

March 2012

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Redefining Youth Engagement Report from Scrutiny Review Group

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A. FOREWORDS

The council is passionate about actively supporting young people so I am pleased to have the opportunity in drawing together this report on what seems destined to be amongst one of the most important challenges facing the council – how we listen to and support young people to achieve outside of school.

Growing up can be tough and we can do more, using existing resources, to help the next generation to flourish. Young people need to be a part of our communities and not doing anything to help them costs local services millions in dealing with the consequences of anti-social behaviour, crime and violence and even more in the emotional consequences of a dispossessed generation of teenagers.

A key principle of this report has been to listen to young people themselves and we have talked to and heard from many throughout the borough. Every one of our conclusions and recommendations are rooted in what they told us. And their message was clear. They have high hopes and aspirations for the future but need more help from us to get there – in school and in the community. Young people's ideas are passionate and infectious. The aim of this report is to inform decision makers and challenge you to reward them with a new approach to support young people to become agents of their own destiny in our community.

Young people face unique pressures but given the opportunity, are as capable as any other group of considering important social issues affecting the community and putting forward solutions. It is vital the council takes notice of what this generation is saying so that we can build a stronger community in Harrow built in part on the important contribution that young people can make. The council and politicians have a key role to play in inspiring the next generation and in ensuring engagement is a springboard to volunteering, community activity, citizenship and gaining crucial employment skills.

We see this scrutiny review as a key part of the council's on-going conversations about where it goes next with its commitment to 'engage and involve' with residents. We hope that its findings and conclusions can be used to trigger wider council debate with young people in 2012 and as such we recommend a major 'youth summit' with all our partners to boost youth participation in community activity and political life for all young people – including those with physical and learning disabilities .

The review has grown out of a determination across the council to give the younger generation inspiration and confidence to get involved in council decision making and community life. We were especially thrilled that Harrow Youth Parliament agreed to collaborate with us, and as such, help steer the review. The final recommendations presented are done so by the review group working with the Harrow Youth Parliament.

We have spoken to many people – national policy experts, community representatives, residents, professionals in the field, other local authorities and most importantly young people. It is their collective knowledge, stories and insight that has enabled us to draw together the findings. We recognise that there is a plethora of good practice, policy and knowledge and our light-touch review merely provides a snapshot of this. The range of people we have spoken to nonetheless highlights the breadth of evidence available to the council in deciding how to work more closely with young people in the months and years ahead.

Furthermore how we equip young people with the skills and support to be 'change-makers', prepared to speak out on issues that concern them, requires the council to be more than just a functional body delivering or commissioning services. For the council to truly empower the next generation it must behave as a change agent in the community itself.

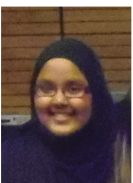
We extend our special thanks to all the people and organisations we met during the course of this review, who are listed in Appendix A. A special thank you is due to the young people from Harrow Youth Parliament and Harrow Mencap for their contributions.



**Councillor Victoria Silver,
Chair of the Scrutiny Review**

In the face of the massive cuts to services provided for young people, I feel this report is imperative in order for young people to be recognised as an important part of the community. More avenues must be created for young people to successfully voice their concerns to the council and it is the council's responsibility to take this on board, as they would from any other demographic. This means inviting young people to be a part of the conversation, and to take on board our suggestions.

What I feel is most important is for the council to redefine the relationship between young people and the council, as in the face of academies and cuts in youth services there is no real definition. As a young person myself, I endorse any research which seeks routes to more communication with young people. I hope this report will be taken seriously by all council members as young people are essentially the future and we need to be engaged in our community.



**Ladan Dirie
Chair of Harrow Youth Parliament, 2011/12
Harrow's Member of UK Youth Parliament (MYP), 2012-**

B. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We want Harrow to be a place where young people feel their right to have a say is encouraged, welcomed, valued and respected.

This scrutiny review looks at how the Council can most effectively communicate and engage with young people in decision making and volunteering activity. Its main ambition was to understand how the council can improve its communication with young people and the context for involving them in decision making, to help them be more effective in making a contribution to community life. By bringing together what the Council already knows about young people including their perceptions of the Council and opportunities to volunteer, this review also aims to stimulate debate about how the Council, in times of austerity, can find new ways to involve young people in decision making as well as offer them opportunities to develop employability skills through volunteering.

The review seeks to identify ways in which the council can make best use of existing resources in developing a new offer from the council to young people and opening up communication channels with more young people. This is a light-touch scrutiny review, gathering evidence and formulating its conclusions within a six-month timeframe. Given the nature of the review, we did not have enough time to explore the 'business case' for youth engagement however it is clear that youth engagement is not only better for the service user but can lead to large cost efficiencies. There is evidence from the Institute for Public Policy Research¹ that demonstrates that providing positive activities for young people can create a net saving through reduced spending on the effects of social exclusion – with every £1 spent on prevention saving £7 on the cost of poor outcomes.

Young people are suffering disproportionately from local government cuts and youth services cannot hope to be immune from the impact. Business has a vital role to play in supporting local youth services in the current climate. It is crucial we specify what teenagers could expect from council services in future. Any new, specific offer will need to have a robust business case, including an emphasis on the role local business and charities can play in delivering innovative, outcome based, projects for young people.

As part of our review, we attempted, somewhat unsuccessfully, to map the current activities run by the council designed to have a positive impact on young people. We encountered problems in obtaining information from a cross-organisation perspective but we are clear that responsibility rests not only within Children's Services but across the whole organisation. Across the organisation we found an unclear and un-strategic picture of youth

¹ Keaney, E (2006) from *Access to Participation*, London, Institute of Public Policy Research. Quoted in *Make Space Youth Review: Transforming the offer to young people in the UK*, 4Children, 2007

engagement activity and that the information is not held in any one place, as the previous reviews, such as HearSay, had suggested it should be.

Key headlines from our review are:

- In order to improve communication with young people, the council working with other providers, needs to offer more positive things to do in the community including opening up opportunities to genuinely influence debate and decision making.
- Young people want to be involved in their community and have a say in issues that affect them.
- Young people want consistent and coordinated conversations, with feedback and a visible demonstration of follow up. Constant conversations will build trust if they are on an equal footing.
- Providing teenagers with a system of 'give and take' rewards will deliver improved outcomes around citizenship, volunteering, democracy and participation.
- Residents, through the Residents' Panel and Better Together research, call for the council to do more for the younger generation in the borough.
- Special attention needs to be given to reaching the seldom heard or difficult to reach groups, such as young people with mental health needs or learning disabilities.
- The model of providing services for young people is changing – the policy landscape and resource envelope has significantly changed in recent years. The youth offer needs to provide challenge to young people and be prepared to be challenged.
- The roles and responsibilities of council have not been well articulated to young people and greater clarity is needed around how they link to community and young people.
- Accessing routes into decision-making process can be difficult to fathom. It is not always easy to neither discern the platforms for national and local influence nor distinguish their inter-relationship.
- Local authorities and councillors have a role to play in ensuring that young people understand what citizenship and community participation can offer them.
- Councils and politicians have a key role to play in inspiring the next generation and ensuring engagement is a springboard to employment skills and recognising that providing volunteering opportunities gives an impetus to this.
- Harrow Youth Parliament provides a strong platform from which to consult young people but the local authority should not see this as the only platform or default mechanism.
- Schools are seen as a natural conduit to communications between the local authority and young people.
- Efforts need to be put in making politics more relevant to teenagers and less 'boring'.
- Young people are not a homogenous group and therefore a variety of different engagement tools must be employed in order to capture their different voices. Although very popular, social media cannot be assumed

to be the best method of engagement in all situations. The importance of face-to-face contact, and building on existing relationships should not be underestimated.

Positive youth engagement activity can give young people valuable skills which can be enormously rewarding and give them a positive stake in their communities. Our future youth engagement programme should provide an important stepping stone for young people – providing new opportunities to develop employment skills through influencing the council, volunteering activity and developing campaigns of their own.

Shadowing a council officer or cabinet member or helping a lady with physical disabilities can all teach young people vital employment skills. This is what young people are asking for most from the council because they know volunteering and other engagement activities is what impresses employers and helps them get a job. We have a role to play in giving young people this support and direction. And through providing a programme of youth engagement and participation we can learn from them and gain valuable insights to help us plan ahead with our services.... and importantly have a much stronger relationship with young people living in Harrow. This must be a relationship based on 'give and take' where the younger generation are rewarded for their community activity efforts with more opportunities to influence and take part in council activity.

The council's resident involvement agenda should make better reference to Harrow's outstanding young people and we call for a major borough 'youth summit' with partners, politicians, and local business as the major first step towards engaging with a much wider audience of young people and designing a positive strategy with them and other partners, including local businesses. Our report highlights a number of initiatives that engage with young people successfully that we in Harrow can learn from.

Thank you to the young people of Harrow and everyone else who contributed for their inspiration.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review Group makes the following recommendations which are not given hierarchically but to follow the structure of the report's discussion. These are intended to complement the council's direction of travel with regard to meeting the needs of young people and add some further thinking, based on what young people have told us through the course of our review:

RECOMMENDATIONS ON GENERAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Designated **corporate ownership of the council's responsibility around youth engagement** that can be routinely measured should be introduced. The Corporate Director of Children and Families Services should take the strategic lead on behalf of the Corporate Strategic Board and work with the Harrow Youth Parliament to ensure that developments are regularly fed back to young people. The introduction of a new Youth Development Team in the new operating model for Children's Service should be seen as an opportunity to adopt a more coordinated approach to youth engagement across the council.

Why? Because our mapping exercise of the council's engagement with young people found that current efforts are uncoordinated and are often ad hoc.

RECOMMENDATION 2: As part of the Council's review of **children centres** consideration should be given to the use and development of council premises – including Neighbourhood Resource Centres, Cedars Centre and Wealdstone Youth Centre – for engaging young people around a specific set of outcomes (community volunteering, campaigning, communications, confidence building and understanding democracy). The sites should include services for teenagers, especially in areas where young people say they have nothing to do, nowhere to go and nowhere to call their own. Any future 'youth offer' should also make the most of what the borough already has to offer around access to sports, music and the arts, health advice and other specialist youth support services. Particular attention should be given to the most disadvantaged areas of Harrow and providing specialist intervention and support for teenagers in difficulty.

Why: Because much negative behaviour can be avoided if young people have positive things to do and relevant places to go, as reinforced by residents through Better Together research, and the council's children's centres and other community sites are ideally placed to plug this gap. Young people told us that more safe and exciting places to go was a top concern with many signalling that a lack of facilities can lead to boredom and bad behaviour.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The council, the Harrow Youth Parliament and others, should explore the introduction of **young ambassadors** as one way to tackle the negative stereotyping and labels around young people and as a way to give leadership to and accountability for young people, as well as a route to improve local public services young people rely on. A group of young ambassadors would also provide a clear leadership and coordinating role around influencing, commissioning and a diversity of voices in encouraging participation in democracy and civic life.

Why? Because Harrow's young people want to be involved in their communities and many already demonstrate community activism, although this is often dissociated from local democracy or politics which are seen as boring or irrelevant. Young people will participate more if they can relate to democracy ambassadors who are a trusted face to other young people. Young ambassadors also raise the visibility of young people and awareness of issues affecting them and provide an opportunity to the HYP to take more responsibility for linking council and policy work to local young people and campaigns. A young ambassador scheme will need wide-ranging support mechanisms and will be a high demonstration that

the council is serious about changing the lives of young people in the borough and are listening to their concerns. How it is presented and delivered will be important. Young ambassadors complement Government's direction around 'Positive for Youth' to get young people involved in decision making and widens Harrow's National Citizens Service programme.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The council should look to reintroduce a **summer university scheme**, backed by a commercial and/or charitable partner, to provide free courses to young people (including those up to 25 years with a learning disability) on communications, influencing, confidence building, community volunteering and campaigning. Camden's summer university and Tower Hamlets' Futureversity could provide a steer for this.

Why: Because a summer university gives young people valuable accreditation for new skills, contributes to community life and wellbeing, improves participation and knowledge of democratic processes in future voters and enhances young people's employability. Building up young people's skills is positive for youth engagement and active citizenship. It arms young people with skills to help their future employability as well as providing positive activities during summer holidays, bringing together different groups of young people who do not always get to interact and share experiences. Residents and council staff on Better Together focus groups said that young people had little to do in the form of structured activities and a summer university helps to anchor young people in positive activities during the long summer holidays when chances to get involved in positive, structured activity is limited.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The council should look to explore the **'business case' around youth engagement**, in both senses of the word, in delivering better outcomes for young people. Firstly, a business case for the council in investing to save through youth engagement and secondly, in the case for business to be involved in delivering outcomes through economic development. Business has a vital role to play in supporting youth services in the current climate. There is a real, current social need for business and charities to work with and champion young people and the organisations that support them.

Why: Because youth engagement will create better policy, is more likely to meet young people's needs and therefore more likely to work in practice when supporting young people. Developing a business case will help save the long-term consequences of not engaging, for example, anti-social behaviour. In the case for business, by working in partnership with business and the voluntary sector the local economy can benefit from better skills in young people and we can create a whole community that is more positive about youth. Participation creates a sense of ownership and community.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The council should consider piloting **youth action group arrangements**, like in Camden, to encourage young people to campaign and lead volunteering projects that tackle community problems. This could perhaps dovetail with the current Neighbourhood Champions scheme. Consideration should be given to integrating more young people into the council's Neighbourhood Champion's programme.

Why? Because young people have told us that they want to be more involved in local decision-making. Youth action groups encourage discussion and debate to address local issues. Neighbourhood Champions is an existing scheme which asks community volunteers to alert the council of community problems.

RECOMMENDATION 7: As the council continues to develop its commissioning models and mechanisms, it should involve young people in **commissioning decisions** from design to implementation, wherever appropriate. This involvement in the council decisions should form one part of a wider involvement scheme that rewards youth engagement. For

example, the scheme used by Hammersmith and Fulham Council secures young people as volunteers in council work and importantly provides a tiered system for reward and recognition. Time and resources should be invested in supporting young people through training for these greater roles.

Why? Because involving young people will create better policy, is more likely to meet young people's needs and have successful outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS:

RECOMMENDATION 8: The council should lead a **major borough 'youth summit'** with partners, politicians, and local business as part of a "Harrow Youth Week" which recognises and celebrates Harrow's young people and as part of the council's ongoing 'Let's Talk' programme and commitment to engage with young people. Young people should help in the design and delivery of this.

Why? Because the Let's Talk programme should make better reference to Harrow's outstanding young people. The Residents' Panel Survey shows that Harrow residents believe that the council does not consider the views of young people enough when making decisions, yet it is important to value and learn from young people's ideas. Harrow needs a ground-breaking conference for young people to boost youth participation in community activities and political life. The conference should aim to produce a youth action plan for Harrow which road tests the recommendations of this scrutiny review's report.

RECOMMENDATION 9: The council should foster a more developed **interface with the Harrow Youth Parliament and UK Youth Parliament**, a relationship that promotes better two-way dialogue. This should recognise that the UKYP is undergoing change with more consideration being given to young people as campaigners in their own right. The Harrow Youth Parliament should consider expanding its remit to that of a Youth Adviser Network which pledges to achieve change through committing to a level of involvement with the council, as part of a system of 'give and take' rewards for participation and involvement.

Why? Because the Harrow Youth Parliament have told us that they want to get more involved and have a more consistent dialogue with decision makers, including cabinet members, councillors, Assembly Members and MPs. The Residents' Panel highlighted to us that the council does not consider enough the views of young people when making decisions.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Councillors, especially Cabinet members, should meet with young people at dedicated times throughout the year with meetings linked to key debates that young people can actually influence, for example the council's annual budget setting. The council should promote more opportunities for all young people to engage in a greater two-way dialogue with councillors and decision-makers, for example through shadowing opportunities, volunteering placements and quarterly question time events that are timed so as to influence key council decisions.

Why? Because if the council is to have future meaning it must be relevant to the next generation. If new forms of engagement are to be effective, it is not just young people who should give up their time – councillors should share some of their power.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Young people should have a **'what's on' guide** available to them (e.g. listing activities, providing explanations of what the council does and how young people can influence local decisions), similar to the 'what's on' guide produced for children and families by the Communications department each year. This could, with support, be produced by young people and provide a useful sign post magazine (print or online) to volunteering opportunities that the council has negotiated with employers and other

organisations, available at the council and in the community. This could be launched at an 'open day' – a dedicated event for young people where the council invites them to learn more about the council, what it can do for them and how they can influence it – a positive way to build up the relationship between young people and the council which scrutiny could facilitate.

Why? Because young people have told us that that they are unclear on what the council does and what it offers. They want more council and councillor visibility and this would demonstrate what the council can offer young people's lives. The young people with learning disabilities who we talked to asked for an open day on how local democracy works as they want to get more involved. Many young people told us that the council should look to build a stronger relationship with them.

RECOMMENDATION 12: The **Harrowyouth website** needs to be overhauled. Young people should be given a dedicated online space like the 'student room' which offers useful opportunities for conversations about local issues, provides clear links to volunteering, jobs and skills development opportunities, is a portal for exchanging conversation and goods, and signposts to council and community information. A dedicated resource should be identified to work with young people and facilitate development of the website.

Why? Because young people have told us that the website was ineffective and did not provide useful information, or meet their needs.

RECOMMENDATION 13: The council needs to develop a strategy for the **use of social media** especially where the target audience is young people.

Why? Because young people told us that social media platforms are one means of engaging with them but is more likely to succeed if run by young people themselves and built on existing and trusted relationships.

RECOMMENDATION 14: The council should pilot a '**press gang**' of budding '**citizen**' **journalists** who can gain work experience in the press office and get their articles about the community published in Harrow People, magazines for council staff and other publications for young people.

Why? Because young people and other local authorities have told us that council magazines will seek most resonance with young people if they are involved in an editorial capacity. They will also gain valuable work experience and skills, and can take great pride in getting their work published which they can add to their portfolios of community achievements.

D. CONTEXT

“Rather than eating the crumbs that have fallen from the table of governance, young people should be partners, recognised as leaders and given the platform to express their views, have their input considered and their contribution clearly acknowledged and celebrated.”

LGIU report ‘Growing Up?’, December 2009

Councils across the country have significantly cut their spend on youth services – this is hardly surprising given the funding cuts and financial landscape faced by local authorities in recent times. That is not to say that the Government is not investing in services for young people and it would no doubt point to the recent establishment of the National Citizens’ Services, of which Harrow has taken part in, as an example of investment - a personal and social development programme which should over time be made available to all 16 year olds, a summer programme of activity and community service intended to inspire youngsters to continue to support their local communities through longer-term volunteering and social action. Furthermore it is spending £141m of capital money to complete a national network of over 63 myplace centres by 2013, providing youth facilities in disadvantaged areas. The new Cedars Youth Centre in Harrow Weald, due to open in spring 2012, is one such project.

The thinktank Demos have stated that today’s generation of young people look set to inherit a set of “chronic social, economic and political challenges that their national governments will be unable to solve without their energetic engagement”². Unite, the UK’s biggest union, has reported³ that the amount councils in England and Wales are spending on youth services is falling and that the youth sector is facing some of the biggest budget cuts of any public service. Figures collated from 430 councils in England and Wales showed that spending on services for young people had dropped on average 12.3% in the past year, down on average from £116 to £102 per year – equating to 28pence per young person per day. Unite claims that it is young people who are bearing the burden of austerity.

Young people have demonstrably shown their opposition to these cuts which many see as disproportionately affecting them and turning them into a ‘failing generation’ – more than 1,000 teenagers protested in London over the cuts at a Choose Youth⁴ rally in October 2011. The charge is that without somewhere to learn life skills and grow as individuals which will enable securing job opportunities in the future, such as a youth club or after-school club, the young people of today are destined to fail. This comes at a time when nationally the EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance) has also been cut.

The Minister for Young People, Tim Loughton, has gone on record to say:

“Youth services in this country are one of the most high-profile unreformed services we have. A lot of other areas of children’s services have undergone a lot of change – much for the better. But youth services have been left in a time warp.”⁵

² *An Anatomy of Youth*, Demos, 2010

³ Reported on BBC UK news, 25 October 2011.

⁴ Choose Youth is a group of youth sector organisations and unions.

⁵ Evidence to final sitting of the Education Select Committee inquiry into services for young people, May 2011.

He believes that youth services' over-reliance on central and local authority funding have made them economically unsustainable. He goes on to say that:

"There needs to be greater accountability by young people themselves. What I want in every authority is a very clearly identifiable and accessible youth engagement body that is able to hold the local authority and other agencies to scrutiny".

The government is providing £850,000 for 2011-13 to the British Youth Council, to work in partnership with the National Children's Bureau and UK Youth, to promote the youth voice in local communities and support youth democratic engagement.

Positive for Youth

In December 2011, the government's new vision for young people and youth services was launched. At its launch the Minister for Young People called on every local authority to get young people involved in local decision-making. The government also wants local authorities to build stronger partnerships with voluntary organisations and local businesses to develop opportunities for young people in their local communities. Many companies like O2, Starbucks and the Co-Operative are already on board with plans to provide innovative projects that will inspire young people. Government initiatives backing the strategy can be found in the Appendices.

"Councils should also think about how to get young people involved in decisions that affect them. I want them to open their doors to young people and get them involved – auditing and inspecting local services and listening to their ideas on how to improve things."

Minister for Young people, Tim Loughton, MP

What is youth engagement?

Youth engagement actively involves children and young people in developing services and their delivery. Youth participation is: "the process by which children and young people influence decision making which brings change in them, others, their service and their communities".⁶ However this does not fully unpack what is meant by influence and how this influence can be achieved. UNESCO has developed the concept of youth mainstreaming which looks at the importance of a youth perspective on all aspects of social, political and economic life which is:

"A process for the meaningful engagement and broad integration of young people into structures and activities of social development on a daily basis. It requires consistent, committed youth-adult cooperation at every level, where young people are recognised as equal and valuable partners."⁷

Why is it important?

"If we want to tackle disengagement, if we want to tackle deprivation, if we want all young people to have a bright and happy future, then we have to listen and respect what young people say."

LGIU report 'Growing Up?', December 2009

Young people should be seen as valued stakeholders in the greater society. About one-fifth of the population is aged under 19 and they are important consumers of a range of

⁶ Youth Participation: Growing Up?, a report by LGIU and Changemakers, December 2009.

⁷ http://portal.unesco.org/es/ev.php-URL_ID=37081&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

public services, education being the most obvious. Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child⁸, they have a right to be listened to and involved in decisions that affect them. There is an increasing focus on young people's participation in civic life because it is recognised just how much this can make a real difference to their lives.

'Youth participation' and 'youth leadership' have gained much currency in recent years and a report by the LGIU and Changemakers^{9,10} looks at how effective activity by local authorities in this area has been. The report concludes that although there have been significant advances in youth participation over the last few years, there remains the need to examine local practice so that youth representation is meaningful and can make a real difference to young peoples' lives. The recommendations from this report can be found in the Appendices.

Democratic engagement and citizenship

Participation and voter turnout in general elections, as given in Table 1, demonstrate a generation gap in voting. The British Elections Survey suggests that if an individual does not vote when young, then they are less likely to do so when older and non-voting becomes a lifelong habit, and disengagement from democracy.

Table 1: Voter turnout for general elections, by age

Age	Voter turnout for 2005 general election ¹¹	Voter turnout for 2010 general election ¹²
18-24 years	37%	44%
25-34 years	48%	55%
35-44 years	61%	66%
45-54 years	64%	69%
55-64 years	71%	73%
65+ years	75%	76%

Since the Citizenship Survey¹³ started in 2001, the proportion of people who felt they were able to influence decisions affecting their local area has never been lower – at 37% - than at 2009-10 (the final survey). Attitudes towards and trust in the local council was the most significant predictor of feeling able to influence decisions. Put simply, the more people are satisfied with their local council the more they trust their council.

For the Youth Citizenship Commission (YCC)¹⁴, citizenship includes activities that individuals undertake for the benefit of their community, including political engagement, public service, volunteering and participation. Recommendations to the then Government included youth representation, methods of institutional engagement with young people and comprehensive long-term auditing of youth engagement procedures.

⁸ Signed by the UK Government and in force from 1992

⁹ *Youth Participation: Growing Up?*, a report by LGIU and Changemakers, December 2009.

¹⁰ Changemakers is a charity which works with young people to promote active citizens and change.

¹¹ Source: Electoral Commission

¹² Source: Ipsos Mori 'How Britain Voted in 2010'

¹³ Community Action in England: A report on the 2009-2010 citizenship survey, Department for Communities and Local Government, December 2011

¹⁴ The Youth Citizenship Commission (YCC), created in 2008 and tasked with defining what citizenship means to young people and increasing young people's participation in politics, provided a multi-faceted view of citizenship for young people in their publication *Making the Connection: Building Youth Citizenship in the UK*, Youth Citizenship Commission, June 2009

The YCC believes that Government efforts to invest in programmes which seek to engage young people have been substantial and that there are excellent examples where these interventions have had very positive effects. However in some places, wide-ranging initiatives and approaches operate in isolation. Therefore better coordination across departments by local authorities could improve their reach and effectiveness. The report finds a disconnection between what most young people feel they need, what they perceive is available to them and how they feel treated by decision-makers.

The YCC reported that young people have different communication habits, spaces and social networking preferences to adults, for example, three quarters of young people use social networking sites. It is vital that organisations and decision-makers tap into young people's communication preferences and recognise that accessible people and information are key drivers to encouraging participation. Young people can be put off by formal processes and languages, for example the YCC suggest that language can be used to shift perception. They note a case study where instead of using 'volunteering' (seen as 'geeky', 'boring' and 'middle-class') the v campaign decided to badge it as 'favours' – simply doing someone a favour. This serves to highlight that as the YCC state: "Youth culture is complex, fast-moving, dense and not homogeneous – there is a constant drive to be different. It is important not to make assumptions."¹⁵

"We can't expect young people to participate in society unless we're serious about listening to their views. We know that young people are passionate about the issues that affect their lives and we must give them opportunities to question those who make the decisions."

David Dimpleby, President of the Institute for Citizenship

Scrutiny review

This scrutiny review explores youth engagement in the context of what the local authority can do to ensure Harrow's young people can engage in a true sense with the council. It also explores the wider sense in democratic engagement - of citizenship, community participation and volunteering. The scope for the review can be found in the Appendices.

This review builds on previous scrutiny work. As part of its work, scrutiny's review in 2006 HearSay¹⁶ examined engagement with young people and within youth services. It made a number of recommendations and findings around engagement including:

- linking the council's corporate community engagement strategy more to other engagement initiatives for example the youth participation strategy
- the council developing a new framework for commissioning youth programmes
- using the experience of existing 'feral' networks (informal and ad hoc) to connect with young people, especially those at risk.
- Hard data on the success and quality of youth engagement exercises is limited: "Some 70,000 contacts are achieved from a budget of approximately £1.3m but the type, level and distribution of those individual contacts is apparently not known".

The year before, in 2005, a strategy for young people's participation across the council¹⁷ had been produced and this recommended a mapping exercise be undertaken to gather

¹⁵ *Making the Connection: Building Youth Citizenship in the UK*, page 23

¹⁶ HearSay: scrutiny review of community engagement, Harrow Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2006

¹⁷ Hearing the voices of children and young people in Harrow: strategy for the active and meaningful participation of children and young people across Harrow Council, October 2005.

information about participation activities in operation across the council so that they could be consolidated into a directory and their effectiveness measured.

For our current review, we undertook a number of different activities:

- Desktop research
- Going out to talk to a number of national experts
- Visiting other local authorities
- Meeting with a number of local voluntary groups and stakeholders
- Holding a drop-in session for young people at the youth centre
- Running a focus group with young people
- Smaller meetings with members of Harrow Youth Parliament
- Meetings with key workers in Children's Services and services for young people
- Discussions with the corporate director and portfolio holder
- Written survey for young people, distributed through a school council
- Survey used as a basis of conversations between youth workers and young people
- Social media – using scrutiny's facebook and twitter accounts
- Residents' panel survey
- Focus groups with young people with disabilities and their carers

This review took place between August 2011 and January 2012.

E. ENGAGEMENT IN HARROW – REPRESENTATION, INCLUSION AND VOICE

*“Young people are a significant part of the present and 100% of the future.”
Richard Segalov, Harrow’s Head of Services for Young People*

What Harrow currently has in place – changing times for services for young people

The council recognises that the ongoing involvement of children and young people is absolutely crucial, not only in decision making but also in policy development - forming ideas before decision making.

Last year, Harrow’s annual performance assessment indicated that Harrow’s Children’s Services “performs excellently”, the highest grade achievable. One of the objectives of Children’s Services’ service plans 2011-13 is “to refine and develop a process for community engagement, service user consultation and youth empowerment to advise on the future development of the services”. This is particularly important when so few young people feel they have a say in the community around them including the services and activities aimed at them. Young people have told us in this review that they feel alienated, excluded and not involved with the council.

There are some 50,000 children and young people in the borough so the scope for their engagement is potentially enormous. Over many years, there has been much activity with Harrow Youth Parliament, underpinned by Voice Influence Action¹⁸, Harrow’s guide to working with children and young people.

“These excessive cuts will severely restrict the work of the youth offending team and severely restrict our ability to nip problems in the bud. Youth offending teams play a vital role in steering young people away from a downward spiral of criminal behaviour.

The really worrying aspect is that more young people will suffer and be in danger of reoffending, with the consequences that residents suffer from further crime and antisocial behaviour. We could all be losers here.”

Councillor Mitzi Green, Harrow Council Children’s Services Portfolio Holder

The landscape for services for young people has changed immensely in the last few years and since the Voice Influence Action toolkit was produced the council and partner agencies have withdrawn many resources. A range of government grants have been terminated (for example Youth Opportunity Fund, Positive Activities for Young People funding and the Youth Capital Grant) and more than £1m removed from Harrow’s Young People’s Services budget to meet necessary savings targets. As a consequence, many community-based activities and the support provided for youth engagement by dedicated council staff, has been curtailed. Youth engagement is not a statutory duty but it underpins a lot of decision-making. In our interviews with staff it became clear that the recent budget cuts “took out the guts of the whole area – the skills and those who had the language to work with young people”, thus removing youth services from the council resource. To date, only a couple of officers remain to carry out youth participation

¹⁸ Voice Influence Action – the Harrow guide for working in partnership with children and young people, 2008

activities. However as also became clear to us, youth participation does not rest solely with Children's Services.

Harrow's engagement with young people is broad and covers many different groups of young people. Much of this is led by Children's Services:

Harrow Youth Parliament – a group of 68 elected young people from high schools, colleges, youth groups and faith groups in Harrow. About 12,300 young people voted in February's youth general election. HYP is the recognised voice of young people for consultations with the Council, Police and the NHS.

UK Youth Parliament - four young people on the HYP also represent Harrow on a national level, as Harrow's Members of UK Youth Parliament (UKYP). In the past two years one million young people have voted in UK Youth Parliament elections. Members of UKYP organise events and projects, run campaigns and influence decision makers on the issues which matter most to young people.

School councils – each school has a council body of pupils who are consulted about school issues and provide a young person's reference point.

Wealdstone Youth Centre – Harrow's sole remaining youth centre provides a range of services for local young people. Registered membership is in excess of 150 young people.

Harrowyouth.co.uk - launched in 2009, this website used to get around 10,000 hits per week, as verified by the external contractor supporting and monitoring the site. In our focus group with young people about the council's conversation tools (detailed in the next section) we discuss in depth young people's feedback on this website.

That magazine – produced by the council, each issue of this magazine aimed at young people cost about £3,000 per edition to produce with about 10,000-15,000 copies of each edition distributed in all schools, youth clubs and libraries. The magazine is no longer produced, the last edition being published in summer 2010. The magazine was also discussed in our focus group on the council's conversation tools.

Apprenticeships - Apprenticeships were launched in 2008/09. Harrow became a pilot through the 'V' organisation operating V-Talent for 2 years, with 32 young people completing the course. In addition Future Jobs Fund benefitted a further 40 young people. The funding for both of these schemes ceased in 2011 although some previous volunteers have continued to work within the council. Through Harrow into Work Harrow College provided 56 training and work placements for young people in retail. The council is now establishing a pilot apprenticeship scheme and is looking to introduce a sustainable procurement policy which requires providers to build apprenticeships into the tender process.

National Citizens Service – as a pilot for the NCS, Harrow has targeted specific 'at risk' groups of young people – children looked after, those not in education, employment or training and known individuals in Wealdstone who are of concern. There are 15 in the current cohort and V will run another two projects for 2011/12. It is intended that the current cohort will mentor the next double cohort.

Holiday schemes – in recent years holiday programmes such as Summer Arts, Summer Uni, Kickz and the Wealdstone Drop-In were all run for young people, following consultation with the Harrow Youth Parliament.

Cedars Youth and Community Centre - Using a £4.2m capital grant from the Department of Education, Watford FC Community Trust in partnership with Harrow Council are developing a new youth and community centre, due to open in spring 2012. The focus of the centre will be on sport and learning, with facilities including an indoor sports hall, astro sports pitch, gym, social space, café, dance studio and music mixing room.

Consultations - Young people have been engaged over community decisions and Harrow's Youth Question Times were seen as a positive event albeit somewhat limited in their impact as standalone events. Harrow has run 4 youth question times between 2009 and 2011, with the most recent on the theme of academies. These all took place in the Council Chamber with an expert panel and each had about 80 young people, with each event drawing in a different audience. A stakeholder said that Harrow should not "compartmentalise young people's issues" and that they should be "valued as part of the whole community, not just theirs".

Recruitment - Children and young people have been involved in recruiting about 6 members of council staff including recently the Corporate Director of Children's Services Portfolio holders have regular engagement with young people both formally through the HYP and the Beyond Limits group of Young People Looked After (closely linked to the Corporate Parenting Panel) and informally, at the events and celebrations they attend with young people. Shadowing opportunities are more limited although young people have attended some of the regular fortnightly meetings between the Corporate Director and portfolio holders.

Joint patrols – youth workers, police, young people. As a response to the recent riots across London, Harrow partners had joint patrols in town centres throughout the school holidays.

On the street engagement - The council's Detached Team and voluntary organisation Ignite have been working together for three years. The street-based programme helps identify issues and problem solve with young people. The aim of the Detached Team is to work jointly with the police and to divert young people from crime and anti-social behaviour, either through constructive engagement in the activities of the centre, or to discourage them from 'hanging around the area' or where necessary to invoke the police powers under the dispersal zone and forcibly remove them from the locality. The Detached Team sit on a lot of intelligence and this should feed into policy-making.

Children in Care Council – 'Beyond Limits' meets regularly to discuss issues and concerns that are important to children looked after or young people leaving care. This also runs a young voices group for children looked after.

These mechanisms are detailed in greater depth in the Appendices.

"I am a foster carer and have cared for a teenager who has attended the Young Voices group (a project for children looked after) for the last 2 1/2 years or so. The activities and various forums have engaged my teenager in a very positive and constructive way. She developed her communication skills, interpersonal skills, organisational skills, artistic skills and presentation skills. In addition to developing life skills such as cookery and nutritional awareness. She was also able to simply have fun with friends.

The range of projects and exciting opportunities provided meant that she was participating in useful and enjoyable activities within a safe environment as opposed to being vulnerable out on the streets. I believe passionately that Young Voices serves an essential purpose in the community and greatly benefits and meets the complex and diverse needs of looked after children."

Andrea, Foster Carer in Harrow

Through our **mapping exercise of council directorates**, we found some examples of other directorates engaging with young people including:

- Consulting the Harrow Youth Parliament on various issues and consultations. An example of this is on the Local Development Framework where the council is developing a vision for what the borough will look like to 2026 and beyond and manage its growth and development. It is the younger generations in the borough that stand to benefit the most and therefore need to be involved in helping shape what that future looks like.
- Working with young people from an estate and local college to support grant applications for resident involvement projects.
- Roadshows to encourage involvement in issues and for the council to capture ideas from young people. For example Housing held a series of roadshows around the borough on estates and tenants and residents association meetings to discuss future housing options. 51 young people participated in this and it was backed by a webpage, facebook page and e-newsletter.
- Promotion of services and consultations at the annual Under One Sky event.
- Creating web pages, facebook pages and e-newsletters specifically aimed at the younger generations.
- Summer schemes provided by the Transitions and Continuing Care Team - the 18-25 summer scheme is run in liaison with Harrow Mencap and is funded by personal budgets. This gives young people with disabilities activities for 4-6 weeks over the summer, as well as providing respite to their carers and parents
- Harrow Heroes – an annual ceremony that recognises and celebrates the contribution of volunteers in Harrow. There is a specific 'Young Volunteer' category designed to acknowledge the contribution of the younger generation.
- Providing work placements – through the Construction Training Initiative 5 young people have been provided with placements in the construction industry since 2011. Furthermore, funding secured from Jobcentreplus will provide opportunities for 22 graduates in 2012/13.
- Securing the input of young people in designs for public realm – as part of the Outer London Fund, the Council has secured funding for the detached youth team and an urban designer to work with young people to secure their input into designs for public realm, including a public square, shop front improvements and signage.
- Taster sessions to future careers, for example the Construction Future event aimed at young people interested in working in the construction industry

“Participation by young people has always been a challenge for the service and we continue to strive to find innovative approaches towards engagement.”

Harrow Council officer

As our mapping exercise highlighted to us, Harrow engages in a wide range of conversations with young people. The council is good at initiating these conversations but not necessarily at sustaining these across the board into long-lasting and value-added conversations with young people that can influence decision making and stimulate greater community participation.

It is often the default mode of operation by council directorates to consult with the HYP. It has been noted with us that the profile of the HYP in schools is not universally known and there is some work to be done around raising its profile, in particular young people with disabilities and SEN are feeling excluded. There can be a tendency within schools to target particular groups of high-achieving pupils to represent the school at HYP and this can disenfranchise other young people or exclude other groups.

In general, officers tend to recognise that they have not yet ‘cracked’ truly effective youth engagement and that there is a need to engage regularly with a wider range of young people than just the HYP and using a wider range of media for example, exploring social media more fully. Social media is not a fix all solution however – young people told us they would not necessarily engage with a council message via facebook unless there is an established relationship there.

A positive suggestion on how the organisation can improve the participation and empowerment of young people in Harrow was to improve usage of the neighbourhood resource centres (for example during weekends and evenings) to offer young people’s groups weekly contact and networking whilst offering respite to their carers. Another idea suggested to us was for young people to be invited to be part of the judging process for the Harrow Heroes volunteer awards, to bring a young people’s perspective to the decision making process.

CASE STUDY – Matthew, a young person in Harrow

Matthew attended Whitmore High School where he was statemented because of anger management problems as a result of being bullied. He later went on to Harrow College. During this time he has come through a local youth group that works with children and young people with severe educational, emotional, social or psychological problems.

Through volunteering at the youth group, Matthew gained employability skills that helped his future search for work. He attended the council’s job fair in the autumn and the council officer he spoke to followed up his interests. When we spoke to him, Matthew was awaiting an interview for a local apprenticeship.

Direction of travel for the council’s services for young people

It is a time of phenomenal change for Harrow Children’s Services given the introduction of its new operating model in early 2012. As part of this, a new ‘Youth Development Team’ has been created, which brings together a lot of the more creative and engaging work with young people, both individuals and groups. This consolidation has to some extent offset the significant reduction in funding for this area, consequent on cuts to many central Government grants and the impact of the MTFS locally.

CASE STUDY – Thinking outside the box in consulting with young people

In the Summer of 2010, Harrow Libraries ran a different kind of consultation to find out what children and young people thought of Harrow libraries. This demonstrated how an effective and useful consultation could happen, produce results and engage with a large number of children at minimal cost. This involved more than the traditional method of questionnaires and extended to talking to young people, encouraging them to vote, comment and make suggestions in a range of ways:

- Dot voting to answer yes or no to questions about the library service. These exercises were carried out away from libraries at events such as Under One Sky.
- Questionnaires developed with the help of the Student Advisory Group and HYP.
- Fronter questionnaire for schools to use directly with students
- Online questionnaire hosted on the Harrowyouth website
- Feedback sheet for participants of the Summer Reading Challenge

The project was experimental but collected data from over 1000 children and young people at very low cost. It engaged dialogue between the service, children, young people and parents whilst promoting the service and showing that it was interested in what young people had to say.

Results showed high awareness of the Harrow Libraries 'brand' but highlighted that there were areas of work that were needed in improving the user experience. Following the consultation, a summary sheet was produced for branches to display at libraries and the service has endeavoured to follow through as many suggestions as possible. As a consequence therefore for example, the proportion of children's books has increased and the public computers will be upgraded and young people involved in making sure the specifications meet their needs. The service recognise the need to keep improving its communications with the younger generations and it is now making online/social 'media' offer of the service, events are more user-friendly and a presence on facebook is to be introduced.

Key learning points from the consultation included the importance, and often the ease, of consulting with younger service users and a greater understanding of that consultation is not just about printed questionnaires or requiring a budget. Ultimately this project demonstrated how effective with young people seeking their inclusive participation can improve services. Embedding young people's involvement at a strategic level of service delivery and improvement will help ensure that there is a continued dialogue between the service and its users, giving young people the platform to ask questions and give ideas.

Current areas of development include:

- The election process and future work plan of the Harrow Youth Parliament, including an increased role in commissioning, monitoring and quality assurance
- The expansion of the Mentoring programme with a significant increase in the numbers of available young mentors, aimed at helping young people get the most out of themselves and local services
- The embedding of early intervention and resilience activities, focussing on those most susceptible to 'gang' involvement, linking closely with the Wealdstone users' reference group
- The opening of the new Cedars Youth and Community Centre in Harrow Weald in mid-April, with young people on its Board of Management. The centre has the potential to become a centre of excellence for a wide range of council services.
- Building on the success of the 'V talent' programme - the expansion of the Council's apprenticeship programme, recruiting a lead member of staff and utilising the experience of previous participants in order to further improve training and employment outcomes. The council is also seeking to attract external commercial sponsorship.
- Having been recognised as achieving some of the most successful National Citizen Service outcomes in 2011, Harrow has had an increased grant for 2012 and is running a programme with double the number of participants. As with the apprenticeship scheme, it will be engaging with last year's 'graduates' to support and mentor the new cohort.
- The Children in Care Council, linked closely to the Corporate Parenting Panel, will continue to have its own dedicated resource and accountability process.

- The harrowyouth website will be developed and relaunched in partnership with the council's Communications department. It will be important that this done through the use of a specialist engagement web solution provider and of course young people themselves.
- The council is currently consulting on the expanded use of Harrow's Children's Centres and the adoption of a hub and spoke model. If proposals are agreed, plans will progress in Spring with all 16 centres remaining open and continuing to be a valuable community resource. The centres will become children and families centres and available for use by almost any group whether they be run by the council, a partner agency or through a private letting.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Designated **corporate ownership of the council's responsibility around youth engagement** that can be routinely measured should be introduced. The Corporate Director of Children and Families Services should take the strategic lead on behalf of the Corporate Strategic Board and work with the Harrow Youth Parliament to ensure that developments are regularly fed back to young people. The introduction of a new Youth Development Team in the new operating model for Children's Service should be seen as an opportunity to adopt a more coordinated approach to youth engagement across the council.

Why? Because our mapping exercise of the council's engagement with young people found that current efforts are uncoordinated and are often ad hoc.

RECOMMENDATION 2: As part of the Council's review of **children centres** consideration should be given to the use and development of council premises – including Neighbourhood Resource Centres, Cedars Centre and Wealdstone Youth Centre – for engaging young people around a specific set of outcomes (community volunteering, campaigning, communications, confidence building and understanding democracy). The sites should include services for teenagers, especially in areas where young people say they have nothing to do, nowhere to go and nowhere to call their own. Any future 'youth offer' should also make the most of what the borough already has to offer around access to sports, music and the arts, health advice and other specialist youth support services. Particular attention should be given to the most disadvantaged areas of Harrow and providing specialist intervention and support for teenagers in difficulty.

Why: Because much negative behaviour can be avoided if young people have positive things to do and relevant places to go, as reinforced by residents through Better Together research, and the council's children's centres and other community sites are ideally placed to plug this gap. Young people told us that more safe and exciting places to go was a top concern with many signalling that a lack of facilities can lead to boredom and bad behaviour.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The council should lead a **major borough 'youth summit'** with partners, politicians, and local business as part of a "Harrow Youth Week" which recognises and celebrates Harrow's young people and as part of the council's ongoing 'Let's Talk' programme and commitment to engage with young people. Young people should help in the design and delivery of this.

Why? Because the Let's Talk programme should make better reference to Harrow's outstanding young people. The Residents' Panel Survey shows that Harrow residents believe that the council does not consider the views of young people enough when making decisions, yet it is important to value and learn from young people's ideas. Harrow needs a ground-breaking conference for young people to boost youth participation in community activities and political life. The conference should aim to produce a youth action plan for Harrow which road tests the recommendations of this scrutiny review's report.

RECOMMENDATION 9: The council should foster a more developed **interface with the Harrow Youth Parliament and UK Youth Parliament**, a relationship that promotes better two-way dialogue. This should recognise that the UKYP is undergoing change with more consideration being given to young people as campaigners in their own right. The Harrow Youth Parliament should consider expanding its remit to that of a Youth Adviser Network which pledges to achieve change through committing to a level of involvement with the council, as part of a system of 'give and take' rewards for participation and involvement.

Why? Because the Harrow Youth Parliament have told us that they want to get more involved and have a more consistent dialogue with decision makers, including cabinet members, councillors, Assembly Members and MPs. The Residents' Panel highlighted to us that the council does not consider enough the views of young people when making decisions.

F. WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US

We engaged with young people in a range of ways to gather intelligence on their concerns, what they want from the council, their expectations of the community and the future, as well as what they feel should form the 'youth offer' – and the council's conversation tools to aid this. We are especially grateful to the young people on the review who helped steer how we should approach their peers in our enquiries and for their honesty around some of our ideas.

Through our conversations with young people it is clear that the council and councillors need to reach out to young people who are not already involved in the community, and crucially to meet with young people beyond the Harrow Youth Parliament. This will often mean going out to young people's existing fora and networks rather than expecting them to come to us at the Civic Centre.

Using social media e.g. facebook or twitter or sending emails such as a newsletter, can be useful but it is important to use a diverse range of methods of communication with face-to-face contact being a very important one. This may mean developing the council's relationship and protocol with schools specifically on engagement strategies and going into classes or assemblies to talk to a range of young people not necessarily just the 'best' students. In addition, as comments around the Harrow youth website reflect, many young people believe that using social media will only be successful if other young people run it, not adults. They also tell us that introductions made by trusted friends or sources are likely to be most successful – for example a status update on the council's facebook page will not be read by young people but a status update about the council from a 'trusted' friend would.

What do the council and local democracy mean to Harrow's young people?

In October, we held an informal drop in session at Wealdstone Youth Centre, asking young people about what the council and local democracy means to them. The aim of the session was to coordinate a discussion that took teenagers through a journey of what happens when people give their opinions to the council including how people's ideas impact on policy and spending decisions. The session involved four 'questions stations' where young people were invited to post their responses and ideas and this was followed by a more structured debate session with some of the young people who had stayed around. Around 40 13-18 year olds came through the doors that evening – from the Harrow Youth Parliament, regular youth centre users, as well as a couple of first time users. Councillors and youth workers were on hand to chat and hear what they had to say.

In the first part of the evening, the question stations explored the following areas:

1. What does the council mean to you?

There were a variety of responses to this question, with the council seen as representing a range of facets including bureaucracy, working for the community making local decisions, running consultations and talking to residents, collecting bins, providing a range of services, being controllers and enforcers.

"Me and my mate Shane go to Skills Centre on Monday, we learn a lot of stuff. Lots of kids want to go but are not allowed."

"Provided me with school transport which was good, I am now an independent traveller, and do things completely on my own – walk to school with my friends now!"

“Grey building on way to Harrow”

“Over paid and lazy men who sit pretending they care but do nothing”

“Council tax”

2. *Can young people influence local decisions?*

“Yes – because the youth of today are the future of tomorrow, meaning that we have experience with working to know what future causes will be like.”

“Riots show that young people stand up for themselves.”

“Even though the August riots meanings faded out really quickly, I still think the way young people fight for/against affects young people more than it affects older people.”

“Groups like HYP obviously have a small say in local decisions and contribute to decisions – but I don’t think not enough people know about certain groups and how to put a point across non-violently.”

3. *How should the council engage with you and your friends?*

Young people asked for more information about what the council is and does as well as asking it to act on young people’s views, give feedback, trust young people and give them the freedom to express their opinions. Schools were viewed as a useful conduit to engagement.

“Give us opportunities to allow us to express our opinions and views and give us opportunities to serve and lead projects of our own.”

“I think the council should engage with youth by telling them what is available in their communities and how to get involved.”

“Act upon what we suggest, don’t just brush it aside.”

“Respect and actually act upon our opinions – if you gain our trust we’ll be more cooperative.”

4. *Is volunteering or helping in the community worthwhile?*

Young people were overwhelmingly positive about volunteering both for the social good of community and personal development e.g. enhancing employability skills.

“Yeah because it’s fun and communities need a lot of help.”

“Yes because children/teens should have experience of working.”

This was reinforced by our conversations with young people with disabilities through Harrow Mencap, who said for example: “Having a job is important. It can be very difficult to get a job and harder if you have a learning disability.”

A number of themes can be noted from conversations with young people during the course of the evening:

- Decision making process – young people need to learn about how to access different parts of the decision-making process so that they can exert influence
- National politics - many issues that get young people interested are at a national level and not knowing how they can access these at a more local level means can be frustrating. Understanding how the council works – and how they can influence it –

will help young people understand how they can influence and campaign at a national level, and how to progress local concerns to a national platform.

- Feedback loop - often the council approach the HYP for consultations but there is a lack of feedback and actually demonstrating that young people's comments have been taken on board. Council officers often come to talk to the HYP but nothing is followed up and conversations can stop dead.
- Local interests - young people are interested in the local area, what it looks like and what it has to offer.
- Volunteering – it is often helpful to gain experience in areas which young people want to pursue as a career e.g. childcare, social care etc. Young people emphasise how important this is when putting together their applications for university places. However they struggle to find volunteer placements in Harrow, whether this be in the public or commercial sector. Opportunities are not advertised as well as they could be – young people do not always know what is out there for them and the council's communications could help address this.
- Shadowing - the council should create more opportunities for young people to gain experience shadowing politicians at the council.

The second part of the evening followed a more structured debate led by councillors with 14 young people. This was structured around what the Council means to young people and how can it engage with them better in order to listen to their views and allow them to influence decisions; trying to find a different model by which to have conversations with young people and on better terms, an ongoing relationship with two-way dialogue – more of a constant two-way conversation.

Again this highlighted young people's limited understanding around what the council does as well as the role of councillors within this. Often councils are viewed as enforcers of central government policy. This exposes a gap in the council's communication efforts in that it is not reaching out to young people around its roles and responsibilities, and how it makes decisions on behalf of residents about local issues.

When exploring whether young people lobby and campaign in order to influence decision making, young people told us that many of the issues that concern them are on a national level and therefore it can be difficult to see how local councils can influence national politics. Furthermore young people were not aware of new policy developments in Harrow and how they impact upon them. There were also calls for councils and councillors to be more active in schools and visible in the community knocking on doors, speaking to people not just about politics but issues. This was also seen as an opportunity for the HYP to rebrand itself and take more responsibility for linking council and policy work to local young people and local campaigns

What the discussions highlight to us is that young people do want to engage with the council but are generally unclear about the roles and responsibilities of the council and where they as young people and residents fit in. Young people need awareness of the issues, how they can make an impact locally and also how to access routes to influence council decisions and decision-makers.

What do young people want from the council through democracy and in the community?

We followed up some of the issues raised with us by young people with a written survey¹⁹, which can be found in the Appendices. This looked at what young people think of the council, their views on local democracy, politics and community participation.

Responses show that young people are already very active in Harrow's communities with many of them volunteering and actively being part of community events, perhaps often without realising that this reflects community activism. However it seems that young people dissociate community activism from local democracy or an interest in politics. Interestingly young people showed a fair amount of apathy towards local democracy and politics – a lot saying it was 'boring', it means nothing to them and makes little difference as they cannot vote.

Although the young people sampled²⁰ generally believe that the council does engage well with them, this does not extend to it involving young people in decision-making. There is limited understanding of the role of a councillor and the role of the council as an important institution in the community, although councillors' links to community is appreciated.

CASE STUDY - Harrow Skatepark

Around 120 skateboarders, rollerskaters and BMXers (in the main young people) use the Harrow Skatepark in Byron Park every week. Located next to Harrow Leisure Centre, it opened in 1978 and is nationally renowned and in design terms is bracketed with classic 1970's skating facilities in Los Angeles and California.

In 2007, council plans to build over the site as part of a £36m project to rebuild Harrow Leisure Centre led to a storm of protests from users, with Sport England also stating their opposition to the plan. In October 2008 the council abolished its plans as plans for leisure development in the borough changed and the changing economic climate saw land prices become more fragile.

Young people initially reacted strongly to the plans despite assurances that plans would be developed with local users input. With time, skatepark users nominated representatives to attend project planning meetings to establish design and tender briefs for the building of the new skatepark. Young people came up with many good ideas for the revamp despite originally being opposed to redevelopment of any kind.

This highlights an example of how young people alerted local decision-makers to the importance of a local issue and broadened their understanding of it through active lobbying and campaigning – it was through young people's involvement that Cabinet members got to understand how important the skatepark was not only locally but also to the skateboarding community across the country. However, reputation damage could have been avoided if young people had been asked before the plans were published and had there been a proper young engagement strategy in place.

When asked which policy issue young people would like most to influence, there was an overwhelming response for influencing policy around tuition fees – an issue that very much affects them. As discussed above, although this is an issue on a national level, local lobbying or campaigning can nevertheless be effective and help inform local responses to

¹⁹ We recognise that as we received only 16 responses to this survey and only through Park High School's school council, this is not representative of all young people and that the sample size is small. Nonetheless the exercise provides snapshot evidence and we are grateful to the 16 young people for their important contribution.

²⁰ It should be noted that the sample surveyed were all from a single school council and as such already plugged-in to local decision making and/or HYP dialogue. This in turn means that they have been in much more closer contact with the council, and therefore not necessarily representative of young people in general.

the impact of national decisions. In our discussions with young people, issues around transport costs, employment and work experience were also raised. At a local level one thing that young people would like to change about Harrow was given as the level of community spirit that currently exists within the borough. It may be on this issue that councillors could use to engage with local young people whilst promoting what their own roles, and that of the council, entails.

There is an interest in the council with its main purposes being seen as bettering the community and making decisions. Young people have asked for more forms of communications through schools or special events for young people. Favoured mechanisms are a balance of face-to-face, written flyers or hand-outs and using social media. Young people have already told us that they want more councillor visibility and for the council to come out to them rather than expecting young people to always got to the Civic Centre.

When asked what puts young people off giving the council their opinions there were three main reasons given: they feel that they will not be taken seriously, they can feel intimidated by formality and the process for involvement is unclear. These are important factors for the council as they can be overcome given thought and innovation. Young people say they would be more encouraged to give their opinions to the council if the impact of their ideas could be shown. This feedback loop should be common practice and motivation can rest on being shown that your views have made a difference.

CASE STUDY – The voice of young Essex through scrutiny

In 2009 Essex County Council (ECC) established a pilot Youth Scrutiny Committee to test how young people could become involved in the formal scrutiny process. The Essex Youth Scrutiny Committee (EYSC) was formed of representatives from the existing Youth Councils. One of the objectives was to engage hard to reach young people in the democratic process, so youth workers were also asked to recruit looked after young people and those classified as NEET (not in education, employment or training).

Right from the very beginning there was a commitment to provide the EYSC members with the same level of support enjoyed by other scrutiny committees. Therefore, the EYSC was not just supported by ECC's Integrated Youth Service but also by both scrutiny and committee officers.

Members were provided with a residential training course and a number of mock scrutiny meetings during which EYSC members were trained to run a meeting, ask questions and formulate recommendations.

Reflective many young people's concerns, bullying was chosen as the topic for the EYSC's first scrutiny project. What distinguished the EYSC from other representative bodies was that it formed a part of the ECC scrutiny structure. So following its investigation into bullying during two witness sessions, the Committee's subsequent report and twelve recommendations were endorsed by the Council's Scrutiny Board (the co-ordinating committee for the Council's scrutiny activity) and included in its Chairman's report to the December 2009 meeting of the County Council. The subsequent development of a DVD and teaching pack formed a way of feeding back the outcomes of the review to those schools who participated in Scrutiny Day – an evidence gathering event involving 200 young people.

The pilot EYSC demonstrated that engaging in the democratic process can make a difference, as the issues highlighted by the Committee's members went on to be discussed in schools throughout Essex as well as Essex's Cabinet.

On a larger scale, we can learn from the Institute of Citizenship brought together thousands of young people as part of the Young Citizens' Action Agenda for the North West project. This identified the following challenges and opportunities for young people today:

- Over two thirds of young people said that citizenship education taught them about their rights and responsibilities, however only 53% said that they would vote in a General Election tomorrow, saying that politics needs to be made more 'real' bridging the gap between what is taught in schools and what happens in the real world.
- Building skills through volunteering and making volunteering part of the curriculum
- Looking after their money and planning for their futures
- Only 49% of the young people felt they have a voice in their school and communities
- Only 18% of the young people feel they can influence politics
- Creating safe communities for them to enjoy
- Two thirds of young people believe that the media portrays young people unfairly.
- Creating a sustainable environment
- Young people believe they have the qualities to affect change but do not believe their opinions are being listened to by decision makers. They see the key players responsible for 'creating change' as the national government, the media and local government (in that order).

Conversation tools – the 'youth offer' that young people want to see from the council

In October we also held a focus group with young people at Wealdstone Youth Centre to critically review the council's conversation tools with young people, namely That magazine, the Harrow youth website and the residents' magazine Harrow People.

Harrow youth website - www.harrowyouth.co.uk

Feedback on the website highlighted to us a number of poor features that confirmed that the website would not would for a variety of reasons:

- Out of date information with too many outdated graphics and outdated images of young people
- The content and style is too patronising
- It does not have an unique selling point – there is not a single compelling reason why a young people would use the website
- Navigation is difficult and too complicated
- It takes too long to download information
- Too busy – there is too much artwork going on that is 'in your face' which are not needed to make young people engage – this again is patronising
- There are no volunteering opportunities, work skill training opportunities or community social action days signposted – this would have made the website more useful to young people.

The general consensus was that the Harrow youth website needs to be completely overhauled. What young people ask for is a single online portal that integrates volunteering and training opportunities with other information about how they can influence decision makers, including relevant and up and coming consultations. The student room <http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/> is a typical example of what young people are demanding as a way to link with and talk to the council, and get more involved. They highlighted the 'student room' because it brought together information they want and use regularly (more than twice a week) in an accessible way that encouraged conversation exchange, help and advice. The Harrow youth website needs to act like a forum or signpost for advice e.g. like the Student Room website with competitions and

volunteering/work experience opportunities so young people would use it. Young people do not want flashy graphics – more important is just access to useful and usable information, including revision tips and study group advice.

We suggest that this portal should also provide a variety of wellbeing advice, for example to provide advice on self esteem, exam stress, family problems, drug and alcohol issues, as well incentivise ‘council’ conversation and participation in community activities with competitions, local offers. We point any future development of the portal toward Orange Rock Corps which provides such support and advice very well²¹. By providing incentives around ‘rights and responsibilities’ we can encourage young people to make positive use of their energies and enable them to gain vocational skills through doing positive activities in the community that will help them get onto the career ladder.

Young people simply want a simple online space that is a useful link to:

1. Information about volunteering opportunities, skills training, jobs and a portal for swapping books and goods.
2. Have conversations with other young people
3. Learn about the council (opportunities to influence)
4. Get advice from other young people and reliable sources

Young people also want competitions as an incentive to use the website e.g. opportunities to win something useful for example free swimming, sport, music, restaurant and cinema vouchers.

That magazine

The format of the magazine does not appeal to young people and it does not link into what is going on in schools or on topical campaigns that matter to young people around jobs, work experience, EMA, youth service cuts and access to student funding. Any successful youth magazine must include issues that young people care about or they will not see it as relevant to them nor read it. Furthermore current and previous magazines and the council website do not allow young people to actively engage with key decision makers for example the council, GLA and MPs.

Any magazine or publication for teenagers has to be topical and focus on generating ideas to involve young people. Our conversations with young people uncovered that the distribution channels of That magazine are not established. Copies of the magazine were not always reaching their audience – a young person through their schools - and so distribution was patchy at best. If any magazine is to be produced in future, young people demanded a much more thought through distribution plan honing-in on public places used by them e.g. transport hubs (bus stations), libraries, shopping centres as well as schools as key points of distribution. Perhaps distribution should be organised by ‘appointed’ or ‘tasked’ young people. Young people are more likely to accept and read magazines that are being circulated by other young people. Another idea to consider may be asking councillors to hand out magazines to young people at the schools in their ward so young people can stop and talk to them too. Although That magazine has now stopped, suggestions for distribution should be considered for any future council publications that want young people in their readership.

Young people were not altogether aware of the council’s residents’ magazine Harrow People and there is not a clear link with young people, unlike in other boroughs like Sutton where young people feature regularly in the content and editorial of its residents’ magazine

²¹ <http://www.orangerockcorps.co.uk/faq/>

Sutton Scene. The content of the residents' magazine needs to reflect the lives and needs of a range of people living in the borough and of course young people should be included in this. Young people told us that they wanted more ownership of the content of the local magazine with sections being produced by young people (for example through young editors) ensuring it is more to be read by young people. Competitions were an important mechanism through which to capture young people's attention and interest.

CASE STUDY – Westminster City Council's Young People's Scrutiny Panel

Westminster's young people's scrutiny panel consists of 23 young people (aged 15-18 years) whose role it is to scrutinise issues of importance to local young people and influence the council's decision making process.

In 2011, the panel investigated the interrelated issues of youth anti-social behaviour, challenging negative perceptions of young people and how young people can play a greater role in their local communities. The panel's 'Top Tips for Getting Young People Involved' are:

- 1. Offer incentives** – they do not have to be financial in nature as young people will often value opportunities to develop their skills and gain experience, particularly when coming to send UCAS forms or job applications. Trips and team bonding sessions are also incentives that young people appreciate.
- 2. Use social media** – sites such as facebook can be extremely useful in advertising opportunities and creating a sense of community when a project is underway.
- 3. Target the audience** – school assemblies, newsletters and e-mails from teachers are all effective channels. Furthermore, having opportunities passed on through school creates more trust as the school effectively endorses it as legitimate.
- 4. Involve young people in promotion** – young people promoting projects to their peers can often be more effective as they are the ones who directly experience being involved and are best placed to describe the benefits of involvement.
- 5. Make it simple** – all opportunities should have a simple application procedure. Nothing is more off-putting to a young person trying to get involved than thinking that the process for getting involved is more trouble than it is worth.
- 6. Welcome and target friendship groups** – the Panel observed that young people were more willing to attend sessions if they could bring a friend along. Having friendly faces involved helps overcome the nervousness of taking on a new challenge.
- 7. Give them a title or certification** – young people are keen to develop skills and gain experience that they can use to promote themselves in applications. Having a title (i.e. youth community organiser) or a certification of involvement are big incentives to getting young people involved.
- 8. Be ambitious and innovative** – young people will be attracted by exciting opportunities. Similarly to really make a difference, organiser should not be afraid to think big. For example, having a volunteering Oyster Card which rewarded volunteers with discounted travel for a period of time would be a real incentive.
- 9. Create a good working environment** – young people are more likely to attend sessions regularly if they associate it with having fun as well.
- 10. Do not call it volunteering** – although it will not influence some young people, there are those who will actively not get involved because they believe "volunteering" is not for them.

Young people getting involved in council – securing the communications routes

Young people told us that Harrow council needs to do more to promote the services it does actually provide for them to help kick-start a proper conversation. At the moment young people do not think the council does anything for them. Only through working more closely with schools – applying key goals and targets about sharing information about council engagement activity – will young people get more involved in council and community activity.

In previous years, the HYP has investigated the viability of establishing young mayors/ambassadors in Harrow as they had proved successful in other local authorities. The view at the time was that the existing approach to democratically sharing the roles and responsibilities worked well for Harrow and that if duties were to be more than 'merely ceremonial', consideration had to be given to how both accountability and support would work.

We also ran a couple of sessions with young people with learning disabilities and their carers, facilitated by Harrow Mencap. This also highlighted to us the responsibility young people are asking of councillors in fostering trust in politicians, providing information about council developments and the need for them to go meet young people face to face and 'knock on doors': "We need our local politicians to be good leaders and care about people, the community and the environment". The young people had not heard of the HYP yet wanted to be involved as they had issues to raise. In terms of how these young people and their carers wanted the council to engage with them, Harrow People was received well in providing basic information about the council and local events. Transition into adulthood is recognised as a very difficult time for some young people and their families and it was impressed upon us how a lack of regular information and support can add to confusing times. Face to face contact and by people known to these young people was preferred, who requested an open day on how local democracy works. This is an event that scrutiny could consider facilitating. The council must ensure that young people with learning disabilities are afforded the same opportunities as all young people in accessing council events. For example we heard that Harrow Mencap's young people had not been invited to the council's employment fairs – it is important that this group of young people receive the same opportunities and invitations to participate.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The council, the Harrow Youth Parliament and others, should explore the introduction of **young ambassadors** as one way to tackle the negative stereotyping and labels around young people and as a way to give leadership to and accountability for young people, as well as a route to improve local public services young people rely on. A group of young ambassadors would also provide a clear leadership and coordinating role around influencing, commissioning and a diversity of voices in encouraging participation in democracy and civic life.

Why? Because Harrow's young people want to be involved in their communities and many already demonstrate community activism, although this is often dissociated from local democracy or politics which are seen as boring or irrelevant. Young people will participate more if they can relate to democracy ambassadors who are a trusted face to other young people. Young ambassadors also raise the visibility of young people and awareness of issues affecting them and provide an opportunity to the HYP to take more responsibility for linking council and policy work to local young people and campaigns. A young ambassador scheme will need wide-ranging support mechanisms and will be a high demonstration that the council is serious about changing the lives of young people in the borough and are listening to their concerns. How it is presented and delivered will be important. Young ambassadors complement Government's direction around 'Positive for Youth' to get young people involved in decision making and widens Harrow's National Citizens Service programme.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Councillors, especially Cabinet members, should meet with young people at dedicated times throughout the year with meetings linked to key debates that young people can actually influence, for example the council's annual budget setting. The council should promote more opportunities for all young people to engage in a greater two-way dialogue with councillors and decision-makers, for example through shadowing opportunities, volunteering placements and quarterly question time events that are timed so as to influence key council decisions.

Why? Because if the council is to have future meaning it must be relevant to the next generation. If new forms of engagement are to be effective, it is not just young people who should give up their time – councillors should share some of their power.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Young people should have a '**what's on**' guide available to them (e.g. listing activities, providing explanations of what the council does and how young people can influence local decisions), similar to the 'what's on' guide produced for children and families by the Communications department each year. This could, with support, be produced by young people and provide a useful sign post magazine (print or online) to volunteering opportunities that the council has negotiated with employers and other organisations, available at the council and in the community. This could be launched at an 'open day' – a dedicated event for young people where the council invites them to learn more about the council, what it can do for them and how they can influence it – a positive way to build up the relationship between young people and the council which scrutiny could facilitate.

Why? Because young people have told us that that they are unclear on what the council does and what it offers. They want more council and councillor visibility and this would demonstrate what the council can

offer young people's lives. The young people with learning disabilities who we talked to asked for an open day on how local democracy works as they want to get more involved. Many young people told us that the council should look to build a stronger relationship with them.

RECOMMENDATION 12: The **Harrowyouth website** needs to be overhauled. Young people should be given a dedicated online space like the 'student room' which offers useful opportunities for conversations about local issues, provides clear links to volunteering, jobs and skills development opportunities, is a portal for exchanging conversation and goods, and signposts to council and community information. A dedicated resource should be identified to work with young people and facilitate development of the website.

Why? Because young people have told us that the website was ineffective and did not provide useful information, or meet their needs.

RECOMMENDATION 13: The council needs to develop a strategy for the **use of social media** especially where the target audience is young people.

Why? Because young people told us that social media platforms are one means of engaging with them but is more likely to succeed if run by young people themselves and built on existing and trusted relationships.

RECOMMENDATION 14: The council should pilot a '**press gang**' of budding '**citizen**' **journalists** who can gain work experience in the press office and get their articles about the community published in Harrow People, magazines for council staff and other publications for young people.

Why? Because young people and other local authorities have told us that council magazines will seek most resonance with young people if they are involved in an editorial capacity. They will also gain valuable work experience and skills, and can take great pride in getting their work published which they can add to their portfolios of community achievements.

G. WHAT OLDER RESIDENTS TOLD US

“The achievement of major policy outcomes requires greater engagement and participation from citizens – ‘government can’t do it alone’ – than traditional ways of delivering public services...Being able to change public behaviour is going to be one of the very few tools in the kit to minimize the impact of budget cuts in the UK.”

Cabinet Office Strategy Unit and Solace research quoted in Populus’ Harrow Better Together Research Report, 2010

Through the Residents’ Panel²² Survey in November we gathered further views from residents across the borough. The questions we asked can be found in the Appendices. 675 residents responded to the survey from across the borough (with most respondents in the 50-years plus age brackets).

Three-fifths of respondents believe that the council does not consider the views of young people enough when making decisions, with significant differences between geographical areas. People in the Canons area are far more confident that the council gives due attention than residents of Hatch End and Kenton West wards. Residents in the 30-34 years bracket were much more positive about the council than 50-54 year olds. This would seem to suggest that the council does need to engage with young people in policy framing and decision making, and where it does so, highlight this engagement to residents across the borough so that residents know of young people’s input.

Seven out of ten residents believe it is important to value and learn from young people’s ideas. There are some variances in age groups however, with 25-29 year olds most supportive and 80-84 year olds least, highlighting perhaps that intergenerational engagement is worth pursuing. There was universal agreement that young people should volunteer as a way to contribute to the community and gain employment skills.

In terms of how the council should engage with young people, residents tended to prefer the council going out to young people and asking them for their views rather than the council facilitating regular meetings with decision-makers. This reflects what young people have been telling us in our various conversations with them. At ward level responses differed, for example residents in Wealdstone were more supportive of the council going out to young people than Hatch End residents. Responses were more evenly split around whether media options such as the web, flyers and Facebook would be worthwhile. Again there were differences between geographical areas and between the ages with 25-29 year olds significantly more supportive of media options than many of the older age groups. Most probably reflecting how residents in those areas themselves would like to be engaged by the council, this also reinforces that one model of communications does not fit all communities and geographies, or indeed impact in the same way.

Achieving greater resident engagement

There is a growing recognition that achieving major policy outcomes requires greater engagement and participation from citizens than traditional ways of delivering public services. The current financial climate has added impetus to looking for alternative ways to improve outputs while not increasing spending. As part of its Better Deal for Residents

²² The Residents Panel consists of over 1,200 residents who have agreed to give their views on questions posed by the council and its partner organisations. The panel is a sample of Harrow residents from the over-18 population, representative by age, ethnicity, gender, geographical spread and employment status. About three or four surveys are run a year.

Programme²³, it commissioned Populus to provide an understanding of how behaviour change programmes can shift resident behaviour – this workstream was called Better Together, detailed in more depth in the Appendices.

In all of its focus groups, Populus found that people were sceptical and suspicious about the motives for various initiatives and that there was a lack of existing ‘community spirit’, making it difficult to immediately implement initiatives which involve residents giving their time and sharing the burden.

One area explored was antisocial behaviour. Statistics show that fear of crime is more of a problem in Harrow than actual crime. The focus groups highlighted that all social groups and ages – including children – felt intimidated by ‘gangs’ of youths hanging around the streets. This did not necessarily mean that young people were behaving badly but rather that their congregating was perceived as threatening. All focus groups thought that there needed to be more for young people to do and better places for them to go – and that young people should be consulted on what activities/facilities they would find attractive. One idea to keep young people from the streets was to encourage more residents to volunteer to help run extra activities/clubs for young people - overall 28% of the 1,000 residents interviewed by telephone said they would be willing to do so. Willingness was linked to age with the most willing being the youngest adults.

Residents’ focus groups showed an overwhelming response that providing diversionary activities such as youth clubs would serve to reduce anti-social behaviour. However there was scepticism about initiatives that bring together older and young people to try to create more understanding, as they thought that in London there is very little community to this upon. In staff focus groups, staff said that the Council should do more to promote better understanding between the generations in Harrow, as misunderstanding made many residents think worse of other people than they needed to, but they accepted that it would be difficult to achieve. Staff shared residents’ views that young people had little to do - although the Youth Service and HYP did offer some activities, most felt there was little else in the form of structured activities.

CASE STUDY - Involving young people in designing services – Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council²⁴

The OurPlace youth facility in Knowsley opened in October 2011 as a result of £5m from the Big Lottery Fund. It has been designed by young people for young people and includes a media suite, café, chill out area, music, arts and sports spaces, a skate/BMX ramp park, an outdoor multi-use games area as well as advice and well-being services. It also provides opportunities for young people to gain new skills through participation in activities and volunteering to run the centre.

The OurPlace Forum was made up of young people from the local area who were heavily involved in the development of the centre since 2008. They worked with architects, engineers and designers to ensure that designs reflected what young people wanted and also focussed on the services that the facility would provide. It was supported by the youth service to ensure that young people were at the heart of the project, whilst giving the young people the opportunity to develop many skills e.g. around working with professionals and decision making that can impact upon their career decisions.

The council intends to create a charity to run the centre which has young people as chair and members of the board. The challenge will remain how to actively involve other young people and ensure that they progress beyond the stage of being consulted and develop the leadership skills and confidence that the original Forum members gained.

²³ The Better Deal for Residents Programme is a transformation programme which seeks to create “a vibrant civic culture in the Borough with residents participating in decisions, taking responsibility for assets and behaving in ways that improve personal quality of life, build social capital, sustainability, and prevent increases in calls from the public purse.”

H. INSIGHTS FROM THE EXPERTS - WHY INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE?

“Many young people (particularly from disadvantaged groups) have negative views and experiences of government or local authorities. In particular they see them as inflexible and ineffective, as enforcers of rules who treat young people as a problem, rather than treating them as assets and being responsive to their needs and views.”

Making the Connection: Building Youth Citizenship

The LGIU²⁵ surveyed all local authorities in England and Wales which scoped youth representation and assessed its impact. Key findings include:

- Social media – using social networking sites was not a method chosen by most authorities for their marketing and targeting of young people. However, there is a strong call from young people to meet them on social networking sites such as Facebook.
- Targeting marketing of youth opportunities – the survey found that while the majority of local authorities made a fair effort to target their marketing to include groups such as NEETs, ethnic minority groups, young people in care, young carers and ex-youth offenders, in some cases these initiatives were limited and occasionally non-existent.
- Consultation – while over half of local authorities consulted young people on a monthly basis, one-fifth did so only annually. As the LGiU point out, surely it is wholly unacceptable to consult with young people as co-service users in the community once every 365 days. The most popular methods of consultation were surveys, focus groups and conferences.

CASE STUDY – Tom, from Chesham Youth Council to youth leader

Tom started on Chesham’s youth council at the age of 13. The youth council was led by young people with the constant presence of two local councillors who had corporate responsibility for the youth council. The councillors believed that it is a councillor’s responsibility to create an environment where people can flourish: “If you value your youth, you have to create the environment to allow it to flourish”. The councillors’ involvement with Chesham Youth Council has demonstrated the necessity to constantly change the model of engagement, move with the times and adapt. Remaining static does not work - young people and their likes change.

Like many other councils, Buckinghamshire withdrew its entire complement of youth clubs. Tom now 19 years old, took on running the Chesham youth centre and sits on the Youth Committee. He gives them his skills e.g. setting up the facebook consultation which furnished 120 responses and was successful in informing a £25k grant bid and supporting business plan. And in return this gives him the opportunity to improve his employability skills. Tom developed the youth strategy with Paradigm Social Housing and sits on its management committee and also the residents’ panel. Through Youth in Action projects, he has been abroad (through Paradigm’s training schemes) and the training has built up his confidence as well his ability to work with a range of people in various settings, some abroad. These are skills that are transferable to everyday life.

The Education Committee has been considering services for young people²⁶ (more detailed analysis of this can be found in the Appendices) and concluded that “the research evidence for effective youth services is weak”. However robust and comparable evidence is needed as a base for local commissioning. Local commissioners need to base decisions on robust analysis of local needs informed by young people and an

²⁴ Sourced from the Local Government Improvement and Development and Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council websites.

²⁵ *Youth Participation: Growing Up?*, a report by LGIU and Changemakers, December 2009.

²⁶ *Services for Young People: the Government response*, House of Commons Education Committee, October 2011

understanding of what exists for local young people, in order to invest public funds to support services for young people. Key consideration should be given to quality of services and value added by outcomes rather than the numbers of young people reached.

In April 2011, the LGIU published findings of their survey 'Equipped to Engage?' – a national survey of local authorities on how ready services for young people are to engaging with social media for youth engagement. This is detailed in more depth in the Appendices. This found that only 25% of organisations are using social media in youth work and there continues to be gaps in policy frameworks, training and support meaning that many services are not taking advantage of social media as a two-way communication and engagement tool.

The drivers to use social media include its cost-effectiveness, its value in engaging with specific groups, its broadcast ability to be used to get messages out as well as its conversational value, and lastly the increasing demand for social media engagement from service users.

Young people want to have the ability to make decisions. The Blackberry Culture, often alluded to when disseminating the cause of the riots, highlight the riots as being a response to the lack of help or guidance. They of course may have been purely opportunistic or a one-off occurrence. What they have highlighted however is that prevention is key and that it is vital to invest in interventions that give young people hope and opportunities to learn, develop and grow. This is not the cheapest option but it is the best option going forward.

“The negative actions of a small group of our demographic are seen to represent a whole generation of people, our inability to vote serves as an excuse for decision makers to unfairly stereotype us rather than working on solutions, proven by the reaction to the recent riots. This review and its means of engagement present an opportunity for us to air our concerns to people who have the power to change and us to feel that our opinions are valued.”

Ladan Dirie, Chair of Harrow's Youth Parliament, 2011-12.

The independent panel set up to investigate the causes and responses to the Summer Riots of 2011²⁷ visited Harrow as part of its evidence gathering visits and were impressed with local authorities like Harrow that had developed multi-disciplinary teams combining police, voluntary sector and local authority staff to talk to groups to prevent them forming and rioting. Harrow did not witness any rioting while many London boroughs did. This may in part be due to the multi-agency teams that walked the streets of Harrow talking to young people (using the enforcement powers of the police with the engagement skills of youth workers to achieve success), as well the attitude of local young people – they simply did not want to riot or destroy their local environs. Furthermore the small group of young people in Harrow who would have most likely been involved in any trouble were otherwise engaged in positive activity e.g. National Citizens Service. This is similar to some of the evidence we uncovered in our review - the experience in Chesham which did not witness any rioting behaviour although there are particular pockets of deprivation and known gangs. It was members of these gangs who dispersed any formation of rioters as they did not want any trouble on 'their patch' – their sense of community alongside the council's diversionary activities prevented widespread troubles.

²⁷ 5 Days in August – An interim report on the 2011 English Riots, Riots, Communities and Victims Panel, December 2011

Why local authorities need to engage around citizenship

We received some eye-opening advice from the Institute of Citizenship (IoC) on how engaging young people in citizenship can help involve them in council concerns. A young 'citizen's action' agenda helps local government save money as it helps provide services that young people actually need - if young people are not using the services provided for them or engagement tools aimed at them then local authorities are wasting resources in the wrong places. The IoC has found that young people are interested in local and national issues but that this is aligned with a negative perception of politicians.

A successful engagement programme should be focused around 'give and take' between the council and young people, with each providing healthy challenge to each other. The IoC cite the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham as a good example of providing this 'give and take' through their progressive ladder of influencing. Hammersmith and Fulham Council have developed a rewards and progression framework whereby young people who do 50 hours volunteering on either the Youth Commissioner Project or Borough Youth Forum and a minimum of three training programmes have the opportunity to apply to become a Young Advisor. The council has supported the Young Advisors to establish themselves as a social enterprise and external companies are charged for Young Advisor time, thus giving young people a clear progression route, without costing the council. The council also has a clear and incentivised youth structure which is important and is discussed further on.

Schools and youth clubs would seem predominantly the best routes to get to young people and to influence positive behaviour change around citizen engagement and social action. Citizenship Education may be relegated to the looser 'basic curriculum' at Key Stages 3 and 4 with no compulsory programmes of study or attainment targets²⁸. With citizenship seemingly playing a lesser role in the curriculum, it will be very important to explore other ways of engaging young people in local democracy, influencing and playing a part in shaping their local community. Councils, working with schools, will have a vital role to play in looking at this agenda and assessing any possible impact on exclusions and pupil referrals for example.

Clearly citizenship education plays an important role in imparting knowledge and understanding of human rights, civic responsibilities, democracy and the rule of law. It is also essential to enable all children and young people from a range of backgrounds to participate fully in a free and open society and in ensuring that young people are equipped with the knowledge to enable them to take their place in society as mature, responsible adults.

Lord Richard Layard, a leading British economist and Government advisor, has emphasised the importance of analysis, opinion forming, debating and the ability to enquire as essential skills for positive youth engagement and more active citizenship. Young people need to know how to lobby, influence and campaign. Councils need to be alert to this as they attempt to engage young people as residents and local voters of the future. It is often co-creation projects (between the council, community, politicians and young people) that yield the best results and long term engagement as they involve a degree of ownership for all involved.

In Camden, the summer university - brought free of charge to young people by the council and local partners - provides opportunities to gain accreditation for various new skills that

²⁸ The Framework for the National Curriculum – A report by the Expert Panel for the National Curriculum Review, Department for Education, December 2011.

young people can learn through the courses on offer. Peer motivators – a team of young volunteers – provide a link between students and staff in supporting and advising students and helping them get the most out of the summer university experience. They also help in delivering classes.

A branded and affiliated Summer University scheme ran in Harrow from 2008 and 2010, benefiting many young people. A budget of approximately £30,000 was used to promote, publicise, administrate and staff the activities and this coincided with a significant reduction in youth crime and antisocial behaviour across the borough.

For the last decade in Tower Hamlets the youth education charity Futureversity has run free courses for 11-25-year olds to develop their skills and self-confidence, in partnership with the data centre chain Interxion. This initially started as a summer university project to help divert young people away from crime and low level anti-social behaviour into positive activities. We recognise that finding sponsorship for initiatives in Harrow has proved challenging and is likely to remain so in the current financial climate, however, if such a scheme existed in Harrow in partnership between the council and a local business, young people could access sessions on confidence building, campaigning, community volunteering, and foster more a sense of citizenship.

Why involve – developing a business case

Hammersmith & Fulham Council recently produced a strategy for increasing children and young people's involvement which looked to strengthen current arrangements and to implement a safe, inclusive and coordinated approach for children and young people's decision making and involvement in the design, commissioning and evaluation of council and health services. This provides a convincing business case for why young people must be involved in the work of the council.

But why is developing a business case for young people so important? Firstly because involving young people creates better policy, is more likely to meet their needs, and therefore more likely to work in practice when supporting young people. Secondly because the involvement of a greater and more diverse community creates better policy, informs key spending decisions and improves relationships between the council and residents, making the council more accountable to the people it serves.

Given the opportunity, young people are as capable as any other demographic group of considering important social issues affecting the community and putting forward solutions. It is vital the council takes notice of what this generation is saying so that it can build a stronger community in Harrow built in part on the important contribution that young people can make.

Children and young people are integral to Harrow's communities and they have a right to be heard, taken seriously and to be involved in the decisions that affect them. By being involved in council policy development and decision making, young people can help create, build and improve services to make them more responsive to their needs. Research and experience have shown that children and young people respond better to services and achieve better outcomes if they participate in the decision-making process²⁹.

²⁹i) Lansdown, Gerison (1995), Taking Part: Children's participation in decision making. IPPR.

ii) Kirby P. (et al), (2002), Measuring the Magic: Evaluating and researching young people's participation in public decision-making. London, Carnegie Young People's Initiative www.carnegie-youth.org.uk

iii) Kirby, P. (et al) (2003), Building a Culture of Participation, National Children's Bureau

The benefits provide a compelling business case for why we should involve young people in council activity and encourage their involvement in decision making:

- More accountable and improved structures policies and decision making.
- Improved, provision, uptake and cost effectiveness of projects, programs and services.
- Recognition of children and young people as stakeholders (as creators and not just consumers).
- Improved collaboration, respect and communication between young people and professionals.
- Providing a means for under represented groups to be heard.
- Engendering responsibility including increased aspirations and self esteem and trust in the democratic process.
- Children and Young People develop transferrable skills, and an understanding of how decisions are made and how to contribute to them.
- They also have a unique opportunity to add to their CV's and reference portfolios and receive accreditations.
- Allows professionals to tap in to young people's expertise and get a greater understanding of what it is like to be a young people in today's' society, the pressures, the drivers, what works for them and what does not.

Although there are clearly many positive examples of young people's involvement and decision making throughout the borough, a less ad hoc and more coordinated approach needs to be adopted across the organisation. Harrow could look to Hammersmith and Fulham's work in this area for guidance (as detailed in the Appendices).

To be able to sustain meaningful efforts in youth engagement in the current financial climate there needs to be a robust business case for young people. Sutton Council wants young people to get involved in its processes and the development of young people in these processes lends itself to the Council's aim regarding customer services. Youth engagement is heavily engrained in what is happening corporately and therefore prioritised - it is not only the purview of youth services but an integral part of what the council does to engage with residents.

What Sutton's experiences and advice highlight to us is that Harrow has a lot of the engagement mechanisms in place but they need to be better coordinated and be corporately led from the top, recognising youth engagement as an important part of the council's priorities around resident engagement and customer care.

Youth engagement is an issue that affects us all, not just councils or politicians. Employers have a pivotal role to play in getting young people, many of whom may have never worked before, into the world of work. Businesses and organisations should recognise that creating a more inclusive workforce can help drive business performance and profitability, as well as widening the talent pool to include young people and their ideas, can achieve this. When many industries are suffering from skills gaps, businesses must identify ways to attract and nurture raw talent, such as through apprenticeship schemes or work experience programmes – and this includes the Council too. A young workforce with diverse experiences provides fresh perspectives which can improve performance and boost growth because young people's ideas and enthusiasm can act as fuel for innovation or providing a well-rounded approach to problem-solving.

CASE STUDY – Sutton Council’s youth engagement

Sutton Council is widely recognised as a vanguard authority for community engagement. It has had the same political administration for over 25 years and therefore there has been a consistent agenda, a luxury not afforded to many authorities. It has always had the will to invest in engaging young people however this was not always coordinated as well as it could and therefore a post focussing on youth engagement coordinator was introduced, working across the corporate core of the council and Children’s Services.

Sutton’s youth parliament (SYP) is well-established and operates strongly, as highlighted by the enthusiasm around and numbers involved in the annual youth parliament elections. SYP members are nominated with the support of their school and there is a clear link between the SYP member and their local councillors regarding the democratic process. Although it is recognised that the youth parliament is not a political body, young people are encouraged to develop campaigning skills to influence decision-makers. Council officers supporting the SYP give young people the voice to say something and the council is used to, and welcomes, young people’s constructive criticism. Whereas some councils may try to ‘manage’ their conversations with young people, to mediate and neutralise them, Sutton treats young people as equals and endeavours to hear their voices as you would adults. This is very similar to the advice offered by the National Children’s Bureau with regard to what makes effective youth engagement.

Sutton engages about 100 young people a month through its Young Advisors programme, more so if one includes those engaged online. Young Advisors are essentially young consultants, trained to help organisations and services ‘youth proof’ their practices, marketing and strategies (make them ‘young person friendly’); and to give them ideas and support with engaging and maintaining the interests of other young people. They are also trained to carry out large scale consultations and focus groups with other people. ‘Train the trainer’ is part of the package and the campaigning module is very popular - 20 young people spent the summer shadowing council officers. Young advisors are self-nominated and can come and go. They represent wider diversity and act as a soundboard for the Council.

Young inspectors are commissioned by the voluntary sector to run the service and train up young people. As funding for this has now ceased, young inspectors are incorporated into the young advisors programme and the processes merged. The Sutton Young Advisors programme stands alone from the national young advisors programme but is successful nonetheless.

Sutton does not pay its advisors but instead the emphasis is very much on what young people can get out of participation. Incentives are not pursued as that level of funding cannot be sustained if more and more young people get involved. There exists the tension that youth services do not reimburse young people but other council teams do – often high profile and media attention can be non-monetary reward.

Similar to in Harrow, Sutton’s Communications Team is delivered in house by Westminster City Council. A communications plan for young people has been developed and this includes that youth services have its own regular column in the quarterly residents’ magazine ‘Sutton Scene’ which includes articles written by young people.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The council should look to reintroduce a **summer university scheme**, backed by a commercial and/or charitable partner, to provide free courses to young people (including those up to 25 years with a learning disability) on communications, influencing, confidence building, community volunteering and campaigning. Camden’s summer university and Tower Hamlets’ Futureversity could provide a steer for this.

Why: Because a summer university gives young people valuable accreditation for new skills, contributes to community life and wellbeing, improves participation and knowledge of democratic processes in future voters and enhances young people’s employability. Building up young people’s skills is positive for youth engagement and active citizenship. It arms young people with skills to help their future employability as well as providing positive activities during summer holidays, bringing together different groups of young people who do not always get to interact and share experiences. Residents and council staff on Better Together focus groups said that young people had little to do in the form of structured activities and a summer university helps to anchor young people in positive activities during the long summer holidays when chances to get involved in positive, structured activity is limited.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The council should look to explore the **‘business case’ around youth engagement**, in both senses of the word, in delivering better outcomes for young people. Firstly, a

business case for the council in investing to save through youth engagement and secondly, in the case for business to be involved in delivering outcomes through economic development. Business has a vital role to play in supporting youth services in the current climate. There is a real, current social need for business and charities to work with and champion young people and the organisations that support them.

Why: Because youth engagement will create better policy, is more likely to meet young people's needs and therefore more likely to work in practice when supporting young people. Developing a business case will help save the long-term consequences of not engaging, for example, anti-social behaviour. In the case for business, by working in partnership with business and the voluntary sector the local economy can benefit from better skills in young people and we can create a whole community that is more positive about youth. Participation creates a sense of ownership and community.

I. WHERE POLICY GOES NEXT - HOW TO INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE

Drawing all the evidence together, **the key headlines for this review** are:

- Young people want to be involved in their community and have a say in issues that affect them.
- In order to improve communication with young people, the council working with other providers, needs to offer more positive things to do in the community including opening up opportunities to genuinely influence debate and decision making.
- Young people want consistent and coordinated conversations, with feedback and a visible demonstration of follow up. Constant conversations will build trust if they are on an equal footing.
- Providing teenagers with a system of 'give and take' rewards will deliver improved outcomes around citizenship, volunteering, democracy and participation.
- Residents, through the Residents' Panel and Better Together research, call for the council to do more for the younger generation in the borough.
- Special attention needs to be given to reaching the seldom heard or difficult to reach groups, such as young people with mental health needs or learning disabilities.
- The model of providing services for young people is changing – the policy landscape and resource envelope has significantly changed in recent years. The youth offer needs to provide challenge to young people and be prepared to be challenged.
- The roles and responsibilities of council have not been well articulated to young people and greater clarity is needed around how they link to community and young people.
- Accessing routes into decision-making process can be difficult to fathom. It is not always easy to neither discern the platforms for national and local influence nor distinguish their inter-relationship.
- Local authorities and councillors have a role to play in ensuring that young people understand what citizenship and community participation can offer them.
- Councils and politicians have a key role to play in inspiring the next generation and ensuring engagement is a springboard to employment skills and recognising that providing volunteering opportunities gives an impetus to this.
- Harrow Youth Parliament provides a strong platform from which to consult young people but the local authority should not see this as the only platform or default mechanism.
- Schools are seen as a natural conduit to communications between the local authority and young people.
- Efforts need to be put in making politics more relevant to teenagers and less 'boring'.
- Young people are not a homogenous group and therefore a variety of different engagement tools must be employed in order to capture their different voices. Although very popular, social media cannot be assumed to be the best method of engagement in all situations. The importance of face-to-face contact, and building on existing relationships should not be underestimated.

So how should we in Harrow address these in policy terms? Again the experiences of other local authorities such as Sutton, Hammersmith & Fulham, Camden and Islington, as well as developments within our own organisation can pave the way.

We have already seen the processes that are successful in Sutton (see case study). North of the river, Camden Council has moved its policy direction beyond youth participation and is embracing a model of youth action³⁰. A key area of activity identifies that "one of the building blocks to deliver improved outcomes is to 'involve children, young

³⁰ Youth Action Group: Delivery Guidance for Lead Workers in Camden, Camden Council October 2011

people and families in decision making". To help deliver this agenda, Youth Action Groups (YAG) are being developed to encourage discussion and debate amongst young people to address issues in their local areas, a recent example being an YAG conference which debated the 'civil unrest of summer 2011'. These are being developed initially in three service areas and they will also be consulted on service development, including consideration of commissioning and the allocation of funds.

Camden is using the YAGs to facilitate access to other groups of young people rather than being the only group of young people consulted, with members being encouraged to maintain and encourage links within their communities³¹. This may be a model Harrow could consider to counter the argument that the council only engages with the HYP as the dominant group 'representative' of all young people in the borough.

CASE STUDY - Developing a youth mutual model in Islington

While many local authorities have scaled back their youth provision over the past couple of years, Islington³² has invested £8m to create two high-quality youth hubs, with one focusing on health and well-being and the other on performing arts. Both offer young people a range of opportunities to develop enterprise and employability skills, as well as access to support services.

A comprehensive needs assessment process engaged more than 3,500 stakeholders with young people themselves being asked to undertake research with their peers and act as young advisers. This approach enabled the council to develop a clear set of informed commissioning priorities.

Resources and budgets were pooled with local community groups to procure services with organisations supported to explore innovative options such as creating community interest companies, ensuring that the new model for youth provision and positive activities does not rely solely on public finance – a criticism of many authorities' approach to youth services and one that the current minister for young people believes makes them unsustainable.

Undertaking outcome-based commissioning and using outcome-based accountability in monitoring is helping ensure value for money and more clearly highlight the impact of the services commissioned. Not only must there be robust processes for commissioning but also for decommissioning and recommissioning.

Islington is exploring the feasibility of creating a **youth mutual**, a model of working that will allow young people to be shareholders and to direct profits from entrepreneurial activity back into services for young people. The view is that by offering young people the chance to jointly 'own' an organisation, they can take real responsibility and thus be provided with the vehicle to build important leadership skills, volunteering activity and that links with their communities.

Social media

Last year, the Department for Children, Schools and Families produced a set of materials³³ to help youth workers communicate and collaborate with young people through social media. This highlights that social media's core strength is its inter-connectivity and that social media platforms can be accessed at any time anywhere. Council websites can easily be linked to social media 'groups' and by establishing online discussion, projects can be easily consulted upon with young people, especially as they allow members to give feedback online in their own time. The guide does however recognise that a common problem is convincing managers that social media is a worthy option in communicating with young people.

³¹ Camden's YAGs have the opportunity to send representatives to the Youth Council and thus understand the democratic decision making processes and structures, as well as give access to key decision makers of local services. There is a training programme in place to support the 68 YAG members who have been recruited so far.

³² Leadership: Let young people decide on the services that meet their needs, Rachel Egan in Children and Young People Now, 14 June 2011

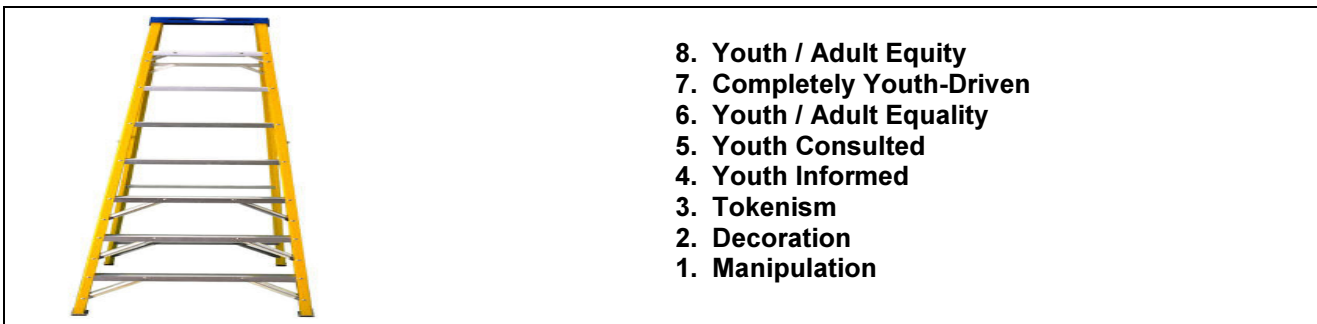
³³ Aiming High for Young People: Engaging through Social Media, DCSF

A 2008 study³⁴ by the National Youth Agency found that online social networking has the potential to bridge divides, encourage creativity and create opportunities for learning, collaboration and innovation. Research shows that young people embrace technology more readily than others and expect to be able to do what they want online. Recent academic research³⁵ by the London School of Economics examined how young people participate and how the internet can be used to facilitate this, the recommendations from which can be found in the Appendices.

Evaluation tools

The National Youth Association's 'Hear by Right' set out standards and a self assessment model that encourages local authorities to critically examine their current arrangements for engaging children and young people in local democracy as part of their community leadership role. The standards identify how well Council's listen, plan, act and evaluate services that impact in children and young people.

The Ladder of Youth Voice was created by Adam Fletcher (2011)³⁶ based on the work of Roger Hart, a sociologist for UNICEF. It was created to encourage young people and adults to examine why and how young people participate throughout communities. It can provide a useful tool against which to measure youth engagement exercises.



Remodelling the council and Children's Services – a new operating model

It is an opportune time, especially given the changes in the public services landscape to look to holistic solutions and a pressure on policy to be more holistic. For example local authorities will be taking on new responsibilities for public health, subject to the Health and Social Care Bill's passage through parliament. This will open up new opportunities for community engagement and to develop holistic solutions to the health and well-being for young people.

In how councils remodel to meet a more holistic approach to local government policy, council restructures will need to join up (e.g. build on the integrated targeted model of Children's Services) and develop a systems approach linked to outcomes. This is particularly pertinent given the move toward commissioning. The new model for Children's Service sees the focus of youth development as around volunteering, citizenship,

³⁴ Cited in *Making the Connection: Building Youth Citizenship in the UK*, Youth Citizenship Commission report, page 53. This study drew upon evidence from literature, a series of focus groups and a survey of 120 youth work practitioners.

³⁵ Young people, the Internet, and civic participation: an overview of key findings from the CivicWeb Project Banaji, Shakuntala and Buckingham, David (2010) *Young people, the Internet, and civic participation: an overview of key findings from the CivicWeb Project. International journal of learning and media*, 2 (1). pp. 15-24.

³⁶ Adapted by Adam Fletcher (2011) at www.freechild.org

participation and hearing the voices of young people. Key to this is understanding, not assuming, what young people want.

We need to ask what the council is trying to change regarding outcomes for children and young people. For example should we be mobilising our contribution for the community to better engage with young people – we do not use young people as a key community resource enough. There is an opportunity with the new Cedars youth facility to focus on outcomes. Rather than focussing on generating income by using the community resource, focussing on community activity for the community will enhance its long term usage and positive outcomes for the clients it serves.

Within the new operating model, the Youth Development Team has gone live in early 2012. This will include participation, volunteering, apprenticeships and its role will be to champion young people. However, there is no business plan for youth engagement as such yet.

Commissioning

As policy moves local government away from being direct providers of youth services, and indeed public services in general, towards more of a commissioner's role, there are great opportunities for young people to be involved in the commissioning of public services, as suggested in Table 2.

Table 2: Young people's role in commissioning cycles

Stage of commissioning cycle	Young people's possible role
Assessment and analysis of local need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting for the problems young people face and their needs Identifying key issues and priorities Researching the views of other young people with unique access to existing young people's networks Identifying gaps in current provision
Planning services to meet needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping make decisions of budget and resource allocations Setting priorities and areas for action Planning services and their activities Participating in planning and advisory groups
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting opportunities to other young people Delivering peer led programmes Getting involved in the recruitment of staff who will deliver the services Contributing to training professionals in understanding issues relevant to local young people or how to be more 'young person friendly' Acting as facilitators and reporters of events and consultations
Review – monitoring and evaluating provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of projects/services and making recommendations for improvement Monitoring services e.g. mystery shopping, informing inspections Reviewing policies and plans – youth proofing them Being involved in the democratic mechanisms of the council e.g. scrutiny committees and reviews

The Government's policy articulations for local government show an ambition for local authorities to become primary commissioners rather than default providers of services and this includes services for young people. Engaging young people in defining their own services and being involved in the commissioning of appropriate services would seem key to this. We would encourage the local authority to take account of some of the feedback we have had from young people during the course of this review as a springboard for developing a commissioning relationship more between the local authority and young people. The Government's response to the Education Committee report cites many

proven ways for young people to get involved in local decision making e.g. youth councils, young mayors, youth parliaments, grant givers, board member roles, young advisors and young inspectors. However it will not prescribe to local areas the form that youth participation should take as it believes it is for local areas to determine and put in place arrangements that best suit their particular needs.

Our conversations with Mandy Douglas at the National Children's Bureau who heads the Participation Works programme highlights that effective and sustainable participation 'costs' in terms of resources if it is done properly. It cannot be done at a low cost unless it is half-hearted. Meaningful and sustainable participation requires investment to ensure that it is embedded, like any professional development because it needs a change in the culture of the council. Costs need not always be financial but relate to resources e.g. shifting resources from elsewhere to accommodate better engagement, time, officers, and behaviour.

We need to be realistic from the outset – it will be to everyone's detriment if the council embarks on participation only to find it is too expensive and then stops it – this loses the trust of young people and others involved. On the plus side, costs diminish as time goes on - firmly embedding processes and mainstreaming participation will mean costs lessen. The issue is not really about upskilling and training young people but retraining adults. It has to be reinforced that effective participation is allowing others (e.g. young people) to voice an opinion and that this represents a say on an equal footing. Adults can fear young people having a say but not the deciding say. The real issue is affording them the respect to listen and discuss with young people if you cannot take up their ideas – all ideas do not have to be accepted, we have to just make sure we listen to young people and feed back outcomes.

Participation creates a sense of ownership and community from engagement and involvement. It can make people proud of where they live – and that is a return on the investment that proper participation needs.

There is a duty on local authorities to demonstrate links and influence to central government. Councillors should act as lobbyists for local residents and of course this includes young people. As we found, many young people are very much divorced from politics. Councillors and the HYP in partnership can have a real role in shifting this. Young people want to be involved in their community - it our responsibility to enable this.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The council should consider piloting **youth action group arrangements**, like in Camden, to encourage young people to campaign and lead volunteering projects that tackle community problems. This could perhaps dovetail with the current Neighbourhood Champions scheme. Consideration should be given to integrating more young people into the council's Neighbourhood Champion's programme.

Why? Because young people have told us that they want to be more involved in local decision-making. Youth action groups encourage discussion and debate to address local issues. Neighbourhood Champions is an existing scheme which asks community volunteers to alert the council of community problems.

RECOMMENDATION 7: As the council continues to develop its commissioning models and mechanisms, it should involve young people in **commissioning decisions** from design to implementation, wherever appropriate. This involvement in the council decisions should form one part of a wider involvement scheme that rewards youth engagement. For example, the scheme used by Hammersmith and Fulham Council secures young people as volunteers in council work and importantly provides a tiered system for reward and recognition. Time and resources should be invested in supporting young people through training for these greater roles.

Why? Because involving young people will create better policy, is more likely to meet young people's needs and have successful outcomes.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A** **Contributors to the review**
- Appendix B** **Positive for Youth**
- Appendix C** **Recommendations from ‘Youth Participation: Growing Up?’ – a report by LGiU and Changemakers, December 2009**
- Appendix D** **Scope for Scrutiny Review of Engaging with Young People**
- Appendix E** **Current youth engagement activities by Harrow Council**
- Appendix F** **Survey of young people**
- Appendix G** **Results of Residents’ Survey – November 2011**
- Appendix H** **Better Together research by Populus – Spring 2010**
- Appendix I:** **Evidence from the Education Committee 2010-2012**
- Appendix J:** **‘Equipped to engage?’ – LGiU survey of local authorities, April 2011**
- Appendix K:** **Hammersmith & Fulham Council’s development areas for youth involvement**
- Appendix L:** **London School of Economics research on young people’s use of the internet**

APPENDIX A: CONTRIBUTORS TO THE REVIEW

We extend our thanks to the people and organisations we met during the course of this review:

- Ladan and her colleagues on the Harrow Youth Parliament, including Ellie, Robert, Ishita, Hannah, Holly, Robert, Shiven, Hena, Nikhil, Teah, Jasmine, Oliver, Ashna, Pooja, Liam, Amrit and Lakmini
- Catherine Doran, Harrow Council Corporate Director of Children and Families
- Councillor Mitzi Green, Harrow Council Children's Services Portfolio Holder
- Councillor David Perry, Harrow Council Community & Cultural Services Portfolio Holder
- Councillor Margaret Davine, Harrow Council, Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder
- All the young people who attended our review meetings, focus groups and sessions
- Sarah Davies, Harrow Council Operational Manager Young People's Services, Parminder Sahota, Project Team Leader and their colleagues at Wealdstone Youth Centre
- Sam Botchey, Harrow Council Senior Youth Involvement Officer
- Richard Segalov, Harrow Council Head of Services for Young People
- Dan Burke, Rachel Whybrew and the team at Ignite
- Rod Andrew and colleagues at Harrow Detached Team
- Amar Chandarana, an ex-member of Harrow Youth Parliament who volunteered to work with the Scrutiny Team during the summer
- Councillors Alison Pirouet and Mark Shaw who have responsibility for Chesham Youth Council
- Adeline Abraham (Harrow Council Children in Care Participation Officer) and her young people from the Children in Care Council
- Jon Fitzmaurice, Projects and Research Manager at the Institute of Citizenship
- Alex Stutz, Head of Policy at the National Youth Agency
- David Clark, Deputy Chief Executive of the British Youth Council
- Mandy Douglas, the National Children's Bureau's Director of Partnership and Involvement
- Julie Browne, Chief Executive of Kids Can Achieve, and her colleagues at KCA
- Deven Pillay, Chief Executive of Harrow Mencap, and his colleagues Yvonne Lee and David House
- The young people and their carers who spoke to us at the Harrow Mencap events in January - Daniella Da Costa, Stephen Wong, Trisha Penfold, Carol Smith, Fatimia Lanker
- Neil Sewell (Head of Youth Service) and Michelle Brown (Youth Engagement Coordinator) from Sutton Council's Youth Services
- Tahir Khan, Youth and Connexions Service Manager at Camden Council
- Brenda Whinnett, Children and Young People's Involvement Officer at Hammersmith & Fulham Council
- Park High school council

We apologise if we have missed anyone from the list above – this is wholly unintentional. We also thank officers and members within Harrow Council for their support in gathering evidence to inform our conclusions.

APPENDIX B: POSITIVE FOR YOUTH

In December 2011, the government's new vision for young people and youth services was launched. At its launch the Minister for Young People called on every local authority to get young people involved in local decision-making. The government also wants local authorities to build stronger partnerships with voluntary organisations and local businesses to develop opportunities for young people in their local communities. Many companies like O2, Starbucks and the Co-Operative are already on board with plans to provide innovative projects that will inspire young people.

Backing up the strategy to build a society that is more Positive for Youth, the Government is:

- Providing £320,000 to Business in the Community to build links between businesses and young people in their local areas.
- Giving young people the chance to 'youth proof' government policy. A new national scrutiny group and youth select committee will monitor and advise on government policy.
- Calling on all local authorities to give young people a voice in local decision-making. Local authorities should introduce programmes like youth mayors or youth inspectors to give youngsters a say. This could include: auditing local services such as youth clubs and leisure services to make them more youth-friendly.
- Establishing four new Youth Innovation Zones to develop new, creative approaches to youth services across the country. The first four areas, Devon, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, and Knowsley will each get £40,000 to set up the zones.
- Publishing revised statutory guidance for consultation in the New Year on local authorities' duty to secure activities and services for young people.
- Providing capital investment to complete 63 myplace centres by April 2013, and developing a national approach to exploit their potential to be led by communities and businesses.
- Expanding National Citizen Service to offer 30,000 places to young people in 2012, 60,000 in 2013, and 90,000 in 2014.

APPENDIX C: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ‘YOUTH PARTICIPATION: GROWING UP?’ – A REPORT BY LGIU AND CHANGEMAKERS, DECEMBER 2009

The report makes seven recommendations around:

- Effective training to support youth participation opportunities.
- The importance of accreditation or recognition to enrich young people's experiences and equip them with transferable skills.
- Local authorities needing to make more use of social networking sites to advertise opportunities for young people.
- Local authorities needing to draw from a more diverse pool of aspirants.
- Youth consultations are most meaningful when they are frequent and youth-led.
- All local authorities should adopt a standard framework for monitoring and evaluate the effectiveness of youth participation models in their area.
- Effective feedback mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the impact of their involvement is made known to participants.

APPENDIX D: SCOPE FOR SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - JUNE 2011

REVIEW OF ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

VERSION HISTORY:

1. 27 June 2011
2. 25 July 2011 – following initial scoping meeting on 20 July
3. 1 September 2011
4. 9 September 2011 – following second scoping meeting on 8 September

1	SUBJECT	Engaging with Young People
2	COMMITTEE	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
3	REVIEW GROUP	<p>Councillors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Victoria Silver (Chair of Review Group) • Councillor Sue Anderson • Councillor Christine Bednell • Councillor Ann Gate • Councillor Krishna James • Councillor Paul Osborn • Councillor Varsha Parmar • Councillor Ben Wealthy <p>Co-optees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julie Browne – Kids Can Achieve • Anne Diamond – Scrutiny Pool of Advisors • Hema Mistry – Scrutiny Pool of Advisors • Young people – representation sought from various young people's groups
4	AIMS/ OBJECTIVES/ OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess how young people currently view their engagement/influence with the Council, volunteering opportunities and future prospects. • To address how best the borough can overcome current challenges and obstacles surrounding youth engagement in order to deliver the best outcomes for children and young people and make best use of existing assets. • To improve the quality of Council dialogue with young people and enhance their influence in key policy decisions and civic participation - assess the success of Harrow engagement initiatives including recent work on Let's Talk and academies consultation, in specific relation to engaging with young people. • To help the Council develop its strategic approach to engaging with young people - to shape future services in Harrow as well as to input into national policy deliberations in 'Positive for Youth' initiatives. • To identify examples of good practice in youth engagement, including pan-London or London-wide examples of successful initiatives. • To examine the role of schools in youth engagement, especially within the new schools landscape of academies. • To engage with and upskill young people through volunteering.
5	MEASURES OF SUCCESS OF REVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased and more effective engagement with young people across the borough. • Increased participation by young people in Harrow council's key decisions, services and initiatives. • Successful model of youth engagement at the reopened Cedars Youth Centre and schools.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tangible input into the development of policy in Children's Services, and more widely to the Council's approach to engaging with young people.
6	SCOPE	The scope of the review will cover services for young people from across the Council, not only Children's Services. It will only consider issues where there is the potential for the local authority to make an impact – including what the Council can add to the wider strategic operation of schools.
7	SERVICE PRIORITIES (Corporate/Dept)	This review relates to the Corporate Priorities 2011/12 of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United and involved communities: a council that listens and leads • Supporting and protecting people who are most in need
8	REVIEW SPONSOR	Catherine Doran, Corporate Director Children's Services
9	ACCOUNTABLE MANAGER	Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny
10	SUPPORT OFFICER	Nahreen Matlib, Senior Professional Scrutiny
11	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	Scrutiny Team
12	EXTERNAL INPUT	<p>The input of the following may be gauged through the course of the review:</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people, for example through the Youth Parliament, Young Voices, Youth Takeover Day Volunteers, Ignite, National Citizen Service Programme, voluntary/youth and faith groups, school councils, colleges, and young people's sports/leisure clubs • Youth workers • Headteachers, teaching staff and support staff in schools • Staff within other children's settings e.g. children's centres, extended school services, youth centres • Relevant corporate director(s) • Relevant portfolio holder(s) • Harrow Association of Governing Bodies • Other local authorities <p>Partner agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harrow Colleges • Harrow Police • Harrow Primary Care Trust • North West London Hospitals Trust <p>Experts/advisers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisor from SACRE • Representative interest groups • Centre for Public Scrutiny • Academic experts • Public policy think tanks
13	METHODOLOGY	<p>The review could gather evidence using a range of methods including written evidence, oral evidence, research, questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, presentations, questioning senior managers and members, inspections, site visits, expert witnesses, public meetings etc.</p> <p>The review will be a light touch review taking evidence at a number of meetings and lasting a few months. A light touch review could explore issues through workstreams e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement initiatives and methods of dialogue between the Council and young people

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting citizenship and participation in civic life – including using council services • Volunteering and inter-generational opportunities • The role of schools in promoting participation <p>Suggested stages for the review are: Identify current policies/practices, examine how performance matches policies, benchmark against other authorities, identify issues arising, seek external input, determine how to inform policies.</p>
14	EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS	<p>The review will consider during the course of its work, how equality implications have been taken into account in current policy and practice and consider the possible implications of any changes it recommends.</p> <p>In carrying out the review, the review group will also need to consider its own practices and how it can facilitate all relevant stakeholders in the borough to have their voices heard.</p>
15	ASSUMPTIONS/ CONSTRAINTS	<p>The review will require a long-term commitment from members and officers.</p> <p>Success will depend upon the ability and willingness of officers, partners and stakeholders (as relevant) to participate and contribute fully in this review.</p>
16	SECTION 17 IMPLICATIONS	<p>The review will have regard to the possible community safety implications of any recommended changes to policy or practice.</p>
17	TIMESCALE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping – July 2011 • Initial desktop research – Summer 2011 • Evidence gathering and review group meetings – Autumn 2011 • Final report to O&S for onward transmission to Cabinet – late 2011 / early 2012
18	RESOURCE COMMITMENTS	<p>To be met from existing scrutiny budget. No significant additional expenditure is anticipated.</p>
19	REPORT AUTHOR	<p>Nahreen Matlib, as advised by the review group.</p>
20	REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS	<p>Outline of formal reporting process:</p> <p>To Corporate Director [✓] throughout the course of the review and when developing recommendations</p> <p>To Portfolio Holder [✓] as a witness in the review and when developing recommendations</p> <p>To CSB [✓] to be confirmed</p> <p>To O&S [✓] late 2011 / early 2012</p> <p>To Cabinet [✓] late 2011 / early 2012</p>
21	FOLLOW UP ARRANGEMENTS (proposals)	<p>Monitoring by the Performance and Finance Sub-Committee after six months.</p>

APPENDIX E: CURRENT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES BY HARROW COUNCIL

Harrow's engagement with young people is broad and covers many different groups of young people. Much of this is led by Children's Services:

Harrow Youth Parliament - Harrow Youth Parliament (HYP) is a group of 68 elected young people from high schools, colleges, youth groups and faith groups in Harrow. It is the recognised voice of young people for consultations with the Council, Police and the NHS. The HYP is split into 4 key sub groups: Communities; Planning; Health; and Crime and Safety. These sub-groups work together to improve their specific areas and are available to liaise with their council counter parts. As part of its remit, the HYP also works on projects that will help young people in Harrow. About 12,300 young people voted in February's youth general election. The HYP has an annually elected Chair and Deputy Chair who champion young people around Harrow.

UK Youth Parliament - Four young people on the HYP also represent Harrow on a national level, as Harrow's Members of UK Youth Parliament (UKYP). Launched in 1999 and run by young people for young people (11-18 years), this enables young people to use their energy, passion and voice to bring about social change. UKYP gives the young people of the UK a powerful voice which is heard and listened to by local and national government, providers of services for young people and other agencies who have an interest in the views and needs of young people. Each Local Education Authority in England represents a UKYP constituency and elections take place each year. MYPs are usually elected in annual youth elections throughout the UK, with any young person aged 11-18 eligible to stand or vote. In the past two years one million young people have voted in UK Youth Parliament elections. Once elected MYPs organise events and projects, run campaigns and influence decision makers on the issues which matter most to young people.

School councils – each school has a council body of pupils who are consulted about school issues and provide a young person's reference point.

Wealdstone Youth Centre – Harrow's sole remaining youth centre provides a range of services for local young people. It is based at the Healthy Living Centre in the centre of Wealdstone. The Detached Team operates out of this centre. Registered membership at the centre is in excess of 150 young people, all having been required to re-register over the last couple of months. The staff report that numbers continue to be particularly good on Wednesday and Friday evenings and this is significant as these were the times showing higher levels of anti-social behaviour in the vicinity and therefore the need to raise the profile of the positive activities taking place inside. Interestingly, there are noticeably more girls, which suggests they feel safer in Wealdstone at the present time.

Harrowyouth.co.uk - Launched in 2009, this website used to get about 10,000 hits per week, as verified by the external contractor supporting and monitoring the site, however for technical reasons it could not be linked to the council website. In our focus group with young people about the council's conversation tools (as detailed in the next section) we discussed in depth young people's feedback on this website.

That magazine – Produced by the council, each issue of this magazine aimed at young people cost about £3,000 per edition to produce. As it was distributed internally, distribution costs were low and about 10,000-15,000 copies of each edition were distributed in all schools, youth clubs and libraries. The magazine is no longer produced as it was scrapped as part of the recent youth service cuts, the last edition being published in summer 2010. The magazine was also discussed in our focus group on the council's conversation tools.

Apprenticeships - Apprenticeships were launched in 2008/09. Harrow became a pilot through the 'V' organisation operating V-Talent for 2 years, with 32 young people completing the course. In addition Future Jobs Fund benefitted a further 40 young people. The funding for both of these schemes ceased in 2011 although some previous volunteers have continued to work within the council. Through Harrow into Work Harrow College provided 56 training and work placements for young people in retail. The council is now establishing a pilot apprenticeship scheme and is looking to introduce a sustainable procurement policy which requires providers to build apprenticeships into the tender process.

National Citizens Service - The National Citizens Service started this year and has been taken on by V. Harrow is a pilot and has targeted specific 'at risk' groups of young people – children looked after, those not in education, employment or training and known individuals in Wealdstone who are of concern. There are 15 in this cohort and V will run another two projects for 2011/12. It is intended that the current cohort will mentor the next double cohort.

Holiday schemes – in recent years holiday programmes such as Summer Arts, Summer Uni, Kickz and the Wealdstone Drop-In were all run for young people, following consultation with the Harrow Youth Parliament.

Cedars Youth and Community Centre - Having secured a £4.2m capital grant from the Department of Education, Watford FC Community Trust in partnership with Harrow Council are developing a new youth and community centre. This represents a total rebuild of the site and regeneration of the area. The focus of the centre will be on sport and learning, with facilities including an indoor sports hall, astro sports pitch, gym, social space, café, dance studio and music mixing room. The new centre is due to open in spring 2012. Its long term success will depend on positive engagement with young people in its development as well as future operation and vision. The centre will also bring in the voluntary sector with for example Kids Can Achieve moving offices next door so that services can be based where support or the client based is most concentrated.

Consultations - Young people have been engaged over community decisions and Harrow's Youth Question Times were seen as a positive event albeit somewhat limited in their impact as standalone events. Harrow has run 4 youth question times between 2009 and 2011, with the most recent on the theme of academies. These all took place in the Council Chamber with an expert panel and each had about 80 young people, with each event drawing in a different audience. A stakeholder said that Harrow should not "compartmentalise young people's issues" and that they should be "valued as part of the whole community, not just theirs".

Recruitment - Children and young people have been involved in recruiting about 6 members of council staff including recently the Corporate Director of Children's Services.

For a period of time in 2009/2010 there was a cohort of young people trained in recruitment and selection procedures who worked alongside the formal Council process. About 6 staff were appointed with the assistance of the youth panel, including the Corporate Director of Children's. Timing was always a challenge as the young people were mostly occupied during the day with school or college. With so little new recruitment taking place at the current time, the trained young people have moved on. More recently, most appointments have been followed internal processes not suited to external panel members. However, there are discussions with young people and the HYP going forward about both their involvement in staff recruitment and with the wider commissioning process.

Youth Takeover Day - a number of young people participate in Youth Takeover Day every year, shadowing council officers and members. There have so far been 3 take-over days, averaging about 25 young participants each time and a similar number of council officers and officials, including the Chief Executive and the Mayor. The aim is to give the young people a taste of the work done by the Council and then at the end of the day to share their experience with each other.

Shadowing Portfolio Holders - Portfolio holders have regular engagement with young people both formally through the HYP and the Beyond Limits group of Young People Looked After (closely linked to the Corporate Parenting Panel) and informally at the considerable number of events and celebrations they attend with young people. Shadowing opportunities are more limited although, young people have attended some of the regular fortnightly meetings between the Corporate Director and portfolio holders.

Joint patrols – youth workers, police, young people. As a response to the recent riots across London, Harrow partners had joint patrols in town centres throughout the school holidays.

On the street engagement - The council's Detached Team and voluntary organisation Ignite have been working together for three years. The street-based programme helps identify issues and problem solve with young people. The aim of the Detached Team is to work jointly with the police and to divert young people from crime and anti-social behaviour, either through constructive engagement in the activities of the centre, or to discourage them from 'hanging around the area' or where necessary to invoke the police powers under the dispersal zone and forcibly remove them from the locality. The team are not a permanent group, but are the centre staff plus a backup set of trained staff who can be called upon when problems arise. The Detached Team sit on a lot of intelligence and this should feed into policy-making.

Children in Care Council – Harrow's Children in Care Council 'Beyond Limits' meets regularly to discuss issues and concerns that are important to children looked after (CLA) or young people leaving care. The group's aim is to provide a voice for all children and young people in care in Harrow so that there are better outcomes for all looked after young people in Harrow. It also works closely with the Harrow Youth Parliament, to ensure that the young people participate in relevant projects. The group, supported by a council officer, developed Harrow's Children's Pledge which sets out the priority areas that will help make the

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lives of CLA better and easier. Members of Beyond Limits launched this pledge in January 2011 to councillors and received very positive feedback. Many teams will be involved in making these pledges happen – from Children’s Services to Housing and Health. Progress on the Pledge will be monitored through the Corporate Parenting Panel, of which Beyond Limits also attend.

APPENDIX F: SURVEY OF YOUNG PEOPLE

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE Survey of young people - October 2011

Background

Most young people do not view the council or local politics as important or relevant to their daily lives, with less than a quarter of 11-16 year olds (nationally) feeling they have a say in the world around them and the services aimed at them. Research for the Local Government Association in 2010 shows that less than a quarter of 11-16 year olds believe that their local councillor is the best person to approach in order to change something in their community.

Why is it important to engage young people?

Firstly because involving young people creates better policy, is more likely to meet their needs, and therefore more likely to work in practice when supporting young people. Secondly because the involvement of a greater and more diverse community creates better policy, informs key spending decisions and improves relationships between the council and residents, making the council more accountable to the people it serves.

Given the opportunity, young people are as capable as any other demographic group of considering important social issues affecting the community and putting forward solutions. It is vital the council takes notice of what this generation is saying so that it can build a stronger community in Harrow built in part on the important contribution that young people can make.

Scrutiny review on engaging young people

The council's scrutiny review - including its conversations with young people and evidence gathering campaign - is just one way to kick start a new approach to involving young people more in what the council does and decides, and put forward new ideas about what a new, more direct, engagement model could look like that the council could adopt in the months ahead.

The session with young people at Wealdstone Youth Centre on 12 October and the review's evidence gathering aims to explore:

- Young people's perception of and interest in what the council does
- What the council and elected members mean to young people
- Whether young people want their opinions and ideas to matter
- How young people want their ideas to make a difference to council services
- What young people would like to change about the council and their community
- What puts young people off having their say
- What would motivate young people to give their opinions to the council
- How young people would like to be approached by the council, identifying the best communication routes the council should use to give young people more say in decisions
- Is volunteering – as a ladder of opportunity to work – important to young people
- Do young people know what volunteering is
- Would young people like the council to offer volunteering opportunities to young people

At the session we hope to coordinate a discussion that takes young people through a journey of what happens when people give their opinions to the council including how people's ideas impact on policy and spending decisions. Underpinning this discussion will be the theme '**voice is power**'. We also hope to discuss the importance of young people having their say because they are just as capable as any other demographic group of considering social problems – including how the council spends its money and delivers services. Underpinning this discussion will be the

theme ‘**young equals**’. Importantly, we also need to get young people’s ideas on what this review should look at and aim to achieve at the end if it is going to make a difference to helping young people have more of a say in future. Underpinning this discussion will be the theme ‘**count me in**’.

The survey

Young person’s information (optional)

Age	Gender
Ethnic background	Area you live in
Name and contact details (email/telephone) So we can contact you again with findings/recommendations of the review	

A. What do you think of the council - perceptions

The council

- What do you think is the main purpose of the council? What does the council mean to you?

- Are you interested in what the council is doing?
 - Yes / Why?
 - No / Why not?

Engagement

- How well do you think the council engages with young people?
 - Very well
 - Fairly well
 - Not very well
 - Not at all well
 - Don't know
- How do you think the council should change the way it communicates with young people to be more successful?

- How, if at all, would you like the council to engage with you?
 - Face-to-face
 - Consultation surveys
 - Social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter
 - Other
 - Don't want the council to engage with me
- What puts young people off giving the council their opinions?

- What would motivate young people to give their opinions to the council?

Any other comments:

B. Getting involved in decisions and influencing policy development

Local democracy

- What does local democracy mean to you? Where do you learn about it?
- Is it important to you that young people's opinions influence local plans and decisions?
- How can young people influence local decisions? How effective are these in making a difference at the council?
- Do you think the council considers young people's views when making decisions?
 - Yes / Why?
 - No / Why not?
- Have you ever been involved in decisions made by the council?
 - Yes / Which
 - No
- What is the role of a local councillor?

Politics

- Does politics interest you?
 - Very much
 - Quite a bit
 - A little
 - Not at all
- What do you think stops young people getting involved in politics?

Active involvement

- Which, if any, have you personally taken part in?
 - Voting (in school for youth parliament, school council or for local/national government)
 - Encouraging others to vote
 - Contributing to campaigns
 - Volunteering for a candidate or political organisation - canvassing
 - Protesting
 - Email petition
 - Written petition
 - Boycotting
 - Other
- If you could influence just one policy decision, what would that be?
- If you could change just one thing about Harrow, what would that be?

Any other comments:

C. Taking part in the community - community participation

Volunteering

- What do you think is the role of a community volunteer?

- Is volunteering important to you?
 - Yes / Why?
 - No / Why not?

- Do you volunteer at the moment?
 - Yes / Why?
 - No / Why not?

- Would you be interested in volunteering to play a more active role in the local community?
 - Yes
 - No / Would anything else encourage you to volunteer?

- Would you and your friends like to do more volunteering with the council's help? Or with your school's help?
 - Yes / Council or School? / What type of volunteering activity would interest you?
 - No

Community activity

- Which, if any, have you personally taken part in?
 - Volunteering at school or for an organisation
 - Active membership in a group or association
 - Organising a fundraising event for charity
 - Participating in a fundraising event
 - Taking part in a sponsored event
 - Giving your unpaid time to help people in need in your community
 - Writing to a local newspaper/magazine/radio
 - Taking part in a local consultation or forum

Any other comments:

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this survey – please return it to Wealdstone Youth Centre or to Nahreen Matlib, Scrutiny Team, Harrow Council, PO Box 57, Civic Centre, Harrow HA1 2XF. If you would like more copies of the survey, please email Nahreen at: nahreen.matlib@harrow.gov.uk

APPENDIX G: Results of Residents' Survey – November 2011

We placed a number of questions in the Residents' Panel Survey in November to gather further views from residents across the borough. The Residents Panel consists of over 1,200 residents who have agreed to give their views on questions posed by the council and its partner organisations. The panel is a sample of Harrow residents from the over-18 population, representative by age, ethnicity, gender, geographical spread and employment status. About three or four surveys are run a year.

We asked the following questions in the survey:

1. Does the council consider the views of young people enough when making decisions?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
2. How important is it to value and learn from young people's ideas about the council and community, especially given the unique pressures they face?
 - a. Very unimportant
 - b. Unimportant
 - c. In between
 - d. Important
 - e. Very important
3. How should the council learn from and engage with young people?
 - a. Regular meetings with decision makers
 - b. Going out to young people and asking them
 - c. Through the media e.g. web, Facebook, flyers
4. Should young people volunteer as a way to contribute to community and gain employment skills?

675 residents responded to the survey from across the borough (with most respondents in the 50-years plus age brackets).

APPENDIX H: BETTER TOGETHER RESEARCH BY POPULUS – SPRING 2010

There is a growing recognition that achieving major policy outcomes requires greater engagement and participation from citizens than traditional ways of delivering public services - as government cannot make the step-change alone. The current financial climate has added impetus to looking for alternative ways to improve outputs while not increasing spending. As part of the council's Better Deal for Residents Programme³⁷, a workstream explored in depth resident behaviour – this was called Better Together.

The Council commissioned Populus to undertake the research to provide an understanding of how behaviour change programmes can shift resident behaviour, develop business cases for a limited number of initiatives, provide an evaluation framework and a view on the councils' readiness to implement a behaviour change programme. The research included interviews with key stakeholders, 10 focus groups with Harrow residents representing all 'samples' of the borough, two round-table discussions with Council staff and a telephone survey of 1,000 Harrow residents. The focus groups looked at how residents currently perceive Council services, current behaviours and attitudes and included one focus group of young people (aged 13-17) recruited from the HYP. This work reported in early 2010 and provides this review with useful perspectives from the older generations, as well as a small cohort of young people.

In all of the focus groups, Populus found that people were sceptical and suspicious about the motives for various initiatives. There was a lack of existing 'community spirit' and this would make it difficult to immediately implement initiatives which involve residents giving their time and sharing the burden. Interestingly, broadly speaking it was the Asian community, and others who felt they had an identifiable community, who expressed most willingness to be involved in civic initiatives. In the focus groups, the suggestion of initiatives where residents play a part were greeted with 'we pay our taxes' and 'that's the Council's job'. Therefore it is Populus' recommendation that the Better Together programme be introduced as a collaborative process, with residents taking part in decision-making and implementation (co-decision and co-production).

Populus brought together their research findings in Harrow with insights from behaviour change methodology to make recommendations on a number of business cases chosen by the Council. Most probably the most relevant of these in terms of the responses they elicited from the young people sampled is the work around antisocial behaviour.

Statistics show that fear of crime is more of a problem in Harrow than actual crime. The focus groups highlighted that all social groups and ages – including children – felt intimidated by 'gangs' of youths hanging around the streets. This did not necessarily mean that young people were behaving badly but rather that their congregating was perceived as threatening. All focus groups thought that there needed to be more for young people to do and better places for them to go – and that young people should be consulted on what activities/facilities they would find attractive.

One idea to keep young people from the streets was to encourage more residents to volunteer to help run extra activities/clubs for young people. Overall 28% of the 1,000 residents interviewed by telephone said they would be willing to volunteer to run youth groups. Willingness was linked to age with the most willing being the youngest adults (18-24 years) with just over half saying they would get involved. This dropped with each age group to 12% for those in the 65+ age group.

Residents' focus groups showed an overwhelming response that providing diversionary activities such as youth clubs would serve to reduce anti-social behaviour. However there was scepticism about initiatives that bring together older and young people to try to create more understanding, as they thought that in London there is very little community to this upon. In staff focus groups, staff said that the Council should do more to promote better understanding between the generations in Harrow, as misunderstanding made many residents think worse of other people than they needed to, but they accepted that it would be difficult to achieve. Staff shared residents' views that young people had little to do - although the Youth Service and HYP did offer some activities, most felt there was little else in the form of structured activities.

³⁷ The Better Deal for Residents Programme is a transformation programme which seeks to create "a vibrant civic culture in the Borough with residents participating in decisions, taking responsibility for assets and behaving in ways that improve personal quality of life, build social capital, sustainability, and prevent increases in calls from the public purse."

APPENDIX I: EVIDENCE FROM THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE 2010-2012

The Education Committee has been considering services for young people³⁸ for its 2010-2012 session and its report last October welcomed the Government's agreement with the committee's conclusion that "the research evidence for effective youth services is weak". However robust and comparable evidence is needed as a base for local commissioning. Local commissioners need to base decisions on robust analysis of local needs informed by young people and an understanding of what exists for local young people, in order to invest public funds to support services for young people. Key consideration should be given to quality of services and value added by outcomes rather than the numbers of young people reached.

The Education Committee assert that "Various government initiatives from 1939 onwards have aspired to create a universal offer of youth services of all young people, principally delivered through local authorities. Yet...in reality youth services have never reached anything like 100% of young people." While the Government and the Education Committee are agreed that the most effective response to social issues is through a mix of open-access and targeted approaches, the committee disagree with the Government's position that the primary position of public services for young people should be to work with the at-risk minority. This is at odds with the committee's conclusion that such services should not be solely to divert young people from misbehaviour but rather to offer positive activities and enrich personal and social experiences.

The Government agrees that it is not a realistic aspiration for local authorities to reach all young people. And given the closing resource envelope around youth services, this aspiration must seem even further distanced from reality today.

The committee quoted that spending on youth services (for those aged 13 to 19) equates to £350m per year, or around £77 per young person, although this does not include the additional funding streams available. From April 2011, the majority of funding streams for young people have been pooled within the Early Intervention Grant (EIG) from which, plus the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and other sources, local authorities have the freedom to decide how to spend on services for young people. Youth services are not immune to the current public spending cuts and cuts to local authority youth services range from 20% to 100% in some areas, according to committee research, necessitated by cuts to the EIG and RSG.

³⁸ Services for Young People: the Government response, House of Commons Education Committee, October 2011

APPENDIX J: ‘EQUIPPED TO ENGAGE?’ – LGIU SURVEY OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES, APRIL 2011

In April 2011, the LGIU published findings of their survey ‘Equipped to Engage?’ – a national survey of over 130 local authorities. This gave an insight into how ready services for young people are to engaging with social media for youth engagement.

Key findings were:

- Less than half of organisations actively use social media tools like Facebook (40%), Twitter (30%), Flickr (21%) and Skype (4%) in their work
- Only 25% of organisations are using social media in youth work.
- There continues to be gaps in policy frameworks, training and support meaning that many services are not taking advantage of social media as a two-way communication and engagement tool.
- Social networking sites remain blocked in around half of all local authorities – 25% offer training on social media and 20% have clear policies on using social media for youth engagement.
- While organisations see the importance of social media, there is a range of development needs that need addressing before the full benefits can be realised.

In terms of the use of social media, youth engagement is the most popular focus alongside using it for communicating with service users and engagement, consultation and participation. The three key barriers that the survey identifies to social media use is:

- A lack of understanding by officers and managers is the most significant barrier
- Fear of technology and out of date IT equipment
- Risk aversion, limits on time and capacity, and an absence of policies
- A perception among managers or councillors that social media could only be used to engage ‘a select few’ – something not borne out by youth engagement statistics on how many young people use social media, spaces, and the experience of practitioners using social media for youth engagement.

The drivers to use social media include its cost-effectiveness, its value in engaging with specific groups, its broadcast ability to be used to get messages out as well as its conversational value, and lastly the increasing demand for social media engagement from service users.

APPENDIX K: HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM COUNCIL'S DEVELOPMENT AREAS FOR YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Hammersmith and Fulham has a number of development areas which have been identified by the stakeholder group for children and young people's involvement:

1. Develop a set of minimum standards or checklist for the principles and an accompanying training pack for professionals.
2. Develop a pledge to children and young people, agreed by staff, managers and elected members.
3. Develop a consistent incentive package, reward and accreditation system for children and young people's involvement, including a clear progression route and links to additional voluntary and employment opportunities. .
4. Increase the use of social media sites to communicate with existing groups, promote activities and opportunities and to develop new participation opportunities.
5. Develop a framework for young people's involvement in the commissioning cycle.
6. Establish of a standard mechanism for feedback for children and young people.
7. Develop young people's representation at senior and strategic meetings including the Children's Trust Board, and develop mechanisms to enable children and young people to engage with Members.
8. Ensure that youth involvement opportunities are accessible to and representative of all young people in the borough.

APPENDIX L: LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS RESEARCH ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S USE OF THE INTERNET

Academic research³⁹ by the London School of Economics examined how young people participate and how the internet can be used to facilitate this makes some of the following recommendations:

- In general, research supports the view that young people are mostly alienated, or at least disconnected, from traditional forms of politics and civic participation.
- The feeling also derived from respondents' actual experiences of having participated (e.g., in school councils, e-petitions, or demonstrations) are of not having been listened to or not managing to change anything.
- The challenge for all concerned was to find ways of reaching "hard to reach" and disadvantaged young people, those most at risk of exclusion from civil society and politics. The internet has, thus far, not been found to be a particularly good means of doing this, and traditional offline approaches involving youth workers and local youth groups are still the main points of contact for economically and socially disadvantaged young people.
- The internet appeared to be an important tool for young people who were already engaged in civic or political activities offline with the internet consistently presented as a major hub for political activities.
- The internet seems to be regarded by a number of civic and political organisations as an inexpensive and effective method of disseminating information and making contact with young people. However, the research suggests that this strategy is by no means always inexpensive or as effective as offline mobilization.
- Several producers pointed out that for a site to be known, considerable thought must be given to marketing and publicity. Most civic website producers have neither the time nor the money to publicise their sites adequately, and hence the core of users remains relatively small.
- Several of the producers interviewed felt that a clear, helpful, but static site that allowed youth to email the organisation was better than offering potentially off-putting or even damaging opportunities for "interaction."
- A majority of civic website producers did not see the internet civic sphere as a replacement for offline civic and political actions but as a complement to them. For many, engagement still begins and ends offline. The internet sustains and contributes to such engagement.

³⁹ Young people, the Internet, and civic participation: an overview of key findings from the CivicWeb Project Banaji, Shakuntala and Buckingham, David (2010) *Young people, the Internet, and civic participation: an overview of key findings from the CivicWeb Project. International journal of learning and media*, 2 (1). pp. 15-24.