



## Case study

# Support

### Islington | Running and election

#### Who?

February 2012 saw the first elections held in Islington for the Youth Council. The Youth Council is made up of eight Youth Councillors elected through open elections for a two year term. Young people able to stand for election are those aged 13-17 who live, study or are looked after in the borough. Young people aged 11-17 who live, study or looked after could vote in elections.

#### What?

Young people in the borough were able to cast their votes in the election through polling stations in secondary schools, through polling stations in two Youth Hubs and through postal votes for those schooled out of borough. Using the children's services database, households with young people who live in Islington but go to school out of borough sent an application for a postal vote and every looked after young person who goes to school in the borough automatically got a postal vote opportunity.

The election was advertised through the use of outdoor banners, flyers, website, wristbands, texts and campaign manifestos drawing on one of eight key areas decided on through consultations with young people. There was a three and a half week campaign period. As young people voted they had their hand stamped with a specially designed stamp.

#### How?

As it was the first election services and officers from across the council came together to create a Youth Council Project Board to drive the project. Taking part were: Central Communications, Democratic Services, Electoral Services, Children's Services, the Lead Member for Children and Young People. They considered questions to develop a project plan:

- What would the YVV look like?
- What would the remit of the YVV be?
- What commitments should the council make
- What form should the elections take?
- What should the communications strategy be regarding encouraging young people to stand as candidates; campaign stage and encouraging people to vote
- How should partners be engaged (including schools, youth clubs, targeted groups)

To inform young people on how they could stand for election and to recruit candidates the council advertised in a number of different ways:

- Outdoor banners
- posters with a text number to get information
- flyers
- website
- flash mob performance in play grounds
- Power point to schools

To stand young people had to register for compulsory information session that contained information on 'What it means to be a Youth Councillor' and an application pack. This session was attended by the Lead Member for Children and Families and the Mayor to emphasise the commitment from the council. It was also designed to get a level of commitment from young people. Two thirds of the young people attending the session signed up as candidates.

Those 25 young people had to complete an application pack consisting of their personal details, a parental consent form, consent form for head teacher showing buy in from their Head teacher and approval for them to stand as a candidate. They also had to submit their campaign manifesto and sign a charter as a demonstration of their commitment; the charters had already been signed by the lead member with a commitment from Council. Only two dropped out at this stage and 23 candidates went forward to campaigning stage.

Young People had to get between one and five young people to act as a Campaign Crew to support their campaign. A number of young people decided to be Campaign Crew rather than stand as a candidate. Over 90 Campaign Crew were recruited.

The candidates and Campaign Crew were offered non compulsory training that could be used towards an ASDAN and 21 young people did do the accreditation. The training was on:

- Handling a budget
- Planning a campaign
- Leadership
- Using technology

## Impact:

This was the first election. 23 young people stood, over 90 young people were campaign Crew and 3207 young people, 24% of the youth population voted. This included 41% of the eligible secondary school population.

An evaluation has been commissioned and will cover candidates, Campaign Crew, Schools and promoters.

There is a high level of support from the local authority and a commitment from the Lead Member for Children and Families and the Director of children's services to meet the Youth Council termly and the Leader of the Council will meet them twice a year. In addition to these meetings the youth councillors sit on the key decision making boards and strategy and task groups, alongside key decision makers from the council and partner agencies.

## Learning Points:

- Having a cross council project board got buy in at an early stage
- Having the support of electoral services made running the elections easier and ensured they were run mirroring adult elections
- Get a commitment from the local authority on how they will relate to the Youth Council
- Use training to support young people to campaign
- Provide support to schools to engage them to promote the elections and support their students to understand the importance of being active citizens
- Involve current youth council in the design and implementation of the next elections
- Consider different learning styles to make it more accessible