing funding. We recommend exploring the options that are available to you.

Step Four:

Choose a space that is accessible to everyone, being aware that you may be entering a new community and it's crucial to involve and respect said community. Cafes, schools, community centres, church halls are all good spaces to hire.

Step Five:

Visit the space before the event, making sure that it's a welcoming and comfortable space to facilitate emotive conversations.

Step Six:

Once you have confirmed a location, it's important to start advertising. You can advertise through flyers, posters, social media and newsletters. Contacting schools, local youth organisations or charities can help extend your reach and can establish connections for future projects. Make sure the advertising portrays the message that you want to get across and is informative but eye-catching - we recommend using a programme like [Canva](#) to develop your materials. If you are working with younger audiences, you may need them to bring permission from their parents/guardians to join.

Step Seven:

When designing the event, the first aspect to be considered is creating a space that is warm and inviting, with information, decorations, tables, and chairs laid out. Snacks and drinks help to welcome people to the space.

Steps to running Climate Café: On the Day

Step One:

As people come through the door offer them a sticker to write their name and, if they would like to share, their pronouns.

Step Two:

Start off with time for mingling, with everyone chatting and maybe engaging in some light ice breakers (e.g. speed friending). Have some tables with information out on them about different topics connected to climate change. You may like to have an area with books to pick up and a quiet space that if they feel overwhelmed, they can go to. We also suggest having activities set up that they can engage in throughout the event. Ideas include making a pledge tree, engaging with a seed potting activity, or a reading corner.

Step Three:

Start off the discussion as a large group and explain to the group why everyone is here and some context on what the concept of a climate café is - a confidential, safe and supportive space - and why we do it,. This is so visitors all understand what they are participating in. At this point, you may want to go over your shared agreements for rules of the discussion. This will help to create a safe space. You can use a visual aid (i.e. a mind map) to help remind everyone of this during the discussion.

Step Four:

Remember to also introduce yourself and give everyone some background on who you are and how you came to be here.

Step Five:

At this point, you may want to break into smaller groups if there are lots of people in the room. You can have smaller groups around a table, with a variety of food and drink that caters to everyone. Get each person to introduce themselves and give them an easy question to answer e.g., where is your favourite green space?

Step Six:

Begin the discussion. A broad first topic could be "our relationship with and thoughts about the climate crisis".

Step Seven:

Continue to encourage people to express emotions, concerns, or ideas around anything to do with the climate crisis. If the conversation goes off topic, you can gently bring it back to an environmental focus. Although you may have a specific topics you have prepared to discuss, make sure you allow the conversation to flow and take different directions.

Step Eight:

You can also suggest breaking into pairs to have brief discussions on things and then coming back as a group. This will make the experience less intimidating and stimulate more discussions. Prepare for this scenario beforehand by having a set list of easy questions to fall back. Examples include:

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS



What is your favourite greenspace in the city?

What subjects in school have mentioned the climate crisis/nature conversation, and what did you learn?

When were you last in a natural environment and why were you there? e.g. park, river, forest

What is a small action you or your family could change to be more environmentally friendly? (Give example e.g. buy less plastic)

How old were you when you first heard about the climate crisis?

What is your favourite activity to do in a natural environment?

Finally...

If you are used to running climate cafés for adults, be prepared to adapt your approach. For example, different from a climate café for adult participants, which focuses more closely on just discussions around feelings and emotions, in a youth focused café, we encourage marrying conversation with accessible action-based activities. You may also need to ensure you offer the young people who attend support if they need it - prepare a list of relevant local or national organisations they can contact if they need further guidance or information (some relevant links can be found at the end of this guide).



THE 5 KEY STEPS FOR A YOUTH CLIMATE CAFE

The 5 steps that will help you produce a Youth Climate Cafe to encourage climate communication among young people.



SPACE SELECTION

Choose a space which is embedded in the community and accessible. Cafes, community halls/centres, church halls and school rooms are perfect. You need to be able to create a warm and inviting space to help create a sense of ease.

SPACE INTENTION

The space you create sets the intentions. Tables should be set out with information and decorations. When they enter the space they should be greeted with some easy ice breakers and conversation starters before the main event.



STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Start as a large group and discuss why you are here, the purpose of the day and set some ground rules as a group. This helps to break the ice, and introducing visual aids to help this process is encouraged.

OPENING UP THE DISCUSSION

Break into smaller groups to create a less intimidating environment and allow for everyone to be heard. In each group, you could set a different intention to discuss.



ACTIVITIES AND ENGAGEMENT

Different to a usual Climate Cafe, to adapt to the younger audience, have activities throughout the day to allow for more interactive elements that initiate more discussions and help keep them engaged.

Below are reflections and recommendations from the climate café organised through the [Challenging the Climate Crisis research](#) project.

Please refer to these if you are organising a climate café and would like guidance and general tips from previous experience.

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CCC CATAPULT YOUTH CLIMATE CONNECTIONS EVENT



ACCESSIBILITY

Reflection: We used a well known, easy-to-access community location. We ensured it was an accessible and comfortable cafe and hall, and we catered for a range of dietary requirements.

Recommendation: Consider the possible and often varied needs of all participants.



Reflection: Many people attended the event, with people dropping in and out throughout the day.
Recommendation: If possible, keep the event free and be flexible in planning.

FLEXIBLE PARTICIPATION



SHARED SPACE AND TIME



Reflection: Sharing the event with other groups/charities meant that we needed to compromise on the amount of time and space we had available, and caused some background disturbance. However, this was also a great opportunity for more diverse events, giving people more tailored options.

Recommendation: Make sure collaborations are mutually beneficial and clearly communicated.

ENGAGEMENT

Reflection: Not all participants felt confident to join discussions.

Recommendation: Generating a relaxed and friendly atmosphere from the start helps people to feel more comfortable.



POWER DYNAMIC



Reflection: Hosts mostly led discussions by recommending subjects or presenting questions.

Recommendation: Train facilitators to ensure they feel comfortable generating but not leading discussions.



DIVERSITY

Reflection: The participants came from different places and communities across the South-West.

Recommendation: Ensure you have an awareness of the community you are working in, and plan to ensure inclusivity.

CONNECTIONS

Reflection: People exchanged information with each other and connected professionally and socially.

Recommendation: Facilitate connections by providing a sign-up sheet where people can leave their details if they would like to stay in touch.



DENSE INFORMATION

Reflection: At times the issues being presented and debated were dense and difficult to comprehend.

Recommendation: Information supplied should be precise, succinct, and relevant to the audience.



STARTING POINTS

Reflection: Participants had different starting points into the conversations, influenced by their knowledge and/or experiences.

Recommendation: As the facilitator, be confident to encourage conversation through prompts and questions



IMPROVISATION

Reflection: We needed to improvise with room set up in response to available space and participant engagement

Recommendation: Be reflective throughout the day and adapt as required



SENSITIVITY

Reflection: Climate change discussions could trigger certain feelings and anxieties for people.

Recommendation: Be prepared for emotional responses and ensure facilitators have the capacity to respond appropriately with signposting.

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

Reflection: During the film viewing, technical difficulties arose which required a pragmatic problem solving approach.

Recommendation: Ensure you have technical support.



EVENT PURPOSE

Reflection: Some attendees had little understanding of the aim of the event prior to attending.

Recommendation: Don't assume attendees have engaged with the event details which you have circulated, and ensure you have a clear way of explaining the purpose of the event.



For more information on the Youth Climate Communications Event or tips for holding a successful Climate Cafe, visit:

<https://ccc-catapult.org/>



WANT MORE INFORMATION?



To learn more about the work of Youth Action Partners, visit the [CCC-Catapult website](#)

Here are some useful links:

Find out more about the climate crisis here:



[UN Climate Change Information](#)

[Global Giving Climate Change Facts](#)

Feeling overwhelmed and seeking some advice or guidance?

[Climate Psychology Alliance](#)

[Young Upstart: Eco-Anxiety](#)

For more information on facilitating climate conversations and more, visit:



[Climate Outreach Guide](#)

[Climate Café Hub](#)

[Climate Cafés Link](#)



**We invite you to send forward
feedback on our guide, or for further advice on
setting up your own climate café, please contact:**

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