

Taking the lead

Youth leadership in theory and practice

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About The Youth of Today

The Youth of Today is a consortium of leading youth organisations working together to increase the quality, quantity and diversity of opportunities for young people as leaders of change in their communities. It has been created to help young people fulfil these roles in an increasingly complex world. Aimed at young people aged 13 to 19, it is funded and supported by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and Communities and Local Government, and is managed by a range of leading organisations, including the British Youth Council, Changemakers, Citizenship Foundation, The National Youth Agency, Prince's Trust, UK Youth Parliament and the Young Foundation.



www.theyouthoftoday.org

About the Young Foundation

The Young Foundation combines creativity and entrepreneurship to tackle major social needs. We work on many different levels to achieve positive social change – including advocacy, research, and policy influence as well as creating new organisations and running practical projects. The Young Foundation benefits from a long history of social research, innovation and practical action by the late Michael Young, once described as “the world’s most successful social entrepreneur”, who created more than 60 ventures which address social needs.

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TAKING THE LEAD: YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Preface

Geoff Mulgan (Director, The Young Foundation) and Fiona Blacke (Chief Executive, The National Youth Agency)

A deepening recession is not a great time for young people. Job opportunities are drying up fast and even graduates with good degrees are struggling. Youth unemployment is rising more quickly than unemployment for any other group and is forecast to exceed 1 million during 2010.

These pressures come on top of other big trends that have weakened young people's position. Much longer transitions to adulthood mean fewer people getting quickly to the top: who could imagine a 24-year-old Prime Minister, as Pitt was two centuries ago? We have observed the professionalisation of many fields of life in just a few short years. And our media increasingly present young people much more often as problems than as problem solvers.

But crises are also opportunities. Young people have the chance to play a leading role in shaping the economy as it emerges out of recession. They can also play a leading role in rebuilding the political system so that it is more trusted and more in tune with public expectations and aspirations.

Indeed, if there is ever a time that young leadership is needed, it is when the old systems are in crisis.

Fortunately, we have good things to build on. For example, young mayors and youth councils are now getting real power, and new and imaginative programmes have sprung up to support young entrepreneurs.

Getting the support and development of young leaders right is vital for the future health of civic life and public organisations. But it has an importance far beyond this: the same skills needed by leaders are needed throughout our society. These include the social and emotional intelligence to understand other people that is turning out to be as important as IQ in explaining who succeeds. They include empathy, building an understanding of the lives of others, and learning to help teams to work together to solve problems.

These are also the skills needed in workplaces – yet too often they are underdeveloped in formal education. However, there is a visible shift of mood, reflected by the fact that all parties are now supporting the idea of some national civic service for young people. The case for building young people's belief in their ability to succeed is supported by a large and growing evidence base that shows these skills are as important, if not more so, than literacy and numeracy to life chances.

Over the next two years, The Young Foundation and The National Youth Agency, together with five of the UK's other leading youth organisations, will be working on a major initiative: The Youth of Today. The initiative, funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Communities and Local Government, aims to increase the quality, quantity and diversity of opportunities for young people as leaders of change in their communities.

As a part of this work, The Young Foundation will be leading research into global best practice in youth leadership, seeking innovative ideas and disseminating our learning to improve provision in the UK and internationally. This report lays a foundation for our work, providing insights into leadership-thinking and early examples of good practice. We hope that it will fuel a lively conversation, and help to ensure that many more young people take on leadership roles and put their energy and passion into the service of others.

Executive Summary

This report was produced as part of a broader programme of work being delivered by The Youth of Today, a consortium of leading youth organisations working together to increase the quality, quantity and diversity of opportunities for young people as leaders of change in their communities. The report explores youth leadership in theory and in practice, investigating the various competing conceptions of youth leadership and different approaches, drawing out lessons from case studies of organisations both in the UK and internationally. Our research reveals much effective, creative and innovative practice, as well as gaps and challenges. The report draws on desk-based research, interviews with practitioners and academics working in the field of leadership, as well as focus groups on and consultations with people involved in youth leadership as ‘programme deliverers’. The key findings include:

- *The nature and meaning of leadership is changing in response to a dramatically changing society, and the rise of complex challenges.* Leadership is increasingly seen as situational and as an inherently collaborative, social and relational activity. Because of this, the social and emotional skills or competencies that foster and build interpersonal relationships – such as relationship management and communication, self-discipline, flexibility, creativity, and emotional intelligence – are crucial. The field of leadership has much to offer in terms of helping build up young people’s skills and capacities in order to make positive contributions to their communities, alongside building their employability skills
- *Providing young people with the opportunity to develop and exercise leadership can have benefits for the individual young person, their peer group and society more broadly.* The emotional and social skills that enable effective leadership have broader significance beyond their potential to prepare young people to take on formal leadership roles; these skills are crucial to young people’s successful transition to adulthood. Additionally, youth leadership can serve as a vehicle for tackling pressing social challenges and catalysing positive social change
- *Unresolved debates on some key issues may impede the development of the field.* These include debates around the relationship between authority and leadership; a reliance on deficit models of youth leadership, and questions surrounding the distinction between ‘youth’ and ‘adult’ leadership respectively; the use of the language of ‘leadership’ among practitioners; and ongoing debates around whether leadership is inherent, versus something that can be developed
- *There is a wide debate around what youth leadership is, and how best to develop young people’s leadership skills.* Based on our research and consultations, we have proposed a definition of youth leadership: ‘Young people empowered to inspire and mobilise themselves and others towards a common purpose, in response to personal and/or social issues and challenges, to effect positive change’
- *While there is no single model for effective practice, there are certain ingredients that are common to successful leadership programmes.* Effective practice includes opportunities that engage young people in challenging action, around issues that reflect their genuine needs and offer authentic opportunities to make decisions and effect change, in an environment of support in which young people can reflect on their experiences. Opportunities should be sustainable to ensure that young people can carry their leadership skills into adulthood, and this should include clear progression routes and appropriate support at all stages

- *Embedding youth leadership into organisational cultures and structures can further promote youth leadership development.* Meaningful power-sharing among adults and young people can, however, be difficult to achieve. ‘Youth-driven’ models of organisation can yield the most comprehensive results, in terms of empowering participants as well as benefits for the organisation – but can be time-consuming and difficult to sustain. Generating organisational commitment to youth-centred structures and processes poses a significant challenge

The report concludes by emphasising the importance of providing safe spaces for young people to explore and practise leadership, thereby building their confidence. We finish by emphasising the importance of encouraging young people to be drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship, and the need for better understanding of how to enable young people to take up these roles.

Part 1

Introduction

Background and context: Addressing new challenges facing young people

Young people in England today are growing up with ideals, expectations, ambitions and talents which are unprecedented, driven by new technology, affluence and globalisation. As a nation, we have an abundance of strong organisations engaged in youth leadership. In recent years, there have been extraordinarily creative experiments, many of them led by young people. However, young people face new kinds of social challenges in a more complex world – a world that is more diverse, with increased pressures on families, greater caring responsibilities (including for the young), more intense pressure from markets, and employability and skills challenges. It is also a time when millions of young people are aware as never before of the scale of the leadership challenges we now face at a global scale – from climate change to ageing to inequality. Many of these challenges and pressures are predicted to increase in scale and intensity as a consequence of the economic downturn. For our nation to succeed, we need to invest in young people's skills and capabilities to act as powerful advocates and agents of change to help society meet these challenges.

Yet, in many communities, talent continues to go to waste: thousands of young people face acute difficulties in making the transition to adulthood, and public perceptions of young people can often be negative, reinforced by unfavourable media portrayals, with young people often being perceived as part of the problem rather than the solution and, at worst, viewed with fear and suspicion. These negative perceptions mask the extraordinarily positive work in which young people are engaged – whether in the private or public sphere (through volunteering, caring, carrying out youth work and a host of other positive activities).

Young people are still denied adequate representation in the places where power is exercised, from Parliament and local councils to businesses and voluntary organisations. Only 0.3% of councillors are under 25¹. Young people from minority ethnic backgrounds face further barriers which also require closer attention (especially in the light of growing challenges around radicalisation and far-right extremism). After the 2005 general election, the average age of an MP was 50.6 years, while just 127 of the 646 MPs are female, and there are only 15 MPs from black and Asian backgrounds². In local government, the position is hardly better: the average age of councillors is 58, and less than 2% are under 30, while 29% of councillors are women³. Many leadership positions – whether in politics, quangos or boards of charities, schools and hospitals – have become increasingly professionalised, thereby making it increasingly difficult for non-professionals and young people to participate in these institutions.

Understanding what kinds of activities and programmes can inspire, motivate and mobilise a new generation of young people to engage in the democratic process and contribute to their community is vital to sustaining a healthy democracy.

A Young Foundation/Carnegie UK Trust report, *Parties for the Public Good*⁴, finds that one of the most crucial roles of political parties in the past was to develop successive generations of leaders, providing them with the skills and confidence to campaign and govern; many young people learned more through party activism than through formal education. This role has atrophied in recent years, in part because of increasing professionalisation in the world of work and political life. Educational qualifications tend now to be the most important determinant of attainment later in life, while the role of judgement and life experience are nowadays given less weight relative to paper qualifications and professionalism. Party politics, aligned as it is to this set of values, has ceased to engage a broad range of young people in its activities, and party leadership has become increasingly less representative – particularly of low-income groups without affluent or politically engaged family and community networks, educational opportunities and political power. The routes that once helped to find and nurture leaders from different backgrounds – such as the trade unions and churches alongside mass political parties – are no longer working. Building the skills and capacities of young people to take up leadership roles in their communities is vital for democracy.

There is also strong evidence supporting the notion of a 'democratic deficit' among young people: notably, young people display low levels of trust in politicians and political institutions and evidence little inclination to join formal political organisations or to get involved in local politics. While young people remain attached to voting as a civic right and responsibility, voting levels among young people are low and are projected to remain so. There is also little evidence that young people are choosing more informal or non-traditional forms of civic and civil participation in large numbers (e.g. participation in activities such as protests, and interest in community issues).^{5, 6}

Beyond the political arena, further pressing challenges are affecting young people. Labour market statistics⁷ show that unemployment for 18- to 24-year-olds was 676,000 in the three months to March 2009, up 60,000 from the three months to December 2008. Youth unemployment is rising more quickly than unemployment for any other group and is forecast to exceed 1 million during 2010⁸. Those under 25 thus appear to be bearing significant pressures as a consequence of the recession.

The social and psychological consequences of youth unemployment are well documented. For example, during the recession of the 1980s, male suicide rates increased dramatically. As David Blanchflower, the influential economist and member of the Bank of England's monetary policy committee who predicted the recession, has said:

"Sustained unemployment while young, especially of long duration, is especially damaging. By preventing labour market entrants from gaining a foothold in employment, sustained youth unemployment may reduce their productivity. Those that suffer youth unemployment tend to have lower incomes and poorer labour market experiences in later decades. Unemployment while young creates permanent scars rather than temporary blemishes."⁹

Not only this, but poor employment outcomes are related to increased criminal activity, reduced health outcomes and lower educational outcomes among offspring.

Unemployment and underemployment are quickly becoming more than a temporary problem, with many young people leaving school, college and university without jobs, or being fired from jobs in the first round of cuts. Many others simply do not have the skills and qualifications that employers want.

Economic woes quickly turn into social challenges. The number of children in custody has increased by 8% between 2005 and 2008¹⁰. As of April 2008, more than 3,000 children were in jail, with further increases expected¹¹. According to *Children and Young People in Custody 2006-2008*¹², one in three young people in prison has a history of care, and 86% of young men have been excluded from schools. This source also cites a disproportionate number of black and minority ethnic young people in custody, with 29% of young men and 23% of young women coming from these backgrounds. Additionally, a quarter of young offenders under 17 have literacy and numeracy levels equal to an average seven-year-old child¹³. This number is higher and increasing among young BME offenders. These statistics and research from the Department for Children, Schools and Families¹⁴ suggest that jobs and education are a critical part of reducing reoffending and preventing anti-social behaviour.

Schools and workplaces are not the only places where young people are facing challenges; young people also have more responsibility in the home and face negative attitudes in society. According to the 2001 census, there are over 175,000 young carers in the UK, with around 13,000 of them caring for more than 50 hours a week. Furthermore, UNICEF's 2008 report¹⁵ on the state of the UK's children noted a "general climate of intolerance and negative public attitudes towards children" in the media and other outlets. Research from the University of Sheffield looking at the sense of belonging to where one lives shows significant drops in all parts of the UK between 1971 and 2001¹⁶.

This report explores the meaning of youth leadership and how providing young people with opportunities to develop and exercise leadership can have a positive impact on young people and their communities, and how youth leadership can serve as a vehicle for tackling pressing social challenges.

The Purpose of The Youth of Today

The Youth of Today is a consortium of leading youth organisations working together to increase the quality, quantity and diversity of opportunities for young people as leaders of change in their communities. It has been created to help young people be leaders of change in an increasingly complex world. Aimed at young people aged 13 to 19, it is funded and supported by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Communities and Local Government, and is managed by a range of leading organisations, including the British Youth Council, Changemakers, Citizenship Foundation, The National Youth Agency, Prince's Trust, UK Youth Parliament and The Young Foundation.

While there is a wealth of writing about leadership, there is a relative lack of information available on youth leadership specifically, and little has been done to capture insights on current best practice and innovative approaches in the UK and internationally. In order to address this gap, the Young Foundation, as part of its work with The Youth of Today will over the next two years map and assess national and international youth leadership approaches, with the aim of identifying effective and promising practice. This publication is the first of three that will capture our ongoing learning and insights in these two years of intensive youth leadership activity by The Youth of Today.

This first report explores youth leadership in theory and in practice, investigating often-competing conceptions of youth leadership and different approaches, and drawing out new lessons from successful case studies of organisations. Our research reveals effective, creative and innovative practice, as well as ongoing gaps and challenges. The report draws on material derived from desk-based research, interviews with leadership experts and academics, and focus groups and consultations with people involved in delivering youth leadership programmes. The document concludes with in-depth case studies of youth leadership initiatives in the UK and internationally.

Learning from established and emerging practice

The case study research involved an in-depth examination of eight initiatives chosen to illuminate both the diversity and commonalities of opportunities and practice. We investigate the community needs that inspired these initiatives; issues of organisational growth and social impact; the 'key ingredients' that make these programmes successful; their common challenges and tactics; creative methods and innovations; and programme sustainability over time. Throughout the report, we draw on the case studies as illustrative examples of good practice in the field of youth leadership. The full case studies are presented in Appendix A (p34).

1. Envision (United Kingdom)
2. Fight for Peace (Brazil and United Kingdom)
3. Groundwork (United States)
4. Muslim Youth Helpline (United Kingdom)
5. Newham Young Mayor and Youth Council (United Kingdom)
6. Otesha (United Kingdom, Canada and Australia)
7. Public Allies (United States)
8. Tower Hamlets Summer University (United Kingdom).

The organisations profiled in this publication are by no means wholly representative of the diverse range of youth leadership organisations and opportunities around the world. However, the participants were chosen to represent some of the diversity in approaches and methodologies to developing leadership skills. There are four major categories we sought to represent when identifying organisations. First, we chose participants based on geography for means of comparison, with the intention to provide, at the very least, a limited geographical spread. While the focus is mainly on the UK, we also looked at programmes across the world, from the United States, Canada, Australia and Brazil. This provides a

snapshot of how other countries are dealing with the question of youth leadership. Second, we chose programmes with differing models for youth involvement and participation in decision-making. Third, our case studies work with, and in some cases target, different cohorts of young people in terms of age, class, religion and background. Fourth, the organisations teach or develop youth leadership in a wide range of contexts: in schools, the community, at the workplace, in political life and through sport and adventure. These four categories have provided us with rich data on how different organisational contexts define, develop and sustain the capacity for a range of young people to gain skills and exhibit leadership qualities.

Part 2

Youth Leadership: What it is and why it matters

The concept of ‘youth leadership’ is difficult to pin down. Leadership literature includes a host of theories investigating leaders, their roles and essential qualities, and whether they are ‘made’ or ‘born’ – and if they are ‘made’, then how to ‘make’ them. Examining *youth* leadership, specifically, adds another layer of complexity, tied as it is in popular conception to other ideas such as youth development, citizenship, youth action and engagement, and participation. This chapter provides a framework for understanding youth leadership, while also drawing attention to shifts in meaning and debates around leadership in general, and youth leadership specifically.

The chapter will also look at the benefits of providing young people with opportunities to develop and exercise their leadership capabilities. We will argue that the skills which enable effective leadership have broader significance beyond their potential to prepare young people to take on formal leadership roles. We show that youth leadership has benefits for the individual young person, their peer group and society more generally. Youth leadership development can thus serve multiple purposes: “It is simultaneously an end in itself, by promoting healthy youth development, and a means to an end, as youth make contributions through their participation.”¹⁷

Drawing from the above analysis, we then present a definition of youth leadership, and define what constitutes effective practice in the field of youth leadership. While recognising that one specific definition may not be ideal in the context of practice, building a conceptual framework of what leadership means and can offer young people is important if we are to be able to assess and inform practice in this area.

Conceptualising leadership

There is considerable debate about the nature and meaning of leadership, and about what skills and attributes are needed in today’s, and future, leaders. In particular, there is a growing shift away from top-down, hierarchical styles of leadership, towards participatory and inclusive leadership styles, which emphasise social and emotional competencies, including self-awareness, collaboration, empathy and relationship-building and the ability to lead through authenticity rather than by authority. Additionally, there is recognition that leaders need a repertoire of different leadership styles for different circumstances.

Interest in leadership increased during the early part of the 20th century. Early leadership theories – such as ‘Great Man’ and ‘Trait’ theories – tended to assume that the capacity for leadership is inherent – i.e. that great leaders are born, rather than made. Later theories – such as ‘Contingency’, ‘Situational’ and ‘Behavioural’ theories – tend to view leadership in less deterministic terms. Broadly, these theories reject the notion that there is a single, optimal profile of a leader, seeing effective leadership as contingent on the situation (See Appendix B – p60 – for an overview of eight major theories of leadership).

Evidence shows that the nature of leadership – including the skills and qualities required for effective leadership – is changing in response to changes in the social world. Research¹⁸ has shown that practising managers believe that the definition of leadership changed dramatically in the last five years and will change even further in the coming five years – with social and emotional skills, collaboration and change management becoming more and more crucial. Numerous commentators have attributed this changing definition to the rise of complex challenges, for which no pre-existing solutions or expertise exists. Leaders’ skills are being challenged by globalisation, technology and the relentless pace of change. As one author notes:

“Today’s leaders are being called upon by necessity to develop responses to complex challenges, brought on by unexpected events and situations. Leaders of the future will have to embrace complexity and the skills needed to harness it.”¹⁹

Increasingly, this complexity will require more collaborative and inter-dependent work. Therefore, the social and emotional skills that foster and build interpersonal relationships are crucial²⁰.

There is a lack of definitional clarity surrounding social and emotional skills (also described as 'competencies') and the terrain is "full of competing and sometimes confusing labels"²¹ – for example, 'soft' skills, or 'non-cognitive' skills. To lend coherence and simplicity, the Young Foundation has suggested the division of these social-emotional competencies into four clusters, making up the acronym SEED:

- 'S' is for social and emotional competencies that include self-awareness, social awareness and social skills
- 'E' is for emotional resilience – the ability to cope with shocks or rebuffs that may be short – or long-term
- 'E' is for enterprise, innovation and creativity – the ability to shape situations, imagine alternatives, remain open to new ideas, problem-solve and work in teams
- 'D' is for discipline – both inner discipline to defer gratification and pursue goals, as well as the ability to cope with external discipline²².

Despite a lack of definitional clarity surrounding social-emotional skills or competencies, there is a consensus around their importance, in the leadership context and more widely. These skills can bring added benefits to the individual – whether in the workplace or through activities in the community.

Research reveals three key strands relating social and emotional skills to leadership development:

Leadership is an inherently collaborative, social and relational activity: Leadership is increasingly understood as a collective capacity, rather than an individual trait:

"Leadership is defined not as what the leader does but rather a process that engenders and is the result of relationships – relationships that focus on the interactions of both leaders and collaborators instead of focusing on only the competencies of leaders."²³

Older models of leadership that privilege a 'Lone Ranger' individual acting alone in decision-making are giving way to ideals of leadership that involve motivation of others and a team-based approach²⁴. This shift in thought is also evident in current work on youth leadership, where there has been a clear paradigm shift from the idea of a leader as a director to an *enabler of effective action*²⁵. This new conception of leadership, shared by most organisations currently working to develop young leaders, is about the relationships of leaders and their collaborators.

Leadership is situational: An emerging focus in leadership-development literature is the successful leader's ability to 'read' situations accurately. This requires self-awareness and self-discipline, both needed for leaders to engage effectively with others in a variety of contexts and environments²⁶.

Emotional intelligence and emotional resonance with others are key capabilities of successful leaders: There is increasing recognition that leaders must be self-aware and aware of the reactions and needs of others. New focus has been placed on the nature and strength of leaders' emotional impact on others. Research has shown, for example, that a leader's emotional resonance with others is a better predictor of effective executive leadership than is general intelligence²⁷.

This focus on leaders' emotional connectedness to others is also apparent in the growing focus, in the last couple of decades, on leaders' genuineness, authenticity, credibility and trustworthiness. These characteristics are related more to the *affective quality* of leaders' relationships with others than to specific leader behaviours and competencies. This has been brought to the fore by increasing public scrutiny of the character and integrity of leaders. A strong case has been made that "character – as defined by qualities like striving for fairness, respecting others, humility and concern for the greater social good – represents the most critical quality of leadership"^{28,29}. Recent literature on leadership – for

example, psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi *Good Business – Leadership, Flow and the Making of Meaning*, and Howard Gardner's *Five Minds for the Future* – stresses this ethical dimension of leadership³⁰.

Interest in charismatic and transformational leaders has been fuelled by the nature and strength of their emotional impact on others. In the past, leadership was conceived of in terms of transactional terms. *Transactional leadership* is characterised by “mutually beneficial exchanges between two parties to optimize mutual benefit”³¹. While this model produces somewhat predictable outcomes, these are generally short-lived. The last two decades have seen an increasing interest in a new type of leadership: *transformational leadership*. Transformational leadership operates through tapping into followers' deeper values and sense of higher purpose, and has been found to lead to higher levels of follower commitment and effort, as well as more enduring change. Transformational leaders “provide compelling visions of a better future and inspire trust through seemingly unshakeable self-confidence and conviction”³². This type of leadership is emphasised in *Confidence: How winning streaks and losing streaks begin and end*, authored by Rosabeth Moss Kanter – internationally-renowned business leader and expert on strategy, innovation and leadership for change.

Effective leadership is, therefore, more than about simply enacting the ‘right’ behaviours – it needs to include a deep awareness of the impact of one's behaviour on others. In turn, leadership development now needs to involve the development of the whole person, stressing self-awareness and balance in life³³. This emphasis – on holistic personal development and self-awareness – is evident in current youth leadership practice: for example, in the philosophy espoused by Public Allies (see Appendix A, p54), a US youth leadership programme, which emphasises that the first step in being a leader is knowing who you are as a person – including an awareness of individual mission, values and character and how those are negotiated with others.

Why youth leadership matters

Youth leadership has benefits for the individual young person, their peer group and society more broadly. By investing in young people's personal development, wider economic opportunities could be created, especially for those in disadvantaged communities. Youth leadership development therefore serves multiple purposes: “It is simultaneously an end in itself, by promoting healthy youth development, and a means to an end, as youth make contributions through their participation.”³⁴

The developmental context: Supporting successful transitions to adulthood

The social and emotional skills which enable effective leadership have broader significance beyond their potential to prepare young people to take on formal leadership roles – developing these skills is fundamental to young people's successful transition to adulthood:

- There is a large body of evidence that highlights good social and emotional skills as factors in improved emotional resilience³⁵
- Research by Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman and others demonstrates with significant statistical results that social and emotional competencies are at least as important as technical skills in determining employability, earnings and career success³⁶
- Research by Blanden, Gregg and Macmillan finds that social and emotional competencies (which they refer to as ‘non-cognitive skills’) play an important role in social mobility, which in turn has a bearing on (in)equality of opportunity³⁷.

There are three key environments in which young people learn and develop these skills: in the family, in the context of their schooling, and through what they do in their leisure time. There is some evidence that poor social and emotional skills are more likely in children from lower socio-economic backgrounds than their better-off peers³⁸, and this group is thus at risk of poorer outcomes³⁹. This may be largely due to the fact that it is disproportionately young people from poorer backgrounds and communities who lack the circumstances through which to develop these skills⁴⁰. More generally, those young people who do not have supportive family environments, who are struggling at school, and who do not participate regularly in constructive activities in their leisure time are also at risk: “Growing up with a combination of

these circumstances can, for a minority of young people, lead to disaffection and at the most extreme, marginalisation from society⁴¹.”

For this reason, nurturing the development of social and emotional skills in young people, particularly those who lack the contexts in which to develop these, is a crucial task. This is by no means impossible or inherently difficult. Paul Schmitz (CEO, Public Allies) noted that the important step in addressing the deficit in social and emotional skills among this group was simply recognising those young people who need extra support, providing it and monitoring their improvement throughout the programme. This simple approach has been highly successful, resulting in an 85-90% graduation rate for participants in the Public Allies programme.

The skills and outcomes implicated in youth leadership development need to be seen in the context of young people’s developmental needs more generally. The areas of development targeted by youth leadership programmes (see Appendix C, p62) – such as belonging and membership, competence and power, and meaningful relationships with others – are critical components of healthy development in adolescence. Young people who have few productive opportunities or positive outlets for establishing a sense of belonging, competence, power, and meaning can “give up and avoid risk because it is easier not to try than to try and fail”⁴² or can seek out potentially damaging alternative routes – for example, seeking to belong through attention-seeking, promiscuous or clinging behaviours, or trying to win respect through aggressive techniques⁴³.

The social and emotional skills that young people develop when they learn and exercise leadership can be key in enabling them to develop this vital self-confidence and motivation towards the future.

The wider social context: Positive contributions to community and society

Youth leadership also has wider benefits beyond the individual young person. Our case studies illustrate that youth leadership also brings benefits to the peer group (by inspiring other young people through setting a positive example), the local community, local community organisations and wider society.

For example, Mohammad Imran (CEO, Muslim Youth Helpline) sees young people as critical to innovation and social change – because their understanding and perspectives are often more flexible than those of older people. Similarly, Lars Læg Reid (Director, Prosjektdesign, Norway) maintains that what makes youth leadership potentially powerful is that young people:

“... look at possibilities in a more refreshed, new and inspiring way than would [older] people. It’s a huge advantage; it feels like it’s the first time the idea has ever been suggested ... You really believe in your ideas, which means often you make your ideas fly – where older leaders may not, because they often can’t get through the mental barrier to trying them. The naïve and the creative elements are the defining aspects of youth leadership.”

Our case studies illustrate that young people have a powerful and vital role to play in addressing today’s pressing challenges. These range from issues around social cohesion, such as intergenerational conflicts and exclusion (see Box 1, p16) to climate change (e.g. Otesha – a programme operating in the UK, Canada and Australia, which inspires and empowers young people to champion environmental sustainability), to street violence (e.g. Fight for Peace – a programme running in Brazil and the UK, which provides young people in marginalised communities with practical alternatives to crime and organised armed violence).

A recent study by The National Youth Agency emphasises that “young people must be integral to the process of building cohesion within communities”⁴⁴. The study points out that young people can be mistrustful of authority and resent solutions that are perceived to be ‘parachuted on them’ and for which they feel no ownership. The study emphasises that young volunteers can be a powerful tool for engaging others, particularly where young people become peer mentors, leaders and mediators. This is what Envision – a youth-empowerment charity showcased in this report – calls the ‘ripple effect’. The Envision programme seeks to provide young people with a powerful and rewarding experience of making a positive difference. Inspired by their experiences, the young people are then both willing and able to continue acting as effective role models for their communities.

Box 1. Case studies: Youth leadership as a vehicle for addressing pressing social challenges

MagicMe: Addressing the intergenerational divide

MagicMe⁴⁵ is a programme in East London that encourages contact between different generations through local initiatives. Susan Langford, its founder, notes that while communities may have become more fragmented than they perhaps used to be, young people and older people have many similarities, one of which is that they spend a significant amount of time in their communities. Bringing these groups of people together, both of whom society often labels as ‘problems’ rather than ‘assets’, is beneficial for both the older and younger people, as well as society more generally.

50FIFTY clothing: Providing real alternatives for excluded youth

Lee Blake, founder of 50FIFTY⁴⁶ and former youth worker, believes in offering young people real alternatives to the offending and drug-dealer lifestyle many excluded youth find themselves drawn into. Blake uses the term ‘back-door exclusion’ in reference to the challenging young people who leave school and ‘disappear’. He notes that schools would rather they leave because of the amount of disturbance they often cause and the time and effort needed to deal with them. He notes that, instead of finding a safety net, excluded youth often find a black hole.

Blake’s project helps young people design and sell their own clothing, drawing on the entrepreneurial spirit many young people have, channelling it away from drug-peddling and using it as a positive force. He offers young people realistic opportunities to develop a sustainable income. Additionally, Blake’s programme forces those young people involved with gangs to recognise the business potential within the whole community, from the shopkeeper to the rival gang member. In order to make more money, these young people are forced to re-engage with the community as a whole, building the positive community connections that can help them rebuild their potential to get a job and gain qualifications.

Children campaigning for social change

The Young Foundation’s 2007 report *Contentious citizens: Civil society’s role in campaigning for social change*⁴⁷ emphasises the need to help children get involved in campaigning in their local communities. The report recommends that by emphasising ‘learning through doing’ in citizenship education – i.e. by embracing an approach that encourages pupils to start campaigns and work for change in their communities – schools could potentially stand as an important site for renewing society’s campaigning skills. Additionally, it is emphasised that “the soft skills and habits of mind acquired in such activities are of great personal and social value, and could help pre-empt both disbelief in and dislike of collective action”⁴⁸.

Issues and debates on youth leadership

Providing young people with opportunities to develop and exercise leadership can potentially have benefits on multiple levels; however, there are some ongoing and emerging issues, debates and caveats on youth leadership that warrant acknowledgement. These include:

- **‘Authority confers leadership’ versus ‘Leadership comes from within’:** Many accepted theories of leadership, including the trait approach, the situational approach, contingency theory and the transactional approach all conflate ‘authority’ with ‘leadership’⁴⁹. They believe that leaders need followers and that positional authority is required for leadership to be exercised. However, newer theories, like those of Ronald Heifetz, separate leadership from authority and self from role, using as an example people like Mohandas Gandhi and Rosa Parks, both of whom exhibited generation-changing leadership without any initial formal authority⁵⁰. As young people rarely have formal authority in society, these conceptions of leadership as centred in the individual rather than the role are vital in youth leadership development opportunities.

It is also important to distinguish between the development of young people’s capacity to be self-motivated and manage themselves, on the one hand, and the development of the capacity to inspire and motivate others, on the other⁵¹. Young people are capable of exercising leadership even without a ‘followership’, and where young people are leading change in the context of a group, this is often a process of creating a sense of identification, shared membership and belonging. It is important to note that “showing responsibility for oneself and demonstrating the ability to make personal change is often as critical as leading a group of individuals or altering the larger community”⁵².

- **‘Leading young people’ versus ‘leading all people’:** It is often presumed that youth leadership is different to adult leadership. In a Changemakers survey⁵³ of more than 100 young people, over half of the respondents were of the opinion that ‘youth leadership’ is different to ‘adult leadership’: 59% of young people who responded mentioned organising a group of the same age, 57% a group of a younger age – but only 40% a group of older people. Research shows that in many instances, there is an implicit assumption that youth leadership entails young people leading groups of other young people – rather than being fully valued leaders in relation to adults and their wider communities. Our research reveals a general need for a shift away from thinking about the concept of youth leadership as ‘good for youth’ towards thinking about youth integration into leadership roles as ‘good for all’⁵⁴. Later in this paper (see part 3, p20), we also highlight the need for a shift away from a ‘deficit model’ of youth leadership.
- **Avoiding the language of leadership:** During our consultations with practitioners (see Appendix A, p34), we found it striking that many programmes eschew the language of leadership – in particular, avoiding this language when advocating their programmes to young people. The process of building and promoting young leaders can sound like something being done *to* young people, rather than *with* them. Additionally, it risks overlooking the ways in which young people are already exhibiting leadership qualities, focusing instead on a conception of leadership that is adult-centred and forward looking⁵⁵. In response to these issues, the practitioners we spoke with preferred engaging with young people on the issues relevant to their lives and about which they are passionate. Some of the reservations concerning the language of leadership include:
 - Young people often associate leadership with rigid skills-development activities, for the purpose of CV-building
 - Leadership can be an intimidating concept for many young people who do not identify with the perceived role or ‘mould’. Specifically, leadership development may be perceived as elitist and exclusive – something for the few, rather than the many
 - The language of leadership can be patronising or be perceived to be patronising to young people
 - ‘Leadership development’ can imply creating an artificial environment for young people to lead, rather than providing genuine opportunities

- The language of leadership can be seen as individualistic, self-serving or inward-focused, rather than directed at social change
- A 'leadership programme' may imply an end-point when young people will be expected to take on formal leadership roles – which can be daunting or seem unattainable for, or may not appeal to many young people.

Given many of these complications in leadership language, some programmes avoid an explicit definition of leadership, as they aim for young people to create their own understandings of leadership. As Rachel Urquhart (Head of Programmes, Envision) reveals:

"We hope and encourage young people to reflect on their leadership abilities, but we don't want to tell them what that should mean; it should mean something different to each one of them. We don't want them to fit a mould; we don't want to say we're a youth leadership programme, and this is what that means, because we want them to figure that out."

- **'Leaders are born' versus 'leaders are made':** The 'inherent leadership' versus 'developed leadership' argument is one of the longest running in the discipline; some argue that leadership skills can be developed and promoted in any young person, given the right support – though not everyone will become a leader, nor will everyone want to be. Others aim to hone skills in talented young people who are already predisposed to be leaders, arguing that the focus on making leaders of all young people has led to the watering-down of youth leadership programmes and an inability to define what leadership is and how leaders should be developed. It is important to point out the veracity of both arguments: all young people can develop leadership skills, but there are indeed some young people who have exceptional personal gifts for leadership. These two concepts need not be mutually exclusive; indeed, good youth leadership programmes should provide the opportunity for all young people to learn and grow, while also encouraging and nurturing those with the talents and desire to do more⁵⁶.

Towards a common definition of youth leadership

Despite the ongoing debates around what youth leadership is, and what youth leadership development should involve, there are more similarities than differences in the literature and in practice, and it is possible to come to a broad agreement about the nature and meaning of youth leadership. While providing a specific definition may not be necessary or ideal in the context of practice (as above), it is important to build a conceptual framework of what youth leadership means and what it can offer young people if we are to investigate and showcase best practice in this area.

After reviewing and compiling a number of definitions both from desk-based research and through our interviews in the field, we compiled the following definitions, relating to theory and practice.

Youth leadership: Young people empowered to inspire and mobilise themselves and others towards a common purpose, in response to personal and/or social issues and challenges, to effect positive change.

Developing youth leadership: Opportunities that engage young people in challenging action, around issues that reflect their genuine needs and offer authentic opportunities to make decisions and effect change, in an environment of support in which young people can reflect on their experiences.

How do we promote and develop youth leadership?

Developing young leaders has positive impacts for young people themselves and for their communities. How, then, should organisational leaders, educators, government and communities focus their efforts?

There is no single model for effective practice: As PEPNet⁵⁷ has observed, "Effective youth programmes are not a one-size-fits-all commodity." The same can be said of youth leadership programmes. Our research indicates that there are effective programmes and valuable opportunities across sectors and across a multitude of contexts. They employ different approaches and methods, and focus on different areas of development and change – ranging from entrepreneurship (e.g. 50Fifty; Make Your Mark⁵⁸) to personal development, to community development (e.g. Envision), to sustainable development (e.g. Otesha).

They emerge in response to a variety of needs. They also provide multiple pathways to leadership, provide opportunities to lead in multiple areas of society, and stress divergent, but often equally valuable progression routes and endpoints.

Nonetheless, there are some characteristics that are common to effective leadership programmes. Some of these characteristics are embodied by effective youth development programmes in general, while others relate specifically to youth leadership opportunities. In the next two chapters this report will map out the principles and practices of effective youth leadership development, and will look at how we can create and sustain organisations that support and nurture youth leadership. The report will also highlight key challenges, as well as the ways in which existing programmes are engaging with these challenges in creative and innovative ways.

Part 3

Developing and nurturing young leaders: Facilitating young people's leadership journeys

This section focuses on how to develop and nurture young leaders, exploring three key stages of the youth leadership journey:

1. *Getting young people involved*: This investigates issues relating to access and engagement
2. *Developing leadership*: This highlights the key ingredients for supporting and nurturing young people's capacity to lead
3. *Sustaining the journey*: This explores how to ensure that young people's leadership journeys progress effectively and are sustained over time.

Additionally, we highlight challenges relating to each of these three aspects of young people's leadership journeys.

1. Getting young people involved

To get young people involved in leadership programmes means making opportunities accessible and appealing to them. Consequently, programmes need to be designed to recognise, reflect and respond to the specific needs and contexts of young people's lives. It also requires acknowledging the practical constraints – such as family circumstances or lifestyles – that may act as barriers to participation, as well as a recognition that young people are by no means a homogenous group. Because of this, different engagement techniques will be required depending on the contextual specificities of young people's lives. For example, Luke Dowdney (Founder, Fight for Peace) explains that encouraging young leaders to get involved in politics poses different challenges in Brazil in comparison to the UK. In Brazil, issues have to do with corruption and the behaviour of the police, which contributes to disengagement among young people. In the UK, the issues are different, relating more to the fact that young people don't feel that politics is something that affects their lives or makes a difference, resulting in little desire to get involved.

Additionally, an important principle to bear in mind is that participation should be measured against the gains for the young person involved. Many people believe that getting young people involved in any programme or opportunity will be beneficial; however, many of our case study organisations highlighted their desire to only include young people when they are sure the experience will be a positive one for them. Otesha (see Appendix A, p54), for example, openly acknowledges that their cycle tours are not for everyone, and indirectly engages more 'marginalised' young people through their theatrical programmes and school activities. Their view is that offering experiences without proper support or infrastructure can not only be a waste of time, but can also discourage young people from participating in similar programmes in the future.

Youth programmes are designed differently to meet different needs and respond to the specific and often differing concerns of the young people involved. Participation, therefore, must be well defined and well thought-through, with the benefits for the organisation and young people clearly articulated, maximising benefits for both.

Gaps and challenges

There are a number of gaps and challenges to getting young people involved in leadership programmes:

Practical constraints to access: Practical constraints can include a lack of accessible facilities; lack of information about opportunities; a lack of access to transportation or childcare; the cost of programmes or materials; and the time commitments programmes require.

Elitism of access: Often, the young people selected as participants reflect the adults working to 'empower' them and are culled from the more educated and included groups of society, rather than being included for talent or ability. This 'elitism of access' has the potential to put off young people who do not feel the current programmes are relevant to their lives⁵⁹. For example, in 2008, the Carnegie Young People Initiative reported that:

"Whilst young people's involvement in participation allowed them to access a new world of politics, government and institutions, young people often complained that this world was dominated by a small elite of regular youth participants, upon whom adults placed an unhelpful reliance, and whose attraction was rooted in their confidence, skills and willingness to relate closely to adult and organisational sensibilities."⁶⁰

Young people may at times feel that leadership is not open to people of their faith, ethnicity, gender or socioeconomic backgrounds. The key is to make it accessible to them, and convince them effectively that they too can be leaders in their field. The Muslim Youth Helpline (see Appendix A, p44) addresses this concern by helping young Muslims define and develop who they are in a safe space where religion is a defining characteristic of all those involved. Building leadership skills and addressing issues in the context of religious identity gives participants the confidence and self-knowledge to become involved in campaigns, and engage with organisations that do not have an explicit Muslim focus. For young people marginalised because of their identity, programmes that help address those issues can be important stepping stones to wider engagement.

Low aspirations and expectations: Low aspirations and expectations are a key barrier to engaging certain groups of young people. Many young people may feel that programmes are not 'for them' or feel they lack the talent or ability to be leaders. For this reason, Public Allies (see Appendix A, p54) argues that it is important to recruit young people using staff and past participants who look like their young recruits, not only in terms of their race, but also in their dress, mannerisms and personal style. As CEO Paul Schmitz noted "encouraging participation is about helping people to see themselves." Providing examples of success for young people who have come from similar backgrounds and identities helps young people recognise their potential to succeed.

Negative associations with leadership roles and negative peer pressure: As noted, our research reveals that key barriers to youth engagement include the fact that young people may not identify with the leadership role, or may view leadership in a negative light (see Box 2, p22). In some cases, young people may experience peer pressure that deters them from engaging. Peer pressure is often mentioned as a barrier to political engagement and participation by young people. According to the Youth Citizenship Commission, many young people feel they will be seen as 'weird' if they participate when their peers do not, and feel afraid to express their views and opinions in front of a group⁶¹. Similarly, the National Centre for Social Research⁶² finds that peer pressure and the desire to 'fit in' with the crowd, and avoid standing out, prevent some young people from participating. Young women and those who lack confidence seem particularly affected by peer pressure⁶³. Also, young people can be put off by the images they have of those young people who do participate – and survey findings show that teenagers who are engaged in politics are believed to be upper – or middle-class people, particularly 'swots' or 'nerds'⁶⁴. The Fight for Peace (FFP) programme, for example, showcased in Appendix A (p38), works with a group of young people for whom 'leadership' is particularly uninspiring – those involved in street violence and drug-running, or who have been in contact with the criminal justice system. Founder Luke Dowdney created FFP to reach these young people, utilising boxing and martial arts as a way to instil discipline and respect. The approach was to teach them skills they already view as 'cool' in addition to others that can help them out of a life of violence. Leadership programmes must 'know their audience' to develop interventions and programmes in which young people will want to be involved.

Box 2. Case study: Resisting the language of leadership

Otesha

While Otesha does build young leaders, they don't use the term 'leadership' to get young people involved. Liz McDowell (Project Director, Otesha UK) thinks that using the language of leadership often distances young people from opportunities. Leadership among young people is often seen as stiff, and associated with 'skill development' for purposes of CV-building, rather than the fun that it can be. Leadership, as traditionally used, tends to separate the creative and exciting from the academic. Leadership can be an intimidating concept for many young people, something they don't self-identify with and feel they could never do. For Otesha, involving young people is as simple as getting them excited about changing the world from the angle of environmental sustainability in the context of their interests, needs and lives.

2. Developing leadership

Our research revealed five key components that form the basis of effective youth leadership opportunities:

- a. Authentic opportunities
- b. Meeting needs
- c. Challenge
- d. Support
- e. Reflection.

These components give us a useful framework for considering youth leadership opportunities: **Young people must be offered *challenges* that reflect their *needs* in an environment of *support* in which they can *reflect* on their experiences and are given *authentic opportunities* to make decisions and effect change.**

In what follows, we investigate each of these elements in detail.

a. Authentic opportunities

It has been argued that “the goal of leadership development ultimately involves action, not knowledge”⁶⁵. Young people learn leadership by *doing* leadership. Because of this, leadership development initiatives need to be about much more than training – they need to also include the opportunity for ‘real world’ application of skills (see Box 3, p23)⁶⁶.

A survey of 25 leading practitioners of youth leadership programmes in the US found that the key characteristics of successful youth leadership programmes include emphasising experiential learning and providing opportunities for genuine leadership⁶⁷. Boyd⁶⁸ conducted a study of the impact of a teen leadership programme in Texas which engaged youth in weekly sessions on different concepts related to leadership followed by experiential learning activities. Through the course of the programme, young people applied their newly acquired learning by completing service projects. The study found that the combination of experiential learning and service learning significantly increased young participants' understanding of leadership. Carole MacNeil⁶⁹, statewide director of the University of California's 4-H Youth Development Program, and national director of the 4-H Youth in Governance Initiative, points to evidence from recent research showing that organisations involved in promoting civic activism and political engagement, which builds skills, confidence and knowledge, have higher success rates in encouraging positive youth development than those focused primarily on youth development.

Many effective leadership initiatives adopt an approach that combines taught learning with real opportunities to put learning into practice – for example, by leading small groups or planning events, internships, apprenticeships, work placements, or establishing community campaigns and projects.

A key challenge for many youth leadership programmes is to break away from a deficit model – which assumes that young people are lacking in leadership qualities, and have to be taught and moulded in order to become leaders for the future – and to start seeing young people as leaders of today. MacNeil⁷⁰ points out that the adult leadership development literature tends to emphasise a dual focus on ability (learning) and authority (doing). By contrast, the youth leadership development literature often directs focus on learning about leadership, but not necessarily on applying learning to authentic and meaningful activities. The author emphasises that, without a concurrent examination of authority issues, “young people are simply learning about leadership rather than learning leadership, that they are developing an understanding of leadership without opportunities to practise it”⁷¹.

Adult leaders often teach young people how to be a certain type of person, rather than equipping them with the tools and presenting them with the guided experiences through which to discover their potential and engage with the community. Indeed, it is by containing youth in the role of consumer rather than actor that youth leadership often fails to inspire true advocates⁷².

Box 3. Making youth leadership education ‘real’

“It’s really easy to engage young people: you just need an interesting project. Many organisations that want to provide leadership education to young people tend to rely on case studies. But you need to find real leadership – which means that you need to find real projects for [young people] to work with. That is the most important thing I can say ... It needs to be something that you want to do for real ... It can be running a club, going to a foreign country, to see all the young people, wherever, just to help. So there needs to be a real project. Don’t make it artificial.” (Lars M. Læg Reid, Director, Prosjektdesign, Norway)

b. Meeting needs

A 10-year study by the Carnegie Foundation of 120 youth-based organisations in the US found that there was a striking divergence between the current needs of young people and youth leadership education. According to this report, many programmes “often depend, at best, on implicit unexamined ideas about how young people develop leadership traits and what being a leader entails. At worst, youth leadership programmes are described as a negative space into which practitioners project their own beliefs about what youth need.”⁷³ Additionally, despite the relative wealth of literature about youth leadership, academics have noted a general lack of applied psychology on how to promote positive youth development.

Youth leadership programmes that reflect their participants’ concerns, fears and hopes about the future are those best placed to help young people develop a positive psychology, which Katy Granville-Chapman (Head of Leadership and Teambuilding Programme, Wellington College) believes has strong links with leadership. If young people have a good level of wellbeing and are psychologically healthy, according to Granville-Chapman, they are more able to lead and, similarly, more sensitive to and able to enhance the wellbeing of those they seek to inspire and motivate. But promoting that wellbeing means helping young people address the circumstances of their lives, building a feeling of self-efficacy that enables them to change these circumstances. According to a five-year study of youth leadership programmes in the US, the ones that supported raising awareness and exploring one’s identity helped young people to develop positive feelings about themselves, cutting down on self-destructive behaviours⁷⁴. Addressing needs in youth programmes is about promoting resilience through the ‘right’ mix of challenge and support.

c. Challenge

Social psychologist Lev Vygotsky believed that learning is about interactions and relationships and that learning is most effective when there are people who can determine the correct amount of challenge and support for each individual. Only by getting this combination right can the learner reach the ‘zone of proximal development’, where the most gains are realised.

Providing young people with challenges and the correct amount of support and guidance to meet those challenges can help them grow and develop.

The key for adults is to know what support is enough, and what is too much. Giving young people too much responsibility can lead to gains in status positions, with no real power. Equally, autonomy can quickly become abandonment; young people need a safe, secure and reliable support network through which to set and meet their own goals⁷⁵. Challenge, in the context of development, is about actively engaging young people at an experiential level from which they can grow.

Envision (Appendix A, p35), for example, presents young people with the challenge of developing, designing and delivering their own projects to make a difference in their local communities. During a focus group, Envision staff emphasised that the process takes time, and requires patience and support on the part of adult volunteers. They also emphasised that the ‘goals’ young people set for themselves are not always achieved during the course of their projects. The important part of the process, however, is not always reaching the goal, but helping the young person recognise what barriers kept them from their outcomes, and how to avoid these obstacles in the future.

Effective programmes recognise and respond to the age and developmental needs of their participants; they sequence activities so that young people experience a series of successes and increase their responsibilities⁷⁶. There is a strong argument against a model of leadership based solely on age-specific cohorts – who might be at very different developmental stages as leaders. Rather, the proposed alternative is to focus on previous leadership experience.

Finding a balance between actively engaging young people at their experiential level and overwhelming them with too much responsibility is no easy task, however: “This difficult balance ... can result in either youth with artificial status and no real power or youth burdened by responsibility that has no context within their former experience.”⁷⁷

d. Support

Effective programmes connect young people to caring adults. A number of the programmes showcased in Appendix A (p34) of this report (e.g. Envision, Groundwork, Public Allies) offer both one-on-one adult mentor services to young people, as well as support within small groups, helping young people develop individually and within peer groups. Research, experience and intuition all support the value to young people of a strong, long-term relationship with a caring, competent adult they can talk to about plans, problems, decisions and their future⁷⁸.

Lars Lægreid (Director, Prosjektdesign, Norway) emphasised the networking aspect of leadership development as “critically important” – young people need to be in contact with people who have “made it” and exposed to a lot of different perspectives and stories of people who have succeeded.

Supporting and guiding – without steering the process or taking control – can be very difficult for young leaders’ supporters, facilitators and mentors. Providing young people with authentic opportunities is not only about encouraging participation, but also needs to focus on adults ceding power. In our case study interviews, the common thread around support was that both the young people and adult volunteers/facilitators needed support from core staff in order to vent their frustrations and concerns, and share their triumphs.

Recognising the benefit that both young people and adults gain from working together is at the heart of any successful programme. Programme staff have a role to play in adjusting expectations and helping adult supporters recognise that the process, rather than the goal, is the important part, but this takes time, capacity and, most of all, a listening ear.

Effective initiatives also organise mutual support networks among the young people in the programme (see Box 4). These may involve connecting participants to successful programme alumni or helping them to form bonds with each other. Peers are a major influence for young people and developing these new friendships and support networks helps them continue on their path to success. Also, for many participants, it is the first time they are being encouraged and rewarded for working towards something positive with peers⁷⁹.

Box 4. Case study: Building confidence and community through peer support

Otesha

Teaching young people how to draw on the resources of their peers is an important way of giving them the confidence needed to assert themselves in the world.

Otesha found the creation of a supportive group of peers especially important in encouraging youth to engage with the larger community. In one successful project, a group of young people decided to create a community garden as their response to increasing sustainability. Part of the Otesha project cycle entails doing what they call ‘people research’: basically, investigating the beliefs and knowledge of the people whom the project wishes to target. In this instance, a group of young people went out and talked to members of the community about what they thought of gardening, food and climate change. However, going to speak with the community presented a challenge in itself. The young people weren’t sure who to talk to, or if anyone would want to talk to them. In order to gain the confidence to engage with community members, the young people decided to pull a couch onto a pavement and offer cake and tea to community members in exchange for a few moments of their time. According to Liz McDowell (Project Director), this sense of community is key to helping young people take initiative:

“Confidence is a huge thing, actually. And also feeling that you have a community of people you are doing it with so you’re not just out there doing it on your own – which is really hard; you’re actually doing it with other people [who] are your age and are interesting. And that makes a huge difference.”

e. Reflection

Challenge, in the form of actual decision-making, combined with effective support from adults are two elements of youth leadership development that are consistently emphasised. However, another aspect of youth leadership development that is often overlooked, but hugely important, is allowing for real-time and post-programme reflection – which brings us back to how youth leadership fits within the context of youth development⁸⁰. Addressing the situational barriers and the ‘rules of the game’ in a safe space can help young people, and especially those who are disadvantaged or marginalised, to articulate how the experience of leadership fits with who they are and what they want to become⁸¹. Many of the programmes we studied had several steps of reflection, starting with goal-setting, evolving into real-time reflection during the programme’s duration, and then post-completion follow-up.

Box 5. Feedback and reflection

Lars Lægreid (Director, Prosjektdesign, Norway) maintains that:

“What is essential in creating a leader is the quality and amount of feedback that you get. Because it is hard to position yourself if you are not getting reflections and clear feedback. You can’t guess who you are ... The reflection is essential ... That’s where people actually change and move to the next level.”

In order to facilitate the reflection process, Lægreid advocates operating within a small and intimate environment – keeping the numbers of participants down, and giving them plenty of opportunities to work closely with one another, as well as staff – which serves to counter insecurities that can inhibit genuine reflection.

3. Sustaining the leadership journey

A DCSF report, *Young people: Leading change*⁸², stresses that leadership activities and opportunities should be sustainable to ensure that young people can carry their leadership skills into adulthood, and should include clear progression routes and appropriate support at all stages. This can mean providing routes that allow young people to move from local to regional, national and even international opportunities. Alternatively, even when contained on the local community level, there are innovative ways to ensure that young people keep growing and developing. Tower Hamlets Summer University (THSU), for instance, builds in opportunities for young people to ‘dip in as they need to’, and ‘take what they need at the point in their life’. For example, an 11-year-old may want to come along and play football and need a social place to be. In later years, that individual may be making career choices and get involved for those purposes. The organisation has a variety of programmes that can help develop young people’s leadership skills – such as the Peer Motivator Scheme and Young Ambassadors Programme – and they channel young people into these programmes when enthusiasm is demonstrated. The THSU programme allows young people to find their own direction forward: “It’s not a one-off initiative, where they’ll go away at the end of the year, and if they haven’t done it now it will never happen” (Liz Jewell, Development Director, THSU).

Effective programmes stress longer-term support for young people, from a minimum of six months to a year, with possibilities for more extended involvement. One way in which programmes can do this is through providing support and regular follow-ups after a young person has ended formal participation in the programme. Another is through structured alumni or graduate programmes, through which former participants can receive mentoring and support while providing orientation and guidance to the next cohort of participants⁸³. Similarly, sustained networking opportunities should be provided both during and after completion of a programme⁸⁴. For example, Envision connects young people to a network of experts across many social and environmental fields, and holds events throughout the year so that students have the opportunity to meet other participating Envision teams, and young participants as well as adult volunteers are encouraged to stay involved in the Envision community after their year in the programme. As Rachel Urquhart (Head of Programmes, Envision) explains, this creates an enduring sense of family and community, which is critical to the sustained success of this programme.

Leadership programmes, for both adults and young people alike, should encourage participants to take on leadership roles in their communities on completion of the programme, and/or should encourage them to participate in further leadership development⁸⁵. A key barrier to address here, however, is the lack of co-ordination between organisations offering youth leadership programmes, inhibiting progression or cross-referral between programmes. This can prevent young people from building on advancements and prior learning⁸⁶.

Facilitating young people’s leadership journeys: key lessons

While there is no single model for effective practice, we have identified a number of common ingredients to successful leadership programmes. Effective practice is espoused within opportunities that engage young people in challenging action, around issues that reflect their genuine needs and offer authentic opportunities to make decisions and effect change, in an environment of support in which young people can reflect on their experiences. Opportunities should be sustainable to ensure that young people can carry their leadership skills into adulthood, and should include clear progression routes and appropriate support at all stages.

The next chapter turns its attention to the organisational level, looking at how to develop and sustain organisations that support youth leadership.

Part 4

Creating and sustaining organisations that support youth leadership: The organisational journey

This section elaborates upon how to create and sustain organisations that support youth leadership. First, we explore how to develop organisational cultures and structures that support and enable youth leadership. We highlight criteria important to creating and sustaining an organisational environment of inclusion and meaningful power-sharing among adults and young people, and present different models of organisation. Following this, we present key lessons for organisational sustainability and growth drawn from our case studies and consultations. These include:

- a. Commitment to reflection and improvement
- b. Commitment to making connections
- c. Balancing innovation and continuity
- d. Investing in branding and communications
- e. Investing in people.

Building youth leadership into organisational culture and structures

For young people to move into authentic leadership roles they must be supported and challenged, and adults must be willing to cede power. The relationship between adults and young people in youth leadership and development is complex. Young people need support and guidance, but also autonomy and consistency. While there is no blueprint for developing an organisation in which young people share authentic power, Appendix B (p60) offers a helpful set of criteria important to creating and sustaining an environment of inclusion and meaningful power-sharing in an organisational context.

Youth leadership programmes should embody high expectations of, confidence in, and respect for those being served, and emphasise the importance of youth involvement wherever possible in the organisation as a means of practising leadership skills. There are three different organisational models available: 'For youth' (or 'Adult driven'); 'With youth'; and 'Youth led' (see Table 1, p28).

All three models can yield a certain degree of success. Which model is most effective will ultimately depend on what the organisation is trying to achieve. A body trying to influence national government could, for example, be best placed to adopt a 'With youth' model, while an organisation that purports to be in the business of 'empowering' young people would be better suited to adopt a Youth led model. The Youth led model with the appropriate organisational framework and support is likely to generate the most comprehensive results. This model is, admittedly, challenging, time-consuming and does not guarantee the automatic success of the programme. However, it has more potential to offer young people the opportunity to develop not only as empowered participants, but also as empowered leaders who feel able to change the institutions that serve them – an experience which can be carried over into many other aspects of their lives and which, in turn, creates a new level of youth engagement in their communities⁸⁷. The model can also yield significant benefits to the organisation – as many of our case studies illustrate.

The case studies we draw on are all excellent examples of Youth led models of organisation. A number of these programmes were set up by young people, and continue to be run, to a large extent, by young people. Muslim Youth Helpline, for example, was created by 18-year-old Mohammed Mamdani, who, while in college, recognised the isolation and alienation of many Muslim young people. The organisation remains largely Youth led, and requires that 50% of the executive board be composed of young people.

Table 1. Three models of organisation for youth leadership programmes⁸⁸

Model	<i>For youth / Adult driven</i>	<i>With youth</i>	<i>Youth led</i>
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people served by a programme designed, run, evaluated and driven by adults • Young people participate in the services, but their opinions are rarely solicited or, if they are, tend not to be acted upon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people not only participate in programme services – their voices are also sought to get their perspective on the programme • Model is adult-driven, but adults are conscious of need for youth input on programme design and services • Young people may be hired as staff, but generally not given supervisory or leadership roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May or may not be actually run by young people • Frequent structured opportunities for young people to evaluate the programme • Young people frequently hired as staff, including supervisory and managerial positions; involved in hiring and evaluation of peers and adult staff, youth representatives on board, involved in fund raising, serving on committees.
Positive and negative characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme structure not penetrated by values, opinions, creativity and talent of young participants • Paternalistic model • Recruitment and retention problems because adults may not understand how to make programme attractive to young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms for getting voice of young people are largely informal, often inconsistent • Young people are not actively involved in decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young participants experience a culture that promotes and demonstrates high degree of youth ownership of programme • Development of empowered participants as well as empowered leaders • Can be challenging and time-consuming.

In the area of public participation, there has been a lot of debate around how to think about and model young people's level of participation in decision-making⁸⁹. One point on which there appears to be consensus is that power is a key concept when looking at young people's involvement in decision-making. But there are divergent views on how to theorise power and participation. Participation is "often seen in terms of the amount of power shared between adults and children and has been depicted as steps on a 'ladder of participation' (Hart 1997), where the steps describe the degree to which children initiate or are in control of the process"⁹⁰. In this model, the bottom rung represents the most limited form of consultation, where the views expressed by young people may not be given much weight (often described as tokenism), and the top rung gives young people full control of the decision-making process, from initiation to outcomes⁹¹. Others do not feel that a 'ladder' is the most useful model, as it suggests "a hierarchy with the objective of reaching the top rung"⁹² and "implies that the lower rungs are less worthwhile"⁹³. There is a strong argument against viewing young people's participation in hierarchical terms – it has been argued that the appropriate level of power and responsibility allocated to young people needs to be determined according to the circumstances and the participating young people.

There are many challenges to making structures and processes 'Youth friendly'. These include:

Breaking away from formal structures: In numerous instances, young people are given opportunities to lead in the context of processes and representative structures, such as committees, that replicate the world of adult decision-making. An *Evaluation of the impact of youth work in England*⁹⁴ found that, while involvement brings clear benefits to some young people, these formal structures meet limited success because many young people are not attracted to them, with high participant turnover, low attendance and short duration of involvement. The conventions and processes of such structures and processes do not have wide appeal, particularly among those who are socially excluded. The study finds that some programmes are developing creative approaches for engaging young people, and that these can serve to widen the opportunities for participation. These approaches include peer mentoring and mediation schemes, peer-led research, and the use of new technologies (mobile phones, websites, message boards and electronic voting systems) and creative arts to encourage discussion, consultation and influence.

Generating organisational commitment to youth-centred structures and processes: As one study notes, “It requires a considerable amount of organisational commitment to create structures and processes which are genuinely ‘young-person centred’ rather than ‘young person focused’ – in other words, expressing what adults feel are the needs of young people.”⁹⁵ During our consultations, it became clear that this also requires considerable time and patience on the part of adult volunteers or facilitators, who require organisational support and guidance. Envision, for example, provides significant support to in-school mentors, who are typically volunteers from the surrounding community. Envision staff noted that adult volunteers needed particular support in letting young people work at their own speed. It can be especially challenging for volunteers and staff to watch young people fail, but stepping in and completing tasks for them can be experienced in patronising and de-motivating terms by young people. Adults often need support to vent their frustrations so they can continue to offer productive assistance to young people.

Despite these challenges, many organisations are making significant gains in changing their cultures to engage young people in meaningful leadership roles. Improvements in practice and policy on the participation of children and young people are also being facilitated by the work of initiatives such as Hear by Right⁹⁶, which offers tried-and-tested standards for organisations to apply and draw upon as a way of embedding the active involvement of children and young people into their cultures and structures.

Sustainability and growth: Key lessons from case studies

Organisational sustainability and growth are critical if youth leadership programmes are to facilitate young people’s leadership journeys effectively over time. This is an area where many youth leadership programmes are lacking, however. The short cycle of most leadership programmes and the change in leadership within those organisations means that there has been little institutional memory generated, and few programmes seem to be taking advantage of the experience of others⁹⁷.

Our research and consultations provide insight into some of the factors that are critical to making youth leadership programmes sustainable. We present these key lessons below:

Commitment to reflection and improvement: Perhaps the most overwhelming piece of evidence that emerged from our consultations is that reflection is key to achieving effective and sustainable programmes. While reflection often formed part of the monitoring and evaluation of programmes, the real value of reflection, according to many of the practitioners with whom we spoke, lies in its potential to offer an ‘ear to the ground’, helping facilitators adapt their current programmes to be more relevant for participants, thereby resulting in more fulfilling experiences and effective delivery.

A common ingredient of successful youth development programmes is a commitment to continuous improvement – and all effective programmes take active steps to grow and improve. Successful programmes rely on internal self-evaluation as well as outside assessments (including independent evaluations) to gauge their impacts and strengthen what they do; place heavy emphasis on training staff; and depend on feedback from their participants to help in identifying areas that need attention⁹⁸.

However, evaluation poses a challenge to many organisations. Research from both the US and UK suggests that there is a limited amount of information available on assessing outcomes of youth leadership programmes⁹⁹. Some organisations are creating their own tools and methods for tracking and measuring outcomes, while others are not assessing youth leadership outcomes in any formal manner. Evaluations that do exist may lack evidence of community benefits and some fail even to capture information on the populations served. There is a clear need for evaluations and research which use a mixed approach, involving qualitative, quantitative, longitudinal and control studies where appropriate.

Key challenges and issues emerging from our consultations also included:

- the challenge of measuring the ‘soft’ outcomes of programmes
- tracking change and development over time
- the costs entailed in rigorous evaluation procedures
- funders’ shaping influence on evaluation methods and metrics.

Despite these challenges, developments are taking place. Fight for Peace, for example, presented in Appendix A (p38), is currently developing a system for monitoring and evaluation in partnership with the University of East London, which will do both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Scheduled for launch in 2010, the system will give quarterly progress reports on quantitative statistics, in addition to bi-annual qualitative questionnaires with social-impact indicators.

Commitment to making connections: Collaboration is critical to successful youth leadership programmes. Programmes should develop partnerships that expand offerings and fulfil programmes' as well as young people's needs, and continually seek potential resources and partners¹⁰⁰. Collaboration and partnership are also an important way of leveraging resources and funding, which are crucial to sustainable work: "Effective initiatives display a creative variety of collaborations and illustrate the use of collaboration as an element of programme design. In many cases, collaboration reflects a strategic approach to widening the array of resources ... available for young people in an efficient and cost-effective way."¹⁰¹

As Katy Granville-Chapman (Head of Leadership and Teambuilding Programme, Wellington College) emphasises in an interview for this report, effective leadership development does not need to cost much; the focus should be on leveraging resources already in place to give young people authentic opportunities and support. This, she suggests, is why leadership is so applicable in the educational environment: because structures and mechanisms are already in place to aid young people to grow positively (see Box 6, below). Collaborations with community agencies and organisations, the education system and public agencies can all expand a programme's ability to provide diverse, quality leadership development activities¹⁰².

Box 6. Case study: Youth leadership in the educational environment

Wellington College

At Wellington College, young people are involved in decision-making in a variety of areas, from classes, to their boarding houses, and even planning and setting dates for sporting events. In effect, Wellington is practising 'asset-based youth leadership', which is why Katy Granville-Chapman, Head of Leadership and Teambuilding Programme, says it doesn't have to cost much to provide real opportunities in the educational environment. The principles used at Wellington can be equally applied to resource-poor schools, where young people can participate in departmental committees. Even in the day-school context, Granville-Chapman recommends taking lessons from boarding school, and advocates breaking schools down into smaller 'houses' or units where pupils have the ability to make decisions about their environment, while at the same time developing a sense of community and receiving support from adults, rather than getting 'lost' in the crowd.

Effective initiatives develop and nurture strong links to the private sector. For example, Tower Hamlets Summer University (THSU) prides itself on knowing how to get the best out of their corporate partnerships. Unlike other charities, which tend to keep corporates at arm's length, THSU develops corporate partnerships that are about more than just funding, involving partners as active participants in their work. Getting community buy-in can also be a key means of achieving sustainability. For example, the Muslim Youth Helpline is planning to make the helpline community-supported, believing that the community needs ownership and buy-in to make the helpline sustainable and applicable to the community it serves.

The Innovation Center for Community and Youth proposes three models of working together – coordination, cooperation, and collaboration – which vary in intensity, risks and rewards (See Table 2, p31).

Table 2. Three models of working together ¹⁰⁵		
Cooperation Short-term, informal relations that exist without any clearly defined mission, structure, or planning effort. Partners share information only about the subject at hand. Each partner retains authority and keeps resources separate, so there is practically no risk.	Coordination More formal relationships and understanding each other's missions. People involved focus their long-term interaction on a specific effort or programme. Coordination requires some planning and division of roles. Authority is still with individuals, but more risk exists. Power can be an issue. Resources are made available to participants, and rewards are shared.	Collaboration Participants bring separate organisations and groups into a new structure with full commitment to a common mission. Requires comprehensive planning and well-defined communication channels operating on all levels. The structure determines authority, and risk is high because each partner contributes risk and reputation. Partners pool or jointly secure the resources, and they share the results and rewards.
Low intensity	⇒ ⇒ ⇒ ⇒	High intensity

Balancing innovation and continuity: Achieving sustainability requires a careful balance between innovating around new ideas, but also maintaining continuity to avert mission drift and to avoid ‘reinventing the wheel’. As Rachel Urquhart (Head of Programmes, Envision) maintains “Don’t be afraid of innovating around several ideas. There are several ways of meeting your mission. Just because you’ve found one way, doesn’t mean it’s the only way.” On the other hand, organisations also have to avoid bowing to pressure to innovate, which runs the risk of giving up on an approach that has been proven to work.

Invest in branding and communications: During many of our consultations, the value of investing in professional branding and communications was emphasised repeatedly, and seen as critical to getting buy-in from young people as well as potential funders, stakeholders and partners. Paddy Chatterton (Programme Director, Tower Hamlets Summer University), for example, attributed the sustained success of the programme, currently in its 14th year, to the balance struck between offering a dependable programme, year after year, and continually rebranding it so that it has ongoing appeal to young people.

Case studies reveal that clearly communicating and demonstrating a common agenda and an opportunity for mutual reward can be a key means of paving the way to success. For example, Darren Jones (Young Mayor Co-ordinator, Newham Young Mayor and Youth Council) emphasises that communicating the Young Mayor scheme as an asset was key to getting buy-in from key stakeholders, such as schools and local authorities – for example, through showing how the programme feeds into the education system’s agenda, or demonstrating how the scheme contributes to effective local political leadership for adults, respectively.

Investing in people – An enduring community: Finally, key to effective and sustainable programmes is an investment in people.

The programmes profiled for this report spend substantial time and energy supporting not just young people, but also their volunteers and staff. Groundwork founder Rich Buery notes that one of the biggest challenges for his programme is hiring staff who believe in and represent the central values of the programme, as well as making sure that there are appropriate routes for staff development so that people don’t leave once they get good.

In addition to supporting paid staff, volunteers require substantial time to train, develop and utilise skills effectively. However, recognising the value that those volunteers add, and the special skills they bring, is crucial to creating an inclusive and exciting environment, as Otesha (see Appendix A, p51) exemplifies. Similarly, Envision stresses the importance of investing in adult volunteers as much as in young people: as Rachel Urquhart (Head of Programmes) says, “the more you invest in them, the better the quality of the programme will be and therefore the better the experience of the young people”. In turn, this encourages young people who have graduated from the programme to return as volunteers, to “give something back” to the programme – thus creating a positive cycle of engagement.

As in any environment, investing in people and allowing them the space to get as involved as they are able to and in ways with which they are comfortable is challenging and time-consuming, but can also be hugely rewarding. As evidenced in this report, young people not only require this support and attention, but thrive in environments that offer continual opportunity for new experiences and interaction with different people. Supporting people is at the heart of positive youth development, creating gains for young people, the organisation and the wider community.

Part 5

Conclusion

Developing leadership skills in young people is a challenging, complex but important task. We have provided a snapshot of programmes from around the world which we consider to be 'best practice' for a variety of reasons, including their ability to engage young people, providing a safe space in which young people can learn to support each other and develop leadership skills, capacity and passions. As our research suggests, the confidence and self-efficacy gained through these safe spaces enables young people to become engaged in civic life more broadly. Successful youth leadership programmes provide pathways for young people to get involved in shaping their world with a wider geography in mind, away from issues that affect them solely as individuals of a particular race, class, faith or gender and onto issues that affect young people more generally as citizens.

Challenges still exist, including the need to make leadership a more accessible and engaging concept for young people. The definition and understanding of leadership must be broadened to include the support work that young people do in their personal lives. This is especially true for disadvantaged and marginalised young people, who often grow up supporting their families and communities. Within organisational contexts, and for those supporting the development of young people, our research reveals that a range of issues must be considered when building programmes and points to the need for a greater emphasis on sustainability of opportunities and support for young people after programmes have finished.

Looking ahead, it will be important to consider how to encourage more young people to be drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship. While the recession poses serious problems for young people in the short term, it also provides a great opportunity for them to shape the future in a substantial way, towards more flexible ways of working, with a greater emphasis on open democracy that utilises technologies of change to inspire wider participation. The example of President Obama and his campaign has shown how influential and powerful young people can be. Youth leadership provision needs to capitalise on that excitement in order to inspire and encourage the next generations to build up their skills and capabilities to make a positive contribution to their communities and societies.

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Name: Envision

Web site: www.envision.org.uk

Location: London and Birmingham, United Kingdom

Date founded: 2000

Purpose: Offers young people aged 16 to 19 the opportunity to make a difference on issues they feel passionately about and gain valuable personal and social skills

Description and purpose

Envision is a youth-empowerment charity that offers young people aged 16 to 19 the opportunity to make a difference to issues that they feel passionately about; enables young people to learn more about the issues they choose to tackle; and helps to build valuable personal and social skills. Envision operates a voluntary programme in schools and colleges. Students form an 'Envision Team' supported by adult volunteers and Envision staff. The team design their own practical projects to make a difference in their local communities – tackling issues ranging from street crime to climate change – and meet on a weekly basis to plan and implement their ideas. Envision provides constant practical support and advice, along with a network of experts, and holds events throughout the year so that students have the opportunity to meet other participating Envision teams. The experience builds confidence, aspirations and skills – and thus inspires the next generation of young community leaders.

History and development

Envision was founded in 2000 by four young people with a vision to change the world for the better. They decided to work with 16- to 19-year-olds because this often represents a key stage in people's lives, with respect to making decisions for the future, and because at this age people can be a powerful motivational force and could have a positive impact on their communities. Additionally, the group felt that negative press around young people – reproducing the stereotype of young people as apathetic and disengaged – could be most effectively tackled through young people setting their own positive examples for others.

They started the programme in London, operating in just five schools. Now, they are working with diverse groups in London and Birmingham as well as several other areas throughout the UK. In 2009, they won funding to venture into three more cities, and after a year of planning they intend to take the programme to Leeds, Bristol and one other city. Envision has now grown to become one of the biggest youth-empowerment networks in the UK, helping 1,500 young people, from 100 schools and colleges, every year, to design their own local community projects.

Conceptualising leadership

Envision prefers to think about youth leadership from an 'external' perspective – in terms of young people being seen as leaders in their community – rather than an internal, personal development perspective. They conceive of leadership in terms of the 'ripple effect': young leaders will inspire other young people to become leaders through setting a positive example. In this sense, the impact of youth leadership is broader than the individual. For this reason, and because Envision espouses an inherently team-based approach, they are reluctant to think about leadership in individualistic terms.

Empowerment is another key term: if young people feel empowered, they feel confident to take the lead and demonstrate by example. Rachel Urquhart (Head of Programmes) explains that empowerment is:

"...realising your capacity to make a difference... Our philosophy is that once you've realised that you can, then you are empowered. But it's that dawning, that realisation that is key. And sometimes it takes just two weeks, and sometimes it takes six months. That is what we hope to achieve by the end of whatever we've done with young people."

Key ingredients

A Youth-led approach: A Youth-driven method is the ‘core ingredient’ of Envision. Young people decide on the issues they would like to learn about and tackle, choose when their teams meet, and decide how to implement their ideas. The model works because it is attractive to young people and allows them to develop new skills and confidence. Youth leadership is embedded throughout the structure and functioning of the programme. Urquhart explains that the programme is deliberately designed without a rigorous structure, so that young people can “put their own stamp on it”:

“We have lots of decision-making processes within every programme for the young people who are involved, it’s not just about consultation – it’s genuinely about leading and making decisions And that stands for the organisation as well. So the young people are involved not only in the programmes that we provide for them, but also in how the organisation functions.”

Removing barriers: Envision removes many of the barriers that tend to prevent young people from getting involved in voluntary work – such as lack of mobility, busy social lives, and the demands of school and extra-curricular activities. By going straight to educational institutions, and building the opportunity into the school day, Envision bypasses some of these obstacles. Envision is also careful to avoid language that might put young people off from participating – for example, ‘volunteering’ and even ‘leadership’ may carry negative associations for many young people.

Inclusive approach: Envision engages a wide range of young people from very different backgrounds – and, while they do not specifically target certain groups, they engage a diverse audience through selecting schools and colleges from a wide variety of locations within the cities they work in. They use engagement tools that include pictures and testimonies of their diverse audience, and ensure that adult volunteers are recruited to represent and relate to the diverse young people they engage.

Teamwork and community-building: The Envision programme espouses a team-based approach, giving young people the opportunity to meet new people who share common interests. Working in a team is also a powerful motivational factor and encourages people to take part longer term as they build relationships and individual roles and responsibilities. It is also a route to improving communication skills and building confidence. Working alongside adult volunteers who are considered team members of an equal status can also be instrumental in improving confidence and maturity and preparing young people for the world beyond school. Young participants and adult volunteers are encouraged to stay involved in the Envision community after their year in the programme is over – and this serves as an important motivator for others to get involved and feel empowered, through seeing likeminded people participating and returning for more. As Urquhart explains, this creates an enduring sense of family and community: “Grads often say they see Envision as a kind of family; you know that you can always come back whenever you want.”

Engagement tools: Envision understands that it can take some time for young people to engage with community issues, let alone develop their own practical projects to make a difference. Therefore, Envision has developed a set of tools to help young people explore issues before asking them what exactly they would like to do. These tools are used throughout the programme to keep participants inspired and motivated. Envision has also developed reflection tools and encourages teams to reflect on their learning and progress. Using creative tools and games adds an element of fun to the process but can also offer structure in critical phases – for exploration, planning and reflection. Former participants play a role in feeding in ideas and assist in designing new tools, thereby keeping the approach fresh, creative and relevant.

Collaboration and disseminating learning

Collaboration has become more and more important for Envision. Due to recent profile-raising exposure of the programme, others have expressed interest in taking up the approach. Envision has only grown recently – until now, the focus has been on quality delivery, and a sector-wide strategic role is difficult for a small to medium-sized charity to fill. However, they recognise that this activity is fruitful and have been funded to produce a booklet called *Envision Flavour*¹⁰⁶. They have also held best-practice events to disseminate techniques for engaging young people. Envision are now trying to pilot and market training as part of their enterprise activities. Being aware of other organisations doing similar work is

important, in order to negotiate competition and avoid overlap in the opportunities they offer. They admit that collaborative work can be challenging, particularly when other organisations are too guarded and bureaucratic, and particularly when working with older, more established organisations, which may not recognise the value of learning from a younger organisation.

Key challenges

Involving a more-inclusive group of young people – e.g. young people who do not stay on at school: One way that Envision hopes to address this is through taking their current model and making it work outside of the education context: and through developing a bespoke training and support package which can then be used and delivered by youth workers who have expertise in working with young people who are outside of the institutionalised education system.

Retaining and coordinating adult volunteers: Envision retains many inspirational adult volunteers – but working with, coordinating and retaining more than 175 of them can be a challenge. Work and living circumstances change, which can affect retention, and other issues include keeping up levels of dedication and enthusiasm over time. It is important to maintain consistency, particularly when supporting young people. Replacing a person with another individual half way through the school year can be difficult, and core staff can find themselves having to fill in. This is a particularly significant challenge for Envision, given the long timeframe to which volunteers are required to commit.

Making work sustainable: Key lessons

Don't be afraid of innovating around several ideas: Urquhart maintains, “There are several ways of meeting your mission. Just because you've found one way doesn't mean it's the only way. You can constantly innovate around one idea, or you can innovate around several ideas”. She stresses that this can be important, particularly when seeking funding for the same thing over and over again. Otherwise, the danger is that you become “so wedded to that other things don't even come up.”

Invest in communications: Envision has seen the impact of having high-profile, national coverage, evidenced in increased levels of interest in the programme. They stress the importance of investing money in developing properly designed, professional promotional material which has an impact.

Invest in adult volunteers: Envision stresses the importance of investing in adult volunteers as much as in young people: “The more you invest in them, the better the quality of the programme will be and therefore the better the experience of the young people.” In turn, this encourages young people who have graduated from the programme to return as volunteers, to ‘give something back’ to the programme – thus creating a positive cycle of engagement.

Never underestimate young people: “Don't be too apprehensive about involving young people more and more in an organisation,” Urquhart says. “I know a lot of organisations say they are Youth-led, if you actually look at it critically, there are quite a lot more ways that young people could be involved more.” She feels that there is an attitude, held by adults in many organisations, which sees young people as incapable of doing certain tasks. However, it is important to let young people assess their own capacity, without telling them what they are and are not capable of: “Young people are capable of saying when they do not understand enough to advise on something – let them judge their own limits ... Never underestimate young people.”

Name: Fight for Peace

Web site: www.fightforpeace.net

Location: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Newham, United Kingdom

Date Founded: 2000

Purpose: Provides practical alternatives to crime and organised armed violence for children and youth in disadvantaged communities via social inclusion through sports, education, access to the formal work market, the promotion of a culture of peace and building youth leaders.

History

Fight for Peace started in 2000 as the Viva Rio project in Complexo da Mare, a favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. High levels of poverty and a lack of social services meant that many young people were entering drug-trafficking to make money. While working at another youth-serving organisation, founder and former English amateur boxer Luke Dowdney realised that programmes were not reaching populations of young people involved in high levels of armed violence and drug-selling.

Fight for Peace developed to meet that need. The programme involves at-risk young people in rehabilitation programmes based on boxing and martial arts. From an initial emphasis on sport, it has developed five pillars, with youth leadership now forming an integral part of the programme, and it has expanded to the UK.

Conceptualising leadership

Fight for Peace doesn't have a written definition of what means to be a leader. As the programme developed, leaders tended to emerge from participant groups to give voice to the other young people. After the establishment of leadership as the fifth pillar in the programme, Fight for Peace developed a youth council. The youth council is now an integral part of the programme, and in Brazil it has evolved into a council of young people who partake in all management meetings. Young people become leaders in Fight for Peace through this structure, presenting themselves for elections where other young people vote on their choice for representation. In the Newham project, more than 270 votes were placed for 14 successful candidates, with a turnout of more than 50% of the young people participating in the process.

The youth leadership council serves as a mechanism for feedback and involvement channel through which the young people have input on all aspects of the project – from internal operations to external relations. Young people helped to launch Fight for Peace in the UK, where their launch event featured the world heavyweight boxing champion Wladimir Klitschko alongside four young people from the programme. Before launching in the UK, Dowdney and others spent six weeks talking to young people in the community. They developed a partnership with Community Links to reach out to at-risk young people. Community Links is a charity with more than 30 years of experience in working with youth typically considered 'hard to reach'.

Key components—The Five Pillars and extending experience

Fight for Peace is a community development project based on the Five Pillars model, which is a holistic and integrated methodology first developed in Brazil. The Five Pillars model includes: 1) boxing and other martial arts training and competition; 2) formal and extra-curricular education programmes and personal development; 3) access to formal employment through job skills training and internships; 4) support services and targets referrals for young people and their families; and 5) building youth leaders via participation in the youth council and leadership training.

The young people are given exciting and relevant experience through which to enact their learning. They participate on policy boards and residents' associations. In Brazil, many have attended youth policy seminars both nationally and regionally, and participate in active networks. In the UK, young people from the youth council have participated in media training given by a private sector partner. These

kinds of opportunities are important not only for skill development, but also because the young people are meeting others with whom they wouldn't normally have contact, thereby broadening their horizons. This kind of activity is essential to increasing confidence, and has helped young participants go on to successful internships.

Working with marginalised young people

Fight for Peace doesn't limit its work to marginalised young people; as Dowdney says, "we don't ghettoise". By working with young people from the community and others who have been referred by Youth Offending Teams or through outreach, they have a very diverse mix of participants. Because of that diversity, when at-risk young people come into the programme they adapt their behaviour to group norms – often different from behavioural norms in their communities.

The programme's core activities, boxing and martial arts, reinforce positive behaviours and trust in individuals and the group. Young people must respect a coach's expertise in order to learn, adopting more-disciplined behaviours and acknowledging the coach's authority. In addition to having these parameters set, there is also a very involved youth work staff who listen, debate and discuss issues with the young people, allowing them a venue where their needs and concerns can be voiced and challenged. It is this mix of appropriate levels of discipline and parameters of respect, as well as the room to express oneself, which makes Fight for Peace work for a range of young people. Young people also reinforce the rules of the space quite stringently; they are given a great deal of responsibility to shape the programme, which is seen by many as a family. The messages about how to act come from young people and go to young people and are thus self-reinforcing.

Fight for Peace has an image as a programme that develops leaders and "young people with a future" – a powerful vision for marginalised communities, especially those in Brazil where the levels of drug trafficking and violence are high. The branding of the organisation, from the T-shirts the participants wear to the blue building in the heart of one of Rio's most dangerous favelas, signals to members of the community that Fight for Peace has a different plan for young people.

Sustainability—Scaling and evaluation

Fight for Peace is currently developing a system for monitoring and evaluation in partnership with the University of East London, which will do both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Scheduled for launch in 2010, the system will give quarterly progress reports on quantitative statistics, in addition to bi-yearly qualitative questionnaires with social-impact indicators. The evaluation system will support the organisation's scaling-up, offering easy mechanisms to replicate in new environments and forming part of a training programme. They are currently developing curricula for sport coaches and those working with NEET or YOP young people. These centres aim to offer training to professionals and then monitor and evaluate their graduates, enabling scale-up at a large level.

Innovation—The importance of brand

Fight for Peace was one of the first programmes to use boxing and martial arts to deal with violence. Many people initially doubted the effectiveness of this method. The innovation comes in the integration of different parts of the programme: combining sport, education, mentoring, home visits and courses that lead young people into employment.

The innovation is also in the branding and the image of strength it conveys. As Dowdney mentions, a lot of projects either give off a boring or "goody-goody" vibe. Because Fight for Peace works with celebrities (like the world heavyweight champion), they tap into imagery that has currency with young people. Fight for Peace creates a space for peace that also enables young people to feel powerful, an important mix for young people formerly engaged in street violence. The message of Fight for Peace is that while it might seem like it is harder and tougher and cooler to join a gang, staying in school is the greater challenge.

The challenge of citizenship

Encouraging young leaders to get involved in politics poses different challenges in Brazil and the UK. In Brazil, key issues are corruption and the behaviour of the police. Dowdney believes, young people in the UK are disengaged and don't feel that politics is something that affects their lives or makes a difference. Fight for Peace strives to help young people recognise the power they can gain by being in positions of power. They also encourage young people to shape their communities by exhibiting strength, not engaging in violence or conforming to a negative model of what it means to be a young person in a deprived community.

Name: Groundwork

Web site: www.groundworkinc.org

Location: East New York, United States

Date founded: 2002

Purpose: To support young people living in high-poverty urban communities as they develop their strengths, skills, talents and competencies through effective experiential learning and work programmes.

History and development

Groundwork began in 2002, when Rich Buery, a civil-rights lawyer with a background in youth development and social entrepreneurship, identified the East Brooklyn community where he grew up as an area of high need. He began the organisation with Andrea Schorr, a social entrepreneur with extensive experience with youth organisations. Together they mapped and assessed Brooklyn in an attempt to truly identify those areas most in need of assistance. The assessment used socio-economic data and delivery and uptake of services to find the most glaring gaps in provision, and East Brooklyn emerged as an area greatly in need of services. For example, 70% of children there are born into poverty and 30% of families live below the poverty line.

Groundwork's name speaks to their approach to developing strong young people. They believe that for young people to succeed, they must be supported emotionally, financially and socially. Laying the foundations in this way gives young people the opportunities to make different decisions about their lives than they otherwise would have.

Conceptualising leadership: Supporting the community

Buery doesn't characterise Groundwork as a youth leadership programme. As an organisation, their programmes reach across family life and include early-childhood services; work with elementary, middle – and high-school students and families; and a family resource centre where individuals and families can go to access a range of financial – and emotional – support-services. The central element in all of their programmes is giving young people and families power over their lives and futures.

In the youth programme, which works with middle-school and high-school students, there is an emphasis on developing positive social and character skills, including leadership. The hope is that young people will become beacons for their peers in the programme as well as within the community. Buery says that leadership is an integral part of the skills a young person needs in order to “make good decisions when there are so many pressures to make bad decisions”. Groundwork attempts to develop an ethos of being a positive support for self, peers and the community.

Key ingredients: ‘Soft’ skills and raising aspirations

Groundwork offers a number of different programmes for young people. The Groundwork for Youth course is a comprehensive after-school and summer academic enrichment and mentoring programme that works with elementary and middle-school students who live near or within three public housing developments in East New York. Their other initiative targeted at young people, Groundwork for Success, is a four-year programme that prepares youth for success in high school and college, beginning to work with students before they enter secondary school. Both of these programmes focus on literacy, personal development, cultural experiences and mentoring and support. Central to all of their programmes is the development of ‘soft’ skills (referred to elsewhere in this paper as social and emotional skills/competencies), which Buery notes as being critical to developing strong, resilient young people.

According to Buery, the after-school environment is especially well poised to develop ‘soft’ skills and promote resilience. The college prep programme is their star example of this. Built on a peer – and cooperative-learning – model, students enter the programme at the end of 8th grade. They are grouped from the start into cohorts of 15, with whom they are linked for the duration of the four-year programme. Building these relationships within a safe space is a key part of Groundwork’s success. Not only do youth learn to support each other through the programme, this support extends to everyday coping and friendship.

In addition to peer support, another core component is mentorship, which involves paid coaches who are responsible for supporting and developing each team of young people. The coach works with each young person individually to set goals at the beginning of each year, and assesses the progression towards those goals throughout the programme. In addition to identifying the obstacles to success, the coach serves as an advocate for that student, intervening when issues arise in school and family life that can keep youth from doing their best. A family resource centre with social workers coordinates family outreach. A collaborative management structure at Groundwork, which brings together social workers and youth coaches to lead weekly team meetings with all members of the programme, acts as a vehicle to allow young people to raise issues about all aspects of life in a supported environment.

Groundwork creates a safety net of support for young people. In-house support services ensure that when a young person starts exhibiting dangerous behaviour, such as suicidal thoughts, the team – with which the young person already has a relationship of trust – is ready to assist, plan and carry out an intervention if necessary.

Working in the community

A core element of Groundwork’s approach is its presence in the community: when youth leave the programme and are out on the street, on the corner, or in school, they have peer groups to rely on. The programme aims to build a critical mass in the neighbourhood and create another model for what it means to be a successful teen in East New York. Unlike many other programmes for young people that entail travelling to another borough a few times a week for a number of hours, locating the programme within East New York enables young people to put the lessons they are learning to immediate use in their communities. As Buery explains, “Having a peer network that is up in the Bronx that you see a few times a week is far less helpful than one in your community that you can use as a resource whenever.”

Visualising and celebrating the impact

Groundwork can boast a good deal of success since inception in 2002. In 2008 alone, the Single Stop family resource centre returned over \$3 million-worth of public benefits to families. Their college access programme has sent over 95% of graduates to college. Groundwork draws on quantitative data, such as report cards, school attendance rates, and standardised test scores. However, there are also plenty of subtle successes not accounted for in numerical outcomes, including providing a safe space for youth and children to grow and learn, and emerging as a trusted institution in the community that many families use every day. Groundwork is trusted to guide and develop children and also to support the community as a whole.

Celebrations and recognition – often in the form of economic reward – are also important. In their after-school programme, students who exhibit the Groundwork ‘P.O.W.E.R.’ characteristics in their work earn Groundwork bucks, which they can spend at the Groundwork store. The ‘P.O.W.E.R.’ values are central to all of their programmes and are about being prepared; taking ownership of one’s actions and one’s community; approaching life with a sense of wonder – including openness to new ideas and tolerance of different cultures; the pursuit of excellence in all of one’s undertakings; and respect for self and others.

The biggest celebrations take place when Groundwork for Success participants graduate from high school. To mark this occasion they have a graduation ceremony where families and young people dress up and celebrate success. For those going on to university they have a ‘college shower’, where funders donate gifts such as irons and duvets for young people to take with them to school.

Serving the marginalised

The profile of the participants varies across programmes and include: youth who have relatively stable backgrounds, young people with very distressed home environments, youth at risk of becoming homeless or who are already homeless, and those with siblings or parents in jail. Young people in East New York have a high likelihood of having experienced violence or trauma, either directly or through a close family member or friend. This fact means that Groundwork has to be cognisant of those barriers and develop interventions that help young people meet those challenges.

To meet the main goal of Groundwork for Success, to graduate their students into college, means doing more than just providing information about college; young people need to be made aware of why college is important, and Groundwork has to be there to make sure the daily traumas of life don't derail young people from their paths. Young people in East New York are less likely to be in good schools, leading to educational disadvantages. In addition to poor academics, schools in East New York generally lack a college focus. The schools' failures are compounded by a cultural community that at the very least has much lower expectations around college and has a limited 'mental map' of how to access higher education.

Sustainability

Collaboration is a key part of Groundwork's ability to sustain itself. Much of the service delivery relies on formal partnerships. For example, they provide legal assistance but don't have any lawyers, instead bringing in assistance from an outside company. In terms of their youth programmes, they have partners that provide specialised services, from arts and sports to SAT training. Given the wide range of support services they provide, Groundwork can be most effective by bringing in outside support.

Embedding innovation happens both as a result of collaboration, as well as through their unique design and management of core programmes. All of the youth programmes are managed in collaborative management teams, as described above, with the mentors and social workers leading weekly meetings and providing holistic support for young people. They have also been part of delivering innovative programmes across the city. Their Single Stop programme was in the first cohort of sites to launch Opportunity NYC, the first conditional-cash transfer programme ever piloted in the developed world.

Groundwork has plans to expand into a new part of Brooklyn. Buery has many hopes for the development of Groundwork; at the forefront of his efforts is an understanding that youth are better supported when their communities are healthy places to be.

Name: Muslim Youth Helpline

Web site: www.myh.org.uk

Location: United Kingdom

Date founded: 2001

Purpose: Provides pioneering faith and culturally sensitive services to Muslim youth in the UK.

History and development: Identifying and meeting social need

What is now known as the Muslim Youth Helpline (MYH) he started as a one-line support service in the bedroom of Mohammed Mamdani in 2001. The concept developed while Mamdani was at university. The student felt he and his friends had nowhere to turn if they needed help or advice about sensitive issues. They couldn't go to the community because of social stigma around issues confronting youth – ranging from sex and relationships, to dress – and they couldn't use the mainstream services because of a lack of cultural sensitivity. Due to this need, he started a one-night-a-week service, which he publicised around the community and at his university. After running the initial programme for a year, there was evidence of a real demand for the support the helpline provided. As a result, Mamdani and a few of his friends got together and developed a proposal to launch MYH. After a year-long pilot phase, including the recruitment and training for 14 peer-counsellors, MYH was officially launched in December 2002. In 2003, MYH extended its opening hours and launched a free phone number to ensure equal access to all young people seeking its services.

According to Mohammad Imran, the current director, the impetus for the MYH evolved from a real social need that wasn't being addressed by the Muslim community. While Imran calls MYH a Muslim organisation, he stresses that they are much more than that, and see themselves primarily as a youth organisation, with youth leading the development at all levels. This is important to MYH because of the status and history of the Muslim community in Britain. The issues faced by earlier generations of Muslims in Britain, such as living as a diaspora community and dealing with poverty, are not the same issues affecting Muslim youth today. MYH is founded on a recognition that the issues faced by young Muslims can best be understood by other young people, which is how the peer-to-peer model of support first developed.

Conceptualising leadership: Creating a safe space for personal development

Like many other youth organisations, Muslim Youth Helpline doesn't describe itself as a youth leadership organisation. Instead, they see themselves as an organisation that encourages leadership by creating a safe environment for leaders to develop in and where individuals feel empowered to identify problems and design projects to help address needs within their community. This culture of individual empowerment cuts across all levels of the organisation, including staff, the youth volunteers on the helpline, and those participating in advocacy campaigns.

This environment of empowerment resulted in one of MYH's most successful current campaigns, which supports the disproportionate number of young Muslims in jail through counselling and advice services offered on the helpline. When a staff member came up with the idea, she was encouraged to take it forward, and since its inception it has grown into an annual project with partnership organisations including Mosaic.

In this way, MYH serves as a stepping stone, providing a community where young Muslims feel comfortable working out who they are, and where they are with certain issues, in a safe space, from which they can go on to the next stage of asking and investigating the issues affecting Britain and the Muslim community within that context. This is the main way that MYH develops young leaders, by making them into active citizens, capable and passionate about their community of faith, as well as the wider community in where they live.

Key ingredients: Supporting communities, encouraging active citizenship and putting young people at the centre

MYH has two main strands of work, the helpline and support services and the advocacy and campaigning work. Muslimyouth.net is the engine of the campaign strand, running a campaign around different social issues every six months. Topics can range from social or political engagement to relationships and intergenerational conflict.

From the issues raised on the helpline, MYH has created a research and training arm through which they carry out capacity-building. By packaging the information into training modules, they are then able to go out and capacity-build with the various sectors, from local and national government to the statutory sector and community organisations. This work is essential to giving organisations an insight into the issues young Muslims are facing. Central to this capacity-building is the philosophy that MYH is a hub of knowledge, but not alone in its support of young Muslims. Rather, they see the whole of society as responsible for meeting the needs of young people. According to Imran, to do anything else would be to reinforce the alienation of Muslim youth within mainstream society.

Like some other youth organisations, there is a mix of adults and youth involved in identifying issues and creating programmes based on those needs. MYH operates as a 'tight-loose' structure, with the staff and board driving the main themes they address, but with youth having the flexibility to interpret and deliver that as they choose. In his interview, Imran offered two examples of how youth are involved in shaping and delivering campaigns and designing websites. When MYH decided to redesign Muslimyouth.net, they held focus groups with current users of the website who shaped the redesign of functionalities, content and usability.

In its advocacy and campaigning, MYH is Youth-led. The themes for the campaigns are determined from the helpline by MYH staff, but young people determine what campaigns look like and how to communicate the key themes. Last year, the theme was citizenship, with a goal to create a local, national and international issue to tackle under that umbrella concept. Out of this structure, the youth decided to confront knife and gang culture at the local level, stop and search at the national level and the Iraq war at the international level. The result was a DVD called Reelhood composed of three 10-minute pieces with all filming and editing done by young people with support from a team of professionals.

Working with marginalised young people: Harnessing 'creative tension'

Promoting diversity within MYH is about allowing 'creative tension', according to Imran. To attract and encourage the participation of a diverse group of young Muslims in volunteering for the helpline and applying to work on the campaigns, MYH does outreach beyond colleges and universities to youth centres and community organisations. Additionally, they constantly track the helpline callers and reach out to groups who aren't accessing their services.

Within the organisation there are two different issues relating to encouraging diversity. The first is accommodating and attracting both Shiite and Sunni participants at all levels of involvement, from volunteers, to staff, to members of the board. While accommodating different viewpoints can be difficult, it is also essential to meeting the needs of the wider Muslim community.

The other issue relating to diversity is the degree of religiosity within the organisation. The degree of religiosity determines, in many cases, the willingness of staff and volunteers to discuss and provide information about topics such as abortion and homosexuality. Confronting this challenge means adopting broad spiritual or social issues, and making the focus of their work the clients and their issues, rather than privileging the views of those supporting them. Adopting this external focus has helped to accommodate that diversity.

In many ways, including and allowing diversity is what the MYH is all about. It entails bringing young Muslims into their community to work on issues affecting them as people of faith, but also citizens of the UK. With the Reelhood project, while knife and gang culture was the focus, it wasn't necessarily about Muslims being involved as perpetrators or victims. Consequently, the young people involved in the project had to go and interview local MPs and councillors, discussing youth service provision and the reasons behind youth violence. As Imran notes, "Just because they come together as Muslims to

do this doesn't mean it's for Muslims. I think this is an important and subtle difference. It is done by a community for their community, but their community isn't necessarily their faith community, but rather their geographic community."

Visualising and celebrating the impact: Showing successes to the wider community

Because of the differing natures of their strands of work, MYH monitors and evaluates each strand in a different way. All helpline calls are tracked and measured, with statistics about the types of issues being raised and the background of the callers recorded to feed into other work. With the advocacy and campaign portion, the young people who participate get awards and their work is celebrated through events. Reelhood was celebrated with a launch attended by a local MP. Additionally, the film was entered into film festivals. According to Imran, this type of recognition is really important for the young people involved, who need to see the wider impact of what they are doing. Otherwise, such activities can feel like a token exercise to build their CV. For young people, having adults and mentors recognising and supporting their work both within the confines of the institution, and outside in the wider community, helps youth feel empowered about the change they can make.

Sustainability: Building ownership and creating buy-in through funding

Sustainability is a big issue for MYH, as it is for many organisations. And like many of the other organisations we have profiled in this report, sustainability is not just about ensuring sufficient funds, but rather about constantly redefining and rearticulating their mission, aims and goals. This is, in part, so important because of the Youth-led element, which means that issues and needs are constantly changing. In order to stay relevant to the needs of the community, MYH is continually in the process of self-redefinition.

But Imran is also concerned with sustaining MYH's focus on being Youth-led. This will be a challenge as they continue to grow, especially as numbers of staff and trustees climb. Keeping youth at the heart of the decision-making process thus far has meant ensuring that 50% of the board is composed of people under 30. Additionally, Imran thinks it is important to ask what is meant by 'young people', and being careful to include not just those over 21, who might be easier to work with. For Imran, youth have to continue driving change, especially contributing to innovative ideas for solving social issues and utilising technology to meet those aims.

Funding is another issue that raises the question of sustainability. MYH has issues around mission drift, as do other organisations that receive one-off funding for projects or programmes. This means that the organisation focuses on short-term interventions rather than long-term problems. However, MYH is also in the process of completing a four-year organisational plan and has set a goal to support advocacy and capacity-building activities through consultancy and training fees from the sectors and organisations that request these services. Likewise, MYH plans to make the helpline community-supported, believing that the community needs to have ownership and buy-in to make the helpline sustainable and applicable to the needs of the community it serves. This model serves to link more closely the goals of each strand of work with the group it is serving, in the hope that such focus can enhance both ownership and provide increased sustainability.

Innovation: Challenges and opportunities

Imran believes that MYH's critical advantage comes from young people and their ability to innovate. But he also notes the importance of involving older people to lend experience, expertise and create structures that allow for consistency, but also provide flexibility. MYH is innovative because it responds to real-time social issues in novel ways. For example, MYH brings together diverse individuals with disparate professional experience, from the BBC to Reuters to the Healthcare Commission, presents them with a challenge and then works through the various viewpoints to reach an appropriate and innovative solution.

As Imran noted, the next challenge is using new technology, such as web 2.0 and 3.0 as tools to help MYH become 'custodians' of innovation. If successful in doing so, MYH hopes to develop into an organisation that orchestrates innovation locally in terms of ideas, taking the best ideas and delivering them. MYH believes youth are best placed to do this work because they are the group which will be most

affected by issues such as climate change in years to come. Yet the divisions and entrenched community barriers that come with age are often less strongly defined in youth, and therefore it is easier, and more natural, for them to imagine solutions that adults simply can't see.

MYH also sees innovation as the key ingredient to making politics “with a capital P” more interesting and accessible for youth. Imran notes that while the statistics show that more youth vote for X-Factor contestants than in general elections, it is not because they don't care, but because they feel more comfortable and able to do so. That is why Imran is trying to get national government to use eBay-style rating for public services. He firmly believes that for young people to become engaged with politics their experience of it must change, for example, by using technology to help young people see and understand the differences between the political parties, which for many seem increasingly the same. Having knowledge presented in a way that fits in with how youth already experience and interact with the world around them is essential to creating active citizens and leaders.

Name: Newham Young Mayor and Youth Council

Web site: www.newham.gov.uk/YoungMayor/

Location: Newham, London, United Kingdom

Purpose: To enable local young representatives to inform and take local decisions and be the pinnacle of the pyramid of processes to involve young people in local decision-making.

What is the Young Mayor scheme?

A Young Mayor is a young person who is elected by other young people to represent them. The Young Mayor leads a Youth Council to represent the views of young people across the borough – consisting of runners-up in the Young Mayor election along with elected representatives from schools, youth forums and marginalised groups. The Youth Council helps local decision-makers to engage more effectively with young people, listening to their ideas and opinions, and it has real power to influence Council decision-making on the services and issues affecting young people.

The first Young Mayor election was pioneered in Middlesbrough in 2002. These elections were designed to introduce young people to democratic participation at an early age. The hope was that this process would normalise voting behaviour in young people and also raise awareness in the wider population. More than six years on, there are now Young Mayors in Lewisham, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Melton, and Wyre Forest, Lambeth and North Tyneside, and there will soon be Young Mayors for the first time in North East Lincolnshire and Camden. The Government thinks that the Young Mayor initiative is a genuinely effective model of youth representation and has recommended that all local authorities should undertake it.

Key ingredients: Make it real

The Young Mayor Scheme works, first and foremost, because it is real – it gives young people a budget, a seat at the table and a voice in decision-making that delivers local change.

The Young Mayor role is not about ‘token’ activities such as cutting ribbons. The Young Mayor of Newham and Youth Council have real power and influence over local services. They are responsible for distributing over £1.5 million of money from the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds. This money is spent on local activities and facilities for Newham’s young people. The Young Mayor also has a specific fund of £25,000 to distribute locally, initiating new projects, strengthening existing work or doing something completely unique for local young people.

This emphasis on effecting local change is a key element of the scheme – and is what sets it apart from other programmes. Other initiatives tend to operate regionally and/or nationally – meaning that elected young people can be quite disconnected from local issues and local young people. While they have a substantial regional and national role, visible, local outcomes and impact, that makes a noticeable difference in young people’s lives is not always put into effect.

The scheme is also inherently democratic – young people are elected on real policies, and are accountable to the electorate. The issues that the Young Mayor of Newham and Youth Council tackle are strongly evidence-based and are drawn out directly from Newham’s Household Panel, and Young People’s and Annual Residents’ Surveys. This is supplemented by conversations with young constituents during the Young Mayor election campaign and throughout Youth Councillors’ terms in office. For example, in 2008, the focus was on crime, jobs and education, while in 2009, the focus is on recycling and renewable energy. The aim is to adjust the agenda and priorities to keep pace with the changing needs and priorities of local young people, set by young people.

The scheme is very much led by young people – who are involved in the running and design from start to finish. It benefits the wider Youth Council, nominees and candidates in elections, and every young person in the borough who is touched by the election processes. The fact that almost 10,000 young

people voted in the last Newham election underscores this. For all young people who take part as nominees, candidates or simply by voting, the process reinforces that their voices are being heard and there is a clear link between placing a cross on a ballot paper and tangible local change.

The final key ingredient of the scheme is that ‘it passes the test of any democratic process’: that is, it’s clear and simple (taking less than 10 minutes to explain) and young people understand it.

‘Everyone benefits’

The initiative is an effective catalyst for engaging, involving and empowering young people at the start of their journey into informal as well as formal political activity. The fun and excitement generated by the campaigning and electoral process is a powerful driver for greater involvement – and begins what, hopefully, is to become a lifelong habit of civic participation in elections and democratic processes. The scheme offers skills and experiences to young people who take up positions as Young Mayors, Deputies, Youth Council members, advisers, candidates and nominees, as well as voters, and it raises the profile of local young people, increases awareness of issues affecting young people, and creates a positive image of young people in the community. But beyond this, the scheme also offers adult politicians enhanced legitimacy, strengthens local accountability for young people, and can drive improvements in public services.

Innovation: A democratic mandate for young people

One of the most innovative dimensions of the scheme is the way in which it builds on, and adds value to, more-traditional youth participation approaches and activities. Specifically, the Young Mayor scheme brings a local focus to the youth participation agenda, and innovatively combines youth participation with representation.

The limitations of more traditional approaches to youth participation are that only a certain segment of young people tend to get involved (and tend to be self-selected, or, even worse, adult-selected), and young people do not always feel that they have a clear role or sense of accountability. The democratically-elected representation model espoused by the Young Mayor scheme overcomes some of the limitations of traditional participation models. First, the model ensures much broader representation, evident, says Darren Jones (Young Mayor Co-ordinator), “in the faces, and in the figures, when you meet the people involved”. Second, within this approach, young people have a clear role and know they are accountable to those who have elected them. Democratically elected young people “hold an ardent personal mandate for local action – and feel a strong sense of responsibility to their electorate along with the passion to change young people’s lives for the better”.

The Young Mayor scheme thus “takes the participatory agenda one step further: it is something of a natural evolution of participation work”. Practitioners have been doing strong work around how to build a culture of participation in organisations and get young people involved and the participation agenda has effectively prepared the ground for adults to cede some of their power and influence to young people. The Young Mayor scheme builds on this and takes it one step further by giving young people democratic validity and representation.

Disseminating learning and collaboration

Those working on the Young Mayor scheme recognise that its structure can be refined and improved, and acknowledge that there is plenty of learning going on. The recently established Young Mayor Network, launched in Newham, will provide a forum for Young Mayors and those involved in supporting them to share experiences on a regional and national level, with a view to getting their voices heard on a national stage; collaborate on projects and campaigns; provide support for each other; and to advocate and promote the scheme to others.

Overcoming challenges

Establishing culture change: One of the challenges lies in taking up an approach that is new and emerging. This involves “challenging existing attitudes and behaviour, and all that kind of social change; it’s really innovative stuff, cutting edge – not everyone understands it immediately”. Establishing culture change in any local authority can be quite difficult, says Jones, unless one has senior-level buy-in. However, once senior-level buy-in is established, “it happens” – given that priorities are set from the top, and built into cabinet proceedings “it perpetuates that culture change”.

Negative perceptions of young people: Additionally, the scheme is challenged by some adults’ reticence toward giving young people leadership roles, compounded by a media that perpetuates negative portrayals of young people. Young Mayors play an important role in representing young people in a positive manner to the media, speaking publicly on behalf of other young people, highlighting the positive things that young people are doing, and proactively working to create positive media opportunities. For example, the Young Mayor of Newham has been interviewed by BBC London News, MTV Switch and appeared twice on The Politics Show, as well as penning several articles in national media. Locally, there are regular features in the Newham Magazine, delivered to every residence in the borough – and ‘report backs’ written by the Young Mayor for his constituents. Jones explains that this sets into motion a positive cycle of media opportunities, which then perpetuates culture change among adults as well, who “start to understand that young people have got opinions, and they can articulate these”.

Resistance to the concept of a Young Mayor: Some concerns centre on the competitive nature of the contest, and out of legitimate desires to protect some young people from its inherently adversarial quality. These can be compounded by concern that young people who face additional barriers to participation in general – through disability, social or economic factors – may be disadvantaged. However, evidence counters this view: engagement has been highly representative and young people who have not felt able to engage in more conventional initiatives have benefited from and remained involved in schemes. Additionally, candidates who stand and fail to be elected have been keen to participate as Young Advisors or as part of a Youth Council, rather than being alienated or discouraged.

Sustainability and success

Communication is key to getting buy-in from relevant parties, such as local authorities and schools: Communicating the programme as an asset is very important – for example, showing how the programme feeds into the education system’s agenda, and the Every Child Matters framework, or, for senior officers in local authorities, it is about communicating how the scheme contributes to effective local political leadership for adults. After demonstrating a common agenda, and getting buy-in through this, there tends to be a very positive response from this point on.

Getting support from adults with the right set of skills: When young people are elected, they need to be put next to the political centre, and support needs to be provided as appropriate. This can be quite difficult, according to Jones, as there are not many supporters and mentors available; the concept is still emerging. A broad and diverse knowledge base and skill set are required, including expertise in youth work and child protection; an understanding of effective ways to consult with and engage young people; representative lobbying and campaigning; as well as speechwriting and articulating messages. However, on a positive note, high-calibre professionals who see emerging democratic engagement as an exciting area to be involved in have shown enthusiasm about taking up such roles.

Name: Otesha

Web site: <http://otesha.org.uk>

Date Founded: 2003

Location: United Kingdom (and Canada, Australia)

Purpose: Inspires and empowers young people to champion environmental sustainability.

History and development: Innovation in action

Started in 2003, Otesha is the brainchild of Jocelyn Land-Murphy and Jessica Lax, two college-aged Canadians fresh back from a life-changing experience in Kenya. Living in deprived communities in Africa made the girls realise their resource consumption far exceeded that of the local population. Upon returning, they agreed to take action, first gathering 30 friends and family and telling their story, which soon developed into a play they wanted to share with a wider audience. Because of their focus on sustainability, Jess and Joss knew they couldn't use buses or cars to get around, and thus began the concept of the cycle tour, which remains Otesha's main programme.

Combining cycling with theatre, learning and adventure, the cycle tours are six-week programmes in which groups of young people aged 18-28 ride around the country giving performances about sustainability to schools and at festivals. While Otesha plans the routes, schedules the dates of the performance and arranges lodging, each group plan their own community, from what issues they want to discuss, to how they are going to live, eat and travel as a group. The challenges in this programme are multiple, from the physical toil of cycling to the mental courage needed to perform. Through these activities, the young people learn skills such as public presenting, group communication, negotiation, and planning. They also spend volunteering days engaging in a wide range of experiences, from horticulture farms and renewable energy projects to intentional communities and bike-recycling programmes, and have sharing sessions where they teach their own skills to other members of the group.

The power of individuals to effect change is at the heart of Otesha's strategy of change and youth leadership. Not only do they have a commitment to inspire, teach and develop leadership skills in youth, but they are also fervently committed to, in the words of the well-known Gandhi quote, "being the change they wish to see in the world". Since 2003, when the programme began, Otesha has spread from its original location in Canada to Australia and, most recently, the UK. Their success can be seen across their range of programmes and activities, and has proven replicable and scalable because of *how* they do what they do. Otesha is a dedicated Youth-led organisation, the oldest member of staff being 26. This peer-to-peer environment makes changing the world a matter among friends, rather than an obstacle confronting individuals. Additionally, the constant support, mentoring and encouragement of all participants has meant that Otesha is as much driven by staff as it is by volunteers and alumni.

Conceptualising leadership: Building confident and empowered young people

While Otesha does build young leaders, they also don't use the term 'leadership' to get young people involved. Liz McDowell (Project Director, Otesha UK) thinks that using the language of leadership often distances youth from opportunities. She finds that leadership among youth is often seen as stiff, and associated with 'skill development' for purposes of CV-building, rather than the fun that it can be. For Otesha, involving youth is as simple as getting them excited about changing the world from the angle of environmental sustainability in the context of their interests, needs and lives.

Leadership can be an intimidating concept for many young people, something with which they don't self-identify. According to McDowell, the combination of the enormity of the world's problems and the message of fear and guilt around 'getting involved' has paralysed many young people. In order to undo the feelings of powerlessness, Otesha's cycle tours and school projects help youth understand and harness their consumer power by helping them realise that what they eat and wear and how they get around has a larger global impact.

From those small seeds of understanding, Otesha combats the feeling of individual powerlessness by providing examples of change young people have inspired. Otesha helps young people develop the ability to dream and the skills to do, not only in relation to one project throughout their lives, but, for example: what kind of work they want to do, what they hope to study, where they would like to volunteer, and how they can create personal lives that reflect their values. While the focus might be environmental sustainability young people decide how, where and what to take on.

Key ingredients: Being the change

The message of 'being the change' is motivating for the schools that the cycle tours visit. When a group of Otesha cyclists arrive at a school out of breath the young people can see that other people just like them are making real-life commitments to living in different ways. Small seeds of inspiration can bring big changes. In the first six-week tour Otesha reached roughly 12,000 people through school performances and festivals. Everywhere they went they challenged people to think of the one thing they could do to lead change. They asked people to put that one action on a postcard and post it to Otesha only once they had completed the action. That first year, they received thousands of postcards, with actions ranging from only buying fair-trade chocolate to giving up a car or quitting a job. Otesha recognises and celebrates all levels of achievement, realising that it takes both the big and the small in equal measure to foment change.

Monitoring and evaluation: Learning through the process

For Otesha, the process of each cycle tour, small group project in a school or alumni coaching session is a way to learn, hone and improve what they do and how they do it. Throughout all of their activities they allocate significant time and energy to feedback, which is an essential part of their monitoring and evaluation. Instead of making monitoring and evaluation a separate part of the programme, or an add-on, Otesha integrates it into everything they do. The cycle tours are an excellent example of their approach, which utilises different forms of feedback. On cycle tours, the first feedback session occurs after training week in the form of anonymous written feedback. Then, halfway through the tours, there is a retreat where participants reflect on their experiences and intentions. At the end of the tour, there is another big group-feedback session. Additionally, there are one-to-one feedback sessions at the conclusion of the tour where Otesha asks tour members if and how they would like to stay involved with the organisation.

As McDowell notes, feedback and monitoring and evaluation isn't about ticking boxes on funding sheets, rather it is integral to creating programmes and adapting the current ones to meet the need and expand and increase the influence of what they do. Furthermore, as we have seen, the different forms and mechanisms through which to channel that feedback means that youth can express their feelings in the way they are most comfortable. This is the central message of Otesha: there are big challenges to meet, but a million ways to meet them. For Otesha, encouraging young people to use their strengths to meet those obstacles will only mean more success in the long term.

Visualising and celebrating the impact

Celebrating successes is an Otesha theme, as is measuring the impact of what they do. Otesha operates with full awareness that what they do will not have the same impact on each individual, nor each group of people. Rather, they measure impact using a bulls-eye. In the middle of the bulls-eye is deep life-long commitment to climate change, and the people impacted at this level are the cycle participants who have the most intense experience. Next are the young people targeted by the projects at schools, an estimated 10% of whom change their behaviour because of what they learn through Otesha. The last circle of the bulls-eye is general awareness-raising, bringing the issue of sustainability and the steps that can be taken to reach that goal to a wider community.

The real change-makers, from the Otesha point of view, are the cycle-tour members, who go back into their lives with the desire and tools to shape a new future based around the goals of sustainability. It is building that passion and teaching youth how to harness it into real-life change that Otesha sees as its greatest achievement.

Including diversity: Meeting Youth where they are

Otesha is very clear about the target beneficiaries of its core programmes. According to McDowell, it is generally for those already engaged in volunteering, and typically includes those who have attended or are planning to attend a four-year college course. However, there is diversity in terms of variety of interests, including theatre lovers, cycle enthusiasts, and those with a passion for working in schools. So while its demographics may seem narrow (primarily middle-class and roughly 60% women), within that group there is a wealth of skill and interest diversity.

Otesha reaches more marginalised groups in schools, or through programmes like their involvement with Prince's Trust xl clubs. Working with youth who might not be aware of terms like 'fair-trade', 'organic', or 'sweatshop' means starting the conversation at a different level, which McDowell thinks is imperative to helping youth learn about how sustainability fits into their lives and the lives of people around the world. But telling kids about sweatshops isn't about motivating them with guilt. According to McDowell, Guilt doesn't motivate people; it doesn't get people to do anything." Instead, as with the Prince's Trust xl clubs programme, Otesha connects issues like sweatshops to a larger discussion about the group's project of ethical fashion.

Sustainability: Using the challenges as advantages and engaging support

Otesha operates like a family, a hallmark of many of the programmes we have showcased. Alumni contact staff to talk about projects they want to initiate, get advice on how to move forward, and also form integral parts of Otesha's advisory board, assist in financial planning and serve as cycle-tour leaders. Keeping connected is integral to maximising impact. Otesha supports this by connecting alumni to information about small bits of funding, or to resources about careers and opportunities to continue advocating for sustainability.

Additionally, because Otesha is Youth-led calling for support and advice doesn't feel intimidating, it seems natural. While sustaining a Youth-led model can be challenging and time-consuming, Otesha believes the benefits of allowing young people and staff to learn from and nurture each other means that they can build a highly engaged network with a long duration of engagement.

Having a Youth-led programme has its challenges. There is often a barrier to knowledge and expertise, but Otesha has been lucky in that respect, according to McDowell. They count alumni as key legal and financial advisors.

With Otesha, the experience is where the learning happens, which means each interaction must be one that is mutually beneficial. As a result, Otesha is a place of rapid change, as well as slower skill-building. Because Otesha is Youth-led, they often find they have a lot of energetic participants who want to run with loads of different ideas. The challenge is often staying focused on their goals and making their core programmes really great, instead of sprouting off in all different directions. Conversely, some of the projects being developed by tour alumni develop slowly, and Otesha is happy to support them as they learn and develop the skills they need to make their projects come to life. Otesha is concerned with cultivating passionate, responsible and capable young people who are committed to driving the sustainability agenda at many different levels. It is this passion which makes Otesha an incubator of future leaders.

Name: Public Allies

Website: www.publicallies.org

Location: United States

Date Founded: 1992

Purpose: To advance new leadership to strengthen communities, non-profits and civic participation.

History and development

Public Allies was started in 1992, in Washington, DC, by two young women, Vanessa Kirsch and Katrina Browne, who mobilised a diverse network of young leaders and mentors to counter apathy and engage young people in civic and community life. Public Allies believes in the untapped energy and desire for change that young people embody and seeks to use that as a powerful force for change. Paul Schmitz, CEO of Public Allies and advisor to the White House on innovation, sees Public Allies' grounding in an asset-based development approach as integral to the way in which the programme works with young people.

Conceptualising leadership

Public Allies, in many ways, makes leadership look easy. It explicitly states its intent to create young leaders and has a well-tested definition of what it considers a leader to be and how leadership should be taught. Public Allies has a three-part definition of leadership. They see it "as an action many can take, not a position few can hold", with the importance placed on the verb – *to lead* – rather than the noun *leader*. Second, it is "about taking responsibility and engaging others to work for common purpose". And finally, it incorporates the practice of values. For Schmitz, the way you become a leader others want to follow is by practising the values of inclusion, collaboration, ability to recognise everyone's assets, continuous learning and integrity. Public Allies' definition is based on the notion of those three ideas and grounded in those five values.

Public Allies has a focus on potential, ensuring everyone is enabled and empowered to take responsibility, step up and act to make a difference. Schmitz uses the Civil Rights movement as an example. The popular story of the Civil Rights movement is that one day, Rosa Parks got tired on a bus and decided to sit down, and this inspired thousands of people to create change. The other narrative is that the actions of Rosa Parks, herself a NAACP leader, met a ready response from people at the grassroots who had years of training in organising and non-violent protest. This narrative says that thousands of leaders were ready – when the spark was lit, all of these people had the potential, belief in themselves and skills to act. For Public Allies, the top-down myth about the movement gets it all wrong; a bottom-up perspective best explains the roots of real leadership inspiring social change.

Key ingredients

Public Allies places young people from 18-30 in non-profit jobs in top organisations in the US. Therefore, much of the time spent in the Public Allies programme is spent within the organisations. Part of preparing the young people to do those jobs is about developing their 'soft' skills (referred to elsewhere in this paper as social and emotional skills/competencies). At the beginning of each course they have intensive training programmes. They start with a week-and-a-half core training as a group and are linked with a liaison/mentor for every 10-15 'Allies', or peers. Finally, where they suspect there might be a greater struggle during the year for a particular young person, that individual will receive greater support from the staff at Public Allies. After the initial training, Allies are placed within organisations for four days a week. The fifth day is spent doing leadership development, which includes weekly workshops, community-building exercises, reflection, feedback and team projects.

Public Allies' grassroots leadership philosophy finds an unusual alignment with the leadership curriculum used by the US Army. Divided into three parts, this philosophy focuses on being, knowing and doing. The

belief is that the first step in being a leader is knowing who you are as a person; including an awareness of individual mission, values and character, and how those are negotiated with others. Then there is the knowledge you need to achieve your mission, including the skills to complete the activities required. Finally, there is the practice of those components. According to Schmitz, the vast majority of leadership programmes start with the 'know' and 'do', leading to a mass of highly skilled dysfunctional people. Therefore, unlike a lot of other programmes, Public Allies firmly grounds its curriculum in the 'be' category.

The state of youth leadership, according to Schmitz, often fails to realise that the best thing you can do is give people the confidence and ability to work with others. While training someone how to dress well and become competent at public speaking is nice, giving someone the belief in their ability to make a difference and work in a variety of contexts with a range of people is what really has the potential to develop young people with the ability to lead.

Working in the community: assets and change

The work of Jon McKnight and Jody Cressman, the founding gurus of Public Allies, is at the heart of the work the organisation does. Their 'asset-based' approach to community and youth development, which focuses on what communities already have, their existing assets, is a reflection of the current changes taking place in the US, and worldwide. As Schmitz explains, we are living in an age where our society is defined by diversity and participation. Technology has ushered in an age where people's expectations for participation and belief in how decisions should be made has changed. Additionally, the US is an increasingly diverse society. By 2050, it is projected that the majority of Americans will be non-white. Consequently, in an age defined by greater participation and diversity, the ability to recognise the gifts and talents innate in every person with humility changes the way people engage with each other.

This approach is a practical one: if leaders go into communities recognising their gifts and talents as well as needs then they can help others do the same. Schmitz believes this model "is the opposite of most service models that say, I'm full, you're empty; let me fill you up". In a world of increased participation and diversity, Schmitz thinks there is no question that this top-down model is the wrong one.

Visualising and celebrating the impact

The Public Allies model of monitoring and evaluation is rigorous. The assessment process for the young people or Allies consists of four different types of activities. There are pre-, mid- and post-year surveys, focus groups and presentations. The presentations, called '360s', are perhaps the most important. Three times during the year the Allies are reviewed by their team members, supervisor at their placements and programme manager at Public Allies. The individual must show how they have reached each of the Public Allies leadership outcomes. The fourth measurement is the final presentation, where the Allies do a 15-minute presentation of learning in front of their fellow Allies, supervisors and members of the community where they have to defend how they met each of their learning objectives.

Serving the marginalised

Public Allies works with young people whose background and personal experience would be barriers to inclusion in most leadership programmes, including college graduates, former gang members and school drop-outs. This presents particular challenges, especially in the workplace, where young people from disadvantaged backgrounds need more support than others.

In terms of getting youth to participate in the programme, Public Allies has no problems attracting a diverse body of young people. In fact, the programme participants are 70% people of colour, 50% college and 50% non-college, with an overall retention rate of 85-90%. This diversity and success is achieved because all of two factors: recruitment at the local level and the asset-based curriculum.

The Public Allies staff look at recruitment as a sales job to people about their potential. When they go out and speak to young people about the programme, they are aware of the diversity of backgrounds from which they come. Part of encouraging participation is about helping people to see themselves. To do this, young people need to see that members of the programme look like them – not just their face, but also their clothes, style and manner. This helps them recognise their potential. And because Public Allies

focuses on developing young people's potential to make a difference about what they are passionate about, young people feel able to be included based on the needs and issues within their own lives.

The asset-based curriculum is also central to inclusion. Schmitz noted two characteristics of working with marginalised youth: one, their backgrounds are full of well-intentioned helpers who haven't always helped and have in some cases been patronising, which can cause tension; and two, these young people often volunteer as a part of their everyday lives (for example, by taking care of family members), so going out to another community to help someone else would make no sense. Schmitz argues that the more society lifts up and recognises the different ways in which people contribute and make a difference in their families and communities, the more we will begin to see how much is already being done. Public Allies does this by measuring youth against what they are doing at home, in the community and in terms of the issues they care about, firmly linking personal, social and civic responsibility.

Innovation and young people

Entrepreneurship and innovation are core to the programme's ethos and are seen an important conceptual tool for young people because they often have a less firmly defined world view and aren't as attached to the existing order. However, the social entrepreneurship world is far removed from many of the Allies because it is often based in the best colleges, where social networks and connections with powerful and influential people are made as a matter of course. Allies might not have the formal innovation network that a young Harvard graduate might, but according to Schmitz they "probably have a better idea".

However, placing young people in entry-level non-profit positions often doesn't square with Public Allies' drive to get their participants to be entrepreneurial, simply because there is not much room in many of these environments to be in the driver's seat, making decisions. But the change doesn't need to happen while at the Allies programme; rather, by teaching future leaders to think more inclusively about individual gifts, group potential and who is around the table, a lot can change.

As Public Allies sees it, innovation is about encouraging people to be entrepreneurial, think about what they can do and take responsibility to do it. Part of this leadership model is stepping up and acting to make change. The clear definition of what a leader is drives this concept of innovation, as it does all of the Public Allies' work. The challenge is to get young people to see themselves and their communities in new ways, from both a fundamentally positive and realistic point of view. Realising that those two goals are indeed iterative is one of the great successes of this model. As Schmitz mentions, creating the next Obama is about empowering the grassroots, bottom-up strategy Public Allies so believes in, so that when a change is in the air, there are competent and functional leaders to take control.

Name: Tower Hamlets Summer University

Website: www.summeruni.org

Date Founded: 1995

Location: London, United Kingdom

Purpose: To provide a diverse range of educational opportunities that promote independent learning for 11- to 25-year-olds.

Description and aims

Tower Hamlets Summer University (THSU) is an independent charity, which pioneers innovative approaches to independent learning for 11- to 25-year-olds. Each year, they provide a vibrant programme of free courses and activities, combining academic and vocational study, performing and visual arts, music, sports, information technology, new media, work and careers, personal development, entertainment and year-round volunteering opportunities.

THSU aims to promote independent learning and increase educational achievement, increase access to educational opportunities through creative partnerships between all sectors – statutory, voluntary, business and industry – and help young people make informed, positive decisions that enhance their lives and the lives of those around them through the provision of high-quality, sustainable opportunities. THSU is also dedicated to promoting racial tolerance and good community relations.

History and development

THSU was initially piloted as a crime-prevention initiative and to counter the impact of the rise of the BNP in the local community in 1995. It provided educational opportunities for young people, particularly those at risk of social exclusion, and offered progression routes to employment.

Since then, each year, the projects have gradually changed focus, with new trends and shifts in education and youth policy. THSU is in its 14th successive year, and is now firmly established as an organisation with a strong identity and appeal for young people. Its success has inspired 32 London boroughs to develop their own schemes based on the THSU model, and it now reaches, engages and benefits thousands of young people across the capital. Given THSU's commitment to raising the aspirations of as many young people as possible, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation is funding an independent feasibility study into the potential for national roll-out of the THSU model.

Involvement of young people

Since its inception, THSU has been committed to involving young people in its organisational functioning and development and was one of the first organisations to think about meaningful ways to engage young people in their work.

Through their *Peer Motivator* scheme, young people aged between 16 and 23 are trained to develop skills to work with other young people. Training includes teamworking, positive communication, equal opportunities, mediation, conflict resolution, customer care, interpersonal skills, disability awareness and marketing. The Summer Peer Motivator Scheme is accredited through Open College Network, originally developed in partnership with Tower Hamlets College. Since 2008, THSU has become an OCN Accreditation Centre. *The Young Ambassadors Programme* recruits and trains young people to advise on the three broad areas of THSU's work – sports, arts and business – to ensure that programmes are attractive and relevant to young people, and to advise on events and marketing. Training includes event management, fundraising and public speaking, and young people are responsible for representing the charity locally and London-wide, meeting with local politicians and attending debates at the House of Commons. Additionally, two young people who have taken part in THSU for over three years sit on the board of trustees, bringing the voices of the youth the programme is responsible for, to the board and giving the young people experience of formal management bodies.

Liz Jewell (Development Director) describes the relationship between adults and young people in the organisation as a “true partnership”. The involvement of young people in the organisation has multiple benefits. Young people get the opportunity to develop a variety of skills and identify and show their talent, as well as get “a taste of how they should be treated” and a sense that their contribution is worth something. This, in turn, boosts self-worth and confidence and enhances their social wellbeing. The benefits to the organisation are also great: young people play an important role in enabling the organisation to stay relevant, thereby bringing in more young participants. This was particularly vital in the early days of the organisation, when the number of staff was limited, but remains integral today: as Paddy Chatterton (Programme Director) acknowledges, “If we weren’t in this constant conversation with young people, we’d lose it very quickly.”

Conceptualising leadership

While THSU recognises that young people’s involvement in the organisation’s development is critical, they avoid using the language of leadership – which they feel can be patronising towards young people, and has elitist connotations. Chatterton says, “When I hear youth leadership, I do think of identifying future leaders – and we’re young-person-led, which means we’ll work with any young person, but we’re not trying to make ‘the politicians of the future’ or something like that.” Jewell feels that ‘leadership’ sometimes implies creating an artificial environment where young people can take the lead. THSU – while not framing itself as a youth leadership initiative – is inherently Youth-led. Also, THSU does not dictate which skills and experiences are important for young people: rather, as Jewell emphasises, “it’s them realising their ambitions, their potential, they’re developing skills that they feel are important”.

Key ingredients

Inclusivity and diversity:

THSU programmes are highly diverse and inclusive – even though they do not specifically set out to target particular groups. Chatterton emphasises: “We’re very much about not segregating young people into the advantaged and the disadvantaged, and the hard-to-reach and the easy-to-reach ...[it’s] just young people coming together and having fun and mixing – you know, mixing different cultures and backgrounds and groups”. In fact, the opportunity to connect with peers from different backgrounds seems to attract many young people to the programme, who recognise it as an opportunity to meet young people from different ethnic, faith and socioeconomic backgrounds in a climate of tolerance and inclusivity.

This aspect of the programme can serve as a powerful tool for bridging social divides among young people, providing them with an opportunity to find commonalities in their lives and in the challenges they face. In particular, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds get the chance to see that they are as capable of the task at hand as their better-off counterparts, which boosts confidence, self-belief and aspirations and can break down negative self-images.

“Regular as clockwork” and room to progress:

“It’s not a one year initiative – and if you miss it, that’s it. It’s regular as clockwork.”

Paddy Chatterton, Programme Director

THSU builds in opportunities for young people to ‘dip in as they need to’, and ‘take what they need at that point in their life’. For example, an 11-year-old may want to play football and need a safe and social place to be. In later years, that individual may be making career choices, and get involved for other purposes. In operating as an ongoing initiative, part of the ‘youth calendar year’, THSU enables young people to engage in flexible ways throughout their adolescence and allows young people to find their own direction forward. The programme also offers young people clear progression routes following their participation in the programme – some of the staff started as participants in the courses, became peer motivators, then team leaders, then went off to do a short-term job – and then applied to work at THSU.

Showcasing success:

Like many of the case studies presented in this report, a key element of the THSU programme involves celebrating the achievements of young people. They offer showcasing events and festivals where young people can exhibit their work. They stress the importance of hosting these events in high-profile spaces, to reinforce the sense of achievement that young people experience.

Innovation: Creative partnerships with the corporate sector

One of the most innovative dimensions of the way in which THSU operates is the manner in which it increases access to educational opportunities through creative partnerships between all sectors – statutory, voluntary, business and industry. In particular, says Chatterton, “we know how to get the best out of corporate partnerships”. He explains that while some charities tend to keep corporates at arm’s length, THSU embraces and draws inspiration from these relationships. For THSU, corporate partnerships are about more than lending space and funding: “We’re very much about ‘let’s work together’: we’re excited about working with you, not just about getting your funding’.”

Challenge: Securing funding for innovative initiatives in the long-term

One of the key challenges in THSU’s work relates to the predominance of short-term funding initiatives, which can serve to impede innovation. Short-term funding initiatives make it difficult to sustain innovative projects in the long term, due to time constraints on planning and evaluating projects, and there is little space to internalise lessons learnt so that the next project can be improved. This experience is not something unique to THSU, and some of these issues are currently being addressed by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) Funding Commission¹⁰⁷, which was launched in February 2009. The NCVO Funding Commission was formed to respond to the voluntary sector’s concerns and uncertainty about funding over the next 10 years. Some of the specific issues that they are exploring, and looking to resolve, include the need to ensure that funding strengthens the longer-term prospects of voluntary organisations, helping them become more resilient and sustainable, and the need to ensure that learning is actively pursued and generated, as well as adequately resourced¹⁰⁸.

Sustainability

THSU’s example offers insight into what long-term sustainability requires. They boast a charismatic chief executive, a history of extraordinary fundraising – which is largely down to funders’ trust in the effectiveness of THSU’s work, and the close relationship their chief executive has formed with them over the years – and a balance between a dependable offering and a continually rebranded programme that has new appeal to young people: “[making] something we’ve been doing for 15 years sound brand spanking new”.

Appendix B. Theories of leadership

Table 3. Eight major theories of leadership ¹⁰⁹	
Great Man theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the capacity for leadership is inherent – greater leaders are born, not made Great leaders will arise when there is a great need Rooted in 19th-C tradition of associating the history of society with the history of great men The term ‘Great Man’ was used because, at the time, leadership was thought of primarily as a male quality, especially in terms of military leadership Criticised for androcentric bias, and for ignoring gender.
Trait theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People are born with inherited traits, some of which are particularly suited to leadership Pioneered by Thomas Carlyle First academic theory of leadership Describes types of behaviour and personality traits associated with effective leadership. Leadership development involves identifying and measuring leadership qualities, screening potential leaders from non-leaders, then training those with potential.
Behavioural theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders can be ‘made’ Successful leadership is rooted in definable, learnable behaviour People can learn to become leaders through teaching and observation Developed in reaction to trait approach Leadership seen as a set of behaviours Aimed at evaluating the behaviour of ‘successful leaders’ and determining a behaviour taxonomy and identifying broad leadership styles Rooted in behaviourism, focuses on the actions of leaders, rather than on mental qualities or internal states.
Situational theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective leadership depends on a range of situational factors Different situations call for different characteristics – thus, no single optimal profile of a leader exists Emerged as reaction to trait theory.
Contingency theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective leadership is contingent upon numerous variables, including leader’s preferred style, capabilities and behaviours, qualities of followers and aspects of a situation; No leadership style is best suited in all situations Similar to situational theory, in that there is no single ‘right way’ to lead – main difference is that situational theory tends to focus more on the behaviours leaders should adopt, given situational factors (often follower behaviour), whereas contingency theory takes a broader view that includes contingent factors about leader capability and other variables within the situation Focus on particular variables related to the environment that might determine which leadership style is best suited for the situation.

Table 3. Eight major theories of leadership¹⁰⁹

Participative theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assumptions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Involvement in decision-making improves the understanding of issues by those who must act on decisions- People are more committed to actions where they have been involved in decision-making; when people make decisions together, social commitment is greater, thereby increasing commitment to decision and task- People are less competitive and more collaborative when working towards shared goals- 'More heads are better than one' when it comes to decision-making• Participative theories posit that the 'ideal' leadership style is one that takes input of others into account• Leaders encourage participation and contributions from group members; help group members feel more relevant and committed to decision-making process – but leader does retain the right to allow the input of others.
Transactional theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assumptions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- People are motivated by reward and punishment- Social systems work best with a clear chain of command – stress on contracts and authority• Also known as 'Management/Managerial theories' – often used in business• Focus on role of supervision, organisation and group performance• Transactional leader works through creating clear structures whereby it is clear what is required of subordinates, and rewards they get by following orders• Leadership based on system of reward and punishment – whereby reward or punishment are contingent on performance• Limitations: assumption of 'rational man' – a person who is motivated by reward and punishment, and behaviour predictable.
Transformational theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assumptions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- People will follow a person who inspires them; a person with a vision can achieve great things- People can be motivated by a leader who injects them with enthusiasm and energy• Also known as 'Relationship theories'• Focus on connections formed between leaders and followers• Transformational leaders:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Motivate and inspire people by helping group members see the importance of the higher good of the task; leadership involves developing and 'selling' a vision- Focus both on performance of group members, but also on helping each member realise his/her potential- Are often charismatic, and embody high ethical and moral standards, and seek to transform.

Appendix C. Youth leadership in the context of human development

Youth leadership should also be understood within the broader context of human development. A US review of definitions and current research on youth development and youth leadership identify five key developmental areas as an effective framework for understanding youth development and youth leadership: *working, learning, thriving, connecting* and *leading*. Youth leadership programmes are typically geared towards producing outcomes that fit within the *leading* and *connecting* areas of development. Desirable outcomes for these areas of development are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Desirable outcomes for youth development and youth leadership ¹¹⁰	
Connecting	Leading
<p>Outcomes implicated in positive youth development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality relationships with peers and adults • Inter-personal skills – ability to build trust, handle conflict, value differences, listen actively and communicate effectively • Sense of belonging and membership (e.g. valuing and being valued by others and being a part of a group) • Ability to empathise with others • Sense of one's own identity apart from and in relation to others • Knowledge of and ability to seek out resources in the community • Ability to network to develop personal and professional relationships. 	<p>Outcomes implicated in positive youth development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to articulate one's personal values • Awareness of how one's personal actions impact the larger community • Ability to engage in the community in a positive manner • Respect and caring for oneself and others • Sense of responsibility to self and others • Integrity • Awareness and appreciation for cultural differences among peers and within the community • Sense of purpose in goals and activities • Ability to follow lead of others where appropriate.
<p>Specific inter-personal skills implicated in the development of leadership abilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to communicate to get a point across • Ability to influence and motivate others • Ability to seek out role models who have been leaders and ability to be a role model for others. 	<p>Specific outcomes implicated in the development of leadership abilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to motivate others • Ability to share power and distribute tasks • Ability to work with a team • Ability to resolve conflicts • Ability to create and communicate a vision • Ability to manage change and value continuous improvement.

Appendix D. Organisational criteria: Fostering youth leadership

Criteria important to creating and sustaining an environment of inclusion and meaningful power-sharing of adults and young people in the organisational context¹¹¹:

- Organisations must **assess and address the attitudes and beliefs of those who will be involved in the changes**. This includes the assumptions held by adults about youth, and vice versa. Do adults believe that the inclusion of youth is simply “good for youth” or do they see it as mutually beneficial?
- Organisations must clearly **articulate the expectations for staff or volunteers in working with youth as decision-makers**. Is the integration of youth the responsibility of all staff? What is the time commitment expected of staff?
- Organisations must **clarify the roles and responsibilities** for youth board or committee members or youth staff. Are they different from adult roles (and if they are different, does the difference facilitate or hinder authentic youth roles)?
- Organisations must **allocate resources to support the integration of youth in an ongoing way**. These may include financial resources (for example, transportation or travel costs), human resources (for example, adult partners), or physical resources (for example, office space for youth partners).
- **Training should be made available for both youth and adults to support their work in a youth-adult partnership** – do not set young people up for failure by giving them responsibility without skills. Adults should be given skills in and preparation for sharing power with young people.
- Organisations should develop a **plan for monitoring and evaluating the integration of youth**. These may include individual performance assessments for both youth and adults (How well did I perform in this group?), evaluations of group process (How well did we work together?), and evaluations of group product or outcome (What did the group accomplish?).

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Sarah Hewes is a researcher at the Young Foundation, where she works on projects including Community Cohesion, Youth Leadership, and Innovation in Health Metrics. She joined the Young Foundation in November 2008 after receiving her MSc in Social Policy and Development from the London School of Economics. Prior to her studies, Sarah completed a fellowship in health advocacy at a national non-profit organisation in New York City, The Medicare Rights Centre, where she conducted in-depth clinical case work for limited income clients, worked to influence federal health policies and served as a state-wide advocate to increase benefits up-take. Additionally, she worked with the Youth Services Opportunity Project, helping to educate young people about homelessness in NYC. Sarah has taught English in Thailand and studied culture and development in Brazil.

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What is youth leadership? Why does youth leadership matter? And how can we support and nurture the development of our young leaders?

‘Taking the lead’ critically examines these questions, bringing together a large body of evidence, including illustrative case studies of organisations in the UK and internationally.

The report was produced as part of a broader programme of work being delivered by The Youth of Today, a consortium of leading youth organisations working together to increase the quality, quantity and diversity of opportunities for young people as leaders of change in their communities.

Lauren Kahn is a research associate at the Young Foundation, Sarah Hewes is a researcher at the Young Foundation, and Rushanara Ali is associate director of the Young Foundation.



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