

# THE YOUNG MAYORS SCHEME

An independent youth-led evaluation

March 2011



**IARS**

Independent Academic Research Studies

Empowering young people to influence policy and practice

## About the Young Mayors Scheme

A Young Mayor is a young person who is elected by other young people to represent them. There are Young Mayors in place across the country and hundreds of thousands of young people have taken part in elections to put them into office. Turnout in these elections is often higher than the equivalent turnouts in adult elections.

The Young Mayor Network (YMN) is a body that gives directly-elected Young Mayors the chance to support each other and come together with a view to getting their voices heard on a national stage.

The aims of the Young Mayor Network are to...

- Act as a lobbying group where there is common interest
- Share ideas and best practice on a regional and national level
- Collaborate on projects and campaigns
- Advocate for democratically elected Young Mayors

The 12 strong Young Mayor Network was established and hosted by the Campaign Company in 2008. The British Youth Council (BYC), which was established in 1948 as the national youth council of the UK, has recently taken over this hosting role and link in YMN to its broader network of 620 local youth councils, and 130 member organisations<sup>1</sup>.

## About the Campaign Company

The Campaign Company (TCC) is a specialist communications consultancy with a national reach, having worked with over 250 public, private and voluntary sector clients. We work to ensure that harder to reach groups within society are empowered to actively participate within their communities. We are market leaders in youth engagement working with local authorities, national government and the third sector to give children and young people more of a voice in decision making processes. TCC pioneered the first Young Mayor election in Middlesbrough in 2002 and have since helped to establish and implement Young Mayor schemes in Lewisham, Newham and North Tyneside. At a point where voter apathy was at its highest since the Second World War, these elections were designed to introduce young people to democratic participation at an early age. By mirroring the process of the first ever elections for adult directly-elected Mayors we hoped this would normalise voting behaviour in young people and also raise awareness of the process in the wider population.

Over the last few years we have increasingly been involved in changing behaviour where we draw on the principles of social marketing, insight, segmentation, marketing mix, exchange and competition theories. Our approaches have delivered successful campaigns in areas like smoking cessation, sexual health and community cohesion<sup>2</sup>.

## About Independent Academic Research Studies<sup>3</sup>

IARS is a youth-led, social policy think-tank that was set up in 2001 by young people to empower their peers, especially those who are marginalised, so that they acquire a voice in society and engage with its structures and services as equal citizens.

Through the provision of high quality volunteering opportunities, youth-led work placements, training, skills-development programmes, accreditation, peer mentoring and research, IARS young people learn to inform and indeed influence practices that affect them at local, regional, national and international levels. Through a youth-led structure, young people from all walks of life learn to influence decision making, policies and the law and as role models participate in society and support their peers and youth-led organisations and groups in creating a tolerant and equal society where

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<sup>1</sup> Information supplied by the Campaign Company.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> [www.iars.org.uk](http://www.iars.org.uk)

young people are respected and valued. IARS is unique in its structure and the only youth-led social policy think-tank in the UK.

The charity achieves its aims by:

- providing voice and representation of issues affecting the youth-led sector;
- providing youth-led direct services to disadvantaged young people e.g. high quality volunteering opportunities, tailored training and skills development programmes such as research methods and human rights;
- acting as an independent youth-led consultancy and policy think-tank;
- carrying out youth-led research to influence and inform policy and practices affecting young people;
- informing strategic decision makers about issues affecting youth-led organisations and youth groups that are easily exposed to discrimination e.g. Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups (BAME), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual (LGB) young people, disabled young people, those out of education and employment, ex-offenders and offenders.

Our work is evidence-based and reflects the passions, concerns and interests of young people particularly those who tend to be excluded. Our activities have a national and international significance, and we are particularly active in London. IARS aims to serve as a model whereby young people, particularly from disadvantaged groups, come together to inform practices and policies that affect their lives, and support youth-led Third Sector organisations and others concerned with issues that involve them.

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 ABOUT THIS REPORT

In June 2010 IARS was commissioned by the Campaign Company to carry out a piece of youth-led action research to investigate what impact the Young Mayors scheme is having on its participants in five areas: Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Worthing<sup>4</sup>.

There were a number of key areas or themes that the research investigated, including:

- i) young people's democratic engagement,
- ii) social cohesion,
- iii) personal development,
- iv) young people's faith in public services as users and consumers

## 1.2 CONTEXT: EMPOWERMENT AND LOCALISM IN A NEW POLITICAL AND PUBLIC SECTOR REALITY

The principle policy document concerning youth engagement and youth citizenship to emerge in recent years is the final report of the Youth Citizenship Commission, which was released in 2009. The Commission defined citizenship broadly as,

*"the activities that individuals undertake for the benefit of their community. This includes activities like political engagement, public service, volunteering and participation."* (Youth Citizenship Commission, 2009: 9).

The Commission concluded that: citizenship activities should put young people in leadership roles, non-engaged and first time participants should be a priority, and that activities should focus on promoting the mixing of young people from different backgrounds and areas (Youth Citizenship Commission, 2009: 26). The report specifically analysed the Young Mayors scheme and concluded that,

*"The concept has been successful in a handful of cases and, on occasion, has elicited reasonably good election turnouts. On balance, however, we consider it to be targeting the positively politically engaged segment rather than those who are non-engaged. The programme also has a strong focus on individuals rather than peer groups...it was seen as tokenistic, ineffective and not involving people beyond the individual mayor."* (Youth Citizenship Commission, 2009: 33).

The Commission recommended that attention should be focused on trying to engage those young people who are not already involved in a citizenship related activity.

The findings of the Commission sat along side a programme of constitutional reform initiated under the Labour government, which sought to increase the role of the citizen in decision making. In particular, section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("LGPIHA 2007") places a duty on local authorities to involve local people in decision-making.

(1) Where a best value authority considers it appropriate for representatives of local persons (or of local persons of a particular description) to be involved in the exercise of any of its functions

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<sup>4</sup> The Young Mayors scheme also operates in other areas. For more information please see the Young Mayors Network website <http://www.ymn.org.uk/>

by being—

- (a) provided with information about the exercise of the function,
- (b) consulted about the exercise of the function, or
- (c) involved in another way,

it must take such steps as it considers appropriate to secure that such representatives are involved in the exercise of the function in that way.

(6) In this section—

“enactment” includes subordinate legislation (within the meaning of section 21 of the Interpretation Act 1978);

“local person” means, in relation to a function of a best value authority, a person who is likely to be affected by, or interested in, the exercise of the function;

“representative” means, in relation to local persons or a description of local person, a person who appears to the best value authority to be representative of the local persons.”

Taking into account the definition of local person and representation under the Act, it can be implied that those changes in local policy and service delivery that affect young people should have some degree of youth involvement.

In addition to this, section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 (“EA 2010”), which during the Commission’s tenure passed through the Green and White paper stages, places an extra duty for local authorities to ensure that they:

(1)...have due regard to the need to—

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

In addition, section 149(3) says,

(3) Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

As age is a protected characteristic under the Act, these sections can be interpreted to mean that local authorities have a duty to ensure that it promotes good relations between people of different backgrounds and young people and the adult population, but also that they are encouraged and enabled to take part in public life, which could include decision making processes.

This movement towards involving (young) people in decision-making as part of a drive to create active citizens has continued after the 2010 election of the Coalition Government. One of the biggest changes has been the shrinkage of regional and national government and an increase in significance of local government. This change forms one part of the new government’s Big Society agenda. In May 2010, Prime Minister David Cameron described the Big Society as “*the biggest... most dramatic redistribution of power from elites in Whitehall to the man and woman on the street*” (Cabinet Office, 2010: 6). The aim of this shift has been to save money whilst enabling local people to work together to drive solutions to local problems (Cabinet Office: 2010). The government’s youth strategy for the Big Society is centred around the National Citizens Service, the Conservatives describe it as,

*“a two month programme for sixteen year-olds to come together in common purpose. It will mix up young people from different backgrounds. It will teach them the meaning of social*

*responsibility by asking them to serve their communities. And above all, it will help the next generations to discover the depths of their talents and the real scale of their potential"*  
(Conservatives, 2010: 2).

As part of the shift in political philosophy towards increased localism, the new coalition government has removed the centrally determined National Indicator system (NI), which could have a significant impact on how (young) people are involved in local decision makers up and down the country. Eric Pickles, Local Government Secretary, announced the abolition of all 152 Local Area Agreements calling for more "*freedom and power*" for councils (Community Matters). NIs were introduced by the Labour government to enable local authorities and their partner organisations to track their progress against national targets (Healthy Schools, 2009). Indicators relevant to the Young Mayors scheme included:

- NI1: the percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area.
- NI2: the percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood.
- NI4: the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality.
- NI6: participation in regular volunteering.
- NI110: young people's participation in positive activities.

The removal of these targets has changed the policy landscape considerably. Now, each local authority has increased autonomy to set its own targets and priorities. In practice, this could mean that the London borough of Lambeth could set vastly different local priorities to Lewisham. This in turn could have an impact on the commissioning of services and potentially requires service providers, such as the Young Mayors, to be dextrous, responsive and bespoke in their approach to each London borough. Previously, one project model and marketing strategy might have satisfied all London boroughs, now 33 different approaches might need to be taken.

This shift in policy runs alongside significant cuts in public spending meaning the competition for funding for youth initiatives is fierce. As a direct consequence many youth organisations have closed or are in the process of shutting down and others are having to pursue new revenue streams. A recent report from the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services highlighted that more than two-thirds of voluntary and community organisations have seen their funding cut in the past year, with the majority of these losing more than 20 per cent of their funding (Third Sector Magazine, 2010). Cuts in grants from local authorities have been identified as putting a significant number of youth services in danger. There has also been a significant reduction in funding from central government and v for volunteering opportunities (National Council for Voluntary Youth Services). In Lambeth, the annual budget for children and young people's services will be cut by £10 million (Third Sector Magazine, 2010). Newham is facing some of the harshest cuts in central government funding of almost any other London boroughs (Newham Council Website) and savings of more than £70 million need to be made by Tower Hamlets where funding for young people's projects is expected to be heavily cut (East London Lines). The full impact of these cuts still remains to be seen, but it is likely like that the provision of services to young people by the voluntary and community sector will decrease considerably.

For citizenship initiatives, which have a diverse range of outputs and outcomes, cuts in the context of locally driven policy priorities could have different implications. There is the possibility that local authorities will alter their priorities to focus narrowly on what might be considered essential services, such as education. Projects and initiatives that previously met other priorities might have to demonstrate on a cost benefit based analysis how their initiative delivers the local areas priorities, or

they may be forced to seek alternative sources of revenue. Alternatively, some local areas may retain broadly the same priorities, but reduce the overall funding for each one.

Finally, one of the coalition government's projects that is gathering momentum is the proposal to alter the UK's voting system. A campaign is presently mounting raising awareness of the Alternative Voting (AV) system in the run up to the proposed referendum in May 2011 at which the nation will be able to determine the future of electoral voting mechanisms (Electoral Reform Society). Evidence suggests that a growing proportion of young people are taking an interest in engaging in democratic processes such as voting. National statistics indicate an increase in young people voting in elections; whilst 39% of 18 – 25 years olds voted in the 2005 general election, 44% voted in the recent 2010 general election (Ipsos Mori). In a recent online survey conducted by the British Youth Council in which 1149 young people aged between 10 and 25 participated, the vast majority were in favour of reform that would change the way MPs are elected (British Youth Council). Therefore, young people are increasingly interested in these mechanisms of democratic engagement. Alongside the Young Mayors scheme are other successful initiatives that work to promote democratic engagement amongst young people. Schemes such as the Young Mayors and UK Youth Parliament, which seek to engage young people in voting, could play a role in engaging young people in the debate on the alternative voting system.

The findings of the Youth Citizenship Commission and changes in legislation and local, regional and national policy making all point to a concerted government lead approach to engaging as many young people as possible in meaningful citizenship activities and involvement in decision making.

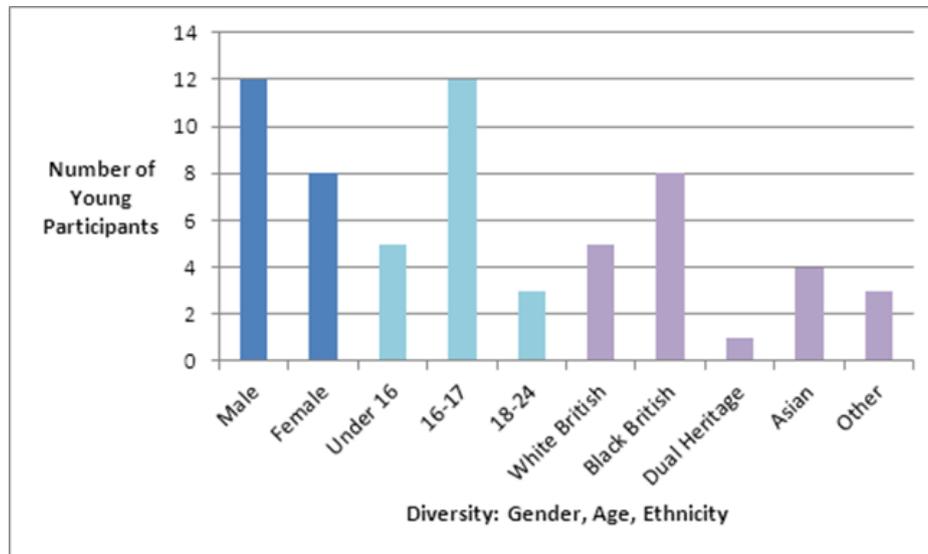
### **1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING**

We used a qualitative methodology for this piece of research, to enable us to untangle the complex and interweaving themes that would inevitably arise from this study. Qualitative research is thought to be the most appropriate strategy for this work since it aims to provide 'rich depiction and strategic comparison across cases' (Miles and Huberman 1994: 41). Qualitative methods allow participants to talk at length, think about issues and talk in their own terms. This could not be achieved through the application of a quantitative design mainly because this would have approached the investigated matters not through the examination of the substance of the sample's responses but of variables (Punch 2003: 2). In addition, this small-scale study had to allow for the possibility of issues emerging spontaneously from the data without being forced through fixed theoretical frames.

The qualitative methodology was informed by IARS' tried and tested youth-led research strategy. Young people, as service users and peer researchers were involved in the research design and fieldwork phases. Our past experience has shown that young people are more responsive as research participants when their peers are conducting the fieldwork and have informed the design of questions.

We conducted three focus groups with people who had participated in Young Mayors scheme. The aim of these focus groups was to investigate the themes of democratic engagement, social cohesion and faith in public services. Focus group one contained 6 young people from Lewisham and Lambeth schemes, focus group 2 contained 7 young people from Tower Hamlets and Newham schemes and focus group 3 contained 4 young people from the Worthing scheme. Additionally, we carried out a number of face to face interviews with young people previously involved in the Young Mayors scheme to get a greater understanding of the impact of the scheme on participants' personal development. A chart of the sample group can be found below.

In addition to the fieldwork carried out with Young Mayor participants, we carried out 11 interviews with stakeholders in each of the Young Mayor scheme areas. These stakeholders included senior local authority officials and politicians. The aim of these interviews was to understand how the Young Mayors scheme is seen from a strategic level from within local government.



### 1.3.1 LIMITATIONS

As is the case with small qualitative studies there are limits to which the findings from this report can depict a scientifically accurate picture of the impacts of the scheme on participants. To develop a comprehensive understanding it is likely that a multidisciplinary approach would need to be taken, incorporating learning from learning and behavioural and political sciences. It is more helpful for readers to view this research as a pilot study.

Furthermore, whilst the data that emerged from the focus groups and interviews was rich and has enabled us to generate an understanding of how the scheme is seen by decision makers and participants, there is still a gap in evidence around how the scheme has impacted on young people whose participation is more remote i.e. those who vote or who are exposed to the scheme through other means. Therefore, this piece of research does raise questions for a secondary study and lays the foundations for further fieldwork.

# FINDINGS

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the report presents the main findings from the fieldwork and begins by outlining the main facets and functions of the Young Mayors scheme. Following this are sections covering key themes including; democratic participation, social cohesion, personal development and the value of the scheme.

## 2.2 DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THE YOUNG MAYORS SCHEME OPERATES

A Young Mayor is defined as “a young person who is directly elected by other young people to represent them” (Young Mayor Network, 2010:4) and common to all of the Young Mayors schemes is an election process. Young people are able to nominate themselves, run a campaign to attract support and votes and then be elected to the position of Young Mayor - or Youth Mayor if in Lambeth, if they achieve the highest number of votes in a first past the post system.

To a large extent the elections for each Young Mayor take place within schools in each of the project areas. When compared with local and national government elections the turnout of young people at these elections is relatively high. For example, young voter turnout for the Youth Mayor election in Tower Hamlets was 50% compared with just 25% of adult registered voter turnout for the Mayoral elections in 2010.

Each scheme operates with a cabinet based system, mimicking the UK government’s executive structure. For instance, Lewisham’s Young Mayor makes decisions with the support of 25 Young Advisors, made up of runners up in the borough’s election campaign or other nominated young people. Their role is to represent the concerns of the borough’s young people to the Young Mayor and others outside the scheme and enable him or her to make decisions based on that intelligence.

The main difference that exists between the different schemes relates to the home of the Young Mayor within each borough’s structure. For instance, in Lambeth the Young Mayor sits within Lambeth Council’s Legal and Democratic Services Department, whilst Newham and Lewisham’s are based within the Mayors’ offices. Although the Young Mayor is not a constitutional figure and has limited authority, this placement of the schemes naturally has the potential to influence how they operate and also how participants and external people view the scheme.

### 2.2.1 THE PRIMARY FUNCTIONS OF THE SCHEME

The stakeholders who took part in the research were asked to define what they felt were the primary functions of the Young Mayor scheme. There was a general consensus amongst the interviewed stakeholders that the primary purpose of the scheme is a mechanism for increasing “*democratic participation*” and “*youth engagement*”. Those stakeholders who defined it as the former, focused on the purpose of the scheme as a mechanism for enabling young people to influence local government,

*The young people get to vote; its democracy; it's empowerment and we are getting about 40%<sup>5</sup> turnout and that's going up. (Stakeholder, Newham, Interview)*

*It is largely about young people having an influence on the country and a voice in the Town Hall (Stakeholder, Worthing, Interview)*

*It becomes a project that's focused on democratic engagement, on citizenship, on the relationship between the state and the local state and citizens and young citizens. (Stakeholder, Lewisham, Interview)*

Other interviewed stakeholders who focused on “youth engagement” saw the scheme as a mechanism for engaging with young people in participating more actively in their local area. For instance, one stakeholder in Lewisham said,

*The young mayor is a totem for youth engagement and participation. (Stakeholder, Lewisham, interview)*

The stakeholders viewed the scheme as a mechanism for youth influence in their local area and as a method of encouraging young people to participate more actively in their local area through voluntary involvement in the project.

Some of the stakeholders defined the Young Mayors scheme as an education initiative. They focused more on the ability of the scheme to provide experiential learning for young people on democratic processes,

*It's an educational initiative and part of that education is democratic engagement, this goes without saying. (Stakeholder, Tower Hamlets, interview)*

*I think that opens up young people's view on how countries are organised, they're managed. How the democratic process works and how they can be engaged in it. It's obviously educational because it makes aware of politics, it makes them aware of the process, (Stakeholder, Tower Hamlets, interview)*

The stakeholders therefore identified that they thought that the scheme's primary function is to increase the democratic participation of young people in local government. They also identified youth engagement and education about democratic processes as secondary functions of the scheme. As will be seen later in this report, some of the stakeholders saw the scheme as preparing young people for voting in local and national elections: democracy with training wheels.

### 2.2.2 WHAT MOTIVATES YOUNG PEOPLE TO ENGAGE WITH THE YOUNG MAYORS SCHEME?

The young research participants identified three main reasons why they thought a young person may wish to get involved with the Young Mayors scheme i. to make a difference in their local area ii. to ensure the youth voice is heard in local government and iii. for personal development.

One of the young people summed up the general consensus amongst the young research participants,

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<sup>5</sup> Voter turnout for Newham for the 2007 election was 40.13%, and voter turnout for the 2010 election was 32.77% (Newham Mayor's Office).



*People come in for different reasons, but people might come in specifically because they are more popular, some people would want to do it because they actually want to change Lambeth for young people for better, and there are some people who are like...well they just want something to do, so they just thought it was an opportunity for some people who want to achieve something in life. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lambeth, focus group)*

As the research participant stated, he felt that some young people engage with the scheme because they “*actually want change*”. This motivation was key for a number of participants who expressed that they wanted to see a tangible change in their area as a result of their involvement in the scheme, for instance, two other young people said,

*I just wanted change to be made, no matter what change. I just wanted to see a difference...I also wanted our voices to be heard because a lot of the time I think, young people feel like being heard, taken seriously or their voices are not being heard by the adult politicians. They feel like whenever they say things it is noted down, and most probably crunched up and thrown in the bin. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Newham, interview)*

*I just wanted to make things better. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Tower Hamlets, interview)*

The participant above said “*I also wanted our voices to be heard*”. This was another common reason that the young participants gave for wanting to take part in the scheme. This theme is covered [later in this report](#).

The young people were also attracted to take part in the Young Mayors scheme because they saw it as an opportunity for personal development and something that might assist them in their future careers, for instance two of the young people said,

*I thought being young mayor is just going to help me a lot with my future. It's going to open up opportunities. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Newham, interview)*

*My own personal people skills and to be able to communicate with adults, actually and young people because I didn't have enough confidence in myself. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Newham, interview)*

The theme of personal development is also covered [later in this report](#).

The main reasons for young people's involvement in the scheme could be summed up as a mix of dissatisfaction with the *status quo* in their local area, a thirst to engage in what the Youth Citizenship Commission defined as citizenship activities, and the opportunity for personal development.

### 2.2.3 KEY QUALITIES OF A YOUNG MAYOR

When asked the key attributes or qualities required of a Young Mayor, a substantial proportion of the discussion amongst the young research participants focused on the confidence and skills of current participants.

The stakeholders identified “*confidence*” as a key attribute,

*Each one has managed to be a very successful young mayor because they are so confident and they are an extremely strong voice. (Stakeholder, Newham, interview)*

*Well I have to be honest, the ones who tend to shine are the ones who are vocal. (Stakeholder, Newham, interview)*

This view was also shared by the majority of the young people who took part in the research, for instance two of the participants said,

*You have to be able to speak to people, especially when you have to give speeches and things, you have to be confident enough to do it. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Worthing, focus group)*

*I thought it would be natural to me to be like a leader. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lambeth, focus group)*

It was also suggested by many of the young people that owing to the need to attract votes, young people who succeed on the scheme are “*popular*” with their peers,

*You need to know a lot of people and you need to have good connections so people tell people to vote for you. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Newham, focus group)*

This view was also shared by the stakeholders, for instance one said,

*The young people it attracts are already high profile within their schools...popular. (Stakeholder, Worthing, interview)*

The findings suggest that some key qualities or attributes that are necessary to succeed in the scheme, such as a degree of self-confidence and an aptitude for public speaking. It could be seen as providing an opportunity for the development of “*natural*” future leaders and advocates. This conclusion complements the findings of the [Youth Citizenship Commission explored above](#).

## 2.3 THE YOUNG MAYORS SCHEME AS A TOOL FOR DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

### 2.3.1 LEGITIMISING THE VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Most of the young research participants, particularly those who had taken part in schemes that were embedded into their Local Authority’s Mayoral structure, felt that they had a duty to promote the youth voice and that the Young Mayor as an elected representative legitimised that voice.

The young people's discussions of the purpose and need for the scheme largely mirrored those of the [stakeholders](#). Similarly, they also saw the scheme as offering a key democratic outlet for the "youth voice" and also as a tool for engaging young people in democratic processes.

*It's not tokenism, it's actually real. We actually get a voice and I'm confident. And what Lewisham does for young people, I think it's really great. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lewisham, focus group)*

*We know that the mayor supports us fully, so we know that we can say what we want and we will have a response. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lewisham, focus group)*

*I think that from the time they have actually come in to take time out and listen to what we are saying and then make a report and show it to us and then we give it back to them, then they say ok, I think that it's fair that they've listened to us, I think it's a fair chance, and I feel not completely 100% confident, yeah they've listened...I feel that they have taken stuff into consideration. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Newham, focus group)*

What is clear from the research participants was a sense of confidence based on their perception that they are seen and listened to by key decisions makers. This was an important factor for the participants as can be seen later in this report. However, some of the young people felt less confident and more sceptical about the "youth voice" being listened to. In one instance it was clear that the failure of a key decision maker to attend a meeting had impacted on one participant's sense that the Young Mayors were being taken seriously, she said,

*We got really excited, yeah we are going to be able to talk to him and stuff like that, and every Friday he put it off... you've kind of kept our hopes up so if you can't come for two hours and just listen to our views, you don't even have to take them into account. Just understand how we feel, if you can't do that how are you going to take in our views to change something about the borough? (Young Mayor scheme participant, Newham, focus group)*

There was a difference in opinion between the stakeholders on whether they thought the Young Mayors legitimised the "youth voice". Some, especially those who had felt that the initiative's primary purpose was democratic participation, saw the scheme as enabling young people to have an authoritative voice and influence,

*They really do boost the youth voice into the council and it really matters. (Stakeholder, Worthing, interview)*

*The Youth Mayor meets regularly with leaders of the cabinet and members to inform strategy and decision making. (Stakeholder, Lambeth, interview).*

*It is election by their peers which means accountability. It is also about influence with decision makers- it's so much more than a mere activity for young people. It's got meaning. (Stakeholder, Worthing, interview)*

*I take extreme credence over what the Young Mayor says to me because they have that legitimacy. (Stakeholder, Newham, interview)*

*I think it shows that we are encouraging young people to be part of the community and the decision making process, and that's vital for them because this is a large community of young people. If they don't feel that they've got a stake in the community they live in that when I think it could be problematic. So I think if they see the adults of this world who are running things don't want to engage with them, they could easily become disenchanted with the system so I think it's a very good way bringing them into all of those things that go on. (Stakeholder, Tower Hamlets, interview)*

These stakeholders used words and phrases such as “*boost the youth voice*”, “*inform*”, “*more than a mere activity for young people*” and “*legitimacy*”. They understood the scheme to play an important role in shaping local democracy.

A minority of the stakeholders, in particular those who felt the scheme to occupy the role of an engagement mechanism, doubted the ability of the scheme to enable the youth voice to be heard, for instance one of the interviewees said,

*Because it's somehow bolted on to other structures, I'm not convinced that it gives genuine democratic voice to young people. [...] I think the Young Mayors' speak for themselves and not for anyone else. They don't have a mandate, and equally really they don't have any authority. If you happen to have a very charismatic Young Mayor people would listen but there is no real statutory channel for their work. (Stakeholder, Tower Hamlets, interview)*

Whilst amongst the young people and some stakeholders there was a consensus that the Young Mayor scheme can and does achieve high level democratic outcomes by enabling the youth voice to be heard in local democracy, some of the other stakeholders saw the scheme as fulfilling a function more akin to a youth service or activity that focused on youth engagement.

### 2.3.2 YOUNG MAYORS: YOUTH LEADERS OR REPRESENTATIVES?

A significant proportion of the young people's discussions focused on the role of the Young Mayors as representatives and advocates of other young people. They felt that their primary role was to put forward the views and concerns of young people to decision makers,

*A young mayor should be a representative, an ambassador for young people to you know just to represent and like be more like a spokesperson kind of thing, but I wouldn't say not too much of*

*leadership, not too much of power holding I would say that, they've got a responsibility to represent and to listen and to be that kind of envoy. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lambeth, focus group)*

*I provide a voice for people who ain't got one. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Tower Hamlets, focus group)*

*I can represent them because I am one of these young people, and also I thought I had quite a good perspective of things... I'm good friends with people who have done crime... but I'm good friends with people who are doing the flip side who are doing music and really positive stuff and I can just see that, I just thought I can bring these two worlds together and make people understand both sides. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lambeth, focus group)*

Some felt that rather than being youth representatives, they were youth leaders,

*If you start to lead by example and then you develop that into the young mayor and when you think of giving the young mayor a budget ... you can then start to change and influence your community to realise that young people have been making the best in their own community and then rather than representing young people young people begin to represent themselves. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lewisham, focus group)*

*Rather than saying that I'm like, the boss, because that's what a lot of people think... I see myself as just a spokesman, a person that is a voice for the youth, and I see someone that is, obviously a leader but I wouldn't say that I'm above anybody, I'm on the same level as everybody else, I've just got an influential role. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lambeth, focus group).*

*You have to be a good role model. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Newham, interview)*

From the interviews and focus groups it was clear that there was a divide between what role the young people felt they should take as democratically elected young mayors. Some thought that once elected their primary duty was to act as a conduit for the views of other young people, whereas the others felt that they should act as role models and use their position to influence the behaviour of other young people.

## **2.4 THE IMPACT OF THE YOUNG MAYORS SCHEME ON SOCIAL COHESION**

This section is concerned with the broad theme of social cohesion; the impact that the Young Mayors scheme has had on the relationships between different groups of people. There were three key sub-themes that arose during the research i. the relationships between young people and adult decision makers ii. the engagement of young people from a diverse range of ethnicities and iii. the engagement of young people from different socio-economic backgrounds.

#### 2.4.1 FACILITATING A DIALOGUE BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT DECISION MAKERS

The Young Mayors are so eponymously named because of their age, and it is perhaps natural that a significant proportion of the discussion in the focus groups and interviews focused on the interaction between young people and adult decision makers. The young people's discussions often started from their concern that young people are generally negatively perceived by adults,

*Young people are stereotyped because people always think that they're bad and they make trouble, it's not like that it's only a few, but adults think all young people are like that when only it's a small percentage of us so if we represent people our own age like, adults will realise we're not all bad. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lambeth, focus group)*

*We have the young mayor to prove the media wrong. To prove that there are young people doing good things for their community. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lewisham, focus group)*

*The older generation... are very stereotypical of young people, especially when you go out in the beginning of your year as Youth Mayor. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Worthing, focus group)*

These young people expressed a clear motivation to use their position on the Young Mayors scheme to counteract what they perceived as a negative stereotypical image of young people in the media.

Some of the stakeholders and young people saw the Young Mayors scheme not only as a measure to counteract negative stereotypes, but also as a way of establishing and maintaining a dialogue between the wider youth population and adult decision makers, for instance one stakeholder said,

*The presence of young people in the town hall on the basis that they are here to have their meetings and do what they need to do on an equal footing with everybody else who uses the town halls seems to me to not only send a proper message that these people count just as much as everybody else. It actually also seems to me to impact on everybody else who uses the building...it sort of normalises their relationship with young people. (Stakeholder interview, Tower Hamlets, interview)*

Further, some of the young people said,

*I think that that's the problem sometimes is there's a breakdown in communication between young people and other people and I think if that was ironed out things would run a lot smoother in this country. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Worthing, focus group)*

*I think it's such a positive thing to see an adult mayor and a youth mayor together getting on and talking to lots of people I think it's just such a nice positive thing. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Worthing, focus group)*

*It sort of makes peace between the adults and the youth. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Newham, focus group)*

It is therefore clear from the fieldwork that the scheme is having a positive impact on participants' perceptions of adult decision makers and vice versa. The scheme has provided an opportunity for young people to interact and bond with adult decision makers, which might not have been available otherwise.

#### 2.4.2 ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE A DIVERSE RANGE OF ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS

One of the phenomena that was discussed amongst stakeholders and young people was the sense that there is a high proportion of young people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups (BAME) that actively take part in the Young Mayors scheme in the London boroughs examined,

*Last year we had a female Bangladeshi young mayor. So that was a real first for us. (Stakeholder, Tower Hamlets, interview)*

*Really I mean for the last year I've been around, it's much more of like an all-Black community really, I've got no problem with that. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lambeth, focus group)*

*I think in Lambeth its mainly like Black people in the meeting, (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lambeth, focus group)*

The most common explanation for this given by some stakeholders and one of the ex-Young Mayors was that the population of BAME groups in boroughs such as Lewisham<sup>6</sup>, Tower Hamlets<sup>7</sup> and Lambeth<sup>8</sup> is relatively high.

However, some expressed concerns that despite this successful engagement there might be an under representation of young white British people in the London schemes, for instance one stakeholder expressed that the "white working class" are a challenging group to engage with,

*I worry a bit about the engagement of white working class but I worry about the engagement of white working class on everything. We haven't had a white Young Mayor and I would be delighted if we did have one. (Stakeholder, Tower Hamlets, interview)*

*We've had Asian young people, young Black people involved... We need to ensure diversity and representative of the borough. I don't want it to be a Black only thing though. I want to see more diversity. (Stakeholder, Lambeth, interview)*

*I want to see more white people, I want to see more mixed race people, more Indian people, more Chinese people, I want to see you know...a diverse spread of young people, because I think that ...it's*

<sup>6</sup> The BME population of Lewisham was recorded at 20% in the 2001 census. It is now estimated that 40% of Lewisham's population is Black, Asian or from a minority ethnic group (Lewisham Council, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> The BME population of Tower Hamlets was recorded at 37% in the 2001 census. It is now estimated that 45% of Tower Hamlets population is Black, Asian or from a minority ethnic group (Ethnic Groups, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> The BME population of Lambeth was recorded at 37.5% in the 2001 census.

*not bad...what we've got but I think we should make it more equal, more diverse. That's what I think we should do. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lewisham, focus group)*

The research participants from the London schemes agreed that the Young Mayors projects have attracted significant buy in and participation of young people from BAME backgrounds. This is particularly noteworthy since these groups are usually classed as harder to reach<sup>9</sup> through such engagement mechanisms. However, some stakeholders and young people expressed a concern that young white British people do not seem to engage with the scheme as much. One possible explanation for this is the high proportion of young white British people who are not in education, employment or training<sup>10</sup> (NEET) in those boroughs, who are unable to take part because the Young Mayors elections take part in schools.

#### 2.4.3 ENCOURAGING THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS

In addition to the ethnic diversity of Young Mayor participants, discussion also centred around the socio-economic background of participants. The general consensus amongst research participants was that the Young Mayors attracts young people from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds,

*We are reaching typical young people in Lewisham (Stakeholder, Tower Hamlets, interview)*

*The young people in Young Mayors are more varied, they come from across different classes. (Stakeholder, Lambeth, interview)*

*in terms of the main people who are involved with it I would say they tend to be Black, they tend to be from across the comprehensive sector than from any other sector but within that then mixed you know. (Stakeholder, Lewisham, interview)*

*But I'd say now it's a lot more diverse there are people that are on low income, there are lots of working class people and there are still some middle classed people. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Worthing, focus group)*

Some of the above participants compared the Young Mayors scheme with other initiatives, which they labelled as “middle class”. References were made to the Young Mayors scheme being “more varied” as opposed to other schemes. References to “typical young people” and young people in the “comprehensive sector” implicitly suggest that the scheme is attractive to young people from background that are not necessarily considered privileged or affluent. The stakeholders felt that other engagement mechanisms that they knew of were more suited to young people from a narrower range of socio-economic backgrounds when compared with the Young Mayors scheme.

<sup>9</sup> BAME groups are commonly defined within the “hard to reach” agenda for engagement. Commonly they are under-represented groups who may feel they have little to no voice outside of their immediate communities. (Brackertz, 2007: <http://www.sisr.net/publications/0701brackertz.pdf>)

<sup>10</sup> The Local Government Association’s report, Hidden Talents: re-engaging young people, found that young white people were less likely to stay in education beyond 16 and were more at risk of becoming NEET than their BAME counterparts. (<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/2164402>)

## 2.5 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Research participants expressed the opinion that the Young Mayors scheme presents its participants with a number of opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and understanding of democratic processes and progression opportunities.

### 2.5.1 SKILLS

Many of the young people felt that they learned time management and organisation skills through managing meetings and running their own campaigns,

*I became very organised and I also learned to manage my time better. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Tower Hamlets, interview)*

*Time keeping was one of them. Because as a young mayor you have to be at a lot of places and at certain times, and doing certain things. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Newham, interview)*

*I think I learned a lot about running a campaign and organising events, those were new skills, things I had not done before or had much knowledge of. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Tower Hamlets, interview).*

Common amongst many of the previous Young Mayors who took part in the research was the learning curve they experienced in developing public speaking skills,

*At the beginning I used to read from a script, oh this is next on the agenda, you know I had to control everything then I started to just really, just get on with it...it really started to flow a bit and I started to chair meetings better. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Newham, interview)*

*So I'm still kind of getting into it, at first it was, well I had to make a speech at the mayor making and that was quite nerve racking, 'cause I mean there's always that slight adrenaline rush when you have to speak to a large group of people, I know I get that, and after you done ... but just generally it's really good. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Worthing, focus group)*

*Public speaking, that did improve. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lewisham, interview)*

Further, some of the young research participants talked about developing better communication skills. For instance one girl explained that she had learned how to articulate complex ideas to present to young people,

*Communication skills was the most used one because you had to learn to talk to all the people, you had to learn to make younger people comprehend what you're saying. Some of the terminology was so new to me and even when I did get the hang of it, people who*

*weren't involved in the young mayor's scheme wouldn't know what I was talking about so I had to make sure they knew things I had learned and could be communicated easily to those people I was representing. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lewisham, interview)*

The Young Mayors participants felt that the experience of taking part in the scheme provided them with the opportunity to develop new skills. In particular, the skills they developed were picked up through taking part in new activities including organising campaigns and public speaking.

### 2.5.2 INCREASING KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

For most of the young research participants the Young Mayors scheme was the first time they had learnt about democratic processes.

*It is representative and teaches them about the electoral system and the process of voting. (Stakeholder, Lambeth, interview)*

*I wanted to get that first-hand experience...I just wanted to know how everything works, so you know that the basic general things. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Tower Hamlets, focus group)*

*I've really enjoyed my role, because I just know a lot more things that I didn't know before and it's given me so much more knowledge and it's really set me up a lot for what I want to do when I'm older. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Tower Hamlets, focus group)*

There was some discussion around the potential to change young people's attitude through their participation in the scheme, for instance, one young person said,

*Every borough should be able to vote, because those that our older, like people that are 18 have the chance to vote but they don't really vote, they don't really care about their vote. It will give us a chance to vote, so when we are 18 we will know how to vote, like what parties to vote for, how it goes and how the scheme goes and how everything goes. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lewisham, focus group)*

### 2.5.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESSION

In addition to some of the skills that have been outlined above, a few of the research participants also felt that participation in the Young Mayors scheme provided opportunities for young people to experience certain professions within the public sector, for instance two participants said,

*Seeing the council as a potential employer, I mean that opens up their mind to possibilities of employment in the public sector. (Stakeholder, Tower Hamlets, interview)*

*I think obviously it catches the imagination of young people who want to be involved in politics; it probably catches the imagination of young*

people who want to be involved in youth services. **(Stakeholder, Tower Hamlets, interview)**

## 2.6 LOCAL PRIORITIES AND THE YOUNG MAYORS

All of the stakeholders felt that the Young Mayors scheme was something that was of importance for their local area. Two of the interviewees saw the scheme as essential to upholding democratic values or processes,

*If you're talking about something that would seriously damage the relationship between the council and the young people if we did away with it, then I would say it was essential. **(Stakeholder, Tower Hamlets, interview)***

*I would describe it as an essential service because I think democracy is essential. **(Stakeholder, Newham, interview)***

Other stakeholders were more influenced in their thinking by comparing the Young Mayors scheme with statutory services,

*It should be essential but if you compared it with other essential things I think many councillors would not rank it up there. I think it should be taken more seriously by some in the council and this would help to make it an essential service. **(Stakeholder, Worthing, interview)***

*By definition it's not a statutory requirement so no it's not essential. However, it is a priority and it does make a difference. It's important. **(Stakeholder, Lambeth, interview)***

All stakeholders saw that the Young Mayors scheme as a programme contributes towards a number of other local priorities, such as “equalities targets”, “building stronger communities” and “young people’s engagement”

*It closely aligns with the Youth Strategy. **(Stakeholder, Lambeth, interview)***

*Fundamentally, we are trying to build stronger communities and therefore making sure that all of our citizens have a voice and that they are not excluded from public life **(Stakeholder, Lewisham, interview)***

*I think the equalities targets as well, because we're opening up to everybody **(Stakeholder, Tower Hamlets, interview)***

*It obviously meets our targets for ‘activities for young people’ and ‘engagement with young people’. In addition to this it meets some of our wellbeing objectives, things like getting health messages out to young people through the Young Mayor’s campaigns help towards those targets. **(Stakeholder, Worthing, interview)***

*Safety and crime are high on our agenda for outcomes to improve in the borough. Young people's engagement is also another outcome we are meeting with the scheme. We try to make life safer and with more opportunities for young people as a strategic aim and the scheme also meets that. (Stakeholder, Lambeth, interview)*

The young people who took part in the interviews also saw the Young Mayors as performing a role in providing, influencing or supporting public service delivery. Discussions focused around sensitive issues such as health, where perhaps young people on the Young Mayors scheme are more able to build rapport with other young people,

*Adults come from using all these services saying this and that and we do something about it, like budgets and stuff. We give them ideas on our borough as a whole. Every service has been to us, NHS, the mental health scheme, the sexual health, disabled kids in care. Young Mayors has had every single service in Lewisham come to our meeting. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lambeth, focus group).*

*The other day we had a country show. Just through that we were able to publicise different services. A lot of young people may not be aware of the sexual health service. I don't think we have a big say, or I don't think we help public services that much but we do a great deal to help it. (Young Mayor scheme participant, Lambeth, focus group).*

Therefore, the majority of research participants saw the Young Mayor scheme as an essential or a very important service. There was also an indication that stakeholders understood how the Young Mayors scheme contributed towards delivering other local policy priorities including health and criminal justice.

# CONCLUSIONS

This action research project aimed to investigate the impacts that the Young Mayors scheme on participants' democratic engagement, social cohesion, personal development and faith in public services as consumers. The below conclusion organises these themes and the other themes that arose from the fieldwork under the headings of successes, challenges and opportunities.

## 3.1 SUCCESSES

The Young Mayors projects in Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Worthing were considered by research participants to be successful in engaging a wide range of young people in experiencing, learning about and contributing to local democracy (see section on democratic participation [\(2.2.1\)](#)). Particularly noteworthy is the schemes success in London of engaging young people from BAME communities ([see 2.4.2](#)). This was particularly the case for Lambeth, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets and Newham; boroughs that have a high proportion of BAME residents. In addition, the scheme attracted the participation of what were described as “*typical young people*” ([see 2.4.3](#)). The stakeholders in particular contrasted the Young Mayors to other schemes that appeared to be more exclusive or targeted at young people from more privileged backgrounds.

The majority of participants felt that these young people were provided with an opportunity to communicate with local decision makers. Research participants felt that a democratic voting system provided a legitimate mandate for the Young Mayor and his associates to represent the views and concerns of young people in the local town hall. For instance, one stakeholder from Worthing said “*It is election by their peers which means accountability. It is also about influence, with decision makers- it's so much more than a mere activity for young people. It's got meaning*”, and one of the young participants from Lewisham said “*It's not tokenism, it's actually real. We actually get a voice and I'm confident*” ([see 2.3.1](#)). The voting figures for each borough go some way to demonstrating that many young people recognise the importance of enabling their peers to speak on their behalf. As explored in section [2.2](#), voting figures were as high as 55% in some boroughs.

The research participants also saw the engagement of these young people through the scheme as promoting a positive relationship between young people in the participating boroughs and adult decision makers. To some extent, the evidence suggests that the daily interaction between young people and adult decision makers normalised the relationship, for instance one of the stakeholders said,

*“The presence of young people in the town hall on the basis that they are here to have their meetings and do what they need to do on an equal footing with everybody else who uses the town halls seems to me to not only send a proper message that these people count just as much as everybody else”.*

In summary, the Young Mayors has been successful in enabling young people to engage with local governance. In each of the five areas that this project investigated, that the Young Mayors scheme provided a conduit through which a dialogue could be initiated between young people and adult decision makers ([see 2.4.1](#)).

Participation in the scheme also brought with it other benefits. It was agreed by most research participants that the scheme educated young people about democratic processes. One of the stakeholders said,

“I think that opens up young people’s view on how countries are organised, they’re managed. How the democratic process works and how they can be engaged in it. It’s obviously educational because it makes aware of politics, it makes them aware of the process”,

Participants in the scheme referred to learning by doing. For example, they learned by running a campaign. All of the young research participants felt that they improved upon or developed new skills. In section [2.5.1](#) participants referred to developing time management, organisation and communication skills – particularly public speaking.

The above contrasts to some extent with some of the [findings of the Youth Citizenship Commission](#), in particular, that the Young Mayors did not involve young people beyond the Young Mayor figure. The findings from the fieldwork in combination with voter turn out figures painted a picture of a more sophisticated scheme that engaged young people in many different types of activities including: voting, acting as advisors to the Young Mayors, taking part in various consultations for local government and other public authorities and a range of media activities. There was a sense amongst research participants that the Young Mayors acted as an interface between local government and young people through the public face of the Young Mayor and his or her advisers.

### 3.2 CHALLENGES

The participants in the London boroughs expressed that there was some difficulty in engaging young white British people in the scheme. This was mainly the case for the boroughs of Lambeth, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets and Newham where there are high proportions of residents from ethnic minority groups. One stake holder commented that *“I worry a bit about the engagement of white working class but I worry about the engagement of white working class on everything”* and another stakeholder said *“I don’t want it to be a Black only thing though. I want to see more diversity”*. Moving forward from this report, one challenge will be how to engage this group in the scheme ([see 2.4.2](#)).

It was acknowledged by research participants that to play an active role in the Young Mayors scheme, a high level of self-confidence and motivation is required. Some of the young research participants also felt that it was the more popular young people who excelled in the scheme, for example one young person said *“I think it is you need to know a lot of people and you need to have good connections so people tell people to vote for you and stuff like that”* and a stakeholder said *“the young people it attracts are already high profile within their schools...popular”* ([see 2.2.3](#)). It is possible that if there was a widely shared perception that only confident and popular young people excel in the scheme, then those young people who are lacking in self-confidence and perceive themselves to not be popular, might be deterred from taking part. Further investigation might need to be carried out to determine if other young people perceived a lack of confidence or large circle of friends a factor for choosing to take part – or not, in the scheme.

A significant challenge in the future for the Young Mayor scheme, which will also be shared with similar initiatives, will be how to demonstrate how the scheme is: value for money, adds value to existing services, can involve the biggest number of the widest range of young people possible and how links with local priorities and legislative frameworks. As part of responding to this challenge it may be desirable to redefine the main aims and functions of the scheme to clarify whether its primary role is to promote youth participation or engage young people in the workings of democracy.

### 3.3 OPPORTUNITIES

In the current [context](#) of a public sector revolution and an increased focus on localism, the challenges highlighted in the paragraph above also present a number of opportunities for the Young Mayors scheme. There was a recognition by stakeholders of the potential of the Young Mayors scheme to add value to a number of existing activities and services ([see 2.6](#)). For instance there were examples of local authorities, criminal justice agencies and health authorities using the scheme to communicate with young people and carry out intelligence gathering exercise. These value added components that

the youth-local government interface that the Young Mayors provides, offers an opportunity to develop the Young Mayors model beyond local government to engage with all public services that affect young people. Furthermore, this approach is compatible with and responsive to the legislative duties on public authorities more generally under the Equality Act 2010 and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act ([see 1.2](#)).

In addition to the above, the Young Mayors is ideologically compatible with the coalition government's Big Society philosophy, which at its core is concerned with how people are engaged to steer and or run public services. This provides the opportunity for the Young Mayors scheme to help shape what Big Society means in practice by demonstrating the direct impact that young people have made by participating in the scheme.

### **3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Below are a set of recommendations based on the findings of this research.

- Carry out further investigation to understand the reasons behind the purported under representation of white British young people in the scheme, particularly those who are NEET and to find ways of engaging this group.
- Carry out a follow up quantitative study with young people in each participating borough to understand their perceptions of the scheme with the aim of generating base line data on the impact of the scheme.
- Create more opportunities for young people in each area to actively engage in the Young Mayors scheme beyond the Mayoral campaigns and elections, for example through running more consultations.
- Investigate whether it would be suitable and financially viable to set up training initiatives for those young people interested in the scheme, but perhaps not confident in their chances in succeeding before the mayoral elections take place.
- Clearly define the main purpose and function of the scheme to increase understanding amongst stakeholders and participants.
- Develop partnerships with public service providers including local education, health and police authorities, to involve the Young Mayors in the steering of public service delivery.
- Develop a strategy to strengthen the democratic role of the Young Mayors in each area through pursuing more opportunities to influence local policy and practice.
- Develop partnerships with other third-sector youth organisations that might be able to provide complementary services for participants, including training and mentoring.
- Make a business case for the Young Mayors scheme based on how it meets a range of local priorities and enables local authorities to comply with their obligations under the legislation outlined in this report.

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