



Improvement

Valuing young voices, strengthening democracy: the contribution made by youth engagement

Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	6
What is youth engagement and what does it achieve?	8
What programmes and structures exist?	10
The benefits of engaging young people	12
Where does volunteering fit in	16
References	20
Bibliography	22
Websites consulted	25
Acknowledgements	26

Executive summary

Councils are supporting young people to participate in society – from shaping services to be delivered differently and helping to make public decisions, through to supporting social action where young people have changed their area for the better. Through youth engagement work, councils have enabled young people to improve their local areas and strengthen democracy. While future budget decisions will be difficult, the evidence in this report demonstrates how wise investment in youth engagement can bring many benefits to the council, local area and young people.

This report, commissioned by the Local Government Group and the National Youth Agency (NYA), demonstrates the contribution that youth engagement makes to strengthening democracy and delivering many outcomes that communities and councils seek. It focuses on three aspects of youth engagement.

- **Public participation:** typically through involvement in youth forums or councils; participation in surveys and consultations; or through activities linked to quality assurance and improvement of services such as inspection, mystery shopping and involvement in recruitment.
- **Social participation:** defined as group activities that young people are involved in. These include many examples of social action projects, where young people are motivated to improve their local area;

volunteering, as both a one-off and an on-going activity; activities such as group fund-raising and support for charities or good causes; and participating in more generic social group and positive activities.

- **Individual participation** as a way of exploring the motivation and benefits for young people and the impact this has on strengthening democracy.

Accountability and **legitimacy** is increased among decision makers where young people are involved in public participation activities. There is evidence that decision makers change their approach and attitudes to young people, as well as changing the decisions they make, as a result of public participation work. Research found that the involvement of youth councillors in public decision making:

- increased young people's participation in decision making (89 per cent)
- improved quality of youth services (62 per cent)
- saved young people money (22 per cent) and saved the council money (13 per cent)¹.

There is evidence of particular progress in **increased accountability** to, and **improved services** for, young people in health and education settings. Ofsted² found that the impetus created by youth participation work had a positive impact on other council services and departments. Examples were seen where young people had influenced

the development of sexual health services and where architects and planners looked to youth for their views and opinions on, for instance, play spaces.

Analysis of examples of ‘what’s changed’ using the NYA’s ‘Hear by right’ framework³, show that young people positively influence the **development of new provision** in their area, such as BMX parks, youth cafes or improved youth centres responding to the needs expressed by young people. Young people have also been able to **influence the way in which services are delivered**, for example, improving and changing the times a Connexions centre or sexual health clinic is open to young people, making it better suited to their needs.

There has been significant growth in the numbers of youth and school councils and other representative structures. There are significant benefits to the participating young people who increase in **confidence** and gain a wide range of **personal and social skills** often linked to the skills required to participate in democratic life and to take on leadership roles. Ofsted⁴ found that youth services have engaged young people well through youth councils, forums and community action. They enjoyed participating and developed **political literacy skills**, as well as the more practical and essential skills of **communication**.

Volunteering also plays a significant role in developing **self-confidence and skills**⁵ of young people. It supports the development of **self-efficacy** as young people start to see that they can influence decision making, take some control and improve their local area, thus contributing to **community cohesion**.

Volunteering contributes to improved **employability**⁶ of young people as they gain the skills required for work and adult life.

There is evidence of improved **social capital** in local communities where young people volunteer and greater **empowerment of communities**.

There are benefits derived from the engagement of young people in the wider community through initiatives that engage peer groups rather than individuals. The evaluation of the pilot National Citizen Service for 16 year olds found that, among other things, the scheme provided **social mixing** and supported **community engagement**. Outreach work and supportive adults are required to build the conditions for disengaged young people to become involved.

“Volunteering developed me as a person, and instead of now thinking small, I can now think big... it has given me a purpose in life.”

Zak, 18

“I was excited about being in a group that ‘did’ things productive, other than just sitting around waiting for things to happen; we make these things happen... being in the group gives me a way to do some good in the area.”

Jonah, 15

Tim's story

When Tim was 10, he was having trouble dealing with his home situation. His attitude often got him into trouble, he talked-back often and he vandalised his own home and other people's possessions, often spurred on by his friends. During this time, he met a voluntary mentor, who he spent a lot of time with talking about home and school and about how he didn't have to do certain things to be accepted. His mentor wanted to see him become a positive influence at school, with his friends and at home. This encouragement from his mentor to be a positive influence, along with the skills he had gained at the regular youth event, led to Tim being able to volunteer as a leader of weekly motivational workshops for young people, and lead a monthly event for young people. Tim also voted in the last election. Tim admits that if it were not for the mentor and the positive friendships he developed, he would not have got involved in volunteering or voted. He would have been a part of the ranks of the disengaged and probably in a considerably worse position in life too – somewhere similar to the friends who used to spur him on.

Introduction

Youth engagement has brought many benefits, from improving the quality of services and making better decisions, through to young people taking social action that improves their areas and develops their own skills, confidence and behaviours. Councils have played a vital role in supporting youth engagement, which has strengthened democracy and society locally. The current financial climate will make decisions on budgets difficult, but the evidence gathered in this report demonstrates that wise investment in youth engagement can bring many benefits to the council, communities and young people.

This report has been commissioned by the Local Government Group (LG Group) and the National Youth Agency (NYA) to demonstrate the value that youth engagement and participation can bring to a range of outcomes sought by councils and their partners, with a focus on strengthening democracy. Within the context of this report, youth is defined as young people aged 11 to 22 years, to account for the transition years when people move from being able to participate in youth democracy through to local and general elections.

Participation and engagement can range from actions by small groups or individuals up to more organised and formal forms of action including large voluntary and community sector organisations. Such action strengthens our democratic system by giving people control, involving them in decision making and stimulating interest in the area. Indeed, participation opportunities for citizens in local areas are often the first steps on the road to becoming elected members.

There are many definitions of youth engagement, youth participation and democracy that appear in the literature and in the practice of professionals, young people and decision makers. Within this report three particular aspects of youth engagement are explored in detail:

- public participation
- social participation
- individual participation.

The report has been written at a time when the relationship between the citizen and the state is being discussed, and this debate is equally relevant to the relationship between the state and young people. The evidence presented in the report demonstrates the many ways in which young people have participated in society, resulting in benefits to the community and to themselves. There are examples of young people reforming the design of public services, having an influence on decisions and their communities

and taking social action to improve their area or find solutions to local issues. So, over a number of years, councils have been helping young people to contribute to all three strands identified by David Cameron as supporting the Big Society⁷. This report identifies the factors that have helped make this a reality and demonstrates the need for continued investment in youth engagement.

Methods

This report draws together existing resources, research and documents to provide an overview of the scope of youth engagement and gives examples of typical types of youth engagement activity. It highlights how democracy has been strengthened by such engagement in relation to public decisions, wider society and individual young people.

A small amount of primary qualitative research has been carried out by a young associate* of the NYA, to gain the perspective of young people and enhance the secondary sources used. This included a focus group with three young people (under the age of 18), who could be described as hard to reach and/or not in education, employment or training (NEET) who have volunteered in their local community. Research was also carried out using an electronic questionnaire which elicited 16 responses (half of which were from young people under 18 years old in May 2010), and two follow-up interviews. Examples of the findings from the primary research are highlighted in the case studies in the shaded boxes.

* The NYA works with a group of young people aged 16-25 who undertake a variety of roles, including development and delivery of training, specialist knowledge in participation, research and facilitation of focus groups.

What is youth engagement and what does it achieve?

Across the literature on youth engagement, there are broadly three defined areas of activity. The literature review undertaken for 'Pathways through participation'⁸ categorises these as:

- **public participation**
engagement of individuals in structures and institutions of democracy
- **social participation**
the collective activities that individuals get engaged in
- **individual participation**
the choices and actions an individual takes as statements of the kind of society they want to live in.

The chart below, whilst not exhaustive, groups together the youth engagement activities most frequently referred to during this study. Each of the activities has been identified as contributing to one or more of the outcomes listed above. Within the chart activities have been grouped according to the areas in which they have greatest impact

Public

- Youth Councils, School Councils UK Youth Parliament, British Young Council
- Young mayors, young advisors
- Young inspectors, mystery shoppers, scrutiny panels
- Recruitment panels
- Youth surveys/ consultations

Social

- Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF)/Youth Capital Fund (YCF)
- Volunteering
- National Citizen Service
- Youth exchange/youth visits
- Positive activities

Individual

- Voting
- Volunteering
- Citizenship education
- Campaigning
- YOF/YCF

Public participation is typically through involvement in youth forums or councils, participation in surveys and consultations or through activities linked to quality assurance and improvement of services such as inspection, mystery shopping and involvement in recruitment.

Public participation is significant in addressing concerns around a 'crisis of legitimacy'⁹ for government, councils and state institutions linked to evidence of the decline in the number of younger people voting in elections. Public participation supports strengthening **legitimacy** and demonstrating **accountability**. Public participation is also highly valued in **reforming public services** to ensure that they are more efficient and better meet the needs of people.

Social participation is defined as group activities that young people are involved in. These include many examples of volunteering, as both a one-off and an on-going activity; activities such as group fund-raising and support for charities or good causes; social action projects, where young people are motivated to improve their local area; and participating in more generic social group activities and positive activities.

The role of the voluntary and community sector is particularly relevant to the social participation of young people, identified by the Carnegie UK Trust as "the space for activity not undertaken by either the state or the market" (page 7)⁸. The development of a National Citizen Service for 16 year olds is intended to give young people the skills they need to be active citizens, engaged in their local community and will be run not by the state, but through partnerships between charities, local businesses and social enterprises.

Individual participation typically describes the acts of individuals such as signing petitions or donating money. Within the context of this report, individual participation is used as a way of exploring the motivation and benefits for young people and the impact this has on the broad concept of building a stronger democracy.

Individual participation is also associated with the ability **to develop new skills**, which can be specific to further engagement in the democratic process, such as knowing how to influence decision makers; how to speak in public meetings or represent the views of others; or may be linked to the specific tasks undertaken such as gardening, managing money, fund-raising or caring skills. There is an underlying expectation that by **empowering individuals**, they are more likely to participate in democratic life.

What programmes and structures exist?

Local government

Services for young people are likely to be more effective if they are designed, delivered and evaluated on the basis of needs identified by young people themselves. ‘Hear by right’¹⁰ is a self-assessment process designed to assess and improve policy and practice on the participation of children and young people.

‘Hear by right’ was developed by the NYA and the Local Government Association (LGA) with councils and partner organisations. It is used widely by councils and other public bodies such as primary care trusts, schools, the police and housing authorities and across the voluntary and community sector. ‘Hear by right’ is an excellent tool to use across children and young people’s trusts, to map current evidence of participation practice and to plan priority developments. It has also enabled partners to share a common language for participation and a common framework for development.

Central government

From the perspective of central government, wide ranging reform of children and young people’s services has occurred over the last ten years, through the introduction of the every child matters agenda in 2003, the Children Act 2004 and the on-going reform of children and young people’s services. The need to reform services for young

people first outlined in ‘Transforming youth work’¹¹ set out the standard that 85 per cent of service users must report satisfaction with the services they receive to promote reform and demonstrate **accountability** to young people. In the health service, quality standards were also introduced through ‘You’re welcome’¹², again with the focus on **accountability** to young people and to ensure that health services are young-people friendly.

The scale of Government investment to involve young people in public decision-making has been substantial and reflects a belief that **empowering** young people requires a commitment to devolving power in decision making; an essential part of this is budgetary control.

Representative bodies for young people

There has also been a significant growth in the number of young people’s representative bodies, which more directly encourage young people to participate in, and experience, representative democracy. These often mirror the formal mechanisms of decision making that exist locally and nationally. There are over 500 elected members of the United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP). There are also a number of young mayors who are elected by young people in a given area to represent them on local issues. Many young mayors have designated budgets

and are often elected with turnouts of over 50 per cent. In 2009 the Youth Citizenship Commission (YCC) found that 90 per cent of schools have a school council¹³. A recent report by the British Youth Council¹ found that in 2009/10 there were 19,800 young people who were active as ‘youth councillors’, and they were mostly between 11 and 17 years old. Just over half of these were elected and were voted for by an estimated one million children and young people. The remainder were appointed to represent minority groups, other youth organisations or were volunteers.

In detailing their activities 94 per cent of these young people stated that they were involved in representing the views of young people to decision makers and over 90 per cent said that they saw this as their main role. Typical activities include meeting with:

- senior staff eg director of children’s services (85 per cent)
- members of parliament (70 per cent)
- local councillor and the lead councillor for children and young people (85 per cent).

This type of activity can be seen to be supporting the desire to **strengthen legitimacy** for both local and national decision makers and to **demonstrate accountability** to young people.

The benefits of engaging young people

Improving services

The improvement of services for young people is frequently an aspiration for their involvement in decision making. Youth councils report¹ their biggest achievements as:

- increasing children and young people's participation in decision-making (89 per cent)
- increasing their community's awareness of young people's contribution (75 per cent)
- increasing the quality of youth services (62 per cent)
- saved money for young people (22 per cent)
- saved money for their local council (13 per cent).

A study in 2004 by the National Youth Agency and the British Youth Council¹⁴ surveyed senior post holders in voluntary and statutory sector organisations and found that 79 per cent of statutory and 81 per cent of voluntary sector organisations reported that they involved children and young people in decision making. When asked to measure the impact of involving young people, 42 per cent of the statutory sector and 48 per cent of the voluntary sector respondents believed that **services had improved** as a result of involving young people. However, the use of monitoring and formal evaluation of impact is limited by both statutory and voluntary

organisations. Therefore, whilst various claims are made on the effectiveness of involving young people in decision making, **several studies find that robust evaluation is lacking.**

A recent Ofsted 'Survey of integrated youth support services'² found that the impetus created by youth participation work had a positive impact on other council services and departments. Examples were seen where young people had influenced the development of sexual health services and where architects and planners looked to youth fora for their views and opinions on, for instance, play spaces.

This concurs with the findings of the Young Leaders Inquiry in 2007¹⁵, where 25 young leaders aged 16 to 21 were invited to explore their views on the future of **civil society**. In relation to participation they supported the view that **better decisions** are made in public life when the people who are affected by the decisions are involved in the decision making. Whilst they expressed major concern that governments are becoming increasingly unrepresentative as voting figures drop, they recognised the positive trends in the delivery of public services, with schools and hospitals in particular becoming more responsive to the needs of children and young people thus showing greater **accountability**.

There are many qualitative and anecdotal stories of how young people have felt more involved, how they feel more able to influence decisions and how they can help to shape services. These accounts are in themselves very useful and should not be discounted, because they represent the views and experiences of young people. However, the extent to which services actually improve or become better tailored to needs is not sufficiently tested and evaluated against quantifiable measures.

Impact on individuals

An Ofsted⁴ review of youth services 2005/6 found that involving young people in shaping services, alongside listening to their views, is inherent in good youth work. Youth workers have made a strong contribution in this area and a significant minority of services have excelled in it. Youth services have engaged young people well through youth councils, forums and community action. Young people enjoyed participating and developed **political literacy skills**, as well as the more practical and essential skills of **communication**. The young people also enjoyed volunteering opportunities and peer mentoring. Youth workers often help other public agencies develop expertise in **seeking the views** of young people.

The 'Measure the magic'¹⁶ report found that there was a significant impact on decision makers, through their involvement with young people. There are many examples where this has then led to further participatory work taking place, with relevant structures and mechanisms put in place to support it. The Department for Children, Schools and Families evaluation¹⁷ of the Youth Opportunities Fund/Youth Capital Fund (YOF/YCF) found evidence of positive impacts on decision makers and their belief

in the ability of young people to make decisions which resulted in an increased willingness to share decision making with them.

Many young people will not participate in formal politics because they do not feel empowered to make a difference. The Youth Citizenship Commission¹³ report quotes young people who state:

“You can be really active, but what’s the point if it doesn’t change anything?”

(page 21)

Equally young people rejected tokenistic consultation, saying:

“If they are going to come and talk to us then they really need to be ready for what we have to say.”

(page 21)

Ofsted² found that councils were slow in providing feedback to young people and the NYA mapping of participation found that even in organisations that take participation seriously, young people do not always receive feedback on the results of their involvement.

There is substantial evidence that personal participation benefits individual young people who take part in purposeful participation. The role of youth workers and participation workers in supporting this work is often primarily concerned with the development of the individual young person. Here the development of new skills, confidence and personal efficacy (the extent which they feel their actions can bring about change for the better) are outcomes sought from youth engagement activity.

Impact on the community

The National Youth Agency (NYA) work on 'Hear by right'¹⁰ recognised the need to monitor outcomes with the introduction of 'What's changed'¹⁸ in 2008. This invites young people to give their views on what they consider to have changed as a result of their involvement in **public decision making**. This provides case studies as 'snapshots' of improvement at a point in time. An analysis of twenty examples on the NYA website¹³ shows that most typically young people have:

- been involved in the **development of new provision** in their area, such as BMX parks, youth cafes or improved youth centres (60 per cent)
- **influenced the way in which services are delivered** such as the times a Connexions centre or sexual health clinic is open to young people and there are examples of changes in the way young people's reviews are carried out (30 per cent)

- **improved relationships** in the wider community (5 per cent)
- campaigned to remove a 'mosquito' device (5 per cent).

These case studies provide useful snapshots of the change that has happened. Young people are found to be effective at achieving **outcomes for the community** when they provide or initiate services themselves. Working as peer educators, developing educational programmes around young people's health issues or community issues such as racism or gang violence have all been found to be effective. Further evaluation is needed to identify the continued impact on outcomes for young people and the wider community, such as how new facilities are used or whether the service provided to young people is more effective.

Improving engagement

In 2002 the government introduced citizenship education as a part of the compulsory national curriculum in secondary schools. The annual study into its impact (the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study, CELS) contributes some insight into the way in which community is defined by young people and its importance as they move through their school career. The 2008 annual study¹⁹ focuses on the **civic participation** of young people in and beyond schools, investigating their attitudes and intentions concerning:

- formal political participation
- informal civil and civic participation
- what influences them over time.

It finds that there is strong community attachment for young people and the most significant community is the one where they engage daily. By year 11 (age 15/16) the most important community for young people is their school. Young people show declining levels of trust in authority by year 11; but they indicate higher levels of trust for groups and institutions they engage in daily in their near environment than to those further away. In terms of influence over **civic participation**, here too it is the local that proves most significant, so by year 11 this will be school for most young people. When asked about political intention, most young people say they do intend to vote; but they show little interest in joining a political party, or contacting an MP, or a local councillor.

The overall purpose of that study was to gauge the impact of the citizenship education and the report finds no direct impact of school factors on students' attitudes and influences to civic participation. However, it does highlight the potential of schools to impact positively on student efficacy through voice and empowerment work – including through school councils.

These findings are useful to understand the role of young people's participation work in building **social cohesion** and **empowering communities**. Several commentators¹³ note the gap between schools and local communities. The CELS¹⁹ study highlights the need for schools and local communities to work together to harness the commitment young people have to their school community and to create easier access to participation opportunities for young people in their local community, supported by school. In June 2009, the Youth Citizenship Commission¹³ found that schools are becoming isolated from their communities and the connections between schools and communities for students leaving school appear to be weak.

The CELS¹⁹ study also shows the considerable influence that background has on the attitudes and intentions of young people to participate in civil and political society. It notes that the most positive attitudes are found amongst

- girls
- those of Asian origin and
- those of high socio-economic status.

The least positive attitudes are found amongst

- boys
- white British and black
- low socio-economic status.

Whilst recognising the 'missed opportunities' for schools and communities working together to build on the positive attitudes of young people through better community links, the report¹⁹ also recommends a role for voluntary and community organisation to build **efficacy** with those young people who do not develop it in school. This echoes the importance of social action outlined by the Carnegie Trust¹⁵ around shared interests, purposes and values beyond that undertaken by the state.

Where does volunteering fit in?

Zak (18 years old) from Barking and Dagenham, who has volunteered, said:

“I think people in the local community are slightly less quick to judge young people as a result of volunteering.”

and that:

“It’s developed me as a person, and instead of now thinking small, I can now think big... it has given me a purpose in life...”

The establishment of the Youth Citizenship Commission was announced in October 2007 and reported in June 2009 with recommendations for building youth citizenship in the UK. It states:

“We place great importance on encouraging young people to participate in voluntary and other community-based activities, to provide positive experiences, skills, confidence and potentially as a stepping stone to more ‘political’ activity.”

(page 28)¹³

The role of volunteering is one of the main ways in which young people participate in their local communities and there is good evidence to show that there are **personal gains** for young people, but also gains for the **wider community** and for the continued involvement of young people in civil society.

The numbers and types of young people who volunteer are not easily measured and figures provided are dependent on the definition of volunteering that is used in any study. In 2008 the Institute for Volunteering Research²⁰ found that 57 per cent of young people aged 16 to 24 years had volunteered in the previous 12 months; 34 per cent volunteered regularly. By contrast, the youth charity v carried out a ‘favours campaign’ in 2008 to promote and change perceptions of youth volunteering¹³. It found that 80 per cent of 16 to 25-year-olds say they have ‘done a favour’ for someone that was neither a friend nor family member. This contrasts with 37 per cent who say they had ever volunteered²⁰. The significance of changing the language and image of ‘volunteering’ through the favours campaign also generated:

- 2,859 unique volunteer opportunities
- 16,500 acts of good will.

In Dagenham, one young woman involved in volunteering found:

“I can safely say that we are making an impact especially in the community around Castle Point. I think people’s perceptions are slowly changing in regards to young people as a threat and dangerous. People have begun to appreciate that not all young people are bad. I have seen this especially in the litter picking and the door to door.”

Rachel, 14

These outcomes relate to the potential to **build social capital** and **empower communities**. The numbers involved (by any measure) are significantly higher than for those involved in public participation activities designed to improve public services and decision making as described above.

The promotion of volunteering to build **social capital** is an integral part of the Government’s plan to develop a National Citizen Service for 16-year-olds, which has the aim to achieve:

- a more cohesive society
- a more responsible society
- a more engaged society.

The ‘Evaluation of a Citizen Service pilot scheme’²¹ (undertaken under the previous government in July 2009 – March 2010 by Strathclyde University) found that many of its aims were achieved, including:

- participants’ trust in others increased
- social mixing
- support for the transition to adulthood
- support for community engagement
- provision of a fun and challenging programme.

In relation to the personal gains a young person derives from volunteering, a research project by NYA²² in 2006 found that increased **confidence was** consistently the greatest benefit from volunteering identified by young people. The development of this confidence was linked to **new skills** that had been learned through volunteering, in particular:

- improved communication skills – letter writing, telephone calls, taking minutes, addressing others, public speaking, taking part in groups discussions and meetings
- self-awareness – young people noted changes in their self-awareness through comments on how their values and opinions had changed through contact with others, particularly members of society they would not usually come into contact with, such as those of different ages
- self-management – time-keeping, improved behaviour, dealing with stress
- project-planning skills
- taking responsibility
- teamwork
- managing relationships
- leadership skills
- problem solving
- decision making
- planning
- managing relationships.

Young people commented:

“I’ve gained a lot more confidence. Volunteering has changed my life. I got bullied at college, so through coming here and volunteering I’ve gained back the confidence that I had lost.”

(page 21)

Research has found that young people report that volunteering is often an opportunity to enhance **employability**⁶. In some areas, youth workers and participation workers make use of accreditation opportunities to recognise the **skills development** that young people achieve through volunteering but this is not consistent practice across the country and often the analysis of skills development or **personal development** is anecdotal and left to the young person to define. The British Youth Council is currently calling for a national award for young people who volunteer to recognise the contribution they make and to better quantify their own personal development, which would, amongst other things, support the employability of young people.

The YMCA²³ has recently researched how to build social and emotional capabilities; the findings recognise the importance of young people volunteering to provide opportunities to build these capabilities in different contexts, such as school and the local community as well as at home. It finds that civic service or voluntary work could have an important role to play in helping young people to develop key **social and emotional skills** and **build links** between young people and their communities.

In the research focus group and questionnaire responses the benefits that young people say they have gained from volunteering and participating in social action can be summarised as:

- influence – having a say on decisions that matter to me
- ideas – it is hard to have them on your own, but it is easier to think of them and feel they are achievable when you are working with others
- skills – gaining more by taking action and meeting challenges
- social action – seeing how you can change things, rather than just complain about them
- social interaction – the fun of doing things with other people, rather than feeling as though you are on your own
- satisfaction – that you get from taking action, that then helps motivate you to do more.

The enablers that made this happen were described by the young people as:

- impressions – feeling that things will change as a result of your actions
- inspiration – from an adult, or peer, so that you believe that you can make a difference or take action, or to help you become interested
- impact – seeing the difference you have been able to make
- skills – having enough to feel that you can get started
- information – knowing where to go and what you can do
- scale – feeling that by working with others you can achieve bigger things than if you were on your own
- snowball effect – being swept along with your peers who are involved, and encouraging others to join you.

References

1. British Youth Council (2010) Young Voices 'Stronger Together': a report of the local youth council network by the British Youth Council British Youth Council. Available from: http://www.byc.org.uk/asset_store/documents/young_voices_stronger_together_web.pdf
2. Ofsted (2010) Supporting young people – an evaluation of recent reforms to youth support services in 11 local areas. Ofsted.
3. National Youth Agency (NYA) (2010b) What's changed using the Hear By Right framework. Available from: <http://www.nya.org.uk/quality/hear-by-right/what-s-changed>
4. Ofsted (2007) Building on the Best: overview of local authority youth services 2005/06. Ofsted.
5. National Youth Agency (2010a) The Edge (Issue 29). NYA.
6. Low, N., Butt, S., Ellis Paine, A., & Davis Smith, J. (2007) Helping out: a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving. Cabinet Office, Office of the Third Sector.
7. Cameron, D. (July 2010) Big Society Speech. Available from: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/07/big-society-speech-53572> (accessed 3rd October 2010).
8. Brodie, E., Cowling, E., Nissen, N., Paine, A.E., Jochum, V., & Warburton, D. (2009) Understanding Participation: a Literature Review. London: Pathways through Participation.
9. Smith, M. K. (2000-2009) Social capital., In The encyclopaedia of informal education. Available from: http://www.infed.org/biblio/social_capital.htm (accessed 7th October 2010).
10. National Youth Agency/Local Government Association (2003) Hear by right. Available from: <http://www.nya.org.uk/quality/hear-by-right> (accessed 3rd October 2010).
11. Department for Education and Skills (2002) Transforming youth work: resourcing excellent youth services. London: DfES. Available from: <http://www.mywf.org.uk/uploads/policy/REYSDec2002.pdf> (accessed 5th October 2010).
12. Department of Health (2007) You're welcome quality criteria: making health services young people friendly London: DoH. Available from: http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_073829.pdf (accessed 5th October 2010).

13. Youth Citizenship Commission (2009) Making the Connection: building youth citizenship in the UK. Final report of the Youth Citizenship Commission. Youth Citizenship Commission.
14. Oldfield, C. and Fowler, C. (2004) Mapping children and young people's participation in England (DfES research report 584). Department for Education and Skills.
15. Carnegie Trust UK (2007) Inquiry into the future of civil society: insights from young people, report from event held 29/30 September 2007. Carnegie Trust UK.
16. Kirby, P. and Bryson S. (2002) Measuring the Magic? Evaluating and researching young people's participation in public decision making. London: Carnegie Trust UK, Young People Initiative.
17. Department for Children Schools and Families (2008) Research brief: outcomes of the Youth Opportunity Fund/ Youth Capital Fund. DCSF.
18. National Youth Agency (2010b) What's changed case studies Available from: <http://www.nya.org.uk/quality/hear-by-right/what-s-changed/what-s-changed-case-studies> (accessed 5th October 2010).
19. Benton, T., Cleaver, E., Featherstone, G., Lopes, J. and Whitby, K. (2008) Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS): Sixth annual report. Young People's Civic Participation in and Beyond School: Attitudes, Intentions and Influences (DCSF Research Report 052). Department for Children Schools and Families.
20. Hutin, M. (2008) Young people Help Out, Volunteering and giving among young people, in the May 2008 Research Bulletin. Institute for Volunteering Research.
21. The Cabinet Office (2010) National citizen service. Available from: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100722-citizenservice/national-citizen-service.aspx (accessed 5th October 2010).
22. National Youth Agency (2007) Young people's volunteering and skills development. Leicester: National Youth Agency.
23. Bazalgette, L. (2010) Life in all its fullness: towards a capabilities framework for measuring young people's development. London: YMCA.

All quotes highlighted in orange have been drawn from responses to the questionnaires and focus group held with young people as part of this research.

Bibliography

Bazalgette, L. (2010) Life in all its fullness: towards a capabilities framework for measuring young people's development. London: YMCA.

Benton, T., Cleaver, E., Featherstone, G., Lopes, J. and Whitby, K. (2008) Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS): Sixth annual report. Young People's Civic Participation in and Beyond School: Attitudes, Intentions and Influences (DCSF Research Report 052). Department for Children Schools and Families.

British Youth Council (2010) Young Voices 'Stronger Together': a report of the local youth council network by the British Youth Council. British Youth Council.

Brodie, E., Cowling, E., Nissen, N., Paine, A.E., Jochum, V., & Warburton, D. (2009) Understanding Participation: a Literature Review. Pathways through Participation.

Cabinet Office (2009) An agenda for youth engagement. HMSO.

Cabinet Office (2010) National citizen service. Available from: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100722-citizenservice/national-citizen-service.aspx (accessed 5th October 2010).

Cameron, D. (July 2010) Big Society speech. Available from: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/07/big-society-speech-53572> (accessed 3rd October 2010).

Carnegie Trust UK (2007) Inquiry into the future of civil society: insights from young people, report from event held 29/30 September 2007. London: Carnegie Trust UK.

Castell, S. and Sweet, O. (2008) A New Reality: Government and the IPOD Generation. London: Ipsos MORI.

Coleman, S. & Rowe, C. (2005) Remixing Citizenship Democracy and Young People's use of the Internet. London: Carnegie Trust UK, Young People Initiative.

Commission of the European Communities (2001) European commission white paper: a new impetus for European Youth. Available from: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2001/com2001_0681en01.pdf (accessed 5th October 2010).

Commission of the European Communities (2005) Communication from the commission to the council on European policies concerning youth: addressing the concerns of young people in Europe – implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship Available from: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0206:FIN:EN:PDF> (accessed 5th October 2010).

- Commonwealth youth programme (year unknown) The commonwealth plan of action for youth empowerment 2007-15. London: Commonwealth secretariat.
- Cutler, D. (2003) Standard: Organisational standards and young people's participation in public decision making. London: Carnegie Trust UK, Young People Initiative.
- Department for Children Schools and Families (March 2008) Statutory Guidance on Section 507B of the Education Act. London: Department for Children Schools and Families.
- Department for Children Schools and Families (2008) Young People Leading Change. London: Department for Children Schools and Families.
- Department for Education and Skills (2002) Transforming youth work: resourcing excellent youth services. London: DfES Available from: <http://www.mywf.org.uk/uploads/policy/REYSDec2002.pdf> (accessed 5th October 2010).
- Department of Health (2007) You're welcome quality criteria: making health services young people friendly. London: DoH. Available from: http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_073829.pdf (accessed 5th October 2010)
- European Commission (year unknown) Youth in action programme. http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/doc74_en.htm (accessed 5th October 2010).
- Golden, S., Bielby, G., O'Donnell, L., Morris, M., Walker, M., Maguire, S. (2008) Outcomes of the Youth Opportunity Fund/Youth Capital Fund. London: Department for Children Schools and Families.
- Huskins, J. (1998) From disaffection to social inclusion. Bristol: John Huskins.
- HM Government (2009) An agenda for youth engagement: government response to the recommendations of the youth citizenship commission. Cabinet Office.
- HM Treasury (2007) Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities. HM Treasury.
- Ipsos MORI (2010) Our Nation's Civic Health: Summary Report. Department for Communities and Local Government.
- Jigsaw Research (2009) Democratic Engagement and Participation: Segmenting the 11 to 25's London: Youth Citizenship Commission.
- Kirby, P. and Bryson S. (2002) Measuring the Magic? Evaluating and researching young people's participation in public decision making. London: Carnegie Trust UK, Young People Initiative.
- Low, N., Butt, S., Ellis Paine, A., & Davis Smith, J., (2007) Helping Out: a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving. Cabinet Office, Office of the Third Sector.
- Molloy, D., White, C., & Horsfield, N. (2002) Understanding youth participation in local Government. London: Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions.
- National Youth Agency/Local Government Association (2002) Hear by right. Available from: <http://www.nya.org.uk/quality/hear-by-right> (accessed 3rd October 2010).
- National Youth Agency (2007a) Young people's volunteering and skills development. Leicester: National Youth Agency.

- National Youth Agency (2007b) Children's Trusts: Evaluating the development of young people's participation plans in two children's trusts. Leicester: National Youth Agency.
- National Youth Agency (2007c) Influence through participation: a critical review of structures for youth engagement. Leicester: National Youth Agency.
- National Youth Agency (2010a). The Edge. (Issue 29) Leicester: NYA.
- National Youth Agency (2010b) What's changed case studies. Available from: <http://www.nya.org.uk/quality/hear-by-right/what-s-changed/what-s-changed-case-studies> (accessed 5th October 2010).
- Ofsted (2007) Building on the Best: overview of local authority youth services 2005/06. Ofsted.
- Ofsted (2010) Supporting Young people – an evaluation of recent reforms to youth support services in 11 local areas. Ofsted.
- Oldfield, C. and Fowler, C. (2004) Mapping children and young people's participation in England. (DfES research report 584) Department for Education and Skills.
- Putnam, R. (2001) Better Together, Saguaro Seminar Report on Civic Engagement. Available from: <http://bettertogether.org/thereport.htm>
- Putnam, R. (2002) Chapter on youth and social capital in Better Together, Saguaro Seminar Report on Civic Engagement,. Available from: <http://bettertogether.org/pdfs/Youth.pdf> (accessed 7th October 2010).
- Smith, M. K. (2009) 'Social capital', The encyclopaedia of informal education. Available from: http://www.infed.org/biblio/social_capital.htm (accessed 5th October 2010).
- Taylor, T. (2008) Young People politics and participation: a youth work perspective. Youth Policy (volume 100, pages 253-263).
- UNICEF (year unknown) UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Child Friendly Language. Available from: <http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchildfriendlylanguage.pdf> (accessed on 5th October 2010).
- Youth Citizenship Commission (2009a) Making the Connection: building youth citizenship in the UK. Final report of the Youth Citizenship Commission. Youth Citizenship Commission.
- Youth Citizenship Commission (2009b) Youth Engagement – a literature review. Youth Citizenship Commission.
- Youth Citizenship Commission (2009c) Youth Engagement – deliberative research. Youth Citizenship Commission.

Websites consulted

Action for Children

www.actionforchildren.org.uk

British Youth Council

www.byc.org.uk

Barnardo's

www.barnardos.org.uk

Centre for Excellence in outcomes in children
and young people's services (C4EO)

www.c4eo.org.uk

Carnegie UK Trust

www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk

Children's Society

www.childrenssociety.org.uk

Fawcett Society

www.fawcettsociety.org.uk

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

www.jrf.org.uk

National Youth Agency

www.nya.org.uk

National Children's Bureau

www.ncb.org.uk

NSPCC

www.nspcc.org.uk

Russell Commission <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100807034701/http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/russellcommission/>

Save the Children

www.savethechildren.org.uk

United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP)

www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk

Acknowledgements

The research and report has been prepared by Louise Atkin (NYA Associate) and Nicky Peck (NYA Associate) and the primary research was undertaken by Robyn Keeble (NYA Young Associate).

We would like to thank all the young people who have participated in the research through the questionnaires and focus group.

Thank you also to the Strengthening local democracy through youth engagement stakeholder group for their valuable contributions: Antonia Dixey; British Youth Council; Dami Benbow; East Riding of Yorkshire Council; London Borough of Lewisham; Local Government Association; Local Government Improvement and Development; National Council for Voluntary Youth Service; National Youth Agency; UK Youth Parliament; Young Advisors; and the Young Mayors Network.

Local Government Group

Local Government House
Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000

Facsimile 020 7664 3030

Email info@local.gov.uk

www.local.gov.uk



**Local
Government
Group**

The Local Government Group is made up of six organisations which support, promote and improve local government.



© Local Government Group, December 2010

For a copy in Braille, Welsh, larger print or audio, please contact us on 020 7664 3000.

We consider requests on an individual basis.