

Practice update

Youth participation

September 2006

Introduction

Welcome to the September edition of Partnership for Young London's practice update, featuring examples of participation work taking place with young people throughout London. Many organisations, both maintained and voluntary, have chosen to contribute to this month's edition, illustrating the depth and variety of the work that is going on right now in the capital.

So what is going on in London?

There have been many developments in support of participation work with children and young people in London over the last year. Following the *More than Words* conference held at City Hall in June 2005, the Greater London Authority (GLA), Partnership for Young London and the Carnegie Young People Initiative set up the London Participation Workers Network, an online forum to enable participation workers across the capital to share practice and ideas, discuss developments in the field, and provide each other with informal professional support and advice.

Subsequently, as part of the Young Londoners' Network, the GLA, in partnership with Carnegie and Partnership for Young London, have established quarterly meetings for participation workers to share practice face-to-face, promote innovation, and focus on specific issues facing young Londoners. Regular agenda items include discussion workshops and short presentations, together with updates from the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and the UK Youth Parliament.

The practice update

This practice update aims to enable our members to share their experiences of delivering projects for and with young people in London, by providing details on the scope, success and funding of their work, as well as useful information about implementation and the lessons they have learned.

The **November edition** will be taking a look at emerging good practice in delivering the **Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds** in London. Examples from local authorities about their approach, from young people about how they are using the money, and from voluntary sector organisations about their role in these developments, are all welcome. If you are interested in contributing, please e-mail info@partnershipforyounglondon.org.uk to request a submission form. All contributions must be received by **31 October 2006**.

Partnership for Young London

T: 020 7332 3599 F: 020 7332 3701 E: info@partnershipforyounglondon.org.uk

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London Gold Award Forum

Duke of Edinburgh's Award

The London Gold Award Forum is a youth-led committee of 14 Gold participants (at different stages of the Award) aged between 17 and 24 and from all over the capital. We are a diverse and representative group of London's demographic make-up with regard to gender, ethnicity, culture and socio-economic background. The forum was established in October 2005 and will function for one academic year, with the new forum being recruited this September.

Project aims

The aim of the London Gold Award Forum is to assist in the planning and development of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in London. At the Award, much emphasis is placed on young people having a say in the design and decision-making process for the programmes they are involved in. By representing all of the Award participants in London, the Gold Award Forum acts as a bridge between the directors and co-ordinators, and the thousands of Award participants.

Project activities

So far this year, we have responded to the *Youth Matters* green paper; held a conference for young people; attended fundraising events; met HRH Earl of Wessex; and been involved in the London Arts Project, the Young Londoners' conference and various 50th anniversary events at the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. We have also been to Head Office and spoken to the Chief Executive, Peter Westgarth, and directors from other regions.

The forum members undertook a trip to the Gambia this summer (the first of five countries that we plan to visit), the aim of which was to investigate and establish development projects in the country in partnership with the President's Award (the Duke of Edinburgh's Award equivalent in the Gambia). During our stay, we developed links between the UK and the Gambia, and researched ways to encourage Gold Award groups in London to take on international residential projects in the near future.

Implementing the project

As last year was our first year, Peter Fleet (the Director for London) decided that the Gambia would be the first country we visited as he had been there before. As the Gold Award Forum has developed, we have become increasingly autonomous, although there is always support available from Peter and the other staff at the London office.

When we were in the Gambia, we visited the President's Award and asked about development work that needed to be undertaken in the area. We then worked together to prioritise these projects. Examples of some of the work that needed to be done included removing the asbestos from the roof; replacing the old, wooden, eaten away, un-waterproof roof with a new, metal-framed one; cementing the classrooms' sandy floors; installing new electrics, a ceiling, windows, shelving, mosquito nets and furniture. We took a lot of notes, drafted plans, and obtained quotes for doing the work. The Gold Award Forum is now producing a portfolio of development projects to be undertaken by various Award groups from the London region over a five year period.

The staff of and a few participants in the President's Award gave us a tour of their site, which included a skills centre. At the centre, young people can learn marketable skills, including IT, secretarial, sewing and dressmaking, carpentry, metal fabrication, mechanics and electrical installation. It was good to see that a lot of subjects are covered and that the President's Award is doing good work, but sad to see how limited their resources are.

London Gold Award Forum...

Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Lessons learned

I believe that the first year of the London Gold Award Forum has been really successful: I have met people from all over London, all with different backgrounds, which gives the forum a great deal of diversity. I also like the fact that I have met people I would not normally socialise with - for example, one member of the forum is deaf, and I found it a valuable and sometimes challenging experience communicating with her. That is why we began to learn BSL (British Sign Language) before going to the Gambia. With hindsight, it would have been better if we had a signer on the trip abroad to make her feel more included; however, we did manage to overcome most of the language barriers we encountered, often simply through the use of pen and paper.

The opportunity to research rather than undertake development projects was very positive because it allowed us to see and experience the Gambia. We visited the Albert and Serekunda market, Bungalo beach, Independence Arch, the crocodile pool, went on a roots tour and spent a day with a Gambian family.

It is great that the Gold Award Forum provides us with a platform from which our voices can be heard. It is important that young people's views are taken into consideration; after all, young people are the participants in the Award! We plan for the new forum to carry our success forward, and after five years hope to see several groups travelling to different parts of the world at different times throughout the year.

We are the children of yesterday, the voice of today and the leaders of tomorrow. If you have any issues or questions to raise with the Gold Award Forum, please e-mail us at london@theaward.org.

Contact details

Nathan Jones
Member of the London Gold Award Forum
The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
4th Floor
207 Waterloo Road
London
SE1 8XD

T: 020 7928 8004
E: londonstaff@theaward.org
W: www.theaward.org/london

Mainstreaming youth participation

Central London Connexions

The aim

Mainstreaming the involvement of young people in design and delivery is now the emphasis for Central London Connexions, providing a stronger power base for young people through a wide variety of approaches. Some of the ways in which the organisation is doing this are outlined below.

Minimum standards for Connexions centres

One-stop shops are a central point of access to information and resources for young people. As a result, the Central London Connexions Youth Board, supported by a consultant, was commissioned to research and present a clear definition and set of standards for Connexions centres. These are now built into the contracts and performance management structure for providers. During 2006-07, Youth Board members will visit each centre twice a year to assess its performance and report their findings to the Partnership Board. As a result, minimum standards will be upheld and services will be fit for purpose.

Mystery shopping

Youth Board members, supported by a specialist mystery shopping company, were trained to assess the quality of provision at a sample of five Connexions centres, by assuming the role of clients. Training including looking at ethics and standards, learning the assessment process, and reporting research findings. Each young person presented their scenario at two centres, and each centre assessed received a full report of the service delivered. They were then asked to develop an action plan to improve their services.

Sharing and inspiring good practice

Central London's Youth Forums, Youth Councils and youth groups, along with the Central London Connexions Youth Board, showcased their work at a major event at *Sound* nightclub in Leicester Square. Young people and their workers came together from across the partnership to share their experiences of youth participation through presentations, themed workshops and 'speed networking'. As a result, many Youth Councils were inspired to launch new projects to change the shape of their local services.

Training Personal Advisers in youth participation

Members of the Central London Connexions Youth Board worked with Bigga Fish and Youth Culture Television to increase awareness of youth participation among Personal Advisers (PAs). Together, the Youth Board, Central London Connexions staff and Bigga Fish developed a day-long training session to look at the objectives, methods and outcomes of involving young people more fully in the day-to-day work of PAs. As a result, more PAs are working directly with young people to improve the support they offer.

Peer research

Every other year a major survey is undertaken to ask young people about the relevance and value of Connexions services. Youth Board members are trained by the market research company conducting the survey to be co-facilitators of the focus groups held. Last year, Opinion Leader Research (OLR) was commissioned to do the work, and they trained fifteen Youth Board members to conduct face-to-face interviews and facilitate group discussions with young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, refugees and asylum seekers, young people in mainstream education, those in Pupil Referral Units, teenage parents, and young offenders. The outcomes from the research shaped the priorities for the following year's business plan.

Mainstreaming youth participation...

Central London Connexions

Youth debate

The *Engaging London's young people in learning* youth debate took place at the Institute of Contemporary Arts. Three organisations, Carnegie Young People Initiative, Centrepont and Central London Connexions, worked jointly to put together a lively debate, which focused on some of the barriers young people in Central London face when getting into and remaining engaged with learning. Young people were helped to prepare questions for the Secretary of State for Education and a panel of experts (which included other young people). A total of 170 young people took part in this animated debate, which was chaired by Centrepont Chief Executive Anthony Lawton.

Contact details

Hayley Ramsay-Jones
Youth Involvement Co-ordinator
Central London Connexions
125 Freston Road
London
W10 6TH

T: 020 7938 8081
E: hayley.ramsay-jones@rbkc.gov.uk

Youth Action pilot programme

London Youth

Project aims

The aims of the *Youth Action* pilot programme are:

- to enable youth workers to encourage, support and accredit young people's participation in the running of their youth club or for their initiative in developing a new project or activity
- to develop and enhance a culture of youth action and participation in youth clubs across London.

Project activities

London Youth's *Youth Action* programme is made up of four main parts:

1. *Identifying and promoting the key elements that make up youth action*

- identifying needs and finding solutions
- project planning
- working as a team to carry out a project
- evaluating and reflecting on the work.

2. *A one-day training course for youth workers, covering:*

- a definition of youth action
- the role of youth workers in supporting youth action
- key elements of youth action
- practical tools for facilitating youth action
- further support and accreditation details.

3. *Support and guidance for youth workers in facilitating youth action in local clubs*

On returning to their youth clubs following the training, youth workers are using the practical tools they have learned to support young people through the youth action process and keep them sufficiently motivated and engaged to work through the four stages of youth action. There are scheduled support and evaluation sessions throughout the programme for youth workers to share progress and give feedback, during which they can also access support and further training.

4. *Accreditation for young people*

Young people who are involved in or lead on all four stages of youth action will receive a *Youth in Action* certificate. This is accredited through the AQA Unit Award Scheme and endorsed by the Youth Action Network.

Lessons learned

The training event for youth workers was a great success - many felt highly motivated by this simple and practical approach to youth participation, and appreciated the opportunity to accredit young people for their actions. This pilot programme is being run by London Youth between July and December 2006, and will be fully evaluated in 2007.

Contact details

Rosie Ferguson
Youth Volunteer Training Officer
London Youth

T: 020 7510 5855
E: rosie.ferguson@londonyouth.org.uk

Youth participation pilot project

Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) London

Project aims

MLA London, the capital's regional agency for museums, libraries and archives, is running a pilot project which aims to:

- engage young people outside mainstream education in museum and archive services at a deeper level of participation
- enhance museums and archives' cultural offer to young people at risk of exclusion, developing skills and understanding of this audience within the sector
- create partnerships between creative organisations, young people's services, and museums and archives
- increase awareness of inclusion and other citizenship issues within museum and archive contexts.

Project activities

During the autumn term 2006, two groups of excluded young people will become young consultants at two of London's most original museums, the Old Operating Theatre Museum and Leighton House Museum, helping to make them more exciting and friendly for young people across the capital.

Young people currently outside mainstream education in the boroughs of Lambeth and Kensington and Chelsea will be working with museum education officers at the Old Operating Theatre Museum and Leighton House Museum to create new ways of delivering their services.

Implementing the project

Creative practitioners with extensive experience of working with excluded young people, *Back on Track* at Oval House Theatre, and the participatory video company Living Lens, will be supporting the young people throughout their consultancies, together with the youth services in each of the pilot boroughs.

MLA London will be working with the project's steering group to develop further youth consultancy activities (with additional funding) from 2007 onwards.

Contact details

Jan Kofi-Tsekpo
Cultural Entitlement Schools Liaison Officer
MLA London
Cloister Court
22-26 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3AJ

T: 020 7549 1715
E: jan.kofi-tsekpo@mlalondon.org.uk
W: www.mlalondon.org.uk

For the Old Operating Theatre Museum: www.thegarret.org.uk
For Leighton House: www.rbkc.gov.uk/LeightonHouseMuseum/general

Youth Act

The Citizenship Foundation

In London, Youth Act is and has been run with young people aged 11 to 18 in the boroughs of Croydon, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Southwark and Waltham Forest.

Project aims

The overall aim of Youth Act is to increase young people's ability to bring about social and political change in their communities. Specifically, Youth Act works to:

- increase participants' political literacy and their ability to influence decision-makers
- enable participants to run a campaign
- increase participants' confidence and sense of self as active citizens
- enable young people and adults to work in partnership.

Project activities

There are seven core elements of the Youth Act programme that need to be reproduced to successfully develop local youth-led action for change:

1. Taster sessions for the education, youth and community sectors to gain an insight into the Youth Act programme.
2. An orientation and training session for supportive adults.
3. A minimum six-week training programme delivered to groups of young people and their supportive adults. Each session lasts approximately two hours, and the training covers a wide range of skills including advocacy, negotiation, influencing decision-makers, teamwork and resolving conflict. The training also introduces the young people to other youth activists and to local councillors who could influence the outcome of their campaigns.
4. A residential training event for all supportive adults and young people.
5. Ongoing informal support and guidance from Youth Act after completion of the training.
6. Opportunities for Youth Act groups to reconvene at events and gatherings, including opportunities to make presentations and network with peers.
7. Provision of resources and materials for supportive adults and young people.

Youth Act groups have chosen to address a huge range of issues, which include mobile phone theft, teenage pregnancy, anti-social behaviour, extending local hospital opening hours, improving relations between young people and the police, a lack of local youth provision, making social services more responsive to young people, improving housing estates, and tackling gun and knife crime.

Implementing the project

Youth Act has grown slowly since 2003. We initially decided which boroughs to work in and looked at how to access the widest range of young people by tapping into existing networks. We consulted groups of young people, created advisory groups, and ensured that training and related support were closely linked to local need. As Youth Act has attracted more funding, staffing has increased from one project manager to include administrative and web support and a full-time trainer. Resources have been identified and refined, and we now use one or two effective manuals supported by websites, experts and other contacts.

Lessons learned

Some Youth Act groups ran successful initial campaigns that are still going after three years. The Tottenham-based Stonebridge Road Estate group is a great example of a successful Youth Act initiative. This group of young people won a Philip Lawrence Award in 2004 for their outstanding achievement in good citizenship, and organised a *Make a Change* day for local residents in order to lobby Council members. This event won Haringey Council's Most Active Tenants Group (Special Prize) in 2004, and a Wavemakers Award in 2005.

Youth Act...

The Citizenship Foundation

This same group also appeared on Newsnight in July 2004; persuaded the council to install new lighting and remove dangerous equipment on their estate; and secured £2,400 from the Community Chest for facilities for improved recreational facilities on their estate. They were one of only 15 examples of young people making their voices heard in BT's *Seen and Heard* report of 2005.

Other Youth Act groups have not necessarily run campaigns, but the young people involved have grown in confidence and linked up to other activities as a result. Some of these activities have included:

- joining local youth councils
- becoming involved in the new permanent Anne Frank exhibition
- helping to judge other young people's awards schemes, e.g. the Camelot 4Front Awards
- taking part in a Citizenship Foundation round table event on young people, attended by journalists and other commentators
- being nominated as Cosmo Girl of the Month and Year
- writing articles for national magazines, e.g. Volunteer Action, Young People Now
- participating in further training and skills development, e.g. peer leadership, 'train the trainer'
- helping to run Youth Act taster days, residential weekends and consultation events
- becoming trainers with Young Movers at Trafford Hall in Cheshire
- appearing on national and local television, e.g. BBC Newsnight, Politics Show, ITV, Community Channel
- meeting with members of the Home Office Civil Renewal Unit who, as a result, consider Youth Act to be an exemplary model for community action
- joining an interview panel to appoint Youth Act staff.

A small number of Youth Act groups did not stay together, for a wide range of reasons: where we did not ensure they could really commit to the training before they started; where their lives were too crowded with other issues; where the supportive adult let the group down.

An independent evaluation of Youth Act stated, '...engaging young people in community action, policy change and political campaigning is never an easy process...All projects working in this area experience the real barriers that exist to youth participation in democratic processes and community action. However, such work is needed now more than ever and the fact that the Youth Act pilot has succeeded in enabling young people to engage in political action in their communities demonstrates that this is a scheme that warrants attention and resources.'

For the future

Sustainability has been ensured for some campaign groups as the Youth Act projects became part of their communities. Like all voluntary organisations, we are trying to secure long-term funding to make Youth Act a permanent part of the Citizenship Foundation. We are also in the process of rolling the project out nationally using a 'train the trainer' approach.

Contact details

Carrie Supple
Director of Youth Act
Citizenship Foundation

T: 020 7566 4153
E: carrie.supple@citizenshipfoundation.org.uk
W: www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/youthact

Youth Advisory Group

Summer Uni London

Summer Uni London

Summer Uni London (SUL) is an initiative run by Tower Hamlets Summer University, the aim of which is to encourage and facilitate the growth of high quality, sustainable summer universities that offer open access for young people across London. SUL is currently developing a network and partnership of successful Summer Unis and other summer activity providers, and is committed to providing advice and assistance to Summer Unis, identifying gaps in summer provision, and being a forum for Summer Unis to share practice.

The **SUL Youth Advisory Group** is the natural next step for those young people already involved with Summer Unis as youth advisers, peer motivators and team leaders.

Project aims

The SUL Youth Advisory Group aims to:

- become a recognised youth consultancy body across London
- assist Summer Unis with self-evaluation
- collate information and consult on youth issues, and attend youth forums across London
- act as an advisory group to SUL on its overall development.

Project activities

Members of the SUL Youth Advisory Group are being recruited through existing Summer Unis and youth-led initiatives in London. Once established, the group will:

- 1. Advise SUL** on publicity, events and marketing strategies.
- 2. Evaluate Summer Unis** and extended programmes, looking at publicity, the quality and range of courses offered, peer motivation programmes, and youth advisory boards.
- 3. Offer consultancy** to Summer Unis and extended services on the quality of their programmes and publicity.
- 4. Campaign**, working closely with pre-existing networks and bodies around London; researching issues for young people in London, and gathering young people's views to feedback to Summer Unis and to lobby Councillors and Ministers across London.
- 5. Publish a dynamic annual magazine** by using film, photography and journalism to collate information from Summer Uni evaluations, consultancy and campaigns.
- 6. Develop a web page** and produce regular news bulletins to disseminate the group's work.
- 7. Organise and manage an annual youth conference** to bring together Summer Unis and other youth organisations to showcase and promote summer provision.
- 8. Research Summer Unis, youth forums, youth advisory boards and other youth organisations** across London, highlighting successful models and disseminating practice.
- 9. Compile video evidence** of their own work and that of Summer Unis, for presentation at the annual youth conference.
- 10. Manage and administer their budget** and undertake fundraising activities.

Implementing the project

The first consideration in implementing the project was to look at creative ways of involving young people in SUL. Following research of innovative consultation and participation initiatives, the SUL Youth Advisory Group was set up. In its first year, the Youth Advisory Group will be made up of 12 young people aged between 16 and 25, who have either completed Summer Uni programmes as peer motivators and team leaders, or who have considerable experience on youth forums or as youth advisers.

Summer Unis and SUL are providing core funding for the group, which contributes towards venue hire, the annual youth conference, external training for advisory group members, and payment for the young people's time and travel.

Youth Advisory Group...

Summer Uni London

This funding will also cover capital items such as video and digital cameras, materials for the magazine, and general administration. It is hoped that the Youth Advisory Group will begin to apply for their own funding as they develop, to achieve sustainability over the longer-term.

Each member of the Youth Advisory Group will have a mentor to offer them support and guidance, as well as access to external training courses. We are also considering developing a charter in partnership with Young Enterprise London, which would form the basis of the Youth Advisory Group in the future.

In consideration of the longevity of the SUL Youth Advisory Group, it proposes to increase in size each year, evaluate an increasing amount of Summer Unis, and continue to develop its existing activities. Previous experienced members will have the opportunity to join the Alumni SUL Youth Advisory Group, which we hope will mentor, train and recruit new advisory group members.

By taking part in the scheme we hope that young people will:

- develop as committed, responsible, accountable leaders and team players
- increase in confidence and have greater aspirations
- gain new skills and experience, e.g. in setting up and running a company, evaluation and consultancy techniques, journalism, finance and fundraising
- be paid for their consultation and evaluation work with Summer Unis
- improve their CVs and opportunities for employment
- feel pride in leaving a legacy for future group members
- play a crucial role in our charity, helping to have a positive impact on their local and wider community.

Young people will have tangible evidence of their achievements, such as copies of the annual magazine and news bulletins, their reports and DVD footage. SUL also has a Careers Co-ordinator in post, who will be able to guide both existing and alumni group members.

Lessons learned

It has been essential to ensure that the group has remained true to its original aims and objectives as it developed. However, the most important objective of the Youth Advisory Group is that creative, mutually beneficial relationships are forged with young people. This means getting regular feedback from young people, ensuring that the work continues to benefit young people, and incorporating a balance of views from both young people and colleagues.

Extensive partnership working is being continually considered, in order to make the most of opportunities that could enhance our work. SUL's role as a pan-London initiative is appealing to many, and we have a lot to offer to other organisations. We have already created many opportunities for our young people in this way, and are always looking for further partnerships to continue to do this.

It is hoped that our participation activities will encourage other organisations to increasingly involve young people throughout their organisation's strategic development.

Contact details

Luke Clark
Young Person Development Co-ordinator
Summer Uni London

T: 020 7183 1424
E: lukeclark@summeruni.org

A citizenship project

Hillingdon Youth Council

Citizenship is an issue that has been discussed repeatedly at youth conferences in Hillingdon during the last year (at the Local Democracy Conference in October 2005 and the Youth Council conference in February 2006), where young people have suggested that citizenship lessons should be delivered differently and be more relevant to their lives and the issues they face on a daily basis.

Project aims

Hillingdon Youth Council decided to investigate young people's views and opinions about the quality of citizenship lessons in their schools in more detail, and to gather their suggestions about the continuing development and relevance of 'citizenship' across the borough.

Project activities

The Youth Council involved Hillingdon Council's Management Board in the project at the outset, as they wanted to ensure that the information gathered was fed back both to young people and to the decision-makers in the council (those with the power and influence to act on the suggestions made). To date, approximately 1,600 questionnaires have been returned - these provide a clear picture of young people's opinions about citizenship lessons.

Taking forward this project has involved a wide range of activities for the Youth Council:

- devising questionnaires in partnership with other young people across the borough
- testing the questionnaire with different age groups of young people
- discussing the project with Hillingdon Council's Management Board, who subsequently endorsed the project and its aims
- making contact with all the citizenship leads in the borough, to explain the purpose of the project
- distributing the questionnaires to all secondary schools in the borough who delivered citizenship lessons, supported by a second questionnaire for citizenship teachers
- putting together a video project to document opinions, including interviews with both staff and young people.

Completed questionnaires are now being analysed - initial feedback suggests that young people have really taken the opportunity to express their views about the quality of citizenship lessons in their schools. Feedback from the questionnaires will be presented to young people at the Local Democracy Conference in October 2006.

Implementing the project

Initial contact with the school citizenship leads ensured that the project's aims and objectives were clear and meant that schools were happy to be involved. There has been a clear plan to disseminate the information collected through the survey both to young people and to those who can influence the content of citizenship lessons in the borough.

Contact details

Jenny Glen / Asima Mahmood
London Borough of Hillingdon - Youth Services
3S/07 Civic Centre
High Street
Uxbridge UB8 1UW

T: 01895 277816
E: jglen@hillingsdon.gov.uk

Kensington and Chelsea Youth Forum

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Project aims

The aims of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) youth forum are:

- to provide opportunities for young people in the Royal Borough
- to debate and inform
- to encourage active participation
- to encourage involvement in the development and improvement of services for young people
- to target 13 to 25 year olds who live in, or attend school or college in, the Royal Borough.

Project activities

The RBKC youth forum takes part in a diverse range of activities, which include:

- debates about local, national and international issues relevant to the concerns of young people
- being the driving force for implementing the Hear By Right standards throughout all of the business groups (RBKC is the first borough in London to reach the Advanced Standard)
- sharing good practice with other boroughs and youth facilities
- representing the young people of the borough at external conferences and events
- organising and electing the MYP (Member of Youth Parliament) for the UK Youth Parliament
- mystery shopping for all the different business groups within the council, and as part of the Resident Reviewers Team
- developing publicity for events and for services for young people
- creating the new initiative of democracy-orientated youth exchanges and residentials
- developing workshop-based conferences about how democracy impacts on local young people
- planning and delivering workshops for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
- conducting peer research projects
- assessing and evaluating applications for the forum grant scheme, in which the budget is currently £12,000 (due to be substantially increased over the coming years by the Youth Opportunity Fund)
- presenting their views on council documents, for example on the draft Children and Young People's Plan, to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- employing young people at every opportunity, including training and employing young development advisers for the youth service (currently held by six young people from across the borough).

Key achievements

The youth forum has received acknowledgement and praise for the work it does in encouraging young people in the borough to participate fully in the services provided for them.

- Nine young people achieved the Level 2 Peer Education and Global Youth Work Course accredited by the Open College Network, developed in partnership with Save the Children.
- Nine members from the youth forum completed their silver Duke of Edinburgh Award, including the first disabled young person in the borough to achieve this award.
- The forum received the Apollo Award for two years running, once for Excellence and once for Outstanding Contribution to the borough.
- One of the members received the Apollo Award for Academic Excellence.
- Another forum member received the Outstanding Contribution Award for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, presented by Connexions.
- Members of the forum gave a presentation on their youth grants scheme at the Hilton Hotel, discussing the benefits of the scheme and how they assessed grant applications.
- The forum has developed a close working partnership with the Moroccan Consulate for the Cultural and Educational Exchange programme to the Kingdom Of Morocco.

Kensington and Chelsea Youth Forum

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Implementing the project

The youth forum meets every two weeks, and has a rotating chairperson and minute-taker. Young people have agreed their own terms of reference, and the application process by which young people can join. Young people decide the agenda for each meeting, including those RBKC staff they wish to attend for consultation. The consultation process has been developed so that its impact on young people can be clearly evidenced both during and after the consultation.

Youth forum members have formed an integral part of the recruitment and selection process within the borough as part of the Hear By Right standard, and have access to a full-time Youth Participation Officer and part-time worker who support the forum. These staff were both short-listed and interviewed by members of the youth forum.

Lessons learned

This youth participation project was initially externally funded, which raised concerns among forum members about a potential lack of funding and staff support in the future. This led to active engagement with the local authority by the youth forum members, in order to campaign for secure internal funding for the youth participation programme. This was achieved, in part due to the track record of the youth forum.

Now that sustainable funding for staff, resources and expenses for young people has been secured, we are able to set long-term project goals and learning objectives, better motivate young people to get involved, and achieve tangible targets.

The youth satisfaction survey and other peer research helps the youth forum to gauge the response of young people to the services provided locally, and to learn what areas are in need of greater improvement. The youth forum members have developed a youth charter as a way to set goals for the local council to meet, in order to provide young people with a minimum standard of service provision. A complaints procedure was also put in place at the youth council to ensure everyone's voice could be heard, whether or not they had the majority vote. This allows every young person to contribute to the future development, improvement and evolution of the youth forum.

Contact details

Written by Misha Badr-Safdari and Safiyah Dahbi-Skali, members of the Kensington and Chelsea Youth Forum.

For more information, contact:
Alwyne Colley / Brendan Read
Youth Participation Team
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

T: 020 7938 8039 / 07976 060 118
E: alwyne.colley@rbkc.gov.uk

Bexley Youth Council

London Borough of Bexley Youth Service

Project aim

The aim of Bexley Youth Council is to reach out to young people in the borough of Bexley to ensure their voices are heard on issues that affect their lives.

Project activities

Members of Bexley Youth Council have been and are involved in a range of activities, some of which include:

- securing premises to hold meetings and facilitate workshops
- attending consultation meetings with local authority representatives, e.g. regarding children's trusts
- creating a logo and image to raise the profile of the Youth Council
- establishing a website for Bexley Youth Council
- organising an event for under-18s in the borough
- brokering the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds
- gaining accreditation for voluntary hours undertaken, through initiatives such as Millennium Volunteers.

Implementing the project

Bexley Youth Council was established in January 2005 with its own budget from Bexley Youth Service and with one full-time worker to offer support and guidance to the young people involved. The Youth Council members agreed to meet formally once a month at premises they had secured in Erith, Kent. They elected a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, and meetings are minuted and the notes distributed. At present, the Youth Council is looking at the need to recruit new members and involve a wider range of young people. They are also forming a Bids Panel to make decisions on grant applications received for the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds.

Youth Council members are provided with training and support to carry out the responsibilities associated with their roles.

Lessons learned

The Youth Council has achieved many milestones in its short lifespan but now recognises the need to form an Executive Committee of members. This committee will meet prior to meetings to decide agenda items and take on the responsibility of representing the Youth Council and young people at external meetings. Young people are also looking at ways of restructuring the council, including giving each member a specific area of responsibility, e.g. Education, Health, Environment, etc., and are discussing the need to employ someone from the Youth Council to take on the role of an administrator, in view of the extra work associated with the Youth Opportunity Fund.

The young people on Bexley Youth Council have given many hours voluntarily to ensure that the voices of young people are heard within the local authority.

Contact details

Filomena Brockwell
Participation Worker
Welling Youth Centre
Welling
Kent

T: 020 8854 4046
E: philomena.brockwell@bexley.gov.uk

Safe with Sport mural project

Merton Children's Fund

Project aims

The aims of the *Safe with Sport* mural project were:

- to engage children from three schools (one primary, one secondary and one for children with moderate learning difficulties) in a creative activity that involved social skills and learning about art and design
- to show children at risk of exclusion that graffiti well done and in the right place would be admired.

Project activities

As the Merton Children's Fund Participation Worker based at Jigsaw4u, I had previously consulted with local children (in partnership with the police), who felt that there was nothing to do in local spaces or that they felt unsafe. We began to consider providing creative sporting activities as a way to occupy young people's time. Locally, the Hub, the Tooting and Mitcham Football Stadium and Fitness Centre was keen to get involved with the local community, and agreed to display the children's artwork.

A local graffiti artist, Jamie Lawrence, was then engaged on the project, and together we worked with 38 children and young people to create a wall mural on the theme of keeping safe by doing sports. A design competition was organised and run by small working groups in all three schools, and then the winners and original group members worked with Jamie at the Hub to create the mural (see picture below).



Implementing the project

A grant of £1,000 from the Police Property Fund enabled me to launch the design competition. A further £3,000 from Safer Merton paid for my time, the artist's time, the workshops and materials, and also funded a launch celebration event at the Hub on 8 July 2006.

Lessons learned

Having small groups with clear rules set by children and young people, being clear about the intention of the project from the start, and regularly meeting those from other schools, all contributed towards the project's success. It was clear that workshops without a clear structure, especially at secondary level, did not work - the young people involved did not cope well with abstract concepts: they needed clear and achievable goals to underpin what they were doing.

Contact details

Lizzy Webster
Merton Children's Fund Participation Worker - Jigsaw4u
T: 07971 517513
E: lizzy.webster@blueyonder.co.uk

Every Drawing Matters

Richmond Education and Children's Services

Project aims and objectives

The aim of *Every Drawing Matters* is to support young people to shape and participate in cultural services across the borough of Richmond. The project's objectives were:

- to involve young people in creative workshops which explore the key objectives of *Every Child Matters* and introduce them to the Arts Service at the Orleans House Gallery
- for young people to work collaboratively to create high-quality work based on their interpretation of the *Every Child Matters* outcomes
- to work in partnership with key agencies that support young people's engagement, including the Looked After Children's Team, ASDAN schools support, services for young parents and the Adolescent Resource Team
- to support vulnerable young people in such a way that provides additional support for their involvement with an inclusive peer environment, through their usual social, familiar, educational or support settings
- to install young people's work in a public exhibition at the Orleans House Gallery, which will offer a platform for young people's views and creativity, and a forum for the public to meet gallery staff, partners and others involved in the development of children's services
- to evaluate the project outcomes, allowing us to develop a forward plan based on our findings, and assess the viability of the project as a template for other organisations seeking to work collaboratively with young people in developing their services.

Project activities

Over a core period of 10 weeks, artist Nathalie Palin worked with 27 young people aged nine to 19 in creative workshops, predominantly held at the Orleans House Gallery, but also at youth clubs and in youth support settings. The project also ran four open workshops for children and families from October 2005, and contributed to International Disabilities Day.

The young people involved were encouraged to consider the themes of *Every Child Matters*, and to create drawing-based work that explored one or more of those themes. Each group focused on a specific artist, looking at artists' processes and ideas to influence their own work. Work included stencils on canvas, paintings, photographic silhouettes, collaborative ink drawings, and 3D drawings in wire.

The final pieces were shown in an exhibition at The Stables at the Orleans House Gallery in May 2006, curated and installed by young people and gallery staff. A private viewing was held, attended by participants, staff, partners, local providers, friends and family. The exhibition coincided with the official opening of the Arts Education Centre at the gallery, attended by David Lammy MP.

Implementing the project

The project activities ran from October 2005 to May 2006, with the majority of the 32 workshops taking place from February to May. Of these workshops, 23 were scheduled with partner staff for six distinct groups where young people worked within a peer group (friends, school group, support group); four were family learning workshops open to local families (with families of some participants from the closed groups invited directly); and five workshops were arranged directly with participants late in the project, to allow them additional time to refine their work after school and at weekends.

The project was led by artist Nathalie Palin with support from Education Co-ordinator Alexandra Bennett and Curator Mark De Novellis. Funding came from a variety of sources including family learning, early years, and the *engage envision* project.

Every Drawing Matters...

Richmond Education and Children's Services

In the short-term, a number of opportunities have emerged as a result of the project. The council has used the artwork from *Every Drawing Matters* as a focus for the launch of Children's Services and a springboard for other activities involving young people. We are now planning to extend the project to create an animated version of our local Children's Services Plan (working with the same participants and the Richmond Youth Forum) to illustrate its key targets. This is due to be completed by November.

Negotiating the transition between the recruitment of young people through formal education frameworks and more informal relationships with the gallery over the longer-term has been an important aspect of this and previous gallery projects. On the whole, we have identified one or two young people from a given project who have become clearly attached to the gallery and we have continued to support them. We are now developing individual art and design GCSE programmes for young people involved in the project, following requests by schools and other agencies.

The Orleans House Gallery has been delivering award-winning projects with young people over the last 10 years and has recently opened a new facility - the Coach House Education Centre. This has provided us with a bespoke accessible education space that we can use to develop and expand our work.

Lessons learned

What worked

Young people on the project related very well to the gallery environment and appeared to feel at home. All of the staff noted that the young people's behaviour in the workshops was much improved in comparison to behaviour at school. The artist ran workshops in schools and youth clubs as well as on the gallery site, and felt the young people were able to take on a much more responsible role when they worked in the gallery environment. Significantly, 17 of the 24 young people who attended one or more workshops on the gallery site have said that they would like continued contact with the gallery.

What didn't work

Some workshops were delivered off-site in youth club and youth support settings. Early in the project, staff noted that there were often too many distractions here for participants to engage fully. For the PAYP (Positive Activities for Young People) group, workshops were re-located to the gallery site, where young people found it considerably easier to engage and their behaviour noticeably improved. For the young parents' group, workshops took place once a month during their existing group support session - this large gap between workshops meant that the impetus to complete work was difficult to maintain. Young parents who took part in these workshops said they would like to finish their work for the touring show, and one couple came to the gallery independently to work with the artist. Staff felt that it was beneficial for the young parents to take part in the project, but overall, contact through the project was insufficient to have any significant impact.

Contact details

Rachel Tranter
Head of Arts
London Borough of Richmond

T: 020 8831 6462
E: r.tranter@richmond.gov.uk

Listening at Last

London Borough of Harrow

Project aim

The aim of the *Listening at Last* project was to set up an unbiased, youth-friendly application process for young people in Harrow to bid for money from the Youth Opportunity Fund. This work was led by young people in the borough.

Project activities

- Create a database of all youth groups in Harrow (both formal and informal).
- Inform as many young people as possible about the Youth Opportunity Fund.
- Create application forms and guidelines for young people to bid for grants.
- Set up meetings with youth groups to help young people complete the forms (if necessary), and to support them in developing Youth Opportunity Fund projects.
- Establish a deadline for the application process.
- Invite the youth panel to judge all the bids that have come in.
- Let youth groups know whether they have been successful, and if not, why not.
- Ensure the grants go out quickly to the successful applicants.
- Put a process in place to do spot checks on groups that have received money, to make sure they are using the money as stated, and that everything is running smoothly.
- Ensure that processes for the Youth Opportunity Fund are embedded for the future, with appropriate levels of staff support for the young people involved.

Implementing the project

Under the guidance of the Youth Participation Team in Harrow, young people employed a freelance project adviser to help to set up the project. She had already been working on a similar project in another borough) so brought valuable experience to Harrow. We also employed two young people to assist in setting up the project, to advise on the best ways of contacting other young people, and to ensure that the project was truly youth-led (this article was in fact submitted by one of the youth assistants on the project).

In order to ensure that this work was sustainable, the whole group worked from the beginning with the ethos that any short-term obstacles needed to be resolved with a view to the future. For example, bidding forms and guidelines were created with the long-term funding process in mind, rather than simply for the pilot project. We are currently contacting groups of young people who might want to apply for funding in the future - even if they are not ready to do so now, they are still being given equal consideration in our plans. A rough timeline for the pilot project (up until the launch of the Youth Opportunity Fund in Harrow) had already been established by the freelance adviser - this was agreed and followed by everyone working on the project.

In terms of resources, Harrow Council had already provided us with our own rooms and facilities for working on the Youth Opportunity Fund so, although it took longer for us to get access to ICT resources than we had planned, we were raring to go soon after the project was launched. Following the success of the pilot, Harrow Council are going to employ someone to work on the Youth Opportunity Fund, and we have accounted for a handover period to allow the new officer time to learn the job before they are left to do it on their own.

Listening at Last...

London Borough of Harrow

Lessons learned

Although this project has largely been a great success, there are a number of considerations that would have made *Listening at Last* run more smoothly and be more effective in the short-term:

- publicising the project and all that it involved more widely to youth organisations before it began - this would have made sharing office space with these organisations a lot easier, and would have meant more youth groups were engaged with the project from the outset.
- capitalising more heavily on word of mouth advertisement to reach young people in the borough
- improving inter-council communication, particularly around sharing knowledge - for example, we spent time creating a database of youth groups in Harrow for the project, only to discover that there was an existing database that simply needed to be updated.

The many positive aspects of our project include:

- involving young people in creating publicity materials and press releases for the project, making it more likely to spark other young people's interest.
- having young people working on the project - this was hugely refreshing and brought new ideas and a 'youth-connected' vibe to the project as a whole.
- setting up and working to embed an excellent system for future use within Harrow Council, which can be used not only for the Youth Opportunity Fund but also for other similar projects. We hope this will help the Youth Service to be more efficient and thus help out young people in Harrow.

Contact details

c/o Wendy Forbes
Participation Team Manager
Youth Engagement
London Borough of Harrow

T: 020 8420 9245

E: wendy.forbes@harrow.gov.uk

South Kilburn Youth Board

The Campaign Company

Project aims

The South Kilburn New Deal for Communities (NDC) Youth Board is a democratically elected body of young people aged between 11 and 24 from the South Kilburn area, which sits for one year. Its aims are:

- to be the voice of the youth of South Kilburn
- to act as a grant awarding body for young people seeking funding to start their own projects (the Board has £30,000 to spend each year on youth-led projects in South Kilburn).

Project activities

During the last 12 months, the Youth Board has:

- approved over £15,000 worth of funding for new youth projects in South Kilburn. These have included business start-up courses, cheerleading and street dance groups, sponsorship and kit provision for a local youth football team, and support for young people not in education, employment or training to attend a youth residential.
- convened a Youth Select Committee to look at crime, anti-social behaviour and respect. The Board invited residents, local decision-makers and Government representatives to a series of meetings to answer the Board's questions on these issues and how they affect young people in South Kilburn. From the evidence gathered, the Youth Board has submitted a report and DVD to the full NDC Board, supported by a series of recommendations. These are now being implemented, and include establishing a closer working relationship with the NDC board, and ensuring more consultation with young people on issues affecting South Kilburn.
- two members of the Board were invited to a weekend residential organised by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, where young people from all over the UK came together to respond to *Youth Matters*.

Implementing the project

The elections for the Youth Board are held during July and August of each year, culminating at the South Kilburn Youth Festival in August. A great amount of planning and staffing goes into the run up to the election, particularly around identifying candidates. The Campaign Company spends a great amount of time in South Kilburn attending school assemblies, youth group meetings and youth clubs, talking to young people about the Board's work. We also rely on the support of local youth service providers to put forward young people for election. Once elected, the Board members receive support from The Campaign Company, although the meetings are convened and the agendas set by the young people.

At present, the Youth Board has been guaranteed NDC funding for the next two years and we hope that this will continue for the lifetime of the NDC (which has about five years to run). We are currently looking at ways to fund the Board after this date; if separate funding cannot be secured, it is possible that the Board will become part of the Brent Youth Forum.

The success of the South Kilburn NDC Youth Board has surpassed expectations, particularly as it was the first Youth Board of its kind in the area. Its members have worked hard to ensure its success, which is in itself illustrated by the number of young people that stood for election this summer - 25 candidates for 12 places.

Contact details

Nik Clifton
Project Officer - The Campaign Company

T: 020 8688 0650
E: nik@thecampaigncompany.co.uk

AMP 2006

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Project aims

The aims of AMP 2006 were:

- to support local young people to organise and run the borough's premier annual event for young people
- to introduce Community Action to groups of young people and encourage them to take action in their own communities.

Project activities

During the planning stages of AMP 2006, young people were supported by the Tower Hamlets Participation Team to organise almost every aspect of the day-long event. From venue to workshops, catering to entertainment, young people made the decisions on how the event would run, and were supported by the team to make it happen.

Beginning with Olympic-themed activities run by youth work apprentices, the day moved on to the launch of the borough's strategic Children and Young People's Plan (by the Corporate Director of Children's Services) and the Youth Opportunity Fund. Young people then went on to participate in a series of streamed workshops, all themed around community action. These were facilitated by organisations such as St. John Ambulance, the Fire Brigade, Youthbank and International Youth Exchange. The third workshop in each stream was a creative one, giving participants the chance to share their learning through methods such as rap, dance, drama and art.

The final part of the day involved responses to AMP 2006 from the Mayor; a question and answer panel made up of representatives from organisations such as housing and the police, and hosted by one of the borough's Deputy MYP's; and 'edu-tainment' run by MC:PSG, engaging the crowd in sharing their experiences of the day through music and rap.

Implementing the project

A huge amount of time was allocated to supporting the young people's planning group, who were involved in all stages of planning and implementation, and wherever possible, encouraged to take the lead on specific areas of the event. Even on those small parts of the day that they did not arrange, young people were consulted. They had the final say on almost everything, although when this wasn't appropriate (e.g. for the launch of the Children and Young People's Plan), this was made clear from the outset.

To ensure their attendance, senior staff at Tower Hamlets, including the Director of Children's Services and the Mayor, had the date of AMP 2006 in their diaries several months in advance.

Lessons learned

Holding a large event over two venues, however close they are to each other, is problematic. The communication between the two sites needs to be instant and simple. Relying on an outside body to provide catering was an issue, as what was supplied varied from what was expected and meant alternative arrangements had to be made on the day. Having a back-up plan for even the most organised of elements could prove useful.

Engaging young people throughout the entire event was important, as unengaged people invariably find ways to occupy themselves! Finally, question and answer panels require a certain type of audience if they are to work effectively, and should only be attempted if this audience is present.

AMP 2006...

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Having the event organised, hosted and generally run by young people formed a powerful message to adults about how much can be achieved by young people if they are given the support and the opportunity. It can perhaps take more time, but the outcomes for the group and the event far outweigh this cost consideration.

Contact details

Glen Ocskó
Youth Participation Worker
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
T: 020 7364 4019
E: glen.ocsko@towerhamlets.gov.uk

or

Darren Jones
Youth Participation Officer
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
T: 020 7364 4087
E: darren.jones@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Youth Assembly

St. John Ambulance

Project aim

The aim of the St. John Ambulance Youth Assembly was:

- to increase the awareness of youth participation work in the organisation
- to enable members from across the country (and from Germany and Cyprus) to network
- to share information and disseminate good practice models of youth participation.

Project activities

The Youth Assembly looked at specific areas of youth participation work and the skills needed, which included:

- communication with young people
- making the most of your volunteering
- finding motivational speakers
- interactive teaching methods
- how to set up your own Youth Assembly
- how to make your Youth Assembly better
- next steps after the Youth Assembly.

Implementing the project

The Youth Assembly project was youth-led from the very start. The Youth Participation Implementation Group, eight young volunteers with a keen interest in youth participation, organised and delivered the event. A new lead team has been elected to carry this work forward, with the hope of running regional participation events next year.

The event was advertised throughout our membership, and the programme itself, written by volunteers, was devised from a series of consultation days earlier in the spring. The staff team involved consisted of the Youth Participation Implementation Group, two members of paid staff and two senior volunteers.

Each county was asked to send two young people aged 14 to 25 to the Youth Assembly, as well as one youth leader to accompany them.

Lessons learned

The staff team have formed a very good relationship in organising this event, and had ownership of the project from the start, which gave them more enthusiasm and drive. The programme was flexible and open to change if the delegates requested it (e.g. for longer or shorter workshop sessions).

The best part of the Youth Assembly weekend was the Open Forum, a question and answer session between participants and an expert panel. This was supported by a skills session earlier in the day that taught delegates how to write good questions, how to follow up their questions and how to answer questions. As a result, the questions put to the panel were clear and concise, and subsequently answered satisfactorily. The panel itself included three young people.

We encountered a number of administrative difficulties when organising the event, predominantly around procuring completed application and consent forms - this was a result of many of our young members taking part in camps, summer activities and family holidays during the summer months.

Youth Assembly...

St. John Ambulance

The impact

The after-effects of this event have been astounding. The numbers of e-mails and phone calls that we have received, and the increased participation on our e-mail lists has been beyond belief. There has also been increased interest from leaders and young people in participation work, including reports coming in about youth participation events being planned across the country in the near future. County Youth Assemblies are coming to life, and increasingly being led by young people.

The buzz created by the Youth Assembly is difficult to describe, but the feedback has been incredibly positive. The Youth Assembly has been a real launch for youth participation within St John Ambulance.

Contact details

Antonia Dixey
Youth Development Officer (Youth Participation and 16 to 25)
St. John Ambulance

T: 020 7324 4273

E: antonia.dixey@nhq.sja.org.uk