

Youth Voice: Positive Stories



August 2015



The Make Your Mark campaign launches

Youth Voice:

Positive Stories

A report by youth representatives and the workers that support them

August 2015

Welcome to the August 2015 edition of Positive Stories. Our format reflects part of our commitment to the **UN Convention on the Rights of a Child Article 13 - Freedom of expression** 'Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law,' (UNICEF UK).

The British Youth Council will share this report regionally and nationally, with local councillors and MPs, and certain media outlets, in order to raise the profile of the fantastic local work that we know is happening every day.

The case studies and stories of the work of young people in their local communities are reproduced here in their own words. If you would like to find out more about one of the projects you read about in this report, please email: mail@byc.org.uk

The online survey remains open and we produce reports once a month, providing young people the opportunity to shout about the great work they have been doing in their local areas during the previous month. Previous reports are available online: <http://www.byc.org.uk/uk-work/youth-voice>

The British Youth Council would like to thank all the workers and young people who took the time to promote and complete October survey and we look forward to hearing more from everyone over the coming months.

Contents

Young People's Stories

East Midlands	4
East of England	6
London	7
North East	8
North West	9
South East	13
South West	18
West Midlands	27
Yorkshire and Humber	28
Northern Ireland	29

Support Worker Stories

West Midlands	31
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Young People's Stories

East Midlands

Leicestershire

Siân Vincent, 15, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

During August, I have been to a County Youth Council Leicestershire (CYCLe) meeting and helped plan our annual youth voice event, Unheard Voices. I have listed the schools and drafted the emails for Make Your Mark, which are all close to being ready to be sent; As of September 1st, when students return to school, I shall be promoting MYM and getting the votes in. Our Unheard Voices event will be on Thursday 24th September and we have chosen the debate topics for the evening, all from the MYM ballot. During 'UV' each participant will be given a MYM ballot which will be collected at the end. Other than planning, I've just been spreading the word and promoting MYM to my friends and family.

Daria Eckert, 14, Member of Youth Parliament

August started with the Annual sitting which is the UK Youth Parliaments annual conference. At the Annual sitting I developed my skills as an MYP and refined my Make Your Mark plan. The big vote is when the MYPs debate which issues should be put forward the BYC's manifesto for 2015. This year I put forward extended support for special needs children; for which I held a one minute opening speech and then the debate was open to the floor and then voted on. The issue was voted in on a clear sweep. The MYPs then voted from 113 issues (that were on the BYCs manifesto) the top 10 issues they felt were imported in their area. The top ten were made into the Make Your Mark ballot. On August the 12th Make Your Mark was made live. Extended support for special needs children had made it on to the ballot! My youth council for my borough (the Oadby and Wigston Youth Council) organised an event for young people called Supersonic Boom on Wednesday 19th August. The event had live music from young artists in our borough and stalls for example from the police or the migraine awareness. The event was raising money for the Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Rutland Air Ambulance and ended up raising £525.00. At the event I did Make Your Mark, by going around the event with a clipboard and a tally sheet asking young people to take part. I got 123 responses at Supersonic Boom. I will be continuing Make your Mark as the schools open again for the new year.

South Derbyshire

Mitchell Duggins, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

On August 1st I had the chance to go to Exeter university to participate in a debate to decide on the top 10 topics to go on the make your make ballet paper.

Nottinghamshire

Dylan Wilson, 14, Member of Youth Parliament

I was on a Tendering panel representing young disabled people for a new Service in Nott's County Council. It was definitely worth the time and effort put into the process.

Derbyshire

Lucy Boardman, 16, Member of Youth Parliament & Youth Councillor

July was obviously an amazing month, because I got to travel down to Exeter for the UKYP Annual Sitting. I had a great weekend and learnt a lot, mainly focusing on Make Your Mark and how to effectively get a high number of ballots. Since getting back from annual sitting I have been using social media to raise the profile of the consultation in my area, and am preparing assemblies for the three registered schools in my constituency. Last year I also wrote an article for my local newspapers regarding Make Your Mark, and was the guest on my local radio station, which I plan to do again this year as it was a great experience that proved very effective in raising publicity of Make Your Mark. I am also writing to my local MP to ask him to express his support for Make Your Mark whenever possible, as he has been extremely helpful in the past and incredibly supportive of the UK Youth Parliament.

Chesterfield

Libby Louise Brown, 14, Member of Youth Parliament, Children Trust, Youth Councillor and school/ community Youth Councillor

In February/March 2013 I was elected on the youth Council. It was my first year but I just went for it. I try to get on the childrens Trust board and was successful. Then about a month or 2 back then I was elected on the UK youth parliament. I'm so glad I when for the youth council or I would not be writing this story today. On the 31st of July to the 2nd of August I went to Exeter University for my annual sitting of UK youth parliament. I met some amazing people there and learnt a lot of things. My biggest achievement of that weekend was adopting a Lord. My Lord was Lord Paddick. I email him about voting at 16 and see if he was with the campaign or not. Lord Paddick practical email me straight away and guess what he was willing to help and support me and other youth councillors to get the voting age down to 16. Thanks you Lord Paddick.

Two messages: number one, just go at life with a fight and if you know you want to do something don't let anyone tell you that you can't do it. Number two: if you smile I will smile too. They are my two messages and that is what gets me through life

East of England

Suffolk

Jed Levett, 16, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

Toward the end of July I put together a survey regarding the Expansion of the Suffolk Endeavour Card. I got an email from Tracey Vobe from Suffolk County Council saying that she has been to a meeting with Abellio Greater Anglia and brought up that as part of my manifesto was to get an expansion of the Endeavour Card by getting Abellio Greater Anglia to allow some sort of discount on the train for 16-19 year olds living in Suffolk. I have sent it out to Suffolk's D/MYPs, put it on Twitter and Facebook for people to complete. Poppy Reece from Suffolk County Council will be putting in the SAY newsletter so those who read the newsletter can complete the survey.

Benjamin Denton-Cardew, 18, Member of Youth Parliament

Early in this month, my question to the House of Commons regarding tuition on mental health was read out by my local MP Dr Dan Poulter, The question read: "To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will incorporate education on mental health issues into the national curriculum" The answer was long, but the gist was that the answer was no aside from the PSHE association to produce optional lesson plans on it.

Ipswich

Onica Hussain, 17, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

I feel delighted to be elected as DMYP for the Ipswich constituency. Recently I have been working on the Make Your Mark campaign with my fellow MYP and DMYP. We have contacted schools to register and have discussed ways to promote this campaign in our constituency. We hope to attend assemblies to present MYM and our roles as MYP and DMYP. This is my first Make Your Mark, so I am very excited!

London

Hillingdon

Talin Aslanian, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

This month my fellow MYP Melissa and I went to the UKYP Annual Sitting in Exeter. It was our first time at an Annual Sitting so we were quite apprehensive as to how the weekend would go. However, from the moment we arrived in Exeter and were greeted by beautiful views and welcoming stewards we knew we were in for a treat. I had an amazing weekend talking about issues I'm passionate about and forming bonds with MYPs from different boroughs. Additionally, during the Big Debate I was lucky enough to be able to speak on the subjects of prioritising the Youth and Youth Unemployment- preparing for the World of Work as work experience is a current issue to the youth of Hillingdon. Overall, Melissa and I had a brilliant weekend and we're now motivated to work hard on the Make Your Mark campaign. Furthermore, Hillingdon Youth Council has just had a change of youth workers which meant that we had to say goodbye to the wonderful Sylvester Swanston and Chloe Sullivan. I'm aware that these are 'Positive Stories' and although this is quite sad, myself and my Youth Council can only be happy and 'positive' that we were able to enjoy their wisdom and direction over these many years. Hillingdon YC would like to wish Sylvester and Chloe good luck for the future and we hope to keep in contact with them as their advice is invaluable.

Havering

Tolu Akingbade, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

The month of July was mostly planning for the Make Your Mark campaign. The planning was finally going into action! I started the planning for the Make Your Mark campaign by emailing the three MPs in my borough to support the Make Your Mark campaign (as suggested by my PG). Only one MP answered my email, this MP said that he would fully support the Make Your Mark campaign and he proceeded to send a letter to every single school in Havering, encouraging them to sign up for the Make Your Mark campaign. After the MP intervening, it became easier to convince the schools to sign up for the Make Your Mark campaign. This resulted in getting all the schools in Havering signed up, except one. It would be wrong to take the credit for signing up all the schools, most of the credit must go to the Youth Council workers who worked tirelessly to get the schools signed up. The month ended with the Youth Parliament Annual Sitting which required tying up the loose ends of planning for the Make Your Mark campaign and analysing how to improve on the amount of schools signed up. The Annual Sitting was fun as well because I got to meet people from all over the country and the party was amazing

North East

Newcastle

Emily Dormer, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

Both MYPs from Newcastle attended a Charity Concert at a youth club in Central Newcastle and gave out Make Your Mark ballots to all the young people attending. It was humbling to see how many passionate young people there are in our city.

North West

Salford

Laura Edwards, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

Having finished our GCSEs & A Level exams, Salford Youth Council hosted a Schools Debate at the end of June. We held it at the People's History Museum, a fitting venue as the museum is the national museum of democracy. School Councils were invited to this debate, as we rely on their help and have identified that as a Youth Council we should be giving more back. The idea of the day was to allow students a safe environment to practice debating and make them feel empowered to speak on what they believe, as we too often hear that young people feel too uneducated to even form political opinion. To do this we held three debates and ran two workshops. The motions were "X Factor is good for the music industry", "the UK should adopt a topic based curriculum as opposed to subjects, like Finland" and finally "Plastic surgery should be provided by the NHS". One of the workshops was provided by Parliament Outreach, who reminded students that they can make a change if they want to by explaining activism and exploring what changes have happened in the past thanks to it. The other was ran by us, Salford Youth Council, and we did a variety of exercises to prepare for debate. Such as practicing making a quick point, exploring why it's important to attack a point not a person and using trick questions to make sure everyone knew the importance of listening skills. Steven Fielding, a professor at Nottingham University chaired the debate and did a Q&A session on both University and being active when decision makers do something you don't like. Overall, the event was a huge success. We decided this will happen every year and we will ensure that next year the students that attend will be given plenty resources to start a debate club and hold debates in schools. Hopefully in a few years the whole of Salford will be debating!

I have been visiting schools. In total I have been able to visit 6, including two PRUs and look forward to visiting 3 that had to be cancelled in September. Whilst visiting I ensured schools were signed up to Make Your Mark and asked the School Councils for help in delivering the survey. In every school I got an extremely positive response. I was also able to invite school council's to a training day in September, which will focus on delivering Make Your Mark but also help school councillors develop different skills. This will be delivered by Youth Councillors and we will encourage the representatives from each year to then deliver this training to each form representative, so that we're all learning from each other. Another opportunity was offered to schools, which was for a year 10 student to join 'Salford Student Council'. This will be a City-wide forum that will initially focus on improving the GCSE results of schools and will work alongside Salford City Council's Education Scrutiny group. In Salford only half young people leave school with 5 A*-C GCSEs and pass rates vary from 21% to 79%. We want change that so everyone leaves school with as many options as possible. Following that project, we hope to see the group evolve into whatever the members want it to be. Finally, I had a meeting with a newly elected MP, Rebecca Long-Bailey and updated her on what Salford Youth Council are up to and invited her to our September meeting.

On Friday 7th August we launched our campaign, Frame of Mind. We invited people with stakes in mental health and professionals that work in mental health to our launch and used it to let them know what we wanted to do with Frame of Mind, and gather advice and expertise from the people there. The two aims we pitched were the creation of a guide that will equip schools to better deal with mental health & to make assessments less intimidating and repetitive, we suggested a matching service. We had people

attend from our Salford CCG (who commission all health services in Salford, therefore decide what services are available and what standards they must sign up to), Healthwatch (the watchdog for health services), our local college, CAMHS and Educational Psychology team. Everyone was really eager to get involved with our ideas and supportive of our view that young people need to be involved more in the services they provide. Getting more people involved and using Twitter has already proved successful, as someone from our event tweeted about it and tagged the Head of NHS Patient Care, who then tagged even more people. We ended up with over 40 notifications from just one tweet! We used workshop style activities to make the adults who work in mental health aware of how it can feel to access a mental health service and also how important it is to make people feel safe in services. We also created a tree of services (we hung on the tree which services are available for young people in Salford), with intention that the tree will grow as the campaign does. This is the first of our campaign steps completed and we can't wait to further research the ideas to create a guide of real quality that will make a massive difference to schools across Salford.

Oldham

Saadiqah Begum, 18, Youth Councillor

I represented the young people of the UK at the School Nurses International Conference 2015. I was able to meet with so many people from all over the UK and many from all around the world. As part of this experience we were able to share on a global scale, what we, as young people in the UK are already doing as part of our local youth councils and how we all work together to represent the youth of the UK. We showed some of what we have done as part of Youthforia, and as part of the British Youth Council and that young people are important members of society. That we are able to contribute to help make positive change in so many ways including our current major projects regarding mental health. I feel we were able to make a lot of impact and remind the adults that not all young people are in fact accurately represented by the negative teenage stereotypes and connotations that exist. We were able to show them that young people are not to be ignored - that we are not a lost generation and are capable of helping and making a lot more effective impact than they think. It was a fantastic opportunity as we were able to hear how different organisations already get young people involved. I felt it was very important that they do so as School Nurses' main priority are young people and children and the fact that they do take into consideration their thoughts and opinions ensured that young people were being heard and having an influence on the services that are in place for them. In some circumstances I did find that some people did not already have any young people giving any input to their organisation but that they had a desire to get young people involved. We were able to give advice on how best to go about getting young people involved and assured them of the masses of children and young people out there that do want to get involved and make change no matter if they are part of schools or in the wider community. It also helped me to have a greater understanding of the School Nurse role as I feel that this is something in this day and age which is rather ambiguous. School nurses really do so much in their role, and are stretched. I believe that they deserve more credit for what they do and that by working alongside them in schools we can improve young people's understanding of health in a more holistic way - especially mental health which is not discussed as much in schools. It was refreshing to see that there is so much in place in some parts of the world and that sharing of ideas is taking place. From the setting up of Health Councils within schools involving students which seemed like a brilliant scheme to the universality of young people have problems with dealing with mental health issues and ensuring that they are able to get the help that they need. Ultimately, the fact the we are seen as being upfront and centre and allowed to have an involvement has been incredible. Especially as young people seemed for once not to be just seen as passive recipients of care, but as partners, that can help make better the service for more sustainable change and improvements for all.

This was actually my first opportunity to represent young people on such an international scale. We had the opportunity to speak to professionals from all over the United Kingdom as well as those from the other side of the planet. Including nurses from Australia to Sweden, to those of completely different cultures to my own such as Japan and South Korea. I was working with fellow young people that I had never met before, yet we were able to bring our passions together to present in front of large crowds. This was something that I felt incredibly proud about and was grateful of the opportunity to represent young people.

Wigan

Grace Thompson, 18, Youth Councillor

Since the last “positive story”, much has happened! The councillor event which we held in July went very well. Councillors were very keen to learn about our various campaigns, such as Make Your Mark, The Vote, etc. They asked many perceptive questions in the Q&A session, including questions on transport, whether young people would be interested in becoming more involved with councillors and how the councillors themselves can help in terms of funding. Most of the councillors attending were familiar friends, but we were also pleased to meet the youngest councillor, Nathan Murray, who was newly elected this year. He was very happy to be there and was interested to visit Youth Cabinet again. We were also very lucky to have Mayor Susan Loudon in attendance, despite her busy schedule! Last night, we were delighted to have the ambassador from Angers, Stéphane Jamin, to speak to us about France in general, and Angers in particular. Angers is a city in north-west France, which has been twinned with Wigan since 1988. Stéphane was very interested in the work that Youth Cabinet do in the local area and joined us in our hopes that we would be able to meet with the Angers Youth Cabinet again sometime, just as we did 7 years ago. Next week, we will be meeting at the Town Hall, as we are having our second Debating Society of the year. It is a new scheme which is there to encourage us to learn how to debate effectively, as well as to see a variety of different issues from more than one perspective. The topic next week will be about the EU, and whether Britain should remain within it or come out. The teams are chosen by the youth workers, rather than us choosing which side we would prefer to debate for. This is good, as it teaches us to be able to debate from a viewpoint which we may not agree with. We have also been busy filming footage for a DVD which will go out to schools in September, about the Children and Young Peoples’ Deal. The Deal for Children and Young People is centred around the theme of “believing in yourself” and respect for others. The DVD is going out as part of a consultation period, before the Children and Young Peoples’ Deal itself is signed off later in the year. The Children and Young Peoples’ Deal is just a small subsection of the large “Deal” that the Council is promoting in order to cut costs and to get people more involved in their local communities. Our MYPs, Rory Gilmore and Neomi Midgley, recently attended the first of two annual sittings for UK Youth Parliament. This particular sitting was held in Exeter and was used to debate various issues, as well as to choose what topics would be on the Make Your Mark ballot paper this year. Rory and Neomi thoroughly enjoyed the weekend, despite a close shave at the beginning, when Rory realised at the airport that he had forgotten his passport! There’s a reason why these pieces of writing are known as positive stories. It’s because, in a world full of much negativity and bad news, there are glimpses of sunshine. In a world where young people are often derided as “lazy”, “good-for-nothing”, and “irresponsible”, it is right to show, even in this small way, that there are young people who are willing to prove that stereotype as false. There are young people who want to reach out and help others. There are young people who take their responsibilities seriously. There are young people who want to be heard, despite being in a world that seems determined to stifle the voices of those it doesn’t want to hear, whether that be the voices of the young, of ethnic minorities, of certain faiths...whoever it is! Here in Wigan, we are fighting back and we will always fight to maintain our voice.

Trafford

Lauren Barclay, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

Over the month of August numbers often fall in cabinet as members go away and even our youth worker disappears to get a tan. However we don't let this stop us and have been continuing to have meetings, mainly to plan our annual conference coming up in November. This year's theme, political education and what politics means to you. As well as this members have been attending the archivist training which they have really enjoyed and can't wait for the next one. We've had the excitement of being given a date to run and Yourhforia which just so happens to be our MYPs 18th birthday. And are very much looking forward to planning and running a Yourhforia, we even have plans for something a little bit different. Of course Trafford also like to spend the summer enjoying themselves and last week we spent International Youth day bonding and having fun on a canal barge. We also stopped at a national trust park and had a competitive (only slightly of course) game of rounders followed by ice cream! It was an enjoyable day for all and left us well motivated to work hard over the next year.

South East

Surrey

Rowan Munson, 16, Member of NHS Youth Forum

NHS Youth Forum: Increasingly Influential

NHS Youth Forum has chosen its priorities for the coming year! Following an active discussion we chose “Supporting young carers” and “Transition between services” as our priorities for the coming year.

“We feel that [young carers] is an area where we need to make improvement, we need to help young carers and support them. In the long term we also want to stop the mental health issues which can come with being a young carer as well as improving their day to day life too” - Luciana O’Reilly, NHS Youth Forum

“We’ve also focussed on Transition, not only in physical health but also in mental health services, we have identified some issues across the country with it, that it is not standardised, and we’ve highlighted that’s something we really want to work on” – Annie Parker, NHS Youth Forum

Arriving at Kidderminster station, as a member of the initial NHS Youth Forum I was very excited to meet a new group of people, with different experiences, backgrounds and lots of new ideas!! I’m glad to say that I was certainly not disappointed. My 24 new colleagues blew me away with their hard work and passion for improving healthcare for young people. Raring to go on our second year! Building on the strong foundations on the relationships, partnerships and enthusiasm with staff we built last year, we are now in a place to make amazing change happen, and influence meaningful decisions. We introduced ourselves, both to each other and the world by announcing #HelloMyNameIs and #WhatMattersToMe. These formed the basis of our discussion for our two priorities.

We also had some amazing guests, who all facilitated scintillating conversations around a number of different topics. Some of my personal highlights from the session... Alix Sheppard (@Healthtalks1, Youth Health Movement lead for Royal society of public health) and I talked at length about the “youth health movement” and how she works to empower young people to become peer educators, and teaches them to gain an Ofqual Level 2 (GCSE A*-C equiv.) qualification – visit the newly launched website here youthhealthmovement.org.uk!! Kathryn Pugh (@KathrynCYPIAPT, Programme Lead for Children and Young People's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies at NHS England.) talking about the importance of improvement in young people’s mental health services, and when she told me that one of the reasons that Mental Health is the second of the NHS England Corporate Priorities this year, was because of the work highlighting the issue from the Youth Forum last year, it didn’t just make my day, it made my month!! We also spoke to Claire Bosi (@gastronomicals, author of The Gastronomical Guide to Fabulous Food, encouraging young people to cook and eat healthily!) whose wonderful sea bass recipe I tried a couple of weeks ago and highly recommend!

The group found it a really good opportunity to start networking with our partners in the NHS and also wider partners as well. Contacts really are key to influencing decisions and getting people; it also gives us vital opportunities to share youth voice through other projects such as the People’s Panel run by Shahana at NHS EXPO, or through Jana and the digital team

Our discussions on the priorities brought up lots of questions:

- Where can young carers access local services for support?
- How would young people identify as a young carer?

- Are young carers' rights considered after being identified? Do they get sign posted to services? •How does the NHS link up with schools to ensure young carers are supported (i.e. with their studies)?
- Are there clear guidelines for transition, specifically age, procedure and service responsibility?
- Are there personal goals set as well as goals/aims relating to illness?
- What is the training for adult services to treat incoming transitioning patients, as opposed to long term adult patients?
- Are there plans to roll out best-practice transition approaches nationally, such as the "Ready, Steady, Go, Hello to adult services" programme run at Southampton? Which we will seek to answer to inform our projects over the next year.

Join the conversation on Social Media: #NHSYF, @NHSYouthForum, /NHSEnglandYF Rowan Munson, NHS Youth Forum @RowanMunsonYV

Brighton & Hove

Thomas Soud, 17, Member of Youth Parliament Procedures Group Rep

This month my main action as PG in assisting the D/MYPs in the South East has been in reforming and consolidating the South East Regional Team. I have found D/MYPs from each LA in the South East to take part and help the running of the region. Primarily this has consisted of hearing what each LA has been upto in there progress on campaigns, such as Make your Mark and what can be done to help them represent as many Young People as possible. I am hopeful that this can be a lasting change to how the South East is organised and inturn lead to more and more people getting their voices heard across the region.

East Sussex

Harry Elphick, 17, co-director of Sussex Voice

Kelly Balmer has got the Sussex Voice ball rolling again. The task of tracking down the youth voice outlets in Sussex and seeing if they want to work with us has begun. I have helped with this data collection in East Sussex where I am a DMYP.

Reading

Adrian, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

This month we saw the launch of Make Your Mark 2015. Early on in August, I went to the annual sitting- where we were able to vote on new policies to add to our manifesto and ultimately decide the 10 issues on the make your mark ballot. Now that it has been launched, my focus is to get as many young people to vote and reach the 1 million mark!

Kent

Angel Layer, Member of Youth Parliament

Since the beginning of August I have been talking to youth groups in order to get them involved with Make Your Mark. I am currently working with a headteacher of a local school to do some inspirational speeches

for the schools in the area which is in return for them completing make your mark ballots. Whilst this month has been quiet, it is ahead of a much busier month next month. I also took some super cool shots with the Make your Mark ballots when they arrived.

Georgia T, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

This month I took part in a GCSE course with some members of Medway Youth Parliament. The course was run by local youth workers for The Royal Society of Public Health. We enhanced our knowledge on different types of health, the main topic we studied was Smoking. The opportunity given to us to learn new things was great! Some of the things spoken about, I'd never heard of/about before. Now myself, and other members of Medway Youth Parliament are Youth Health Champions!

East Hampshire

Mishca, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

This month, we have been discussing how to get the final schools signed up to make your mark in September. This way, we can exceed our LA target and help to reach 1 million votes overall. We have also been working on lesson plans about topics such as mental health so schools can teach and raise awareness about these topics. The top 10 voted issues have been shown and we can now use Make your mark to find out which is most important to young people

West Sussex

Kelly Balmer, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

The UK Youth Parliament was a good as ever! I felt honoured to attend and speak on behalf of the young people I represent on topics such as Representation of young people and safeguarding. It was also nice to meet other young people from up and down the country and hear about what they are doing in their role as a MYP. Make Your Mark has been launched and this year the topics on the ballot are as exciting as ever! In West Sussex we are already preparing for assemblies in schools.

Oxfordshire

Rowan Ibbotson, 13, Member of Youth Parliament

My main event for this month was a planning meeting, the final stages of organisation for an event that I am running in September to complete my campaign (increasing awareness of the activities available to young people) and to kick off MYM Oxfordshire! I met with a city council member, electoral services manager and Councillor to finalise the details of the area of the local festival that we will be running, so I look forward to following through on September 5th.

Milton Keynes

Amber Saunders, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

I am part of a group called Young Peoples Healthwatch Milton Keynes (YPHMK) and we look at issues that young people have regarding health across Milton Keynes. We have had organisations approach us and ask our advice on leaflets (such as on appointments with GPs which were made to give advice to young people), on surveys (we had to evaluate a survey which would be given to young people in hospitals so that the hospital could identify any issues that their patients are having) and more. Soon we will be visiting Milton Keynes Hospital and giving feedback on the paediatrics ward to try and improve young peoples experience in the hospital.

Ellie Flint, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

Everyone's being having a great summer, but that doesn't mean we've not still been working hard! Not only was the annual sitting a lot of fun, it was hugely beneficial to decide on the UKYP manifesto and practice our debating our skills. We've now launched make your mark, so are preparing for launching in schools in September.

Medway

Philip McCue, 15, Youth Councillor

I received a response from Tim Farron MP, the new leader of the Liberal Democrats, regarding the political education campaign I am involved in. Tim has now been added to our long list of supporters including Natalie Bennett, Caroline Lucas MP and Nik Dakin MP. Our petition has received over 1,700 supporters and I hope to discuss the topic with both Rehman Chishti MP and Ben Howlett MP.

Alden, 15, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

Luke, Pamela, Maxiene and myself are all set and ready for the heading out to schools for the make your mark campaigns . We have also signed up various schools to be a make your mark champion.

Luke, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

Since attending the annual sitting in Exeter, I have been planning the launch event of Make Your Mark in Medway with my Worker. We are planning to go to a street festival and then to youth centres to acquire the voices of as many young people as possible. We will then go into schools that have not signed up to ensure that the voices of their students are also heard.

Harjot, 14, Chair of Health and Wellbeing

I was elected in September 2015. In this month I have met with a member of the local council to help organise our annual conference, around mental wellbeing. I have also attended a youth health champion course along with other MYP members. I have uploaded my manifesto online and updated my page.

Charlotte Midwinter, 14, Member of Youth Parliament

Myself and other members of Medway youth parliament have taken part in a pilot scheme to become youth health champions. We went through a 4 day course looking at the history of public health, the social and medical changes to p.h and how it affects us. Also we created mock campaigns in groups, mine was based on teenage pregnancy, we did research to support our campaigns unaided and i found out that maidstones rate of teen pregnancy had increased. We then moved on to look at smoking. The reasons why people smoke and the ways they can stop smoking. We did all this to be able to become peer supporters and signpost our fellow students to services that can help them improve their health. The members that took part including myself worked really hard and have acheived a great deal in 4 short days. We have succeeded and in doing so will receive a level 2 health champion certificate, the equivalent of a gcse A*- C . I found the course highly enjoyable and I'm sure my fellow medway youth parliament members agree. So thats my positive story! Charlotte. MYP member.

I highly recommend the course and if you get the opportunity to do it, you should jump at the chance.

George Perfect, 15, Youth Councillor

I attended the Royal Society of Public Health's Medway, Youth Champion training. This training educated me on how health improvement works in the local area! During the training, we learnt about how our unitary authority's Smoke Quit area works and how they provide services. We learnt about how as Youth Cllrs, we could speak to youths who need signposting to the different health services in our area.

I attended the Council's overview and scrutiny committee and learnt about how the committee scrutinise children's services!

Robin Holmes, Member of Youth Parliament



In the Big Vote at the Annual Sitting!

South West

Cornwall

Cameron Sykes, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

This month has been an exciting one, marking the beginning of Make Your Mark 2015. The target this year of over 1 million voters seems as possible as ever. Unfortunately for me, I was away on holiday for the Youth Parliament National Sitting at the beginning of this month. This was a great shame as it is obvious I missed a great weekend. However, the issues that are going to be voted upon throughout the MYM campaign were decided and I couldn't be happier with the result. As it stands, Saffron and I in Mid-Cornwall are working on two projects. One regarding a 'Kernow Card' that acts as an 'Oyster Card' substitute for the youth of Cornwall. On top of this, I am looking to introduce a project I have been working on along side Youth Parliament, as I believe the young people that make up the Youth Parliament would be massively beneficial to this project. There will be more to come on this in the coming months. Over the rest of this month and in to next, Saffron and I will be in contact with schools that registered for MYM, and will endeavour to find more supporters of this year's Make Your Mark. Let's make that 1,000,000 target a reality!

Saffron Blake, 16, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

So far this month I met up with the teenagers of Padstow to discuss my manifesto of creating an Oyster card for Cornwall. I have found out that they have some sort of device that they use in Falmouth but for ferries, however I could use the "Kernow card" for trains and buses. Next month I will try and get in contact with the companies again as they have not replied to me.

Owen Winter, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

In this month, Make Your Mark was launched. I was involved in publicising the campaign and launching Make Your Mark in Cornwall and spoke to local newspapers and news outlets, including BBC Radio Cornwall. I launched Make Your Mark in Cornwall on August 21st with the first votes being cast in an official ballot box. I have also been campaigning for electoral reform. I attended an event in London demonstrating support for changing our voting system. I made a speech to the crowds and introduced speakers including Tom Brake and Simon Hughes. I am now standing for election to the Electoral Reform Society council. Working with Cornwall Council, I have been involved in the Council tender assessment. Young people have been given a 20% share of the evaluation for organisations competing for youth service contracts. This will take place over the next few weeks.

Somerset

Kira Lewis, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

August of 2015 saw me represent young people to decision makers, engage with the community and broaden my online presence. I attended a UK Youth Parliament Advisory Group meeting, in which we planned our campaigns, budgeted for the future and allocated 'Youth Bank' funding. I also met with my deputy to set up a SurveyMonkey around 'legal highs' (New Psychoactive Substances) and antisocial

behaviour, which is now available online. Every year during the House of Commons sitting, members of Youth Parliament speak about a topic with significance to the year. Last year was around WW1, and this year, being 800 years since it was signed, is the Magna Carta. MYPs were offered the chance to audition for 'My Magna Carta', which involves speaking about how democracy is important to them, and what they'd like to see in the future. I auditioned for this for the South West's speech, and anticipate the results. I was also on a young person's panel for Somerset County Council interviewing for an Integrated Sexual Health Clinic for Somerset. I have volunteered at Pride In Priorswood fun days in North Taunton to engage with our local community, and I also attended an event in Chard, advertising Farm Watch (a Neighbourhood Watch scheme for the rural community). Towards the end of the month I met with Cllr. Diogo Rodrigues of Bridgwater Town Council with Chelsea White MYP to introduce ourselves, UK Youth Parliament's Make Your Mark ballot and to talk about a youth forum in Bridgwater. He was fully supportive of our campaigns and the parliament, which was wonderful to hear. I have also surpassed 3,400 likes on Facebook, and approaching 800 on Twitter which is enabling me to reach out to a wider audience. Last week saw me join 'Goodwall', which is a social networking site to show young people's achievements to universities, and I have already been offered an ambassadorship for the company because of my previous experience with engaging young people on a large scale, representation and presentation. I look forward to seeing what September holds, especially to furthering Make Your Mark in Somerset.

Chelsea White, Member of Youth Parliament

On the 19th of August, myself and fellow MYP Kira Lewis met the recently elected councillor Diogo for Bridgwater who's role is the youth spokesperson within town council. We discussed youth parliament nationally as well as the upcoming Make Your Mark which he was extremely interested in, and even managed to get a selfie with him. From this meeting Diogo and I are now creating a Bridgwater youth forum, a town in my constituency, so that young people can give their opinions on local youth services and what they would like in the future and any improvements they would make to any existing services. Earlier in the month aswell, members of Somerset Youth Parliament were on a youth panel judging applicants for a new inter grated sexual health hub in Somerset. As sexual health being apart of my campaign, I was extremely passionate to ensure that the proposed services would be young people friendly and available for them to use. Lastly I am currently working on a tumblr page for my campaign, which will raise awareness about body image and the pressures on young people in regards to looking a certain way, and also advertising different services which support young people going through this particular issue.

Away from youth parliament I have also been apart of NCS (national citizen service), apart of this means working on a local or current issue. As a group we chose body image amongst teenage girls as this was an issue close to all of our hearts, and which also tied in with my youth parliament manifesto. Our campaign is called What's The Difference, as everyone is equal we all just have our individual qualities. As part of this we raised money for a charity called Rosa UK, which is a charity that works primarily on female associated issues such as FGM and body image. We raised money by leg waxing, cake sales as well as a sponsored walk. I also did a radio interview with Glastonbury FM about our campaign.

Bristol, City of

Ella Marshall, 16, Member of Youth Parliament & Youth Councillor

The beginning of this month was dominated by the UK Youth Parliament Annual Sitting, which was one of the most inspiring and enjoyable weekends of my life. Meeting the rest of the incredible young people

involved made me feel so at home and I have definitely made friends for life. We took part in workshops to prepare us for Make Your Mark and maximising the number of votes we can get. The most important part of the weekend, however, was the Big Vote. Here, new motions were proposed and debated for six minutes each before a vote deciding which would make it into our manifesto. Most of the issues were unanimously supported by MYPs but some issues, including an opposition to austerity and the legalisation of drugs, proved contentious issues. I spoke on behalf of Sophie Giltinan, a fellow MYP for Bristol, to open the debate for her motion about tackling racism (particularly Islamophobia) in the media. This was passed. I also joined in on the debate during the anti-austerity and climate change motions. Each and every debate was exhilarating and it was great to hear so many differing opinions. We had 24 hours after annual sitting to vote for the 10 issues from the UK Youth Parliament manifesto that we thought should be on the Make Your Mark ballot. It took me a while as there are over 100 important manifesto pledges to choose from! I met with representatives from the Bristol Clinical Commissioning Group and the local Public Health Group the week after annual sitting to discuss our exciting local mental health campaign. This meeting was extremely productive and I left feeling optimistic about us working in close partnership with one another. It was great to learn more about the commissioning side of things and how the local group intends to consult young people and shape services around them.

The Bristol City Youth Council was invited to the Lord Mayor's mansion house for afternoon tea this month, which was an interesting experience. It's extremely grand and I enjoyed learning more about the history of our city. A fun day was had by all and we're all very grateful for the Lord Mayor's continued support of our work. As a youth council we held an all-day meeting, which included a training session from local mental health organisation, Off The Record and some young people from their campaign group, Mentality. I think this had a positive impact on all of us as we are not only more informed but also feel more comfortable talking about the matter. Off The Record also run a group session called the 'Resilience Lab' and we were able to learn some of the seven resilience strategies also during the day. 12th August was an exciting day as not only was it the launch of the Make Your Mark ballot and International Youth Day but the feature about my political empowerment campaign was aired on ITV West Country that evening! I was extremely pleased with the issues on the Make Your Mark ballot this year as they are all things I feel strongly about and I'm sure will engage other young people. I also found the broadcast much easier to watch than I thought I would - I wasn't cringing the whole way through at myself! I think the Fixers crew did an amazing job and I'm really thankful for all their support, as well as the positive feedback I received. You can watch the feature here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDUNsaj6tnM>. I met with a founding member of a mental health campaign group at the university here in Bristol this month too, which was a great opportunity to discover how we can support each other. It seems the university will be very helpful in getting our own project off the ground (still top secret so I'm not giving much away). I appeared on Bristol Community radio later that week too, which was a great opportunity to update everyone on our progress locally. It's always nice to be able to broadcast a message and know people are listening. I revealed that a petition is going to be established in order to lobby the Bristol City Council into holding a debate and vote on their support for votes at 16 in November. This could be an exciting development as with every council that officially supports the motion, the more traction it gains nationally!

Sophie, Elise, Micaela and I presented to the Health and Wellbeing board this month also. We were able to briefly outline our whole manifesto and also talk in depth about the two mental health campaigns we are running side by side. One being the Bristol City Youth Council priority, which aims to have physical and mental health recognised and taught equally in schools, and the other being our local UK Youth Parliament project. All members pledged their support and gave us useful advice. We also received a couple of lovely emails from the local Protect the NHS group who offered their support in activism and campaigning. Just this morning I woke up to find my Huffington Post blog has been established and I was able to post my first article, a revised version of something I wrote a few months ago about public perception of young

people and votes at 16. It's a persuasive piece so I hope by it being published the movement gains a couple more supporters! You can read the article here: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/ella-marshall/eu-referendum_b_8028632.html?utm_hp_ref=tw. I hope to blog at least every two weeks about social and political matters. I currently have an article in the works about feminism so watch this space...

Sophie Giltinan, 17, Member of Youth Parliament & Youth Councillor

This month has been a lot of resting for me. I've only been home for 9 days altogether! I received my exam results on the 13th and did a lot better than I thought I would. I hope everyone who received exam results this month got what they deserved! On Wednesday 5th August Bristol City Youth Council visited the Mansion House in Bristol which has been official residence of our Lord Mayor since 1874. The house was designed by George and Henry Godwin in 1867 and originally named 'Elmdale'. It's the third Mansion House in Bristol. The original building in Queen Square was destroyed in the Bristol Riots of 1831. Although replaced by a second house in Great George Street, this was closed in 1835 under the drastic economies forced on the city council by the Municipal Corporations Act. We all got the opportunity to take a look at the museum with the history of the Lord Mayors and the Mansion House. It was great to catch up with the Lord Mayor, Clare Campion-Smith, and meet her consort Ian Campion-Smith. On the 19th, myself, Ella Marshall MYP, Micaela Briscoe and Elise Brindley presented our manifesto to the Health and Wellbeing Board, mainly focussing on our health related campaigns. We also spoke about our UKYP campaigns including Mind The Gap. Each member received a copy of the Mind The Gap report. We received some great feedback and enthusiasm towards our campaigns. The BCYC are looking forward to working with the board to support each other in future campaigns.

Youth Representative, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

Recently I attended a Bristol City Youth Council (BCYC) campaign meeting. We have 3 campaign groups within BCYC. Out of the three groups I am part of the Green Capital campaign. I along with others reviewed what we have achieved so far and what action we will be taking in the future.

Devon

Bethany Lee, 15, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

This month began with the Annual Sitting, which I'm told was an amazing experience for all those who attended. The weekend after, on Friday 7th, a few DMYPs from our Devon team attended an NCS charity marketplace event in Exeter, where we told people all about Make Your Mark and asked them to sign up to the thunderclap. This was a very exciting weekend for me, as the next day I met with my local MP, Peter Heaton-Jones. We discussed what our roles included, and how his local campaigns would help young people in the area. On Tuesday 11th, we had our local meeting, where we discussed the results of the surveys that we have been carrying out, and we spoke about our local plan for Make Your Mark. Wednesday 12th, 1pm marked the beginning of MYM, and I'm very excited to be working on this for the next few months!

Ryan Harnell, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

This month was the Annual Sitting, a brilliant opportunity that offered the chance to both debate professionally and meet literally hundreds of new people, all of which were as passionate as me. The highlight of the Annual Sitting (other than the Summer Party) was the Rt. Hon. John Bercow's speech at the opening ceremony which reinvigorated my already great interest in the world of politics and

supporting my constituents. Since the Annual Sitting I have been sent my Make your Mark Ballots ready for collecting the opinions of Young People in my college and others around my constituency. I am currently preparing a talk about the Youth Parliament for the Okehampton Rotary Club on Thursday, which I am very much looking forward to.

Megan Chapple, Deputy member of Youth Parliament

This month has been a crazy one but it's been a great one, with new things happening. For example, Devon's Fixers is coming along very well and we are planning doing a filming day which is really exciting. Another thing that is exciting is that Make Your Mark has been released. I have received the ballot paper which means that I will be going into school and telling young people what Make Your Mark is and how they can vote.

Jack Alderman, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

This month, I went around to churches and youth clubs and spoke to people about make your mark and asked them if they were voting so that they could get their voices heard! I have also conversed with a number of political activists and informed them of Youth Parliament and how they can get involved.

Olivia, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

This month we had the annual sitting where we voted on the top issues we felt should go to Make Your Mark. The issues were voted on by members of youth parliament and the top ten were decided on, to go into this year's Make Your Mark ballot. The top ten issues were then put onto the ballot and the ballots were sent out on the 20th of August. Also this month we had a Devon team meeting where we talked about Make Your Mark and how we were going to get all of our constituents voices heard. We also looked at documents and slide shows which we will be able to use when we go into assemblies. The team in the meeting didn't just talk about Make Your Mark, we also talked about the transport fixer which some of the group are doing and their ideas towards it which also sounded great. I am excited for the next couple weeks as I am able to start playing a role into making young people's voice being heard and my constituents which I feel is the most important thing about being in youth parliament. Last but not least let's hope Team South West do well at Make Your Mark and letting young people have their say. Good luck Team South West #teamsouthwest15

Torbay

Sam McCarthy, 18, Member of Youth Parliament

Our meetings in Torbay have started again and are now in full swing, following a successful exam season followed by what was hopefully a positive results day for everyone. We have made headway into setting up a database for young people to find part-time work. We are currently contacting local businesses and charities to build up some support financial or otherwise. Sophie Hunt has met with the Fixers to discuss her anti-bullying project which could make a huge difference to those affected by bullying. We also have a possible radio show with Parkfield FM radio to be broadcasted in the near future. On top of this we hope that our pre-recorded meeting with the MP and local decision makers can be played on FM too. Make Your Mark is here, and our plan is simply to get the most votes ever record for Torbay.

Dorset

Lucy, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

Hello everyone, sadly our summer weather has been pretty dreadful but I'm sure that the weather doesn't stop the amazing job that all young people have been doing! I missed the Youth Parliament Annual Sitting as I was holiday in Spain but from what I've heard it was really successful weekend where a lot was done. I have been doing lots of work with Plan UK on youth engagement and global development, which has been eye opening. I realise how lucky I am to have a voice in this world when young people in places such as Pakistan are too afraid to make a whisper. Keep up the good work even when it feels like nothing because to some people it is all they need.

Grace van Zyl, 14, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

As I've been out of the country for the past month I haven't been as proactive as normal. However, I have high hopes for the next couple of months. Make Your Mark, this is a nation wide campaign asking young people what they would like their UK Youth Parliament to campaign on over the next 12 months; then the choices are counted and the points with the most votes get shortlisted to be debated in... the House of Commons! The Fixers project that I have been working on with my local Youth Council (DYCE) is nearing completion but maybe it is just the beginning, we have heard rumblings that it could be featured in the national bus driver's magazine! Also, the bus driver that the project is kind of centred on has been nominated for 'The top industry award' (see in the link)

http://www.dorsetecho.co.uk/news/13585385.Weymouth_bus_driver_Gus_nominated_for_top_industry_award/?ref=mr&lp=11. For those of you who don't know, our Fixers project is about breaking down barriers between young people and bus drivers, and how to act on the bus. It is aimed at bus drivers and the transition years of 6-7 when primary students take the big leap to the secondary school! None of our work over the past few years would have been possible if it weren't for our fabulous Youth Worker, Dawn Ball!

Bath and North East Somerset

Beccy Thompson, 17, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

The 2nd of August was the deadline for our national 'Mind the Gap' campaign and so brought an end to the research I had been doing in BANES. Myself and Ed Joseph, with the help of BANES' young people, wrote a report reviewing all mental health services in our constituency. Our feedback will be added to that of all other D/MYPs across the country in order to improve future services and stop the 'postcode lottery' that young people face when it comes to their mental health. On the 6th, alongside some other BANES Youth Forum members and our MYP, I met with Jodie from ITV's Fixers to discuss our upcoming gender equality campaign. We spent the morning talking about the inspiration behind the campaign and writing our project proposal; in September Jodie will be coming to a Youth Forum meeting to help us further the campaign and get to work planning our creative product. On the 26th I will be attending SPACE group's promotional video premiere; for the past 6 weeks the LGBTQ youth group have been working incredibly hard on this film and I'm excited to be a part of its launch. This month I also had a meeting to discuss the handover in September; on the 7th I will be stepping into the huge shoes left by BANES' current MYP Ed Joseph as he leaves for University. He kindly gave up his morning to fill me in on all things MYP- from Policy Scrutiny to survey monkey- and now I'm prepped and ready for a new month and a new role!

Wiltshire

Chloe Lintern, 17, Member of Youth Parliament & Youth Councillor

On the 31st July I joined all the other MYPs in Exeter for Annual sitting 2015. It was during this weekend that we set the manifesto for UKYP and added motions that we felt were important for us. We heard from speakers such as Sian James and her experience as an activist. We also had workshops that improved our skills as MYPs based on how experienced we felt we were. We learnt how to communicate well and how to run a good campaign by setting yourself small steps. Make Your Mark workshops were a good way to learn what to do next and how to achieve your target. It was a good way to share good practice and how to overcome barriers that you might encounter along the way. We had the famous summer party and all in all was a good weekend, in order to better ourselves as MYPS.

Representative of Youth Parliament

This month I have been arranging meeting with the police and crime commissioner for my area so that I can work with him for the benefit of young people in my constituency. I have also been attending my local youth network (LYN) and have been helping them with issues that affect young people in my local area. I have also received my 'Make Your Mark' ballots and have hit the streets getting young people (aged 11-18) to vote on the issues presented on the ballot.

Kieran Mulvaney, 17, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

This month I have been emailing youth groups about make your mark and doing preparation work for September when school start to launch Make Your Mark. I have also been emailing MPs about my campaign and trying to organise meetings to gain their support for Let's Think.

Gloucestershire

Alysha Bodman, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

At the end of the Department of Education consultation about A Level and GCSE reforms, I met an inspirational woman called Kate Willoughby who is one of the people behind the campaign named #Emilymatters. She is launching a campaign called #DearLauren which aims to encourage disengaged voters to voice their concerns and to use politics to empower them. I recorded a short video with her for the campaign and I look forward to it coming out at the end of August! I am proud to be part of Team #EmilyMatters; a group of inspirational people campaigning for an important cause! August was the month of the much awaited annual sitting! On the 31st of July, Members of the UK Youth Parliament from across the British Isles descended upon the South West for the much awaited Annual Sitting, hosted at the University of Exeter. Whilst there, all 370 MYPs decided and debated on the new issues that will become part of our manifesto and be eligible to appear on the upcoming Make your Mark ballot. Make Your Mark is the UK's largest youth consultation, which gave a voice to 876, 488 young people last year. The ballot allows 11-18 year olds across the country to vote for the issues that concern them most, and consequently determines the UK Youth Parliament's priorities for the coming year. This year, we have set the ambitious target of a voter turnout greater than 1 million! As proud hosts, the South West Youth Parliamentarians initiated the Opening Ceremony and paved the way for the Right Honourable John Bercow, Speaker of the

House of Commons to mark the event with a truly inspirational speech. Mr. Bercow pledged his continued support for the UK Youth Parliament in his 6th appearance at this annual event and emphasised that "quantity, persistence and overall repetition" is the key to achieving our campaign goals. On both Saturday and Sunday, the Big Vote took place. This was an opportunity for everyone's voice, and hence that of their constituents to be heard. Numerous proposals were passed through the success of the democratic process, and some failed in the same manner. Democracy was truly at work. 26 new motions were passed including Tackling Racism, gender equality, improving political education and prioritising young people. I proudly spoke during the debate about Youth Representation and highlighted the negative portrayal of young people in the media and proposed that as a Youth Parliament, we needed to counteract this. It was very interesting to hear the range of opinions and ideas presented in the debate and this clearly showed the diversity of the UK Youth Parliament. Overall, the annual sitting was a brilliant opportunity to meet inspirational young people from all over the country who have similar interests to ourselves. In addition, it was really insightful to hear from such a range of people in the Big Debate and plan for success in the year ahead. We are all now very much looking forward to our sitting in the House of Commons on Friday the 13th November, where we will debate the topics voted on by young people with passion and a desire for change. With regards to Make Your Mark, I have been contacting all of my preregistered schools and ensuring that they are ready for the campaign when school starts again! I am really looking forward to achieving our Gloucestershire Target and finding out the issue which is most important to my constituents. In addition, I am currently trying to recruit Make Your Mark champions from each school and I have encouraged the Stroud District Youth Council to put Make Your Mark on their agenda. On Sunday the 30th of August I will be speaking on a panel at the 'Woman up!' feminist conference in London named 'How can we make change?'. There will be 5 minutes at the start where all the panellists speak about whatever they want with regards to gender equality and then a Q&A session afterwards. I am so excited to speak about my hope for change and how we can achieve it! There are a full 2 days of panels and activities and I am really proud to part of such an inspirational and progressive event. Feminism and Gender Equality are issues which are very close to my heart and I am proud to be part of this movement for change and represent young people on this panel. Feminism is one of the issues I am most passionate about. I'm hugely disappointed by the fact that a mere 29% of MPs in Parliament are female. By contrast, in the UK Youth Parliament, we have a rough 50:50 split of genders- what's more 25% of MYPs come from BAEM groups. This huge difference in statistics demonstrates to me that something is going wrong between the teenage years and adulthood of women. From where I stand the next steps are clear. I believe that we need to empower women and eradicate all of the factors which stand in their way to the top. In addition, society needs to change. It needs to change to encourage women to achieve what they want, rather than restricting them with preconceived ideas of 'womanhood'. The key to achieving gender equality through my eyes is by empowering women to make their own decisions- not letting society, or anyone else, decide for them. Previously at the Annual Sitting, we debated a motion entitled 'gender equality and feminism'. I am immensely proud to say that we voted in favour of it passing during our 'Big Debate'. To me, this shows that the young generation are striving for an equal society but gender roles nowadays are so twisted that the clue to breaking such misconceptions is not clear. Neither, I am sad to say, is the path to unravelling the stereotypes, etched into minds from day one. I have also arranged a meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire for next month which is something I am really looking forward to. It will be interesting to hear his opinions on issues which affect young people and to discuss them with him.



Swindon

Wilf, Representative of Youth Parliament

Make Your Mark schools have been signed up and I will be attending what events I can (college permitting). This month itself has been fairly uneventful. However there is a PHSE survey meeting next month, as well takeover day in November and House of Commons as well.

West Midlands

Worcestershire

Representative of Youth Parliament (MYP)

Worcestershire Youth Cabinet has been busy this month, heading out to a variety of different events to meet young people and planning our Make Your Mark assemblies for September. Last Friday (21st August) our Ella met with MP Sajid Javid, the Business Secretary. They discussed the work of Worcestershire Youth Cabinet and, super excitingly, he agreed to support Make Your Mark and help get it into schools in his constituency. Furthermore our Holly, deputy chair of Worcestershire Youth Cabinet, picked up a ContinU Trust Award for her work in the community. To add to this she has begun helping on a weekly basis at a local retirement home. On top of this two of our Members of Youth Parliament headed down to Exeter to engage in the UK Youth Parliament's Annual Sitting, where they reflected the views of Worcestershire's young people whilst discussing what should make the Make Your Mark ballot. Worcestershire has also had a fair share of fame this summer, with the Right Honourable John Bercow attended a Democracy Day in Evesham. Aidan, Jai and Dan from Worcestershire Youth Cabinet were all there to meet him. Then, to bolster our fame Jai took to the stage to give a speech about what democracy means to young people. Not only have we been busy but Worcestershire's young people have also used the summer break to do some pretty amazing things. For example, this month a very inspirational young person in Worcestershire decide to cut her long hair to a much shorter length. Why? So that she could give the cuttings to a charity that produce wigs for people who have lost their hair as a result of cancer. And have you ever heard of a silent rave? Yes, that's right a group of amazing young people in Worcestershire will be dancing, with their headphones in, through the streets of Evesham for 24hrs. The awesome group are doing this as part of their NCS award and are aiming to raise money for Acorns Children's Charity, so make sure to donate at www.justgiving.com/24HourSilentRave.

Walsall

Balraj Jhooty, 16, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

Walsall UKYP met up with David Winnick, MP for Walsall North. In light of MPs agreeing to allow MYPs to continue to debate in the House of Commons, this was a big deal. It is only via keeping links between the Parliament and Youth Parliament can we campaign effectively. We let the MP know of our anti-bullying campaign and informed him about our work. We hope that by combining the influence of the MPs with the energetic drive of Walsall UKYP, we will succeed in our efforts. Meeting Mr Winnick was an undoubtedly an enjoyable experience. It was our pleasure to host him and we hope to continue working in tandem with other MPs as well.

Dudley

Megan Weaver, 15, Youth Councillor

I went to the first NHS Youth Forum residential, which was extremely successful. I met new people that I will be working with this year and also got the chance to speak to professionals in various areas of health.

The residential opened my eyes to how much impact the NHS Youth Forum can make and I am now excited to continue working with them!

Yorkshire and Humber

Sheffield

Anne Solademi, 14, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

Well this month, started off with a blast, with me meeting my MP Harry Harpham, what made it more exciting was the fact I was meeting him on the day of the launch of the Make Your Mark campaign. I also seized the opportunity to ask if I could shadow him during the 2015 democracy week. The experience was great. Moreover I took part in a training course on politics and the system, I felt more educated and learnt a lot, but I also see a need for change. I've also volunteered to help make a film for Catch 22, the focus of the film is to inform and advise adult commissioners on what young people know they want, so we can influence their decision on where the money goes. The film is promising and I'm sure will make a difference, we are such a diverse group of people, I see that as an ally and strength in making this film a success and achieving the desired effect. I'm looking forward to supporting Make Your Mark in my school over the coming months.

North Lincolnshire

Kian Borg-Jackson, 13, Young Mayor

In the past month, I have been to the Youth Council AGM and spoke about what I have been involved in as Young Mayor. I also met some councillors and other people that help with the running of the Youth Council. I went to one of our 'drop-in sessions' at Scunthorpe library so young people could share their ideas with us. I attended the CICC Art show and saw the amazing art done by the children in care. I also had a phone call with the dementia representative for Lincolnshire and I have been asked to be the young dementia representative for North Lincolnshire. This would mean that I go around schools within this area and promote the Alzheimer Society's work. Overall, this has been a successful month and I hope to get involved in many things in the future as well.

Northern Ireland

Ross McVittie, Member of Youth Parliament



1. Picture following agreement from the BB Belfast Battalion CEO Paul McCarroll
2. Picture of me editing the Erasmus+ Connections Raising Mental Health Awareness film that will be shown to the NI Assembly Committee for Education and Committee for Health in September.

Support Worker's Stories

West Midlands

Walsall

Donna Ricketts, Support Worker

The members of UKYP took part in a bully debate and asked secondary schools from across Walsall to take part. The debate was held in Walsall Town Hall Council Chamber and chaired by Madam Mayor Angela Underhill. Young people had 4 debates. These were:

- How can young people challenge bullying and not be a bystander
- Should UKYP do a cyber bullying campaign
- What can be done to make young people understand that bullying is a safeguarding issue
- Should UKYP do a peer education campaign

Young people voted at the end on which campaign UKYP members should do. A young person's evaluation of the day was, *"Today enabled many different people from different backgrounds, circumstances and experiences to voice their personal thoughts. To be able to talk and debate about a topical issue such as bullying creates the opportunity for the younger generation to have a voice and to be heard. Also to feel that they have contributed to make a change."*

Balraj (DMYP) said, *"On Wednesday 8th July, Walsall UKYP had their first ever debate. It was held in the council chambers and members from schools across the borough attended. What staggered me was how well it ran. I always anticipated allowing the youth to help us as being beneficial and a joy to them, but what took me by surprise was the sheer enthusiasm and professionalism displayed by all during the event. The debate was on bullying, with the youth citing bullying in the workplace, "zero tolerance" not being taken seriously and focus on cure over prevention being issues. In the ensuing events, the youth voted, peer education being the focus of our campaign over cyber-bullying. 3595 people requested an anti-bullying campaign, we let them pick a specific area and now I can only hope that the rest of Walsall UKYP and I succeed in making a lasting change. Knowing that I am working with such capable people only makes my hopes even higher!"*

Ben (DMYP) said, *"Hi everyone this month I and the other members of Youth Parliament held a #bullydebate in the Walsall Council Chamber. This day was really fun as it enabled us to discuss and debate the different aspects of bullying that we could focus on in our local campaign, about bullying. The two different aspects of bullying that were debated was cyber bullying and peer education. At the end of the day peer education was an outright winner and that will be our main focus in our campaign, however, we are going to use ideas to do with cyber bullying as we can link them together to educate young people on the different areas of bullying. My extra campaign that I am running is to stop youth clubs in the Walsall borough from closing. We need to act fast as they are closing in December unless urgent action is taken. I am starting with the one that I attend so that if my strategy works I can roll it out in other youth clubs."*

It's been a fun month and I can't wait to let you know what we've been getting up to next month

Jasmin, Youth Support Worker

We have had an absolutely fantastic response this year to the Herts1125 priorities, with more young people getting their voices heard than ever before! A huge thank you to the teachers and youth workers who support young people to take part each year and ensure their students' voices are heard. We are now at the last stages of inputting the data collected before the Manifesto is launched on the 17th October, which will definitely be a highlight of our year!

Thank you for your submissions this month, we look forward to reading more positive stories next month.

Also we have The Youth on Board (YOB) Awards which is an exclusively youth-led rolling award scheme that recognises innovative and exciting youth participation, both from young people and the projects and organisations that support them.

Deadline for submissions is quarterly.

To apply see more on: <http://www.byc.org.uk/training-services/youth-on-board-awards.aspx>