

From 5 to 7 July, a group of young people aged eleven to eighteen, from all parts of the country, gathered together in the beautiful Derbyshire village of Repton for the second Big Speak Out, a residential weekend with the theme of Making Your Mark.



The movie Up! was used as a stimulus for discussion, so after icebreaker games in the gardens of Repton School, they all settled down with bags of popcorn for a movie night (and there were not a small number of lumps in throats and slightly tear-filled eyes as the movie progressed).

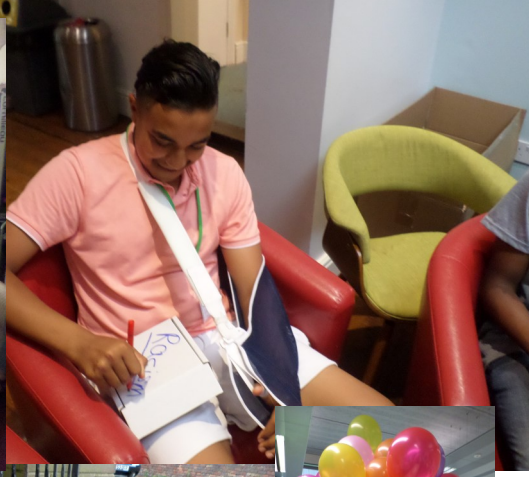
The young people selected from three streams, each tackling the topics in increasing depth, and used Bible passages and clips from Up! to discuss issues such as exploring identity, unexpected heroes, stand up and make your mark, and what God is calling us to next. They developed their speaking skills through a balloon debate (obviously) and their teamwork and problem solving through a competition to make a model of Carl's House, aiming to make their model as accurate as possible. Then came the moment of truth – testing the house to see how many helium balloons it would take to make it fly! It was a fiercely contested contest and the results were very impressive.

Saturday afternoon saw the young people choosing from a series of workshops in which they could make their mark in a very practical way. Some wrote songs for worship, some tried their hand at writing for Reform magazine, some learned how to run an activity as a young leader, some prepared a drama or a dance for Sunday's worship. Most popular of all was a "Church and Community" workshop where a group walked to Repton URC, litter-picking on their way. Once at the church, they worked incredibly hard to make their mark on the church premises by clearing an overgrown garden, filling hanging baskets and flower pots, painting a gate (and each other), and decorating the noticeboards with two inspiring displays to encourage the congregation that they too have a part to play in the mission of God.

Sticking with the balloon theme, Saturday night proved another highlight of the weekend for many of the participants as everyone filled water balloons and set to with a water fight.

It was with great pleasure that we invited the congregation of Repton URC to join The Big Speak Out on Sunday morning to share worship in the chapel of the boarding school where the group had stayed for the weekend. Worship was led by the young people and included contributions from the various workshops as well as individual young people talking about ways in which they had made their mark or planned to in the future. The event concluded with intergenerational team games, an indoor picnic together, and an award ceremony.

Alongside The Big Speak Out, the Children's and Youth Work team also ran a parallel training and networking weekend for volunteer leaders. This well-received weekend included sessions on engaging children and young people with the Bible and an introduction to Friends on Faith Adventures, a new programme being developed by CYW and Pilots for children aged five to eleven.



The Big Speak Out
Repton School 2019

