

# Re-engaging Young People in Voting



## Learning from the evidence

**A series of case studies that illustrate innovative practice by young people, local councils and their partners to improve the practical engagement of young people in civic and political participation.**

This publication builds on initial research conducted in 2010 into the differences in actions and attitudes of young people towards youth and local and national elections. It considers a range of issues effecting voter participation and how these are being addressed, then goes on to identify which gaps in the evidence need to be addressed.

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## Foreword

**Dame Margaret Eaton OBE**  
Chairman of the Local Government  
Association



The involvement of young people in the democratic process is incredibly important. In these unprecedented times of financial challenges that we as councils and people face, it is vital to ensure that young people feel involved in their community and society as a whole. Involving young people in the political process helps strengthen their bond to their local community. This is a great investment as it will also help them to remain involved in the political process as they reach adulthood.

Some might be surprised at the scale of the issues in this research, and we should by no means underestimate the task ahead, there is substantial evidence that councils, youth organisations and most importantly young people themselves are initiating and delivering innovative ways to increase voter turn out. This report captures some of the excellent practice that is ongoing. The case studies show that young people want to be involved, as well as show the benefit to society when they do become involved.

There is much here that policy makers can make use of – indeed thanks go to Tim Loughton MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children who told us about one example in his own constituency.

I wish to express thanks to the range of voluntary and community organisations that have contributed to this report and overseen this area of work. I hope you will consider the policy implications of this important report, and I hope that many of you will be willing to work with us as we work to move these ideas from the realm of policy to that of delivery.

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## Foreword

### **Fiona Blacke**

Chief Executive of the National Youth Agency (NYA)



The current challenges for local authorities and their partners are significant. Limited resources mean that hard choices have to be made about what can be funded from the public purse. However, we know that engaging with young people is not only important but that it makes common sense too. They are future voters – building relationships with citizens when they are still children and young people stands society in good stead in the future securing their engagement in the democratic process throughout their lives. Young people are part of society, without the involvement of young people in their communities we will fail to build community cohesion, citizenship and social capital.

At the NYA we are committed to ensuring that young people are valued members of their communities. We continue to put the voice of young people and their central role in shaping local communities at the heart of our work. That is why I am pleased to introduce this report, which is supported by and produced on behalf of the Local Government Group. It highlights some of the innovative ways that young people, youth groups, councils and politicians have collaborated to tackle barriers to young people's participation.

This report shows how passionate young people feel about engaging in democratic processes – many young people have a strong desire to drive change for the better and understand the duty upon them to vote. Sometimes however, they need assistance. Systems and processes aren't always appropriate for young people, nor do they reflect the changing ways in which young people interact in society. I hope this report will help to provoke discussion and progress in this critical area of democratic engagement.

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## Introduction

There is considerable interest and policy activity in the UK in young people's participation, particularly their civic and political participation. There has long been a specific concern that young people are not voting in the ways and numbers of older generations. There is anecdotal evidence that the voter rates of young people are higher in youth elections than in local and general elections. Indeed, the Electoral Commission (2005) reported that,

“Younger people are now out of the habit of voting... Younger age groups are much less likely to see voting as a civic duty than older age groups... suggesting the beginning of a cohort effect, i.e. a generation apparently carrying forward their non-voting as they get older”

According to the British Social Attitudes 27<sup>th</sup> Report today's young people are not only less likely to vote than older groups, they are also less likely to vote than people of the same age 20 years ago. In the survey 55 per cent, so over half, of 18-29 year olds questioned reported having been treated with prejudice compared with about a quarter (24 per cent) of 30-39 year olds and a fifth (20 per cent) of 60-69 year olds.

This publication, commissioned by the Local Government Group (LG Group) builds on initial research conducted in 2010 by NfER into the differences in actions and attitudes between youth and local and national elections. It is supported with a series of case studies that illustrate innovative practice by young people, local councils and their partners to improve the practical engagement of young people in civic and political participation. The publication focuses on:

- whether young people are more likely to vote in youth elections than in local or general elections
- if there is a disparity in voting turnout whether there are identifiable reasons for this
- identifying the barriers that young people face when voting, and identifying the enabling factors that increase young people's participation in the civic and political participation
- what are the current gaps in the evidence concerning young people's voting habits and how can they be addressed
- recommendations on how best to narrow the gap.

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Despite the scale of the problem identified in the initial research there is substantial evidence that local authorities, youth organisations and young people themselves are initiating and delivering innovative ways to increase voter turnout.

Therefore to address the factors that inhibit young people from voting there are some essential features of the process, which should be built in to increase young people's participation. Within this publication examples are presented where young people have participated in political activity, general and youth elections in order to show case ways in which some of these barriers can be overcome.

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# 1. Are young people more likely to vote in youth elections than local or general elections?

## Do young people vote in local and general elections?

Evidence suggests that the turnout of young people voting in general is lower than the average for the population. For national elections, figures based on the 2010 election (Ipsos Mori, 2010) show that even though there was a seven per cent increase in the numbers of 18-24 year-olds voting in the general election (44 per cent), it is still less than half of all eligible young people compared with the overall turnout of 65 per cent.

While there is no data for local elections broken down in age groups, in England in 2010, 533 parliamentary constituencies and 164 local councils held elections. The average general voter turnout for the local elections was 63.4 per cent, only slightly lower than that for the general election (65.4 per cent). Of the 317 parliamentary constituencies where there were also local elections just over a third (110) had a lower turnout than their respective local council.

Evidence from the first cohort of young people to receive statutory citizenship lessons in schools suggests that young people are less likely to vote in local elections than general elections. The research has found that over half (57 per cent) of the year 11 students surveyed would vote in general elections in the future, and only half would vote in local elections.

## Do young people vote in youth elections?

According to evidence from the British Youth Council (BYC) and UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) large numbers of young people vote in local youth elections. The BYC reported that up to one million children and young people voted in youth council elections in 224 localities in 2008 (De Castella, T. 2009). UKYP reported that over 600,000 young people voted for 1526 candidates of the youth parliament (De Castella, T. 2009). The UKYP (2010) report that this is an increase in total turnout of four per cent, but still only equates to just under 20 per cent of the total electorate eligible to vote.

However, because of the sheer range of different voting methods for young people and the lack of statutory regulation it is difficult to determine the proportions of young people voting in all types of youth elections on a national level.

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## 2. Why are young people more likely to participate in youth elections than vote in general and local elections?

### Young people are motivated by issues

Youth elections typically focus on local issues rather than party politics which are the basis of our political system. It is perhaps understandable that youth elections, which are elections of their peers, and the campaigns that they run are much more likely to be of immediate 'interest' than mainstream national and local elections. In contrast, when young people turn 18, they are no longer asked to vote on issues alone, as local and general elections complicate the focus on issues by being party politically based. This change of emphasis can help to explain why some young people chose not to vote at local and national elections once they are 18. This is reflected in research (Fox et al, 2010) that found that while 62 per cent of young people surveyed (aged between 18 and 24) said they were interested in local issues and even more (67 per cent) in national issues only 38 per cent said they were interested in 'politics'.

#### Sw!tch ID

Sw!tch ID is a youth group in Dagenham that is working on projects to change the negative perception of young people in their local community. In the run up to the general election 2010 the young people in Sw!tch, aged 11-18 years became concerned about the very low voter turnout in their area and the possibility that this would allow extremist groups to make significant gains. They were mainly below the voting age, but wanted to persuade others of the importance of voting.

#### What did they do?

Around 50 young people decided to get involved to raise enthusiasm for the general election. With the support of their youth leaders.

- They produced maps of how to get to the polling stations in the two local wards.
- They knocked on doors, to ask residents if they were intending to vote and whether they would like the map.

To prepare young people for this activity, the youth leaders prepared a quiz asking questions including the following.

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- Who is the current prime minister?
  - Who are the heads of the main political parties?
  - What percentage of people voted in the last general election?
  - What percentage of people from this Borough votes in the last general election?

There followed a discussion of the answers, to raise awareness and understanding amongst young people. Young people had been involved in previous community based projects and youth leaders carried out basic personal safety and awareness training with them in relation to knocking on doors and street safety.

Following the 'door knock' youth leaders asked young people to reflect on what they had learned from this activity and what impact they thought it had had.

### **What did it achieve?**

Young people gained a better understanding of the voting system and democratic process. They also increased their own awareness of the views of local residents on voting and democratic engagement by talking directly to them.

*'The people around where our group runs have got to know us, and when we go door to door to ask them questions or to invite them to events, they remember who we are, and that our aims are to build community and change their view of us as young people'* 14 year old

It raised community awareness that local young people thought that voting was important, countering the view that all young people are disinterested in politics. Young people reported that they gained confidence through engagement in this activity. Significantly, although not only attributable to this project, voter turnout was higher in the two wards included in this street activity, than in recent local or general elections in the two wards.

## **Young people and party politics**

This disinterest in politics also includes political parties. A study (Nestle UK Ltd 2003) of young people aged 11 and 18 showed that young people generally reported negative views towards the three main parties. In particular, all three main parties were seen as parties that 'will do anything to win votes'. One study (Park et al 2003) found that around half of the 11 to 18 year olds who were surveyed said it was 'unimportant to them who won the next general election'. Similarly, Park et al (2003) found that over three quarters of those aged between 12 and 19 years neither supported nor felt close to a particular political party. While young people feel

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motivated by issues, it appears that they are less engaged by the way that the current political system deals with these issues and the politicians who run the system at local and national level.

### **Worthing Ice Rink**

Young people perceive that politicians do not listen to them nor are they concerned with the issues that affect young people. Tim Loughton, the constituency MP for East Worthing and Shoreham and Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Children and Families, has demonstrated that this doesn't need to be the case and that MPs can actively listen to and act on the views of young people.

#### **What they did**

Worthing Youth Council carried out research in 2008, into what young people wanted in the local area. Young people designed the survey and carried out the research and received responses from 2,495 teenagers and their highest priority for the area was an ice rink. The youth councillors then presented their findings to the borough council.

Having heard the outcomes of the young people's research, Tim Loughton MP then wrote to the leader of the council supporting the need for an ice rink and referred to the research that young people had already done in the town. Together young people and MP lobbied the council, through meetings and the Town Centre Initiative, working with local businesses, and secured £80,000 for the ice rink to be in the town for a month in February 2009.

The ice rink was promoted jointly by the council, youth council and local businesses and generated more income than it cost, with around 18,000 people using the rink it attracted visitors from outside of the town. This has now become an annual event each February.

#### **Why did it work?**

The involvement of the MP, working with young people, gained the support of the local authority to bring the idea to fruition. Part of the success was in bringing young people into the heart of the decision making process (the council chamber), where they were listened to with respect and taken seriously.

#### **What are the benefits?**

Young people have gained an insight into how decision making works and they have

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increased confidence in their effectiveness and ability to make or influence change in their area, having seen their own ideas become a reality in the town. Some of the young people have gone on to be involved in other projects such as a local environmental project again with the support of the MP and one young person is now working as a peer mentor with the youth council to share the skills he developed himself in influencing decision making, carrying out surveys and implementing change.

The community has benefitted from access to this popular leisure facility and local businesses benefit from increased trade during the month that the ice rink is in operation.

## **Young people and their relationship with political issues and politicians**

Elected young people, that is members of youth councils, youth parliament and young mayors are all by definition young people. It is therefore unsurprising that young people can easily relate to these candidates. Research carried out by the Electoral Commission (Russell et al, 2002) identified that young people generally found it harder to relate to councillors and Members of Parliament. Young people found them to be unrepresentative of the wider population in Britain in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and social class.

By not feeling that elected members relate to them it could be argued that young people do not feel their views are being heard or represented. For example, in a survey of 12 to 15 year olds (Farmer and Trikha, 2005), 41 per cent agreed with the statement 'none of our politicians are bothered about the problems facing young people today'. This is interesting when compared to British Youth Council research (BYC, 2010) that reported that 87 per of the local youth councils campaigned on issues that were important to young people in their area. Further research (Hansard Society, 2009) suggests that young people believe politicians have a negative view towards young people, blaming them for things going wrong in society and not making the effort to understand and meet with young people.

## **Using Facebook to promote engagement of young people in the general election**

### **The Issue**

A group of young people who were involved in the North Somerset Youth Parliament were keen to see a change of MP in their constituency and so decided to try and

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engage first time voters in supporting the campaign for their local liberal democrat candidate through the development of a Facebook group.

### **What they did**

Imogen Walsh who was part of the group said, “We wanted to encourage the younger voters of North Somerset to get active and vote, so we set up a Facebook campaign and invited as many young people as possible to join.” The Facebook group was titled ‘Change in Weston – Yes we can’ and it was used to promote discussion between the political candidates and young people on any political issue; it was also used as a way to inform young people about campaigning work that was taking place and inviting them to participate.

Debate on Facebook ranged from student fees to services for young people with autism. Young people posted their own views on what they wanted to see from politicians in relation to these issues as well as asking direct questions of candidates. The political candidate posted information about when posters were being distributed, giving times and details of where to meet if any young people were willing to join in; reminders about the leadership debates on TV were put onto the Facebook wall to encourage young people to learn more about the policies of each political party. The local college invited three political candidates to a debate and the politics class then carried out a before and after poll and posted the results on the Facebook group.

### **Outcomes**

The Facebook group proved popular, with 387 members in the North Somerset constituency. Many young people communicate daily on Facebook and so this campaign enabled them to participate easily. The young people who established the Facebook group were surprised by the number of young people who took part and the diversity of the group including young people aged 15 and 16.

Imogen commented, ‘this proved popular and became successful as many young people became involved in the election who previously may not have.’

Mike Bell, the Liberal Democrat political candidate said: ‘I was very pleased with the support we attracted for the campaign from the Facebook, it produced several volunteers for my campaign and was an excellent way to engage with young people in the constituency and respond to their questions and concerns.’

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## **Politics Student web site**

### **What is the issue?**

Robert Smith wanted to create a way for young people up to the age of 30 to further

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their interest in politics. The initial idea was to launch a website to include learning resources to enable young people to gain a better understanding of the UK political system and to create an on-line discussion forum.

### **What was achieved?**

Robert was nominated to the Changemakers fellowship programme by his school. This programme is aimed at developing young leaders and provides support for a year to young people, to enable them to achieve their leadership potential through a chosen project.

Robert wanted to get young people more active in UK politics and so with the help of Changemakers, he launched a website in October 2010, to provide a platform for young political opinion. He produced some learning resources, to provide an overview of the UK political system, covering items such as the main political parties and the House of Commons and information on the various ways in which young people can get involved in politics and help to get their voices heard. Initial promotion of the website was through Facebook. Increasing participation in politics is one of the main intentions behind the website, and it quickly became apparent that the best way to promote debate amongst young people was by using all of the current popular social networks, so now includes a blog, Facebook page and Twitter.

### **What is the impact so far?**

The website was re-launched in January 2011, with the title POLITICSSTUDENT and there are now just over 200 'followers' on Twitter. These are predominantly young people, not known to Robert, including for example, 50 from the North West region of England and 'followers' from Scotland and Belfast.

There are now two regular contributors to the website one a young conservative and the other a young socialist worker and they post articles to encourage political debate. For Robert and the other contributors they are developing their own analytical and IT skills and furthering their own understanding of political issues whilst encouraging other young people to contribute.

Robert said, "We believe that it's so important that young people are active members of democracy, so we wanted to create something which would help young people connect."

Further information at [www.politicsstudent.co.uk](http://www.politicsstudent.co.uk) or follow them on twitter at [www.twitter.com/politicsstudnt](http://www.twitter.com/politicsstudnt).

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Changemakers information at:

<http://beachangemaker.posterous.com/?sort=&search=priyanka>

## **Young people and their knowledge and understanding of the UK political system**

Some of the lack of interest in politics and political parties outlined may be explained by a lack of awareness and knowledge in the 18 to 24 year old age group of the electoral and political systems in the UK. Evidence from the Electoral Commission (Russell et al., 2002) showed that young people aged 18 to 24 were more likely than all other age groups to complain that they had not received enough information about candidates, parties and the parties' campaigns. A consistent finding of the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study Seventh Annual Report (Keating et al., 2009) has been that the 'political literacy' strand of the new citizenship curriculum in schools is the one that is least well taught. Teachers lack knowledge and young people say that it is dull and boring and not relevant to their interests and lives.

### **I'm a Councillor – Get me out of here!**

#### **The Issue**

*I'm a Councillor, Get me out of here!* was an online event to get young people engaged with local democracy and enable councillors to find out about how young people feel and what concerns them. It was also an educational experience to support teachers delivering the citizenship curriculum.

#### **What they did**

Councils signed up to the event and put forward 5 or 6 councillors, to compete to be the 'Youth Champion' for their area. Councillors published a manifesto online and young people could ask questions and then vote on the councillor they want to be their Champion.

The method of communication appeals to young people as it mirrors reality style TV. Being web based allows young people to participate anonymously providing an opportunity for those who find it hard to speak in a group, to participate and give their views. Live chats were often scheduled to take place during citizenship lessons. In Scarborough it has also been used as part of English lessons, to promote debating skills. Questions posted are typically very direct, for example, 'who of you have said you are on something called a Scrutiny Committee -what do they do?'

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## **Outcomes**

Thirty two councils participated in this programme in 2008. 6,961 questions were asked by young people during the two week project.

Young people said, it made them feel important and listened to. They appreciated being able to communicate using email and internet chats as they are used to doing this. 84 per cent said that their understanding of what a councillor does is better or much better than it was before; 87 per cent said they learned something about the council that they did not know before.

Teachers said that I'm a Councillor helps to bring citizenship to life because it is locally relevant and involves students who would not normally be interested.

One Councillor said,

*'the live chat was one of the most challenging things I have ever done as a councillor and really worthwhile.'*

For many it enabled them to hear and understand the concerns of young people. Many were impressed by how interested young people are in local issues and enjoyed their solution, rather than problem focus to local issues.

## **Young Citizens' Action**

The *Young Citizens' Action Agenda (YCAA) NW* project aims to give young people (14-19 years old) the skills to take an active role in society. Run by the Institute for Citizenship, together with partner organisations, one of the aims of the project is to produce a Young Citizens' Action Agenda NW for the Prime Minister and Government.

### **What did they do?**

Over 5,500 young people from across the North West of England completed a 'Young Citizens' Say' Survey between October 2009 and January 2010. The consultation results showed that only eighteen per cent of young people stated that they feel they can influence politics.

In order to address this low level of confidence in the ability to influence political decision making, a number of high profile events were staged to enable young people to meet and engage with decision makers and promote their concerns. One such event enabled young people from across the North West to meet the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne MP at Rudheath Youth Centre, Cheshire and present him with their Action Agenda for the North West. The event

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included a question and answer session with the Chancellor, chaired by Annabel Tiffin, Presenter, BBC North West Tonight and Politics Show NW.

### **Outcomes**

Speaking after the event George Osborne said *'sometimes in politics the voice of young people isn't always heard and it was great to have it heard today'*.

Zandria Pauncefort, Chief Executive of the Institute for Citizenship said, *'this demonstrates that people in power can, though projects like this, listen to young people and their voice can be heard'*.

Young people attending the event who are members of the *Young Citizens' Action Agenda* stressed how important events like this are to ensure that politicians listen to the views of young people. Giving young citizens the opportunity to question high-profile politicians, business and community leaders encourages them to explore how their views can influence policy and decision making.

A video of the conference has been posted on YouTube and between December 2010 and beginning of March 2011 has been viewed 10,707 times so enabling a wider audience to access the debate that took place at the event.

## **Young people and methods of voting**

Systems for voting in youth elections are designed to be straightforward for young people. Typically they take place in familiar and accessible locations. For example, almost half of youth council elections take place in schools, while others may be able to vote in youth clubs or local youth services. In some instances ballot boxes are brought to young people themselves e.g. in hospitals. However, in order to vote in national elections, young people need to make an active decision to go and vote. One study for example found that 21 per cent of young people were certain not to vote because they had 'better things to do with their time'.

In some instances, the research found that not all young people actually understand how to vote – the process that they have to go through to be eligible to vote. Indeed one in five young people in a survey of 11-18 year olds (Nestle UK Ltd 2003) said they would definitely not vote in the next election (if they were old enough to do so) because they did not know how to vote. Registration, which is not an issue at youth elections, adds a complication to the voting process as research shows that young people are least likely of any age group to be on the electoral register. Indeed, just 43 per cent of those aged between 17 and 19 and 44 per cent of those aged 20 and 24

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compared with over 80 per cent of those aged over 35 (The Electoral Commission 2010).

## **Lewisham Young Mayor Elections**

### **Introduction**

In the London Borough of Lewisham the council is supporting the development of young people's understanding of how to vote through the young mayor elections. The Young Mayor's Project began in 2004 and works closely with the Electoral Services team at the council to achieve this.

### **What did they do**

The elections are promoted and held in every secondary school and college in Lewisham. All young people over 11 on the school register can vote. Candidates are encouraged to set up a "campaign team" of their peers to support them and tasks have included young people taking assemblies in different schools, campaigning with leaflets on the street and using social networking to spread their message to their peers.

Youth workers engage with young people through youth events, school assemblies and community events to promote awareness of the election and to encourage young people to stand as candidates and to vote. On polling day, the council's electoral services team run the election in exactly the same way they do for the adult elections. The culmination of the process is the results ceremony where the new Young Mayor, Deputy Young Mayor and Young Advisors are announced. Elections now take place during Local Democracy week each year and voter registration, for 16-18 year olds, is promoted at the same time.

### **Outcomes**

The partnership approach between Electoral Services and the participation workers at the office of the Young Mayor has been critical. Voter turnout at the most recent election in October 2010 was high at 49.27 per cent.

Young people experience an 'adult voting' process in a supported way as there are youth workers and teachers available to explain the process and ensure young people exercise their right to vote with the hope that they will then continue to vote as adults, with a better understanding of the process.

All service areas including youth service, electoral services, looked after children and

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education have worked together to identify shared approaches that can address priorities for each service. For example, the electoral services team could promote the importance of voting with young people in the election at the same time as the elections promote the importance of democratic engagement.

The system has been developed and refined over 10 years with the support of Mayor and Cabinet as well as Executive Management Team and has increasingly become a priority for the full council, not just those involved in youth or electoral services.

## Methods of communication with young people

There is an inconsistency in how young people are used to, and like to, receive information and how information has traditionally been delivered by political bodies. They are more likely than other age groups to use new media. Qualitative research with young people found that, historically many political sites used static online brochures for example and treated viewers as a passive audience. This did not appeal to young people, as this was not the way they used the internet. Instead the research (Coleman and Rowe, 2005) found that they like using sites that allowed them active participation and to have a voice such as forums and social networking sites.

However political parties are rapidly changing. In December 2008 there were four MPs using Twitter for example, and now 210 of the 650 are registered (Tweetminster, 2010). However, this is the tip of the iceberg. The most recent data from the 2010 general election (Bamieh, 2010) found that the three main parties had a combined total of over 250,000 Facebook Fans, 75,000 followers on Twitter and over three million views on Youtube. This underlines the increasing role that social media is playing in politics and serves as evidence that the medium is as important to people as the messages.

### Text Voting in Wiltshire Youth Elections

#### What was the issue?

Wiltshire county council Voice and Influence Team wanted to improve the access to voting for young people in the Wiltshire Assembly of Youth (WAY) elections, to increase the number of young people who participate and introduced a text voting system. This approach to voting in youth elections was an innovative response to young people who engage with social media as part of their everyday lives.

#### What did they do?

Wiltshire Council previously operated youth elections by taking ballot boxes to

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schools and youth clubs. Whilst this enabled a reasonable number of young people to vote (approximately 6,500 in 2004 and 5,458 in 2005) there were some concerns that this was not the preferred way in which young people wanted to vote. So, from 2008, after consulting with young people, the Voice and Influence Team commissioned a text voting package.

Young people wanting to stand for election attended a preparation session where they were supported to prepare a manifesto in poster form which included the text voting instructions. The election was held over one week, with phone lines open from midnight Sunday to Sunday and young people were able to vote using a free phone text number. The voting results were instantly displayed as a live graph on to Sparksite – the young people’s information website maintained by the county youth development service.

As part of the texting package, the Voice and Influence team were able to send up to six texts in the following year to all of the young people who vote – they have used this to publicise the work of the team and opportunities for young people in the county.

### **Outcomes**

In the first year that text voting was used, 2008, there were 14,296 votes. By the 2010 elections there was a significant increase in the numbers of young people standing as candidates from around 15 to 32, and a corresponding increase in votes with 35,410 young people voting using the text system. This was a turnout of over 75 per cent of all eligible voters, from a population of 46,270 young people aged 12-19 in the county. This figure is significantly higher than was ever achieved through the ballot box style elections in Wiltshire and is much higher than in most local youth elections, which typically achieve around 20% turnout.<sup>1</sup>

More young people accessed the council website during the election period to track the ‘live results’. The site promotes events and opportunities for young people and a wide range of information and young people also viewed this information that would not previously have done so.

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<sup>1</sup> UKYP election results 2010 <http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/176337/177537.html>

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### 3. What are the current gaps in the evidence concerning young people's voting habits and how can they be address?

While there is a considerable body of evidence regarding young people's disengagement from voting in general elections in particular, there are also a number of gaps in the evidence.

*Turnout in elections:* accurate data on young people's actual turnout at local elections across the country and whether there are any regional or local patterns emerging is required. Similarly, the data available for turnout in youth elections (taking account all the different types of elections) is not accessible. Consequently there have not been any studies that directly compared turnout in youth election and then in local and general elections. It may be the case that this could only be done at a local level, rather than nationally.

*Voting habits:* there is a lack of information that provides a breakdown of rates of young people's voting in different types of elections by gender, ethnicity and social class. This could help to provide greater information about whether certain groups of young people have a higher voter turnout than others.

*Transition to adulthood:* there is a lack of research that tracked young people across the transition from youth elections to local and general elections to examine why young people vote in youth elections and whether these individuals go on to vote in local or general elections, and the reasons behind this.

*Disseminating good practice:* there is a need for more in-depth case studies on efforts and initiatives (such as those included in this publication) that have improved young people's engagement in the democratic process. These would help to highlight 'what works best' and how it can be transferred to other areas and locations.

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**For more information please contact:**

The National Youth Agency  
Eastgate House  
19-23 Humberstone Road,  
Leicester LE5 3GJ

[www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)

Local Government Group  
Local Government House  
Smith Square  
London SW1P 3HZ

[www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

Authors: Alex Stutz and Louise Atkin working with the Strengthening Local  
Democracy through Youth Engagement Stakeholder Group

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