

Setting up an elected Young Mayor scheme



A guide for Council
Officers supporting
Young Mayor schemes



Contents

	Page
1 Introduction	3
2 Getting started	4
3 Top tips for setting up a Young Mayor scheme	12
4 Acknowledgements	18
5 About BYC and how we can help	19



Published as part of the British Youth Council's Youth Voice programme working with the Department for Education (DfE) to provide a support service for youth participation. The Youth Voice programme aims to support young people's voice and involvement in decision making at a local and national level.

1

Introduction

Over the past decade, there has been a vast increase in the number of youth councils, cabinets, parliaments and forums funded and sponsored by Local Authorities or the voluntary sector. Increasingly local councils have been interested in developing elected Young Mayor schemes, a relatively new model of youth representation. This is due, in part, to the rise of adult Mayor schemes. A Young Mayor scheme can be an alternative to, or compliment other youth participation projects within a Local Authority.

The challenges to actively involving young people in local democracy and decision making (from youth projects and school councils to local youth councils) are vast and varied. This guide will address these and outline the steps to setting up a scheme that will ensure youth participation and its recognition of young people's contributions to their community.

There are also opportunities for Young Mayors who are not directly elected. They may have been selected or chosen to support young people in their community in a honorary or civic role; for example by presenting awards at ceremonies, opening community fêtes or attending events on behalf of their community. There are equivalent Adult Mayors who do a similar role.

The role of the Young Mayor is to represent young people in their area. To do this effectively, they should be politically neutral and represent young people's opinions, not political parties. This will help strengthen their role and ensure they are accountable to the young people they represent.

This guide has been written to support both schemes and make recommendations based on previous learning from Local Authorities from across the UK. The right scheme for your area might be one, or the other, or a mixture of both.

Young Mayor of Lewisham sends out an invitation to key stakeholders inviting them to the election announcement



Getting started

2

What is an elected Young Mayor scheme?

A Young Mayor is a young person, usually 11-18, who is elected by other young people to represent them. There are Young Mayors in place across the country and hundreds of thousands of young people have taken part in elections to put them into office. Turnout in these elections is often higher than the equivalent turnouts in adult elections. This in itself is a big selling point for Local Authorities to run Young Mayor schemes.

In 2010, 49.9% of young people voted in the Young Mayor election and 25.6% of adults voted in the Adult Mayoral election.
(London Borough of Tower Hamlets)

The scheme seeks to empower young people to steer local priorities using a democratic framework. The Young Mayor scheme offers local government the opportunity to prepare young people for active citizenship, enabling them to understand and contribute to their local communities.

“ *A Young Mayor is defined as ‘a young person who is directly elected by other young people to represent them.’* (Young Mayor Network, 2010:4)

A Young Mayor scheme can operate in many different ways. In Lewisham and Newham, the Young Mayor makes decisions with the support of a group of Young Advisors or Youth Councillors who are runners up in the election or who run for a separate election for that particular post. Their role is to represent the concerns of the borough’s young people outside the scheme and enable the Young Mayor to make informed decisions. In Tower Hamlets, when being

Case Study

The main difference that exists between the schemes relates to the home of the Young Mayor within each borough’s structure. For instance, in Lambeth the Young Mayor sits within Lambeth Council’s Legal and Democratic Services Department, and while Newham and Lewisham’s are based within the Mayor’s office, in Tower Hamlets the

Young Mayor scheme sits in the Integrated Youth Support Service. Although the Young Mayor is not a constitutional figure and has limited authority, the placement of the scheme has the potential to influence how they operate and how participants and external people view the scheme.

elected, the Young Mayor runs on three campaigns; these are then chosen as three areas of work that the Young Mayor undertakes in their year of office. They also have a Youth Council, and although they work closely together, they have different agendas and projects.

Adult Elected Mayors?

The Local Government Act 2000 (followed up later by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007) aimed to give local people a chance to have a real say in how they are governed. Councils were required to develop a separation of powers – separate executive and scrutiny functions. A group of no more than ten Councillors were required to form a cabinet and be responsible for executive functions, with the remaining councillors being responsible for scrutinising the performance of the cabinet. Councils were required to consult local stakeholders and propose one of the following types of arrangements for future council governance:

- Directly elected Mayor and a cabinet appointed by the Mayor
- Council Leader appointed by the cabinet with a cabinet appointed either by the council or the Leader

What are the benefits for Young Mayors?

- **Power and influence** - a high-profile elected representative raises the profile of issues that matter to young people, and influences local opinion-formers. Additional control or influence over a budget, for example funding community projects, translates that influence into action.
- **Getting their voices heard** - Young Mayor schemes ensure that young people are more informed and involved in local decision-making. They can see that they are being listened to and that their concerns are being acted on.
- **Understanding and development** - young people gain new skills and develop valuable experiences. Representation promotes the understanding of local democracy and political processes.
- **New skills** – confidence, communication, etiquette, presentation, meeting and campaigning skills are all skills Young Mayors have previously stated that they have taken away from the scheme.
- **Positive representation** - Young Mayors represent young people in the media; countering negative stereotypes and promoting positive images.



We have the Young Mayor to prove the media wrong. To prove that there are young people doing good things for their community. (Young Mayor Lewisham)

What are the benefits for local communities?

- **Informing policy makers** - a Young Mayor helps elected members, local officers and their wider partners understand the issues that affect young people, as well as their needs and opinions, leading to better informed decisions.
- **Developing civic identity** - voting at a young age can become a lifelong habit that leads to greater participation in the democratic process and wider civic society. More people will be interested in local youth elections, standing for and voting in elections.
- **Increasing legitimacy** - Young Mayors provide a voice for a section of the population that often goes unheard. Representation of young people lends credence and focus to the work they undertake with adult politicians.
- **Improving services** - youth representation acts as a catalyst to strengthen local accountability and improve services for young people; making them responsive, user driven and cutting costs long-term.
- **Fulfilling statutory duties** - local authorities have a duty to inform, consult and involve people in the running of local services, as well as a duty to promote democracy - particularly to young people.



If you start to lead by example, you can develop that with the Young Mayor. And when you think of giving the Young Mayor a budget ... you can then start to change and influence your community to realise that young people have been making the best in their own community and then rather than representing young people, young people begin to represent themselves. (Young Mayor Lewisham)

From participation to representation

Traditional youth involvement in decision making has taken the form of youth participation. Representation for young people goes further. Youth representation allows adult politicians to reasonably delegate authority to democratically-elected young people, giving them real influence and power to make decisions.

The democratic mandate of Young Mayors provides the credibility to represent young people. This mandate enables them to take local action on the issues that matter to young people in their area.



I think it shows that we are encouraging young people to be part of the community and the decision-making process, and that's vital for them because this is a large community of young people. If they don't feel that they've got a stake

in the community they live in, that's when I think it could be problematic. I think if they see the adults of this world who are running things and don't want to engage with them, they could easily become disenchanted with the system. So I think it's a very good way of bringing them into all of those things that go on. (Young Mayor Tower Hamlets)

What does a Young Mayor scheme need to be effective?

- Full support and “buy in” of the adult council and elected Mayor or Council leader
- Commitment to let the Young Mayor have some budgetary responsibility
- A clear idea what the Young Mayor can and can't do and therefore establishing boundaries for what impact they can have on decision-making processes
- A formalised structure in which to operate
- A nominated adult champion to help lead and support the Young Mayor scheme
- A formalised Local Authority wide democratic election process
- A mechanism to measure the success of the Young Mayor's involvement
- Projects to help raise the profile and influence of the Young Mayor
- Access to meeting rooms, premises and equipment
- Briefings before meetings
- A youth participation structure to feed in to and lead
- A clear relationship to a broader youth participation structure such as a youth council or parliament



The Youth Mayor meets regularly with leaders of the cabinet and members to inform strategy and decision making. (Lambeth Young Mayor)

Why do they need a budget?

A Young Mayor could act purely as an advisory or consultative advisor. However, experience shows us that Young Mayors who have a control over a specific budget are more successful than those who do not. Providing the Young Mayor with a budget: empowers young people; teaches them a fiscal sense of responsibility and allows them to spend money on things they want, rather than things that Council Officers think they want.

A Lewisham Young Mayor advisor sitting on their throne





It's not tokenism, it's actually real. We actually get a voice and I'm confident. And what Lewisham does for young people, I think it's really great. (Young Mayor Lewisham)

Doesn't having a Young Mayor scheme limit the opportunity to a small number of candidates and only one representative?

Yes. If the scheme operates without other youth participation structures feeding into it, then the opportunity is limited. However, if the scheme is embedded within a local youth council structure it can involve thousands of young people across the Local Authority. The Young Mayor is the focal point but Young Mayor schemes work because they involve the local community. For example:

- 1. Local Authority elections:** in existing Young Mayor schemes, there are often more Young Mayor votes than Adult Councillors receive in their equivalent elections!
- 2. Consultation:** Young Mayors lead Local Authority youth consultation and speak to young people about matters of concern.
- 3. Events:** Young Mayors often lead on local campaigns and events, seeking support from local community and voluntary groups.
- 4. Feeding into other youth participation structures:** by supporting the Young Mayor to link with other youth participation structures, groups and forums across the Local Authority, you allow them to influence and inform decision making at a higher level.
- 5. Awards:** the Young Mayor can present key awards to young people and open new services to support them.



A Young Mayor should be a representative, an ambassador for young people, you know just to represent and like, be more like a spokesperson kind of thing, but I would say not too much of leadership, not too much of power holding. I would say that they've got a responsibility to represent and to listen and to be that kind of envoy. (Young Mayor Lambeth)

Are elections necessary?

Yes - if you want the Young Mayor to be a representative of their community. No - if you would like the Young Mayor to have mainly a civic and honorary role.

Young Mayor elections can provide Local Authorities with a lot more than just a democratic process. They help increase the positive perception of young people, support young people to understand what and who they are voting for as well as lend credence to the role itself. Young Mayors can also be elected through an

internal election from within their Youth Council or Parliament. They are then held accountable to that youth participation structure.

If you are looking to set up a civic or honorary Young Mayor, you may want to think about a selection or nomination process. You could ask candidates to self-nominate and hold interviews like you would for staff, or you could hold a selection day within existing youth participation programmes e.g. the Youth Council.



It is election by their peers which means accountability. It is also about influence with decision makers – it's so much more than a mere activity for young people. It's got meaning. (Worthing Borough Council)

Why so formal?

Adult-elected Mayors have structure and systems in place to support them. It is only logical that a Young Mayor scheme should have the same. This supports Young Mayor authority and lends credibility to the work that they do. It also helps adults in the Local Authority understand what the Young Mayor is supposed to do and how they are meant to work.

It is necessary to establish within the structure some form of protocol so that the Young Mayor can easily and effectively feed into the general workings of the council as a whole. This may take the form of a written constitution or Terms of Reference.

At the same time, some informal workings with regard to communication and style of meetings could be more appropriate and will keep young people interested, informed and engaged.

Having a formal structure will show young people that it is necessary to put forward reasoned arguments and help them prepare and suggest policy changes. A formalised cabinet structure with an agenda ensures that meetings reach positive and constructive conclusions.



The presence of young people in the town hall on the basis that they are here to have their meetings and do what they need to do on an equal footing with everybody else who uses the town hall seems to me to not only send a proper message that these people count just as much as everybody else: it actually seems to me to impact on everybody else who uses the building... it sort of normalises their relationship with young people. (London Borough of Tower Hamlets)

Young Mayor of Newham starting a local road race



Case Study

Real change?

- The Newham Young Mayor has responsibility for a budget of £25,000.
- The Newham Young Mayor and Youth Council's campaigns have raised the profile of environmental sustainability in the borough, particularly around recycling, energy use and local parks.
- The Newham Young Mayor and Youth Council have led the campaign to ensure that all the Olympic and Paralympic venues are available free of charge to local young people after the Games. They also helped design the aquatics centre.

3

Top tips for setting up a Young Mayor scheme

The suggestions below are a few pointers to consider if you have been tasked with setting up a Young Mayor scheme. It is by no means an exhaustive list, nor does it offer a fixed model on how Young Mayor's should operate – there are too many variables to make that possible.

Quick audit

This is the time to ask yourself about what youth participation and representation structures exist in your locality already. If you have an active Youth Council or a group of Young Advisors or Youth Inspectors, now is the time to talk to them and involve them in the process.

Form a steering group

Form a small enthusiastic steering group of young people from existing youth participation programmes and any other young person that is interested in taking part, as well as council officers and elected members to work with while the initial ground work is being done. Handing a "pre-made" Young Mayor scheme over to young people will not work. Key stakeholders need to be involved from day one, have ownership and feel empowered to take the Young Mayor scheme forward.

The following is an idea of services that are involved in Young Mayor steering groups already:

- Democratic Services
- Electoral Services
- Communications and media
- Children's Services
- Schools
- Integrated Youth Support Services
- Adult consultation and engagement

Defining the role of the Young Mayor

Working with the steering group and Young Mayor is important to begin to define what exactly the Young Mayor should do and outline his or her responsibilities and boundaries. Establishing some clear objectives would be a good starting point. Think about how the Young Mayor scheme would link in with the adult structures and vice versa. How will the scheme compliment existing (*continued on page 14*)

Case Study

An interview with the Youth Mayor for Mansfield 2011

After receiving a total of 1,552 votes, 17-year-old Daniel Winfield became Youth Mayor for the Mansfield district in October 2011. We talk to the new found politician about his plans for the next year in his new role.

Are you enjoying your new title of Youth Mayor?

Yes, I am enjoying the title of Youth Mayor; there is a lot of work involved in my new job but I love it. It's full of new people and challenges. I work with the Deputy Youth Mayor and Mansfield District Council and at the moment we are doing tremendously well.

What made you want to be Youth Mayor?

The thing that interested me in becoming Youth Mayor was the fact that it gives the youth of Mansfield a voice and a person who they can talk to if they have any problems they feel are important. Moreover I feel it gives the youth of Mansfield a way to get involved in our local community.

When putting yourself forward for Youth Mayor were you confident you would achieve the position or were you worried about your competition?

I had confidence in my manifesto more than anything, it was the things I wanted to change desperately in Mansfield for our community and that is what kept me focused and confident. Everyone who ran for youth mayor deserved it as much as each other and we were all confident in what we were doing as we all knew it was to make things better for the youth in Mansfield.

As Youth Mayor what exactly are your duties?

My duties as Youth Mayor differ depending on what people are doing and what project I feel I should get involved in. For example I am now a part of the Youth Assembly which is a group of young people that discuss problems in Mansfield. I am also having lots of meetings to achieve the various parts of my manifesto and it is now beginning to fall into place.

What plans do you have for the schools in the Mansfield area?

As for schools I see we need a new way for them to communicate with each other and help each other. Both me, Dawn and Mansfield District council are working with the Mansfield Learning Partnership to do this, and ensure that schools communicate with each other and help each other. In addition to this, as part of my manifesto, I hope to introduce better sex education to schools in hope to make the youth of Mansfield more aware about sex.

Where do you see our education sector by the end of this year? Any drastic changes do think you would have made?

As it is now the government agenda for all schools to become more independent I see a lot more schools becoming Academies. Some see this as a positive and some as a negative, as for me I can see both sides of the argument. However it is up to each individual school to act in the best interest for their students and if they feel this is done by becoming an Academy then I assume it is fully justified.

youth participation programmes and how will they communicate to each other to prevent duplication of work and support a clear youth participation message for your locality?

As the Young Mayor scheme progresses and matures, additional responsibilities and objectives could be assumed. It is also important at this point to decide whether the Young Mayor will have a budget. If so, how much and how this will be administered? Are they seen as a volunteer or a politician? What system does the Adult Mayor or Leader of the Council have? Do you want the Young Mayor scheme to mirror the adult scheme?

Formalising the role of the Young Mayor

Now it's time to think about if you are having an election or not. If you are, you will need to think about the total number of young people to be involved, what kind of Young Mayor structure would be most welcoming and what age range to include. At this stage, a draft constitution and Young Mayor role description could be written. It's important to remember that a constitution should be a living and flexible document and the Young Mayor should have the ability to support informed changes to it.

Elections – how?

Ask yourself which Young Mayor role you are going for – is it a representative model or a civic role? This will tell you whether or not elections are needed to support the process. Think about how the adult Mayor or Leader operates, and which adult role links the best with the youth version you are setting up.

If elections are the way forward for your scheme, the British Youth Council has written a guide to help you. You can find this in the resources section of our website: www.byc.org.uk/resource-centre

Young Mayor inauguration ceremony

At the start (and end) of a Young Mayor role, you may want to think about holding an inauguration or election announcement ceremony. Some Young Mayor schemes use this to feature the work of the outgoing Young Mayor and announce the election results of the incoming Young Mayor. This is a good event to drum up local press interest and raise awareness of the scheme for both adults and young people in your area.

Working with the Adult Mayor or Leader of the Council

For a successful Young Mayor scheme to work, it is essential that they work with the adult equivalent. This could be in the form of meeting regularly, holding joint community surgeries together or presenting to Council together on topics of mutual interest.

Adult Mayors are busy people, so it is essential that (*continued on page 16*)

Case Study

Voter participation – Young Mayor elections in Lewisham

What they did

Since 2004, the Young Mayor elections have been promoted and held in every secondary school and college in Lewisham. All young people who live or attend a school in the borough aged 11 – 18 can vote. The school registers are used as they closely resemble an electoral roll for young people. Provision is also made for postal voting for young people educated outside the borough or not in school for any other reason, and ballot papers are sent to all home-educated young people.

Candidates must either live or attend school or college in Lewisham borough and be aged 14-17 years. Candidates are encouraged to set up a 'Campaign team' of their peers to support them and they have just over 3 weeks to campaign. This has included young people taking assemblies in different schools, campaigning with leaflets on the street and using social networking to spread their message to their peers.

Youth workers engage with young people through youth events, school assemblies, class talks and community events to promote awareness of the election and to encourage young people to stand as candidates and to vote.

On polling day, the Council's electoral services team run the election in exactly the same way they do for the adult elections. Ballot boxes, voting booths and electoral staff are stationed at each secondary school and college in the borough for the duration of the school day.

The count is held the following day, again with the support of electoral staff, and young

people assist in this process. The culmination of the process is the results ceremony where the new Young Mayor, Deputy Young Mayor and Young Advisors are announced. Elections now take place during Local Democracy Week each year and voter registration, for 16-18 year olds, is promoted at the same time.

Outcomes

The partnership approach between Electoral Services and the participation workers at the office of the Young Mayor has been critical to the success of this approach. There are some limitations to this scheme, as there are some young people in the Borough who are not registered for educational placements and therefore are not included on the youth electoral register. Workers are continuing to seek solutions to this.

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

meetings are short and to the point. The Young Mayor may need some help to prepare for these meetings and to create a message that they partner with the Adult Mayor or Leader of the Council on. In logistical terms, Adult Mayors and or Leaders of the Council have had many years of preparation to learn about politics, with both a big and small “p”. Young Mayors have to learn the ropes in a very short space of time.

The Young Mayor may also want to report directly to the Children and Young People’s Board – or equivalent structures in their community. This will help support them with a greater understanding of the work within the area and keep them fully briefed of potential areas of work.

Adult support

Unfortunately, Young Mayor schemes don’t run themselves. A good adult support officer is needed, and depending on the size and work remit of your scheme, you may need two!

One thing that some Local Authorities find challenging is when the voice of the Young Mayor is used as a voice for all other young people in the borough. It is essential that when they meet with adult councillors they are able to put facts and statistics behind their voices. This can be done by speaking to other young people on a regular basis; meeting with groups like the children in care council, school councils, young offenders forums and young disability forums as well as utilising social media.

You may want to consider working with the communications team in your locality. They are there to help spread the positive image of young people in local, regional and national press. Make sure you talk to them regularly about the work of the Young Mayor to ensure maximum coverage of their work and help raise the profile of the scheme in the community.

Now get to work!

The Young Mayor, with appropriate support, now needs to take the lead and get to work! You might want to think about training opportunities, meeting with other established Young Mayor schemes and running activities or events with young people in your area.

To conclude

When establishing and working with a Young Mayor scheme, it’s essential that young people take the lead, feel empowered, make informed decisions and can see the difference they are making to their community.

This could take the form of any or all of the following:

- Accreditation (Youth Voice Award or AQA unit awards)
- Young Mayor’s inauguration event
- Written thank you from the Adult Mayor or Leader of the Council
- Young Mayor scrapbook – scrapbook of photos and newspaper cuttings during their term of office

Young Mayor

Children and young people in your area

Youth Council / Assembly / Forum

Make your
Mark

Young Mayor

Local
Boards and
Committees

Local
consultation,
scrutiny and
campaigns

Local Authority decision makers
and Councillors



*Young Mayor of Tower Hamlets and his
Mayoral Chain*

Acknowledgements

4

Thank you to the following Local Authorities for their case study and image submissions: Lambeth, Lewisham, Mansfield, Newham and Tower Hamlets.

5

About BYC and how we can help

What we do:

The British Youth Council (BYC) is a charity run by young people for young people. We empower young people across the UK to have their say and ensure their voices are heard.

We inspire and empower young people aged 25 and under to have a positive impact through campaigning, engaging with local, national and international democracy, and as volunteers, decision-makers and leaders.

Our membership encompasses over 130 youth organisations large and small around the UK. We reach out to over 600 local youth councils and our networks reach into local communities and around the world.

Our training workshops develop young people's skills so that they can have a say and be heard, while our consultation services tap into the views and opinions of young people across the UK.

Online:

Our free online resource centre (www.byc.org.uk/resource-centre) is packed with information and briefings to help with the running of your local youth council. We have tips on how to run meetings effectively, different roles that young people can take at meetings and how to campaign effectively and make a difference. There are also resources covering fundraising, campaigning and managing the media.

In person:

We run a range of events throughout the year to support local youth councils, from delivering training courses right the way through to our Annual Conventions which bring youth councillors from different areas together. To find out what is going on and where, check out our online events listings.

We also provide in-house training for local youth councils. Have a look at the training pages of our website (www.byc.org.uk/training-and-services) for the latest training offerings. And if none of these do what you need, we do offer bespoke sessions tailored to your needs.

On the phone:

Whether you're establishing a local youth council or looking to develop an existing group, we offer support and advice to people looking to set up a local youth council. Give us a call on 0845 458 1489 or email: lyc@byc.org.uk.

empowering
inspiring
campaigning
since 1948
inspiring



To find out more, please contact BYC:

E: mail@byc.org.uk

W: www.byc.org.uk

Facebook: British Youth Council

Twitter: bycLIVE