

# Young People: Leading Change



department for  
children, schools and families

Unlocking talent



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# Foreword



Young people are capable of great things. In this document we celebrate inspirational examples of young people acting to secure better services, campaigning for change, reaching out to the most vulnerable and bringing people together to promote understanding and build stronger and aspirational communities.

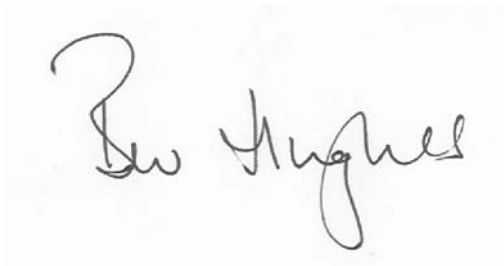
These examples only give a flavour of what young people can achieve when we help them discover and unlock their talents and give them the confidence and opportunities to make a difference.

We want all young people to rise to their potential. Our vision, set out in this document, is for a world where all young people, in particular those who are pushed to the margins by disadvantage, will be recognised and welcomed as leaders of change.

It will not be easy to get there. We know we need to do more to increase the number of opportunities for young people to develop their capacity to lead, as well as provide the intensive support that is necessary to help the most vulnerable young people to succeed.

Making this happen will require working with young people, dedication and investment from Government, as well as a renewed effort from our partners. This document emphasises the real commitment to young leaders which runs from the

heart of Government through our national partners to local community organisations and volunteers. We want to harness this commitment by creating a new national body for youth leadership, supported by significant new funding, which will bring together the best youth leadership organisations and empower them to drive this work forward. We will be discussing our ideas with young people themselves, and our partners at local and national level. We want to hear their views. This document is an important part of that process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Beverley Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B'.

**Rt Hon Beverley Hughes MP**

Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families

# Introduction: leaders of a changing society

Young people are growing up in a diverse society in which their choices and opportunities are increasingly influenced by the power of the global and developing economies as well as issues like climate change, religious difference, migration and new technologies. It is clear that in this changing world our country's most valuable resource will be its people and their ability to lead and influence change.

We know that many young people are concerned by the issues facing society and we are proud of the contribution they have made, for example to the *Make Poverty History* campaign and to the debate on protecting the environment. We believe it is important to encourage and increase opportunities for young people to become active in this way, but this is only part of the picture.

We know that it is often the innovation and talent of young people which drives success in our economic and intellectual sectors. We also see young people as the key to promoting understanding between people from different backgrounds and building consensus between communities. So we need to encourage young people to bring their ambition and energy into the workplace; and we must develop young leaders who can renew society's political and decision-making structures and restore the public's confidence in them.

In short, we need to reach out to and inspire young people, including those who have become marginalised and disaffected by their cultural or economic background and help them develop their talents so that they can become leaders and active participants in society. And we need to act now because young people are not just our future, as this document shows, they are also a crucial part of our present.

# What do we mean by a young leader?

We see young people leading change and making a difference across all areas of society:

**In education:** we see young people shaping ethos and policies through school councils and university governing bodies; and offering their own time, enthusiasm and experience to support the personal development of their peers and younger children.

**In the community:** young people increasingly take the lead on projects to clean up the local environment, encourage intergenerational understanding and promote community cohesion between different ethnic or faith groups, providing personal support to those who need it most.

**In business and enterprise:** successful businesses have always recognised the need to attract and nurture talented young people as future leaders and managers. Innovation and high value-added skills will be the key to taking the opportunities that the global economy will offer Britain. More recently we have seen a flourishing of the third sector, with an increasing number of social and charitable enterprises set up and led by young people themselves.

**In civic society:** young people have always been attracted to issues that interest and affect them but the growth of the internet and digital media has offered today's generation of young people unprecedented access to information and opportunities to set up and become active in campaigns, for example on climate change or human rights. Others continue to take on more formal roles within policy making bodies or by representing young people through youth organisations and civic bodies.

**At home:** we need to recognise and celebrate the incredible contribution made by young carers as well as by the many other young people who take on considerable responsibility within their families. We need to ensure that these inspirational young people do not miss out on leadership opportunities available to their peers.

**And informally:** of course many young people take on leadership roles without going through formal structures or programmes, for example by starting a band with their friends or setting up a 5-a-side football team. We do not want to stifle innovation and creativity or the 'can-do' approach that these young people bring to society, so we need to find ways of nurturing and celebrating their talents alongside those who wish to engage through more formal routes.



# What does quality look like?

## CASE STUDY

### **Kate Lyons 'Change through Peer Power'**

Kate Lyons, 23, created and led a peer education project to change young people's attitudes to climate change. It was run by a group of young people aged between 13 and 23. As Kate says, "It was all peer-powered!"

The young people ran events that they felt would attract and be relevant to their peers; they took a roadshow to music festivals with interactive tools like a pedal-powered smoothie maker, ran their own club nights and held their own festival on Clapham Common.

Kate feels that she took a lot from the project,

"I really enjoyed moving things forward and identifying problems. Sometimes you can finish up talking around stuff and not doing anything. I learnt that I had to encourage the group to work as a whole. Sometimes it can be difficult to keep groups balanced and it's easy to get caught up in your own ideas, rather than incorporating ideas from everywhere, and therefore end up with a project everyone's happy with."

And her advice to young people inspired by this story to act themselves is,

"If anyone else was going to begin a project like this I'd say you have to identify your aims – you must be really clear on what you want to achieve and you must really understand your group."

Kate's project and leadership has been nominated for an award from the Young Achievers Trust.

## CASE STUDY

### **Ataf Sabir 'Radio Ramadhan'**

At the age of 17 Ataf Sabir created a community radio station, Radio Ramadhan, to defuse tension amongst the Muslim population in Dudley which had risen following the attacks on New York in September 2001. Radio Ramadhan was an immediate success; as well as developing the skills of the young people involved, it raised money for local projects and received positive feedback from the local community. Ataf's achievements were celebrated on national radio and he also gave a presentation about his experiences to MPs.

The Radio Ramadhan project was supported by the young people's charity Changemakers and Ataf says that the success of the project was because Changemakers promote:

"a bottom-up approach which means that the communication's good and everyone understands that they have to take ownership of the project, so the success really reflects on the volunteers. We had the freedom to create along with the security of the boundaries and framework they gave us, which meant we were not running around in chaos."

Ataf is now working with Green Light, a non-profit voluntary organisation set up to help empower Muslim young people, promote a better understanding of traditional Islam and build better community relations and believes that he has brought with him a key message from leading the Radio Ramadhan project.

"I learnt that managing effectively means not trying to mould everyone into yourself, but letting them develop their own skills and talents".

## Where are we now?

We are committed to improving outcomes for all young people, and to making sure that they have access to the opportunities and support they need to enable them to succeed in life.

We have already made an unprecedented investment in programmes to empower young people and it is now hard to find a community where inspirational professionals and volunteers have not helped young people to unlock talents they did not know they had and used them to make a positive impact.

In July 2007 we launched *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities*. It builds on the good progress we have made so far, making over 50 commitments aimed at empowering young people and giving them access to more leisure time opportunities, activities and support services. Amounting to an investment of over £670 million in services and positive activities for young people over the next three years, the commitments include:

- the expansion of the Youth Opportunity Fund and continuation of the Youth Capital Fund to give more young people control of budgets and decision-making about positive activities and facilities. Over 9,000 young people have already been involved in decision making on these funds;
- investment in established schemes such as Positive Activities for Young People and Youth Inclusion Programmes, which re-engage the most disaffected young people through structured positive activities that help build their confidence and skills;
- support for third sector organisations that have developed effective approaches to empowering young people to engage their peers and work together to influence local services;

- investment in third sector organisations that support young people to set up their own social enterprises to provide positive activities to other young people; and
- unprecedented plans for new and improved youth facilities, with additional money announced in the *Children's Plan* to create a total new investment of around £200 million. Young people will actively participate in the design, use and governance of these facilities.

In 2007 we introduced new legislation which for the first time requires local authorities to take young people's views on the positive activities available in their area – including leadership opportunities – and to take account of what they say. But in *Aiming high* we went further and set out our long term aspiration that, by 2018, young people could actively shape decisions on 25 per cent of Local Authorities' budgets for positive activities. Applying this approach to youth service spending alone would amount to over £100 million across England being devolved to young people's control.

Alongside *Aiming high* and following the white paper '*Care Matters: time for change*', we committed to fund local authorities to develop Children in Care Councils to ensure that children and young people in care can shape and influence the services they receive, and develop skills in doing so.

Leadership opportunities in education are now widespread with citizenship a compulsory part of the National Curriculum since 2002, providing students with opportunities to play active roles within the life of their communities. Over 90% of secondary schools develop pupils' entrepreneurial skills through the provision of enterprise education at Key Stage 4 and over 95% of schools now have school councils giving pupils real opportunities to lead in developing and influencing school policies.

And through the *Governance of Britain* green paper, which highlighted the importance of engaging young people as citizens so they are able to take an active part in society, we pledged to establish a Youth Citizenship Commission. The Commission will consider how to increase young people's participation in politics; the development of citizenship amongst disadvantaged groups; how active citizenship can be promoted through volunteering and community engagement; and how the political system can reflect the communication preferences of young people. It will also consider whether the voting age should be lowered to 16.

Many more leadership opportunities are made possible by the dedication and innovation of our third sector partners and local children and young people's services. Whether in partnership with Government or pursuing their own initiatives they are transforming young people's lives. We believe they deserve to be celebrated:

- The **Jubilee Sailing Trust (JST) Youth Programme** is a unique leadership challenge for 16-25 year olds that takes place on one of the JST's two tall ships – the Lord Nelson and the Tenacious. The Youth Leadership members become part of the crew and learn to sail and take part in problem solving and team working activities to develop decision making, leadership and team skills.
- At a national level over 500 young people have been elected to the **UK Youth Parliament (UKYP)**. Run by young people for young people, UKYP provides opportunities for 11-18 year olds to use their energy and passion to bring about social change. Members include young men and women from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds and with physical and learning disabilities.

■ **The Football Association Young Leadership programme**

ran a week long course in 2007 covering a wide range of football disciplines and leadership skills for boys and girls from a variety of backgrounds and abilities. Four of the young leaders attending the course were selected to travel to Malawi to support the International Placement programme and support and run festivals for children in Africa. In February 2008 some of the young leaders joined with previous years to share and discuss ideas for this year's course.

- **Haringey Youth Leadership Programme** is a new initiative from the Peace Alliance which offers an inspirational leadership programme for boys aged 8 or 9 and 14 or 15. The programme is funded by the Haringey Safer Communities Fund and offers young people the chance to take part in a week-long summer camp, develop practical life skills and benefit from after school support, learning and cultural trips, parental support and Saturday school.

- The **TUC Organising Academy** places trainees within one of the TUC's departments or partners and helps them develop the skills of union organisers. The Organising Academy Training programme, supported by Newcastle College, provides organising related training for new and experienced organisers; union officers involved in wider union activity and lay reps and officials. All courses are accredited by the Open College Network and are delivered free of charge.

- Since 2006, the **volunteering charity v** has been working towards its target to engage 1 million new young volunteers, building on the success of Millennium Volunteers. **v** will be investing £75 million from April 2008 to create more volunteering opportunities for young people.

- In 2006, 800 young people, including a large number from disadvantaged backgrounds, took part in residential leadership programmes run by the **Brathay Hall Trust**. 13% of those taking part had a disability.

And there are many other such examples across the country.



## CASE STUDY

### **Cambridgeshire Youth Parliament: empowering disabled young people**

Speaking Up is an award-winning national organisation which helps people of all ages with learning difficulties, physical disabilities and mental ill health to have a voice and create change in their lives. It has set up the Cambridgeshire Youth Parliament, to empower disabled young people to become active citizens by influencing activities, services, and youth strategies in their community.

Sean Anderson, 19, is a young man with learning difficulties who has been elected by his peers to the Parliament. His role is to find out what people with learning difficulties and disabilities think about their services and campaign for positive change.

Sean was really concerned that his local council planned to sell off the only local hydrotherapy pool to developers. He led a campaign to challenge the council's decision, took part in a local debates, met his local Westminster MP to put forward the Parliament's case and with the support of the Parliament team made a petition to the council. After a sustained campaign the decision was reversed and young people are once again enjoying the facility.

Sean comments "I just like to speak up and make things happen for the young people I represent".



## CASE STUDY

### **The Refugee Project: Volunteering and Mentoring**

The Refugee Project, a student-led volunteering project at University College London, was founded in 2007. Students work with refugees and asylum seekers at a refugee centre and help them build confidence and language skills through weekly mentoring and group activities.

Wing Yi Kan, from Hong Kong, first became interested in volunteering after a stint as a Young Envoy for Unicef. She is now part of the leadership team for the Refugee Project.

"I would say doing things with passion is the most important," she says. "A leader's work is to inspire others to work for the common good. Projects can only be sustainable if others are inspired to do the work too. The most difficult thing is retaining volunteers when they are in school. It's so hard to keep the momentum going and the enthusiasm levels up. I think I have a passion for volunteering so that is how I can inspire my volunteers to work as well".

# A ten year vision for youth leadership

Kate, Ataf and the other young people whose achievements we recognise in this document show us how society and young people benefit when we raise our expectations of young people and give them support to rise to the challenge. We want every young person to have the chance to develop leadership skills, the opportunity to make their mark and to have their contribution and talents acknowledged and welcomed in society.

We have already released *Aiming high*, our ten year strategy for positive activities, but think it helpful in responding to the challenges set out by this document to set out a long term vision for youth leadership.

**Our vision is that by 2018 more young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, will be leading action to address the problems faced by other young people and be recognised and welcomed as leaders of change for the benefit of wider society.**

In realising this vision we will expect to see many more young people:

- mentoring and supporting their peers as well as helping vulnerable adults in their communities;
- leading projects which bring together communities divided by cultural difference and prejudice, and using their leadership skills to help them find common ground;
- leading independent campaigns and engaged in fundraising;
- empowered by and working with us to influence policy on a national and international stage;
- helping to tackle disadvantage by leading regeneration projects and home-grown social enterprises; and

- empowered by their local council to take a leading role in shaping the local offer of activities and services for teenagers and leading these activities themselves.



## What are the benefits of youth leadership?

Acting as a leader enables young people to develop new skills and experience, build resilience and confidence and hone their personal vision and values. The best young leaders combine creativity with analytical skills, can communicate their ideas clearly and engage supporters of different ages and social and cultural backgrounds, where necessary overcoming barriers and prejudice to do so. Taking on the responsibility of a leadership role can reinforce a young person's connection with and value in society and reduce disaffection and disengagement. It can improve academic achievement as well as help to prepare young people for the workplace.

But these benefits are not limited to young people who take on formal leadership roles. As professionals working with young people will know, and as we acknowledged through *Aiming high*, the personal and social skills which enable effective leadership are the same as those that all young people require to make effective choices and to resist negative peer-pressure in their daily lives. We can see young people employing these skills in their interactions with peers and as they take on greater responsibility within their families, in school and at work. It is clear that developing these skills is fundamental to young people's successful transition to adulthood.

There are also wider benefits. Young leaders can act as positive role models for their peers, providing them with encouragement and inspiration to unlock their own talents. As trusted mentors they can reach out and re-engage young people who have become disaffected, so that they are less likely to be drawn into criminal or dangerous activities. And we know from the success of the Youth Opportunity Fund that empowering young people

to influence the way local authorities plan and deliver positive activities makes it much more likely that they will provide young people in their area with things they actually want to do and places they really want to go to.

But young leaders can do much more than help their peers. With the right encouragement and support they can be a powerful force for change, bringing energy and new ideas to strengthen communities and re-invigorate commercial and charitable organisations and political systems. So by supporting young leaders we help to build intergenerational understanding and community cohesion and by backing the talent of young people produce a more creative and enterprising workforce – issues which affect the whole of society.

So we face a challenge on two levels: we need to give every young person the opportunity and support they need to develop their personal and social skills, so that they can achieve their full potential. And because today's young people will be tomorrow's decision-makers and political leaders who will bridge the gap between generations and communities, we also need to harness this potential to nurture more young leaders, who can make a difference to society now and in the future.

## CASE STUDY

### The Respect Campaign

In 2006, as part of the Respect Campaign, led by the British Youth Council and YouthNet, Mohammed Iqbal led the group of young people that compiled and launched 'Respect? The Voice Behind the Hood'. The report made recommendations to politicians and the media on how they could build better relationships with young people.

The report was well received and Mohammed and the group were asked to present their findings to Ministers as well as senior politicians from other parties.

Mohammed believes that communication is the cornerstone to successful leadership.

"Getting agreement from everyone before you can move forward is challenging. I am still very much developing my leadership skills. To anyone else that was about to do something like this I would say read books about leadership and communication, talk to people who have experience of strong leadership and get their tips. Then start putting them slowly into your own action plan."

Mohammed is now working with an Observer journalist to develop his media skills.

# What makes a youth leadership programme successful?

The Department for Children, Schools and Families, working with Changemakers, has consulted over 40 organisations offering leadership opportunities to young people to identify the key ingredients of a successful youth leadership programme.

**1. Make it real:** leadership opportunities need to be real and relevant to young people. Leadership programmes need to empower young people to influence decisions and lead change. For example, in November 2007 more than 5000 children and young people took over 400 organisations across England for 11 MILLION Takeover Day. Children and young people stepped into the shoes of headteachers, chief executives, council leaders, hospital bosses, police officers and fire chiefs to make decisions, and to shape the future work of organisations and individuals.

**2. Explore values:** to give purpose and relevance to a leadership programme young people must be involved in shaping its vision and values. For example, pupils at Radford Primary School in Coventry developed a new behaviour policy. The group of young people participated in a range of activities and discussions around rights and responsibilities and effective ways of working together such as listening, concentration and respect. The project was supported by ContinYou through its Primary Democracy Project.

**3. Encourage risk:** successful leadership programmes take young people out of their comfort zone, expose them to new ideas and places, encourage them to take risks and give them freedom and support to make and learn from their mistakes. This combination of risk and support is often afforded by programmes which empower young people to control or influence budgets, for example the Big Boost project provided grants of up to £5,000 to young people aged 11-25 to set up innovative and enterprising projects.

**4. Be sustainable:** activities should be sustainable so that young people can carry their leadership skills into adulthood, with clear progression routes and appropriate support at all stages. For example, Clubs for Young People runs a leadership programme that starts with local club members, progressing through county, regional, national and international opportunities.

**5. Recognise success:** recognition and encouragement are crucial and whilst young people don't always need a badge or certificate to motivate them, it is important that they are given opportunities to show and celebrate their achievements. For example, the Young Achievers Trust, known as the 'Oscars' of the youth sector, recognises outstanding youth leadership amongst young people aged 16-25 in the categories of sport, arts and the environment.



**6. Patience is a virtue:** leadership opportunities need to be accessible to all young people, with realistic entry requirements and sufficient flexibility to allow young people to progress at their own pace. For example, Leicestershire Clubs for Young People has been supporting a group of young carers since they were 13 years old. By gradually building relationships and confidence the group has become a highly effective leadership team and recently secured a lottery grant for its work.

**7. Provide role models:** young people's peers exert a powerful influence on their choices. By sharing their experiences young leaders can engage other teenagers and younger children and motivate them to take part for themselves. For example, the Youth Sport Trust has a team of Young Ambassadors, led by Dame Kelly Holmes, to promote sport and lead by example. The Ambassadors are inspirational and highly effective in motivating other young people.



## CASE STUDY

### Emily Cummins 'The Ethical Innovator'

20 year-old Emily Cummins is an inventor and entrepreneur whose latest invention – a sustainable fridge – is set to change the lives of people in the third world. The idea, developed during her self-funded gap year in Africa, was conceived as a solution to help combat global warming.

Emily decided to take refrigerator technology 'back to basics' and create a refrigerator that ran off sustainable energy. By using a medium such as sheep wool, which would hold water, the sun's energy would be strong enough to cause the water to evaporate. She created an inner cylinder to transfer the heat, leaving a completely dry and cold compartment.

As the technology is so simple Emily realised that her sustainable fridge would be perfect for use in the third world; it could be used to keep AIDS drugs and other medicines cool, as well as storing food and water.

Emily said, "The biggest problem I had was coming up with the idea, the problem. Once you find that, you can then start looking at other products, researching and developing."

Emily has received a string of awards, including British Female Innovator of the Year award 2007 and the Diamond Award for Exceptional Creativity at the British Female Inventors and Innovators Awards. In addition, Emily was named the Technology Woman of the Future 2006, and is an Ambassador for the Make Your Mark campaign. She is now developing a second generation refrigerator which can cool to lower temperatures, and has recently visited Africa again where she began to teach people how to produce her first model for themselves.

## CASE STUDY

### Young Advisors

Young Advisors are young people's 'champions' aged 15-21 years. They speak out for their peers, so that local decision makers hear and understand young people's priorities for change in their communities. They help adults, community leaders and agencies improve the way they engage young people in community life and regeneration, having been trained to 'youth proof' policies and practices. They also work directly with young people to encourage them to get involved in regeneration.

Young Advisors is an independent charity set up by the Department of Communities and Local Government to give young people a voice in some of the most disadvantaged communities in Hull, Middlesbrough, Manchester and Brighton. The model has proved to be very successful with 20 schemes now in operation with a further 16 in the pipeline.

Emma Richardson, a Young Advisor, says:

*"Being a Young Advisor has not only taken me to London for the first time ever, but given me the confidence to address local, regional and national meetings on matters affecting my generation. I help local authorities, housing associations and other partners to 'youth proof' their strategies. So now we have a voice at all levels of government."*

# Where are the gaps?

But Kate, Ataf and the thousands of other inspirational young people who take part in these programmes still represent a minority. To realise this vision we will need to address first the barriers that prevent young people, particularly those from disadvantaged and minority groups, from engaging in and benefiting from leadership opportunities.

## **A lack of provision**

In *Aiming high* we identified a need to increase the quantity of positive activities available to young people, particularly young people in the most disadvantaged communities. From our consultation we know that there are similar gaps in provision of leadership opportunities for young people, with many programmes oversubscribed. We know that many third sector organisations struggle to access funding and because of this they can face a real challenge in sustaining opportunities for young people. And whilst we take pride in the many adults who are passionate about supporting young people and give up their time to do so, we need to attract many more volunteers if we are to realise our vision of inspiring all young people to develop their talents.

## **Negative perceptions of young people**

Young people are faced with the challenge of growing up in a culture that views them with negativity and suspicion – adults and the media commonly associate young people with problems such as antisocial behaviour. In this context, young people face particular challenges in being credible in leadership roles or even being given the opportunity to lead in the first place. We need to challenge these perceptions and publicise the

many successes achieved by young leaders so that our future leaders aren't prevented from even starting their leadership journey.

## **Access to support**

We do not underestimate the level of dedicated professional support that the most vulnerable and disaffected young people require in order to raise their aspirations and overcome barriers to access to benefit from leadership opportunities. We know that more needs to be done to ensure that this support is available and well co-ordinated so that young people are supported through initial development of personal and social skills and subsequently to discover their potential talents in more demanding and rewarding leadership roles. We also need to ensure that we celebrate and publicise the achievements of these young people to challenge negative stereotypes. We must also take into account that young carers and young people who need to earn a wage may experience real difficulties in accessing opportunities because they may not have the time to take them up.

## **A lack of coordination**

There is little co-ordination between organisations offering youth leadership programmes, which can inhibit the arrangement of progression or cross-referral between programmes. This can be frustrating for young people, preventing them from building on their achievements and prior learning. It also prevents collaboration and sharing of best practice between organisations.

## **Accessibility and inflexible services**

We know that disabled young people are under-represented in leadership roles and we are committed to addressing this. In increasing opportunities for young leaders we need to make sure we understand and respond to the challenges that can prevent them from participating, which can include a lack of accessible facilities, inappropriate transport and in some cases untrained or unwelcoming staff. And we still have more to do to ensure that leadership opportunities are made available at times that suit young people, at a cost they can afford and in areas where they feel safe.

## **Age of participants**

Unlike many other positive activities, the beneficiaries of leadership programmes are often 18-30 year olds rather than younger children and teenagers. This may be because some leadership activities, such as running businesses and social enterprises can require a full-time commitment that school-age participants would find difficult to make and younger people may be restricted by law from taking up posts such as Directorships. But it is clear to us that unless we open up leadership opportunities to younger children and teenagers we will fail to develop the potential of many teenagers who could make a real impact on society as young adults and act as inspirational role models to other young people.

## **Genuine opportunities to lead**

The first of the key ingredients of a successful youth leadership programme is to 'make it real'. Developing leadership skills is important, but we need young people to value these skills and the best way to achieve this is to make sure that they can see the impact of their work. There are still too many programmes

which give young people an opportunity to explore their leadership skills through simulated situations where they cannot see their actions making a difference in the real world. We need to acknowledge that it is society and not just young people that loses out when this happens. We need to learn from and build on Hear by Right and Act by Right – programmes developed by the National Youth Agency to help organisations open up their decision making processes to young people, and help young people take effective action and make change happen – so that as young people develop leadership skills they also get the chance to use them to make a difference in their own communities and for the benefit of society.



# Meeting the challenges: a new investment in Youth Leadership

*Aiming high for young people* and *The Children's Plan* signify an unprecedented commitment to empowering young people and releasing their potential. And we want to build on these commitments with a response that addresses directly the gaps we have identified in the current offer of leadership opportunities.

In *Aiming high* we committed to establish a youth leadership fund which would support the creation of a new national institute for youth leadership able to build the capacity of third sector organisations, to increase leadership opportunities for young people.

With Changemakers, we are consulting now on the name, form and focus such an organisation for youth leadership should take. Young people themselves, as well as youth sector partners, business and community leaders will help us shape its aspirations and its priorities.

We will expect the new national youth leadership body to be a critical friend to Government, helping youth leadership organisations to speak to us with a single voice and helping us to identify and unlock the barriers to extending opportunities for youth leadership to all young people.

Although the consultation is still underway, we know that:

- The new national youth leadership body will have a budget of two million pounds a year until at least 2011.
- It will consist of one or more of the best youth leadership organisations who will drive change across the sector.



- It will be a virtual organisation – it won't need a building – so all of the money will go directly to young people and youth organisations.

The energy, enthusiasm and expertise of organisations participating in the consultation has been outstanding. The consultation will continue until April and it is already clear that there is a wealth of excellent and exciting ideas for how the new leadership body can achieve its objectives and where its efforts should be focused.

### **Increasing provision: the Youth Leadership Fund**

We know that there are gaps in current provision and that more needs to be done to ensure that existing programmes reach the most disadvantaged young people. Our investment will create more opportunities for young people whose background or circumstances make it hard for them to develop their talents to the full. The funding will be made available to third sector organisations and will be conditional on them using it to improve participation by young people from disadvantaged communities or under-represented groups. We will expect the new leadership body to work with organisations receiving funding to ensure that the new investment builds on the good work already undertaken by local authorities and their partners through the Youth Opportunity Fund and other programmes which empower young people to influence services or spending decisions. A wider benefit of the Youth Leadership Fund will be to create a cohort of positive role models who will inspire and support others to develop their talents.

## **Changing perceptions: a young leaders campaign**

We will launch a national campaign to celebrate the best of youth leadership practice and the achievements of young leaders. The campaign will follow a similar approach to the *Make Your Mark* campaign. It will promote aspirational young role models for other young people to follow and shift perceptions of young leaders in society. The leadership body will use the momentum generated to enlist the support of business and community leaders to increase empowerment opportunities for young people in community schemes and the workplace. The new leadership body will run an annual celebration event to showcase the best of youth leadership.

## **Supporting the most disadvantaged and under-represented**

We have committed through *Aiming high* to focus programmes and resources toward young people who face the greatest risk of negative outcomes, whether due to economic disadvantage, low aspiration, cultural differences or because they require specific or intensive support in order to take part. Overcoming these barriers is fundamental if we are to secure better outcomes for all young people and to unlock the leadership potential of young people from minority communities and other groups currently under-represented in leadership roles. We are clear that the success of our investment should be determined primarily by whether it makes an impact in these communities.

As a first step to achieving this impact, we will charge the new leadership body to support the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Department for Children, Schools and Families in implementing their plans to set up a Muslim Youth Consultative Group. The aim of the group will be to increase the presence of positive young voices in the media;

promote positive role models and mentoring; and build the capacity of young people to counter extremist ideology. We will expect the new leadership body to support this group of young leaders by helping them to develop leadership programmes which appeal to Muslim young people and give them the skills they need to become young leaders in their own right. We will also expect the new leadership body to use its influence and networks to encourage uptake of these programmes by organisations working with young people and communities.

### **Supporting young people's engagement with local councils**

Last year's report from the Councillors' Commission identified a need for local authorities and elected councillors to engage more effectively with young people. The new leadership body will consider, in consultation with the Department of Communities and Local Government, developing and promoting a programme of internships to enable young people to engage with local councillors and help them to understand and value the role of councillors, local government and the democratic process.

### **Promoting leadership in education**

The new leadership body will help the education sector foster young people's ambition and leadership skills. This will support our wider commitment to embed leadership skills within the citizenship curriculum. We will expect the new leadership body to offer advice and encouragement to schools and educational establishments and funding to third sector providers so that together they can offer young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, a greater variety of leadership roles and experiences inside and out of school. This will include supporting the young people and 51 Business and Enterprise

Colleges involved in the ‘Young Chambers’ – a new forum funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families to give young people greater influence over schools’ enterprise education policy – and to encourage other youth leadership organisations to get involved.

## **Challenge and support to Government**

We will expect the new leadership body to offer advice and challenge to Government to help us provide young people with meaningful opportunities to influence policy and strategy and to take on the role of advocate for young leaders on the national and international stage. We will commission from the new leadership body guidance for local authorities which helps them to identify and commission innovative practice from organisations which provide leadership opportunities and develop young people-led approaches across their services, building on the recommendations of *Aiming high*. We will ask the new Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services, which is being set up to identify and disseminate effective practice, to work with the new leadership body to ensure that the importance of youth leadership is embedded in the Centre’s work.

## **Improving pathways for progression**

The new leadership body will use its expertise and influence to stimulate and support collaboration between organisations running youth leadership programmes. A first priority for the new leadership body will be to use these new collaborations to increase and promote progression routes for young people so that they can start from informal and short-term leadership experiences and follow a clear path to more intensive and sophisticated opportunities. Whilst we do not see the new leadership body as a quality assurance organisation, we will

expect it to help partners ensure that their progression routes are targeted on and reach young people from the most disadvantaged communities.

## **Developing new leadership programmes**

We have many examples of effective practice, with many youth organisations, local authorities and other partners offering young people genuine opportunities to lead and influence change. And we now have a clear set of principles which help define the key ingredients of an effective leadership programme. But we also know that to be effective and to attract young people, leadership programmes need to evolve to take account of and reflect changes in young people's social and recreational activities, advances in technology and the emergence of wider issues facing society. We will expect the new leadership body to stimulate and support the development of new engagement programmes and leadership courses which reflect these changes, and use its influence to encourage national and local organisations to adopt them.

## What happens next?

We will continue to work with Changemakers and other stakeholders through March to explore options for the new national body, with the aim of issuing our proposals in early summer 2008.

But we hope that as well as making the case for improving opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills this publication will also encourage more people and stakeholders to get involved in the debate about how to make the best use of our new investment.

We are keen to hear your ideas and any examples of innovative practice in youth leadership, as well as your views on the commitments to engage and empower young people made in *Aiming high*.

To share your thoughts with us please email them to [aiminghigher.youngpeople@dcsg.gov.uk](mailto:aiminghigher.youngpeople@dcsg.gov.uk)





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