



World Sickle Cell Day 19 June 2026 Theme Briefing

Young Voices Rising

We are proud to unveil our theme for World Sickle Cell Day 2026: Young Voices Rising.

This year's campaign focuses on young people living with sickle cell, and the importance of supporting them to feel informed, confident, supported and heard — both now and into the future.

At the heart of the campaign is a simple but powerful call to action:

Own Your Health Now.

Young Voices Rising recognises that young people with sickle cell are not simply recipients of care. They are active participants in their health, their communities and their futures. In order to live well with sickle cell, we all need to enable young people to own

their health now so they can feel supported to access healthcare, seek circles of trusted support amongst friends, family and in the community, and advocate for themselves.

The campaign aims to show young people sources of support, and encourage them to have a voice, challenge stigma, and have confidence in healthcare settings. It will encourage young people to promote more open conversations about sickle cell.

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Why Young Voices Rising?

Adolescence and early adulthood can be one of the most challenging periods for people living with sickle cell. Young people are often expected to take increasing responsibility for their health while also navigating education, independence, relationships, transition into adult healthcare services, and wider life experiences.

At the same time, the treatment landscape is evolving. New treatments and therapies bring opportunities, but also important decisions around risk, timing and long-term outcomes. Many young people describe feeling less supported as they move into adult services, less confident in healthcare settings, and more exposed to stigma and misunderstanding.

Young Voices Rising reflects the importance of helping young people build confidence, ask questions, understand their condition, and feel able to use their voice.

What does "Own Your Health" mean?

The campaign call to action — Own Your Health Now. Live Well with Sickle Cell. — is about confidence, understanding and support.

It is not about expecting young people to manage everything alone. Instead, it is about helping them feel:

- informed about their condition and treatment
- confident asking questions

- listened to in healthcare settings
- connected to support and community
- able to speak openly about their experiences

The campaign also recognises that living well with sickle cell does not happen in isolation. Young people need supportive healthcare services, informed schools and workplaces, understanding communities, and access to specialist support.

The role of voice

At the centre of the campaign is the concept of voice. For many people living with sickle cell, feeling unheard or not believed remains a significant challenge — particularly in healthcare settings.

Young Voices Rising is about creating space for honest conversations, encouraging young people to ask questions, share experiences, challenge stigma and feel respected. Voice in this context is not only about speaking — it is also about being listened to and taken seriously.

Community and belonging

The campaign highlights the importance of connection, peer support and community in helping young people build confidence and resilience. It reflects the wider work of the Sickle Cell Society, including youth peer mentoring, family support, advocacy work, transition projects and awareness campaigns.

Give Blood, Spread Love

Young Voices Rising also connects closely with the Give Blood, Spread Love campaign. For many people living with sickle cell, blood transfusions are a routine and sometimes life-saving part of treatment.

There remains a significant need for more blood donors from Black heritage communities, whose blood types are more likely to match the needs of people living with sickle cell. The campaign aims to encourage more open conversations about blood donation, awareness and community action.

How to get involved

- Share one thing you wish more people understood about sickle cell.
- Write a letter or record a short message to your younger self, and share so that young people can learn from you
- Share a question you think every young person should feel able to ask in clinic.
- Create a poem, drawing, video, song, dance or spoken word piece about living well with sickle cell.

- Talk about what helps you feel confident, prepared and supported.
- Share what schools, universities, employers or healthcare teams can do better.
- Tag us @SickleCellUK
- Use the campaign hashtags on social media – lets raise our voices and get seen
- Promote blood donation within your community, and/or give blood if you can

Campaign hashtags

#YoungVoicesRising

#OwnYourHealth

#WorldSickleCellDay2026

Further information

For partnerships, resources or more information, contact:

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sicklecellsociety.org/wscd26/