

Youth Voice: Positive Stories



November & December 2015



Members of Youth Parliament gather at the House of Commons Sitting in November

Youth Voice:

Positive Stories

**A report by youth representatives and the workers that support them
November and December 2015**

Welcome to the November and December 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 the survey and we look forward to hearing more from everyone over the coming months.

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Young People's Stories

East Midlands

Derbyshire

Lucy Boardman, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

December

I have had such a wonderful year with UKYP this year - I have met some brilliant new friends and had some great experiences. 2015 was my second year as a Member of the Youth Parliament and I have had so much fun, attending conventions with the East Midlands, travelling down to Exeter for Annual Sitting and of course the House of Commons sitting in London. This year I applied to represent the East Midlands as one of the Magna Carta speakers, and I was so privileged to be able to make a speech from the Dispatch Box on behalf of my region, talking about the legacy of the Magna Carta. I was so proud of you all at the House of Commons sitting, you all inspire me every day to keep working as hard as possible and to continue campaigning on important issues for young people. This year has been phenomenal and I can't wait to work with you all in the New Year - may 2016 be as lovely as 2015!!!!

East of England

Suffolk

Benjamin Denton-Cardew, 18, Member of Youth Parliament

November

On the 13th of this month we had our annual sitting in the House of Commons, directed under the watchful eye of the Rt Hon Speaker John Bercow, I thoroughly enjoyed this day in which we got to debate issues that matter to young people in the chamber, live on BBC Parliament. This was an overall splendid affair, and I felt it gave the Youth Parliament the recognition it deserves for the work that it completes.

Alex Bowers, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

December

Looking back on this year since I was elected in April 2015, I can say that I have enjoyed my role representing young people in my constituency and across the county.

I've managed to have successful meetings with my MP to discuss anything that could be done to benefit the youth locally and what each of our targets and goals are in this area. The Make Your Mark campaign was successful and I got 3,197 young people involved and vote. I also thoroughly enjoyed the various BYC conventions throughout the year, meeting with other passionate youth representatives from across the country and feeling a part of a fantastic group of young people. My role as an MYP has led me to be involved in youth panels and helping with campaign planning locally which I have found incredibly useful and brought me closer to the youth democracy happening all around me.

The highlight of the year was the House of Commons debate, where I had the pleasure to sit on the famous green benches and represent the young people from my area. It was a fantastic experience to listen to other MYPs debate the topics voted by almost a million young people in Make Your Mark, and be present at this brilliant occasion.

2015 has been an exciting year for me as a new MYP, and I have experienced so many things that I would never have been able to otherwise. I look forward to new opportunities and challenges in my role next year and hope to carry out my role even more successfully representing young people in my area.

Hertfordshire

Amira, Member of Youth Parliament

November

On the 13th November, I was given the opportunity to speak out and represent all of the young people in my area and make sure that their voices were heard. I attended the annual House of Commons debate which was chaired by the very well known speaker - John Bercow. I was very grateful in the fact that I got chosen to speak as I know that unfortunately not everyone spoke. I spoke for the topic of racism and discrimination and we also managed to make this our national campaign. This was one of the greatest days to experience.

Sahil Ali, 17, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

November

The highlight of this month has definitely been the House of Commons Debates. Although I couldn't attend, I was able to follow the event on the BBC and everyone spoke amazingly well; special shout out to Monica Yianni MYP for her stunning Magna Carta Speech, you've made The East of England proud! As I unfortunately won't be standing next year, I wish both MYPs and DMYPs the best of luck in tackling racism and racial discrimination, which is the Youth Parliaments brand new campaign!

At a local level, the launch of the Hertfordshire Young People's Manifesto means that the most intense time of the year has passed for local work. However, work on the Hertsmere Youth Council continues as research is now being done to explore the workings of a more federal structure for the Council. On balance, a great month as always.

Georgia, 18, WelHat Youth Council

November

As the WHYC we host a question time style event annually, where students have the opportunity to pitch questions to a panel of experts. We feed the Herts 1125 priorities into our work, so last year our question time style event revolved around mental health. We found that it was a huge issue for both the schools that were on the panel and the pupils in the audience. From this we chose it to be our focus for the year, and it snowballed into the Unsaid campaign- the idea being that mental health often goes unspoken about or 'Unsaid'.

Our main aims for the Unsaid campaign were to reduce stigma, and we found that the main way we could do this was by improving education, so we decided to start with schools. We bid for some funding and were able to train 16 school teachers in Mental Health first aid... This led to the schools starting their own Unsaid campaign working group, where they tell our campaign what they need and how they are implementing our ideas within our schools.

Future plans for the campaign is to have a lot more branding, and for trained staff members and sixth form mentors to have pin badges that they can wear to identify themselves as people who are easily spoken to about a variety of issues. We also want to produce a resource pack for teachers so they can signpost students to different services. Mental health is still a huge problem in Welwyn Hatfield and the Unsaid campaign is constantly looking for more ways to support young people... if you have any suggestions tweet us at [@unsaidwelhat](https://twitter.com/unsaidwelhat) or use #unsaid.

London

Redbridge

Viktorija Trump, 15, Youth Councillor

November

Redbridge Youth Council held a manifesto workshop for all the Redbridge Youth Election nominees on the 25th November. The aim of this event was to put minds at ease and aid the candidates in writing their manifestos – an imperative element that will determine which applicants will be chosen to be candidates for the ballot.

The event began with an engaging ice-breaker that allowed the nominees to partake in a fun activity. Nominees were given a sheet of paper with several categories, for example “Someone who is planning to go to university”. They had to guide themselves around the room to find people that fitted each of these categories, thus allowing them to engage with one another on a professional and social level. The ice-breaker was very helpful in creating a welcoming atmosphere, in which candidates could then speak confidently to one another and approach others to ask questions.

Next, there was an introduction to the process of becoming an MYP and the choices our candidates will have to make. It stressed that the correct approach a successful candidate would have in order to write an appealing and worthy manifesto. The talk was extremely beneficial to the nominees, for it opened their eyes to many questions they may have had and gave them the push, necessary for achieving the perfect manifesto. Cllr Elaine Norman, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, was also present. She gave candidates advice on what she would imagine a victorious manifesto to contain. Later, she opened the discussion and answered any questions the keen nominees had to ask.

The event concluded with nominees attempting to write their first drafts, in the correct mind-set, applying the knowledge the gained from the workshop, to paper.

Overall, the event was successful, not only due to the fact that it acquired the candidates with salient knowledge, but also taught them about the traits one must have to become a successful MYP.

Amina Mohamed, 17, Youth Councillor

November

This month the play that Redbridge Youth Council had been working on with the Redbridge Drama Centre, has been touring our schools. The schools that have received the play so far have said that they've really benefitted from it, as have the students.

To go with the play we have brought back wristbands, which are still extremely popular with the students, and also Z-cards. The Z-cards are black and smaller than an Oyster card, allowing students to keep them in their purses or wallets. Within the z-cards there is information about the play, as well as contact information for organisations the students can contact if they have any questions regarding themselves or a friend. It also contains stories and poems from young people letting them know that they are not alone, whatever their situation may be.

James Edwards, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

November

This month I represented Redbridge at the UK Youth Parliament House of Commons sitting on Friday 13th November.

We arrived early in Westminster to meet with the other Members of Youth Parliament and there was an opportunity to reunite with friends from across the UK! After breakfast in Westminster Hall, we made our way into the chamber and I took my place on the benches. The feeling of walking into the Commons Chamber is incredibly special and indescribable. There is a sense of the history and the importance of the room you are in and it is truly magical.

After a lot of excitable discussion, the debates began! There were so many powerful speeches from debate leads and backbenchers alike. I rose many times to try and speak, but unfortunately I was unsuccessful. This gave me an impression of how difficult it must be to be a backbench MP, trying to contribute to a debate. Despite this, I really enjoyed having the opportunity to hear fantastic speeches from my friends from London and all the other regions.

The experience of sitting in the chamber was an incredible one and I am sure the memories will stay with me for the rest of my life. I occasionally found my mind wandering as I looked around in awe, taking in my surroundings! I really think that this day was one of the most amazing in my life and I recommend it to any MYP or anyone thinking of standing to become an MYP!

This month I attended the Patient Engagement Forum meeting (PEF) in my area, along with the other MYP and two Youth Councillors. The PEF is a group formed of members from each locality covered under the area's Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and it looks at the work of the NHS within the CCG. Along with hearing about the other work going on in the area with regards to the NHS so we could feed this back to my Youth Council, we also presented a report to the PEF group to inform them of the amazing work that the Youth Council is doing in the borough.

One of the most important campaigns that we have been running is to do with mental health. We informed the PEF group of the impacts of the play, commissioned by the Youth Council, to raise awareness about mental illness - 'Help Me, I'm Normal'. The tour of the play has educated over 5000 young people in Redbridge about mental health and wellbeing and the impacts of it have been extraordinary. In my school, much of the stigma related to it has been lifted and many people have now become more comfortable talking about it and have shared their experiences.

The PEF group was really impressed with the work we have been doing and we will continue to feedback to them with regards to this and other projects that the Youth Council has been co-ordinating within the borough.

Sarisha Goodman, 16, Youth Councillor

November

'Help Me, I'm Normal' is a drama raising awareness of mental health issues and is currently touring Redbridge schools. The play was the result of years of planning and preparation from Redbridge Youth Council, the Mental Health Core Group and Redbridge Drama Centre.

The play was a huge wake up call to many of the people who saw it and provided an accurate image of what mental illness is really like. It was not romanticised, victim blaming or perpetuated any existing stigmas or misconceptions and it was valuable for everyone as it provided awareness and information on mental health.

The play was so hard hitting and I can't describe how incredible and eye-opening it was. There are some plays that are forgotten about a day after they are shown, but 'Help Me, I'm Normal' is likely stay with me for my whole life. It showed me what to do if I was in danger, if my friend was in danger or if in the future my own child was in danger. It is not one of those drama productions that leave your thoughts as soon as you leave the room and the message behind it will stay with me forever.

Billie Dale, 15, Youth Councillor

November

Coming from someone who is new to Redbridge Youth Council, the welcome I got was very warm. I instantly felt wanted and at home. We often discuss issues that are happening with young people today, and what we think is important.

It helps for Youth Councillors at RYC to get knowledge for themselves, as well as knowledge to spread to their friends. For example, we had Amanda Jones, the teenage pregnancy coordinator, come to speak about sex education in schools. We touched upon the Young People Friendly scheme, in which some people from RYC are involved. This entailed some youth councillors going to sites which are YPF accredited, giving free condoms to young people. These young people looked at how discrete they were when discussing sex education and safe sex, what information they had to offer and if they were clear about it, and how they treated young people that came in to learn more about sex.

What the YPF scheme does is very good for young people and I found it very interesting that there are more places for young people to openly discuss sex in a comforting place where they won't get judged. We also spoke about what sex education we do in school at the moment and what we already knew about sex and relationships. For example, consent.

I felt the meeting was very educational and gave us more knowledge than schools have already. Also, it taught us some things we may not have learnt previously, giving us extra information for that we can spread so young people in Redbridge are more aware.

Valentina Vettore, 15, Youth Councillor

November

Last week I journeyed from the humble town of Ilford to City Hall, which overlooks the River Thames and forms a part of the beautiful London skyline. It was there that my day begun. After going through security, we went downstairs to the cafe, where I had my first meeting with Regan Hook from Crime Stoppers.

One Costa brew later and the conversation begun about the work of 'Crimestoppers' (a charity in which you can anonymously provide information about crime) and 'Fearless' (a similar service for young people which also provides information on all sorts of topics like drugs, alcohol, weapons, etc.).

In addition to that, we discussed the prevalence of "baited pages" - where naked photographs of young people are displayed as well as their personal details such as name, age and their school - as well as the negative impacts they have. It was quite eye opening for me as, like many others I had talked to, I didn't know what they are. There are still more discussions to had about the topic and how we can try and try to prevent these things from happening but it's only been a month since I first got in, so there is time to plan and implement a strategy.

Once our discussion was over, we then went to the main meeting of the Safer Neighbourhoods Board, where we discussed many things such as the digitisation of the statistics (whereas before we had gotten copies via email which were then printed out). Some people weren't as happy with these developments, but I myself found it to be delightful. These tools made it a lot easier to compare and the time frames were a lot more specific. There will be a training session fairly soon where we'll learn more about the features to truly get the best out of it.

Shortly after, Helen King, Assistant Commissioner for Territorial Policing at the Metropolitan Police, gave a presentation on things such as the possible financial situation after cuts to the MET. Right now, these were just provisional statistics as the budget hadn't been released yet but it was quite clear that the position the MET is in isn't going to be the same. I got to ask a question regarding the future of Cadets, which the Assistant Commissioner said she didn't see as a commodity and believed was the pride and future of policing.

Sam Khan, 16, Youth Councillor

November

The School Councils' Conference took place at Redbridge Central Library, a prime location for all schools to take part. I enjoyed the session as it gave me the chance to understand more about Bridget's manifesto on oyster zip cards and how it could become a safeguarding issue.

We first started the meeting off with an icebreaker quiz on the London underground. This was largely successful as it made everyone in each group contribute to the quiz as well as making people forget in their environment around them. This made Bridget's manifesto easier to understand as the icebreaker made us more focus and made it more enjoyable to hear the manifesto.

Further into the session, we spoke about each other in a speech. We were only given a piece of paper with three details about "X" person, this was effective as it started to give me more confidence with talking in front of large groups that I have not done before.

Going to the library introduced me to new experiences that I have not covered before as an individual outside of school and someone who does not like to talk to groups of over five people.

Bridget Okhioigbe, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

November

My manifesto campaign for being MYP has been focused on my Transport for London Campaign, which involved getting TfL to take on board my idea of allowing uniformed students to get free travel during peak school periods of they have misplaced their oyster card.

It began with myself being the first young person in Redbridge being invited to the External Scrutiny meeting within my council. Luckily I was able to meet with a representative from TfL, who accepted my offer to have a meeting with our Young Cabinet.

That meeting took place and due to the issue of the original representative not being able to attend we didn't reach our wanted outcome. However, I didn't leave it there. We requested another meeting with the original representative and people of authority within the company.

We then had that meeting and had a discussion on why they cannot allow uniformed students without their oyster. I made it clear to them that this is a serious safeguarding issue and their current efforts are leaving more and more young people at risk on the streets.

They also agreed and confirmed that at the time of the young person attempting to get on the bus, the driver has duty of care for you and it is to their discretion as to whether you are in a vulnerable position. I clarified that you cannot judge vulnerability from just seeing a person and people can appear more vulnerable than others doesn't mean they are not in the same distress.

They then gave us a youth council a task of adapting the bus driver code of conduct to better the safeguarding aspects for youth. I am still currently working on this with the youth council, the TfL youth panel and also now pushing it to London MYPs.

So I was fortunate to be voted to be one of London's debate lead for the House of Commons debate for this year. I was very nervous to meet everyone but also very glad that I had Hannah there as well. For the residential we had to have 2 things prepared, our first draft of our actual speech for the HoC and a speech on who inspires us. We met on the Friday and on that day it was almost as if everything changed.

We played the obvious icebreakers and then we went straight into the speeches. Hearing everyone speak was almost scary, there was so much power and passion coming from their voices I couldn't believe I was there with them.

After we went to dinner, that's when everyone forgot that we literally just met. We spoke as if we've known each other for 10 years! There was so much love given off from every single person.

On Saturday we had to perform the best 60 seconds of our first draft of our actual speeches then rewrite them. That was when we met Francesca who is an absolute legend! We all worked very hard and enjoyed ourselves at the same time.

That evening, since it was our last night, we spent a lot of time with each other having fun and messing about. We were so upset that we were leaving each other, we were literally like family and that's how it was meant to be.

The last day we had to continue working on our speeches and do a final run through. It was amazing to see how people grew within 2 days and to know that these are the people who I was lucky enough to meet.

That residential helped me to better myself and grow when it comes to speaking, presenting and writing a convincing argument. But it also gave me the opportunity to meet some of the greatest humans on this planet. #DebateLeadsGotTheLove

Esah Bannister, 15, Youth Councillor

November

The relationship between Redbridge Youth Council and the Ilford Recorder seems to have been going from strength to strength. The fact that we have already published two columns and received publicity on both an individual and collective level serves to remind us all and, of course, the borough too.

It also reminds all of all the hard work RYC has undertaken to ensure our events and campaigns are a success. Take mental health for example; which has seen the Youth Council commission plays across several schools in the borough and distribute 1000s of wristbands to raise awareness of such a widespread cause. It has been all the more encouraging to see the Ilford Recorder provide their own coverage of our "Help me, I'm normal" play, which includes a quote on the inside front cover of last week's edition from one of our members of the RYC, whilst also taking the opportunity to congratulate Valentina Vettore for becoming the chair of the Safer Neighbourhood board in Redbridge.

It is clear that the Ilford Recorder has been essential to convey the good aspects of youth sometimes drowned out by the constant portrayal of recklessness we invariably see today. Future columns in the recorder include a new year's special review of 2015 in the Youth Council; thanking the good efforts of our current MYPs in the process. Of course no column would be complete without commenting on the hotly anticipated Redbridge Youth Election 2016 and, on more humble note, we should expect one on the simple day-to-day life in the RYC. None of this would be possible without the co-operation of the Recorder and with hope this relationship will endure for much longer.

Amishta Aubeelack, 16, Youth Councillor

November

Mental health has been on the Redbridge Youth Council's agenda for years, even more so now when this issue was highlighted unanimously as the number one problem Redbridge wants to address from the annual Youth Debate.

We knew as youth councillors something had to be done. Hence the exciting invention of the play 'Help Me, I'm Normal'.

This November, keen to not go about this task in a boring way, my fellow councillors quickly came up with a rather intriguing idea of infiltrating the dangers of mental health within a light hearted, piece of drama with a clear underlying message that mental health is -and never will be - a laughing matter. This piece was impeccably fabricated by the Redbridge Drama Centre, having stuck to the guidelines given I am adamant in saying that this piece of drama touched the hearts of every audience it's been displayed to.

It's quite impressive how just three actors created a moving display of realistic emotions. For us, the leading train of thought was that we wanted the play to be relatable yet simultaneously outline the struggles people within this situation would encounter. This was happily achieved when we heard the feedback we had gotten back, children would often go up to the actors after the production and ask for advice – this in itself illustrates just how successful the creation of the play was and how already we were achieving our goal as youth councillors. We were spreading the word, but moreover we were making help visible to those who required it. To enhance the success of the play even further, due to popular demand, we were delighted to announce how "Help Me, I'm Normal" was also being played to parents and adults as well as schools.

Onubha Syed, 15, Youth Councillor

November

The Young Cabinet in Redbridge decided that one of the key areas that the funding given to us by the council should be used to contribute towards is mental health. We chose to focus on improving both people's understanding of it and helping young people who suffer from having a mental illness. As a result, Redbridge Youth Council commissioned Redbridge Drama Centre to produce a play that would be shown in schools in order to raise awareness for issues relating to mental health in an unique and interesting way.

The play is called "Help me, I'm normal", and I personally thought that it gave an extremely accurate insight as to how some sufferers of mental health deal with situations in life and how their loved ones deal with it also. I thought that it was very effective at explaining mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, which before seeing the play, I didn't really understand and at telling the audience how to seek help if they, or a friend need it, which is vital as young people suffering from a mental illness need to feel supported.

The play has been taken by audiences very well. We have received amazing feedback from students, teachers and parents.

In the future I hope that we can continue creating awareness about mental health in equally unique ways that really touch people in the way that the "Help me, I'm normal" play did.

Ishrat Hossain, 14, Youth Councillor

November

The Schools' Council Conference takes place three times a year and the aim of it is to inspire the school councils in each secondary school in Redbridge to find more out about what is going on borough-wide. It is an opportunity for schools to give and take ideas about how to improve some of their systems and to be educated about some campaigns happening in the borough. One of our termly meetings took place last week where we were greeted with twenty or so young people. The atmosphere was light and jolly thanks to our fun quiz ice-breaker about the London underground. The next thing on the agenda was to pair up and to practise our public speaking skills. It was a fun experience and we learnt tips about how to appeal to a variety of audiences. We then went on to talk about the upcoming youth elections and what was needed of a person to be our next MYP. This led on to talking about campaigns and what makes a good one. The presentation was very interesting and I enjoyed explaining to everyone else about promoting things or themselves. Also, me and another member of the youth council went through ten wacky ideas on how to promote a campaign. This was intriguing and rather funny as the ideas were truly wacky. We ended the evening by talking about Redbridge's on-going mental health campaign. We spoke about the play, 'Help Me, I'm Normal', the wristbands and the Z-cards; all produced by our youth council to inform people about mental health. Overall, the whole evening was fun and informative and something that I would love to a part of in the near future again!

Richmond upon Thames

Oscar Thorpe, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

November

This month I first met my local CAMHS representative for south west London. We had a long productive meeting and decided that we would contact other MYP's in this area to work on a joint campaign. We also organised several schools to be signed up to a peer mentoring program.

I also went to the houses of commons debate the day after this meeting. It was very enjoyable even though I didn't get to speak. Here I also networked with the other MYP from south west London. It turns out there are councils that haven't got MYPs. I also voted on the national campaigns and thankfully mental health was one of them!

Inspired by this I have started planning a new mental health campaign where I make sure the PSHE of every school in the Area includes some teaching on mental health and racism & Islamophobia. I will also

send teachers and students to mind mental health training in order to facilitate this. I also want to link up services in the borough. To start I will be mapping out the services available and then send these 'maps' to every service in the borough so they are aware of where they can refer to/ receive young people from. The project will involve me sending previous service users to peer mentoring training and a large awareness campaign. To fund all of these I will be using NHS commissioning money as CAMHS is a NHS service.

Finally I have taken part in organising a London meeting, where we will discuss a London campaign. This may even take place in my council's chambers.

North East

Newcastle upon Tyne

Emily Dormer, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

November

As a response to the result of the Make Your Mark Campaign in Newcastle, the MYPs have been working on a Transport for Young People Campaign. We have met with decision makers within Nexus (the public transport body in Newcastle) with the aim of extending the Child's tickets from Under 16 to Under 18. The meeting was hugely successful, we were advised on the avenues to take in order to secure our ideas but were wholeheartedly informed that they were completely feasible and wanted for the Metro System long term. They also took our short term ideas, such as making the signs informing Young People of the rules to reduce the number of fines they receive.

I attended the Institute of Directors Annual Dinner along with 470 of the top business leaders in the country. I was fortunate enough to sit on the same table as the Speaker of the House of Commons John Bercow as well as MP for Portsmouth South Flick Drummond and Lord Andrew Lansley. The Speaker remembered my speech in the House of Commons earlier this month and, of course, the famous 'I know your Dad' moment. During his speech, praising British Directors for creating the 'cake' for the politicians to work with, the Speaker closed, expressing the importance of encouraging Youth Participation in all aspects of the UK. He specifically mentioned the UK Youth Parliament and told the famous 'Chewing Gum and Pen Knife' Story to the amusement of the Business Leaders. He mentioned me specifically as an example of a Young Person playing a vital role in encouraging engagement of young people and the democratic process. I felt truly honoured to be part of an organisation worthy of recognition to an audience of such distinguished people.

Sunderland

Brian Terry, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

December

It's been an interesting year for Sunderland. Looking back, the city's youth council has developed much more and has achieved a lot. Just this month we as a collective attended Convention 3 to represent Sunderland. This entailed myself (Brian Terry) giving a speech motivating others to motivate others themselves; the MYPs of the North East (myself and Luwam Habte included) engaging in a question time panel on various issues and talks on transport.

In addition to this, Sunderland has geared up to push for its own campaign on Mental Health as voted upon in the Children's State of City Debate. This is a returning issues to the City and one which Sunderland Youth Parliament looks for to tackling with enthusiasm and energy as always.

In conclusion, I would just like to reiterate how wonderful it has been working with SYP over the past year for the betterment of the city. I'm confident they will continue to shine over the coming years.

North West

Sefton

Laura Curran, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

Wow, what a year! BYC conventions, Annual Sitting, House of Commons, and now it's nearly the end of the year. Due to the fact that so much has happened this year, I feel as if it is appropriate to go over some of the main things that have happened in Sefton, the North West, and the UK in terms of Youth Voice!

January - Youthforia

In January, the North West held its first regional meeting of the year known as Youthforia. This time it was held in Knowsley, with focuses on the #RaiseTheWage campaign about living wage (we had met with our MPs about it earlier that week), and mental health with a group called 42nd Street. We discussed how the meetings with our MPs went and how we could carry on what was started. With 42nd Street, we took part in a number of interesting activities, including designing what our perfect mental health service would be like. In addition, we also had Luciana Berger MP attend and talk to us about mental health, with Debbie Abrahams MP also present during the day. Overall, it was a great start to the year!

February - UK Youth Parliament Elections

The UKYP elections for Sefton we held in February, with this being the second time I had ran for MYP. Main issues that I focused on were the UKYP campaigns, as well using social media to promote gender equality and votes at 16. I was over the moon to find out that I was re-elected as MYP for Sefton! Ryan Everett was also elected as MYP, with Gabby Lawless and Owen Johnson being elected as DMYPs. It was a great start to another great term as MYP, and I hope the same happens again in the February 2016 elections in Sefton (fingers crossed). Since being elected, I have worked on what I had said I will do: I have worked on the UKYP campaigns; anyone who follows me on twitter will know I have promoted gender equality and feminism on there (as well as in UKYP and as a campaign); and I have repeatedly emailed and contacted my local MPs whenever there was an opportunity for them to back Votes at 16 during debates/votes.

March - Youthforia

Once again, the North West held another one of its fantastic Youthforia meetings, this time held in Oldham. Again, we discussed mental health during the day, with Trafford talking about how they had started mental health pledges with schools. As well as this, we were put into groups for the "getting to know your government" session, and talked about why certain areas and departments needed funding and why they were important. Also, we had the People's History Museum perform a piece about Peterloo, which was really insightful. To end the day, we had a debate about citizenship. We had all enjoyed the day and couldn't wait until the residential next month!

April - Youthforia residential #Yofo15

This residential is one that every person who goes to Youthforia looks forward to each and every year. With this being my second Youthforia residential, I was particularly looking forward to it considering how great last years was.

There were vast amounts of sessions throughout the weekend: MYP sessions, fancy dress, drama workshop, government related session - the list goes on! There was also an opportunity for each Local Authority to showcase what they have been doing for young people. The thing that Sefton decided to display was our Young Commissioners programme. In April 2013, a group of young people, myself included, came up with an application form that groups of young people could fill in to apply for funding to start their own group. They would need a supporting organisation in order to apply, and they could apply for up to £10,000 (now £5,000). There have been name tremendous ideas that young people have came up with, from having defibrillator training, to cleaning gardens of vulnerable people in the area, to having a music library where people can borrow and practice instruments. By April, we had given out up to £250,000 to groups of young people to start their project.

There were so many outstanding accomplishments that each and every Local Authority had done, which is one of the things that makes the North West as good as it is (after all, North West Is The Best!). May - Owen Jones replied to my tweet, and one of my feminist tweets got noticed a lot

Okay, so May wasn't exactly the busiest month for me in terms of youth voice work, mainly due to exams starting then. However, I was still using twitter on and off throughout the month. During May, a campaign called Our Vote Our Future launched with the aim of allowing 16 and 17 year olds to vote in the EU Referendum. As a supporter of Votes at 16, I was, of course, in favour of this campaign. I cannot fully recall why I did so, but I tweeted Owen Jones asking him what his thoughts were about allowing 16 and 17 year olds to vote in the EU Referendum, to which he replied that he supports votes at 16 for all votes.

Here is the tweet itself: <https://twitter.com/owenjones84/status/603577072179683328>

Now, regardless of what your political beliefs are and regardless of what you think about him, Owen Jones is undoubtedly one of the most well known and influential political figures at the moment, as a Guardian columnist and author. So having someone like him saying how he supports Votes at 16 would surely raise its profile (or at least lead to discussion about it, which is still good).

As well as this, thanks to the feminist culture twitter account, one of my tweets about feminism got 202 retweets and 384 favourites. Feminist culture tweeted asking why people need feminism, and I replied saying how other females and I don't always have our views taken seriously about topics such as politics. Again, here is the tweet with the full message:

<https://twitter.com/lauracurrannmyp/status/604392121827790849>

One thing that was highly noticeable was that so many people had various reasons why they need feminism. I know that I don't face as much oppression as other people due to privilege, and I am doing as much as I can to educate myself on how others are oppressed because of factors they cannot control, the same way I cannot control the way I am. We cannot afford to forget that we need to work on the

many issues within feminism. Intersectional feminism is so important, and we cannot ignore things such as race, sexuality, gender identity, etcetera. This is why I am over the moon that I got to talk about this at the Annual Sitting (which I will mention later on).

June - Sefton Young Inspectors residential

Now that I had finished my exams, I could get fully involved again in youth voice and participation work. Firstly, the Sefton Young Inspectors residential. Young Inspectors is a follow on group from Young Commissioners. After we give the money out to the groups of young people, a group called Young Inspectors visit the successful projects and see how they were getting on and how they have spent their money. In order for us to understand how to act and what to ask, we would need training. This is what the residential was for.

During the residential, we went over: what the criteria would be when we visited the groups; the difference between what is fact and what is an opinion; and the do's and don't's of being a Young Inspector. It was a very useful residential and it was great to see the rest of the Sefton lot after finishing my exams. We couldn't wait to get started!

July - UK Youth Parliament Annual Sitting #UKYP15

Without a shadow of a doubt, this has been a highlight of the year for me. I was so excited for the whole weekend to take part in workshops, The Big Vote, listen to speakers, the list goes on and on!

On the Friday after flying into Exeter, we took part in regional meetings to go through the weekend; had an opening ceremony with Rt Hon John Bercow MP, Speaker of the House of Commons; went to The Big Vote fringe meetings; enjoyed MYM briefing and good practice sharing; and had a barbecue and a quiz in the evening (I still believe that the Red Hot Trivia Peppers should have won).

Saturday was, again, a jam packed day! We had a House of Commons briefing, another regional meeting, various workshops, an amazing speech by Johnny Chatterton, one to one time with our support workers, and then the biggest part of the weekend - The Big Vote (part 1).

The Big Vote was particularly important for me as I was the speaker for Policy Motion number 5 - Gender Equality and Feminism. I am over the moon to say that this motion passed! On a personal note, I cannot thank all those who supported me and voted in favour of this motion enough - I have never had so much support by so many people at one time, I was literally close to tears! The fact that it was near enough a unanimous decision touched my heart, and I can't thank you all enough for what you did. I am still so proud of the responses from this speech:

"Far too many people have the belief
That feminists hate men and want to do
All in their power to become superior.
Yet, in fact, this is anything but true.

Feminists aim for equality of the sexes:
We do not want superiority of any sort.
But despite the effort that many have put in,
This definition, and another, still isn't taught.

The other, intersectional feminism, is the view
That oppression is experienced in different ways and intensities.
This is due to factors such as age, race,
Sex, gender, class, ethnicity, and even abilities.

Believe it or not, when using discrimination,
Different factors are joined into one compilation,
And these all vary due to things like location,
Religion & more. This should get condemnation.

Equality is more than a gap in pay,
Or the amount of successful women in parliament in May.
It's about allowing all to be able to say,
"I'm here, I'm me, and I'll live my own way".

Identity, expression and awareness are key
To making equality a reality.
And now, before I make too much of a commotion,
I urge you all to vote in favour of this motion."

The remainder of the weekend consisted of partying, more workshops, more food, what else could we have asked for? It was so great to have met some amazing people from other regions during this weekend, and I'm sure others will agree, too!

August - International Youth Day

There were two main things on my mind on this year's International Youth Day: Make Your Mark, and Young Inspectors.

Once again, UKYP launched Make Your Mark in August and lasted until the middle of October. This was the second time I've took part, so I used what I had learnt from last year to improve on my total, which is what I did! I managed to get 1,290 votes this year, which I am very pleased with (I got another mug with it being over 1,000), and I am even happier with the UK total of almost 970,000(!!!). I feel so grateful to be part of a group filled with so many hard working and determined people who have all worked together to achieve such an amazing figure. Well done all!

International Youth Day was also the day of my first Young Commissioners visit, which was to a concert that a group of young people involved in music had organised especially for International Youth Day. They had various young people performing songs, stalls for different groups to promote themselves, different types of food – it was all great! We managed to talk to the group about how the process went and how their group was getting on. All in all, it was a very positive and enjoyable day.

September - Educate For Equality campaign (it started in very late August but the main work for it started in September)

When the Make Your Mark ballot was announced, I do have to admit that I was hoping for my Gender Equality and Feminism motion, that was passed during the Annual Sitting, to be one of the top ten

issues. However, this was not the case. With this in mind, I wanted to start something in relation to gender equality and feminism, a campaign, as it felt wrong to just do nothing after wanting it to be on the Make Your Mark ballot so much.

With an amazing amount of help from so many lovely UKYP people (thank you all so so so much!!!), the Educate For Equality campaign was born. This aims to get gender equality taught in PSHE lessons in schools. It started off as a petition, which is still going, and you can all sign it here:

If you want to know more about how to get involved and what's been going on, check out these two updates on the petition! https://www.change.org/p/department-for-education-nicky-morgan-mp-educate-for-equality-incorporate-gender-equality-into-the-pshe-national-curriculum/u/13910460?tk=-lhC9WwOSz0wuHPEjeIR90KKwG0seQEroUX0nqBhjbY&utm_source=petition_update&utm_medium=email <https://www.change.org/p/department-for-education-nicky-morgan-mp-educate-for-equality-incorporate-gender-equality-into-the-pshe-national-curriculum/u/14717350>

October - BYC convention/Youthforia

October was a highly anticipated month for youth voice, as it was the day we would find out the regional totals for Make Your Mark. Once again, the North West absolutely smashed it with an amazing total of 166,696, a 10% increase from 2014! With the highest regional total, the North West were awarded another debate lead position, so we had two in total. The debate lead and PG elections on the day were really good - so many amazing candidates to choose from for each (eleven for debate lead and five for PG). I'm still over the moon that Rose and Hal got debate lead and Laura got PG, and well done to everyone who ran in the elections!

Also on the day, we had a House of Commons briefing, which went over what would happen on the day and what we could and couldn't do. I'm sure it goes without saying that we were all even more excited for the event from it!

November - House of Commons #UKYPHoC #UKYPWhitePoppy15
It. Was. Amazing.

Having attended the House of Commons debate in 2014, I was even more excited for it this year considering how well it went previously. Not only was it a truly splendid opportunity to represent the voices of young people in one of the most, if not the most democratic platform in the UK, but it was also fantastic to talk to and catch up with other MYPs, both from the North West and from other regions. I will always be so grateful to have shared such an occasion with some of the most amazing people I've become to know.

Rose and Hal, the North West Debate Leads, did an absolutely fantastic job with their speeches - I am so so proud of the two of you! Caitlin, the North West Magna Carta speaker, also did wonderfully and spoke so well at the dispatch box - I'm equally as proud of you, too! Everyone who spoke on the day did fantastically, and everyone who tried to speak and get noticed should have their efforts appreciated (I know how you all feel, from last year when I didn't get to speak).

It warmed my heart to see how many people were so happy with the representation in UKYP: 51% of MYPs were female, and 29% of MYPs were from BME backgrounds - far more representative than how Parliament is now. This is something that I am sure will continue throughout UKYP.

Now, even though I did speak this year as a backbencher about the living wage, more people have watched how I got to speak rather than me actually speaking. If you're not sure about what I'm referring to, look here: <https://twitter.com/lauracurranmyp/status/665560260107771904>

Also, some of my facial expressions managed to get spotted by the camera. So, again, look here if you're not sure what I'm going on about: <https://twitter.com/lauracurranmyp/status/665555001700450305>
And who says that young people don't want to get engaged in politics...

December - BYC convention/Youthforia

With a significant lack of Christmas jumpers being worn on the day (I made sure to wear mine), the final BYC convention/Youthforia took place in December. To end the year, we discussed the issues that were debated in the House of Commons, done work with the NHS Youth Forum, and went over the plans for the new UKYP campaign.

Firstly, we discussed some of the topics from the House of Commons, including the living wage, racism, mental health, and transport. Surprisingly, transport ended up being the main topic we discussed as a group. We ultimately said that the pricing of transport isn't really an issue if people don't feel safe on it. Even though it is important, our wellbeing when on public transport is often forgot about.

Afterwards, we had a presentation done by members of the NHS Youth Forum, and we filmed videos for #DearNHS, asking questions that we want the NHS to answer. Overall, this was very interesting, as near enough everyone had different questions they needed answering. Finally, we discussed the new Don't Hate Educate campaign to help tackle racism and religious hatred. It was really useful to go over this, as we now have a clearer understanding of what we will need to do throughout the campaign. We will be meeting with our MPs on our national day of action, which will hopefully gain more support for the campaign! As you may be able to tell, that took a long time to write. But it was worth it! I would like to thank everyone who has made this year as well as it has been - it's definitely been one of the best years for youth voice I know of! See you all in 2016...

Trafford

Lauren, Member of Youth Parliament

Friday 27th November saw many youths fighting their way through the black Friday sales in search of a bargain, however young people in Trafford instead spent their day voicing their opinions and having a say on decisions in Trafford.

Each year, Trafford Youth Cabinet hosts an event that allows school pupils from across Trafford the opportunity to have a voice. The events varies in theme, this years 'Let's Talk Politics', focused on how

politics events everyone and had the aim to both educate and show young people they were as much a part of our political system as anyone else. Planned and organised by this year's MYP, Lauren Barclay, the event aimed to raise awareness to young people over an array of areas from better positive wellbeing to their rights and how they can have a say. The day started, how every conference would, with an emotive speech urging the pupils to 'make the most of the day and take away as much as they can'. Lauren described why political education was such an important issue for her as a young person.

'How can old white men sat in suits in a big building in London have any impact on you'? And back when I was a clueless year 7 walking into a big scary youth cabinet I would have totally agreed with you. But in my 6 years of being part of what I can only describe as a sometimes slightly scary but totally loving political family I have learnt so much about politics and the ways in which it does effects everyone in their everyday life. Believe it or not. And as someone who has had the opportunity to have been thrown in the deep end and taught so much about this subject I have a strong view on the need for Political Education in every single school. Whilst I have been extremely lucky , having an amazing teacher in my school dedicated to give young people both education and a voice on the matter, and had all the opportunities I have had, not every young person will get those and that's why I'm working hard to help improve this.'

The pupils were then involved in a mini mock election where each school were given the opportunity to build their own political party and chose a representative to lead them. Manifesto's were written, campaign videos made and each and every school came up with their own creative way to advertise their parties key points from balloons and posters to catch-phrases. The workshop was inspired by Head of Citizenship and PSHE teacher, Emily Bowyer from Altrincham Girls Grammar who worked with Lauren to ensure the event was a success.

'The Trafford Youth Cabinet conference was a fantastic success, so many young people engaging in politics and making their voices heard was inspiring for all those involved.' Emily Bowyer, head of PHSE and citizenship at AGGS.

Following this pupils and teachers were separated and whilst the pupils learnt and participated in workshops around the issues of stereotyping and hate crime, wellbeing, having there say, party politics and getting involved and the influence of the media, teachers were presented with a new Trafford scheme, The Mental Health Schools Network.

The Mental Health Schools Network aims to bring schools together and provide them with the resources and help that they need to improve the emotional health and wellbeing support they offer their pupils. The initiative has been created by two young people, Lauren Barclay and Hannah Sharp and has received support not just by Trafford schools and councillors but by MP Norman Lamb, formally the Minister of State for care and support, who commended the girls for their work.

For more information on this initiative or for your school to sign up please find more information on the website, www.mhsn.co.uk

After a lunch in which the pupils were given the opportunity to chat to services and pick up important information on both what services there were for them as young people in Trafford and how they can

be involved and benefit from these, it was time for a debate in which the young people were given the opportunity to ask a panel questions on Trafford.

Questions ranging from free defibrillators to the waiting list for CAMHS as well as current issues including the conflict in Syria and immigration. All pupils were thoroughly engaged in the debate and enjoyed the opportunity to ask the panel members their opinions and thoughts on such matters.

All in all the day provided may young people the opportunity to have their say on important issues and learn more about politics to take back to share with their peers at school. Trafford Youth cabinet would like to thank all those that both attended and organised the day for without them it would not have been such a success.

Lauren Barclay, Trafford MYP and main organiser of the day said 'For me the day showed me the passion that young people have about being heard. The range of questions being asked on the panel proved that every young person does have a voice and an opinion on what's going on both in their local area and nationally. The excited and buzzing atmosphere showed me that pupils weren't just learning but were engaging and enjoying the day, and this made the hard and sometimes quite stressful planning completely worthwhile. It is a privilege to be able to represent an area with such impassioned young people within Youth Parliament.'

South East

East Sussex

Maria Goptareva, 17, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

December

As I am a member of East Sussex Youth Cabinet, we have now finished our successful 2-year term and passed over to the newly-elected members. Along with a fellow-member I have hosted a presentation about the things we have achieved as a cabinet, such as helping the development of the 3i-D card for young people aged 11-19 which provides ID, discounts on shops and leisures and discounts on buses. We have also told the new members about the great opportunities this role will offer them, including the chance to become a member of the UK Youth Parliament, which is another amazing experience for them to have. As last UKYP convention took place recently, I would like to say that it was great and productive, as always, allowing members to meet each other, make friends and plans on campaign development. UKYP provides wonderful opportunities for youth politics involvement and hopefully, more young people will be involved with it in the future. As for now, myself with other cabinet members will do our best to let the new members know more about UKYP and build up their interest for joining!

Medway

Georgia Tuttle, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

December

I had a great time at the third BYC conference of this year. I learnt new things about new 2016 UKYP campaigns. It's inspired me to be elected as a UKYP representative in 2016.

Victoria Tuttle, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

November

I helped run a workshop on Community Wellbeing during our Medway Youth Parliament Annual Conference which was based on the topic of Mental Health. This was very successful as a lot of local young people from school/college/work came to discuss the topics and take part in the workshops. The Q&A session with local councillors and members of staff from CAMHS was very useful in understanding what changes Young People would like to make to the mental health services being offered to them in Medway. I have also been to a meeting with my school head teacher to see if some of our students can take part in training for the SAFE Programme-which also helps young people with mental health issues.

George Perfect, 15, Youth Councillor

November

I attended the 2015 MYP Annual conference at the Rochester Corn Exchange. Our conference was focused around Mental health, and we were lucky enough to welcome along local Cllrs and Mayor of Medway. The campaign was well respected by those in the local community, and everyone had a great time!

December

During this month, we were proud to hold our annual 2015 Medway Youth Parliament Annual Conference event. The event was attended by over 100 delegates from local schools, and institutes. The event was also attended by our Mayor, and local Councillors. This year's conference focused around youth Mental health with the title 'Just because you can't see it'. The conference was a success, with 3 different workshops running throughout the morning, focusing on different areas of the conference, with the conference finishing up with a Q and A in the afternoon. The Q+A allowed local delegates to meet up with, and talk to those involved in making decisions to local services.

Charlotte-Primrose Midwinter, 14, Member of Youth Parliament

November

After a successful annual conference MYP have started compiling findings into our conference report. We look forward to sharing our report with counsellors and others too. The annual conference allows pupils from Medway schools to voice their opinions on important topics, this years being mental health and wellbeing.

Philip McCue, 15, Youth Councillor

November

Myself and another member of Medway Youth Parliament attended the Rotary Club Youth Speaks competition. It was a wonderful event and was a privilege and honour to speak in front of a range of important local figures.

Luke Morgan, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

November

I attended the Medway Black History Trust's annual meal, and gave a speech outlining what black history month means to me, as well as that I managed to speak to multiple councillors about campaigning for more black history to be put on the curriculum

Sophie Hill, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

December

As the year is coming to an end MYP has helped me develop loads of skills!!! I've been a minute Secretary for the past two years now and this year my skills have really progress to the point that when I write what a person is saying I often write all the 'uh's and 'um's that people slip in without realising!! To the point that when I was doing homework whilst listening to music, I ended up writing the lyrics to the song, it's a habit! I can't help but write what I hear!! So THANK YOU MYP for the skill, I get the feeling it will be quite useful come university time!! MYP is preparing me for University!

Mid Sussex

Marvelous Jibogu, 14, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

November

On Friday 21st November, I took part in the Take over challenge, and participated in Democracy day in County Hall North, Horsham. Many different schools attended, and took part in numerous interactive activities. I took part in a debate about which topics should be our 2016 West Sussex Campaign. The topics were Living Wage, Curriculum for Life, and Transport. It was voted by the participants of the event that Curriculum for Life will be our Campaign for 2016. I also took part in a presentation about safeguarding, and more specifically, I talked about posts on social media. I have also attended various meetings for the West Sussex Youth Cabinet and UK Youth Parliament, and I have also attended the Free Your Mind Campaign Group's meetings.

Milton Keynes

Amber Saunders, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

November

After taking part in the House of Commons debate this month, I was able to write a passage for my school's website about the campaigns which the UK Youth Parliament will be working on as well as how great the experience was. This was accompanied by group pictures of the MYPs at the debate.

Earlier this month, the MK Youth Cabinet had a meeting where we discussed the next steps for our Anti-Bullying campaign and wrote a letter for schools to remind them that it's Anti-Bullying week and to encourage them to set up activities for students as part of this.

December

This Month I have been to multiple meetings/events as part of my role as MYP. At the beginning of the month, we had the Youth Cabinet meeting where the Youth Parliament campaigns were discussed and we had a workshop on drugs by Compass.

A few members of the Youth Cabinet, and I, went to a meeting held by Milton Keynes Council, where we asked questions about how young people may be affected when it comes to transport due to the new

budget which is being created for next year; the crowd (which was quite large for a council meeting) was very supportive.

We also went to a Cabinet meeting and talked about what the Youth Cabinet is and discussed our ideas for what we think Milton Keynes should be like in 2050 (e.g., be more environmentally friendly, cheaper housing). We then were asked questions by members of the Cabinet.

Lastly, an event called Mandela Day was held as we went to an event celebrating 25years since Mandela was released from prison - it was a brilliant day, which we all enjoyed!

West Sussex

Stephen Gearing, 13, Member of Youth Parliament

November

Recently in West Sussex we had a Democracy Day in which 6 schools brought a wide selection of their students to Horsham where these students and the members of the local Youth Cabinet debated on a wide range of topics including Transport and the Living Wage.

All in all it was a really good day and hopefully it will be run next year as well and we can get even more young peoples voices heard in the debates.

We also voted on the top issue (which will be the West Sussex Youth Cabinet's Campaign) which was 'Curriculum For Life'

Kelly Balmer, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

November

On Friday 13th November UK Youth Parliament sat in the House of Commons for the Annual Debate, Chaired by Mr.Speaker.

From West Sussex the MYPs in attendance were myself, Sibil Sabu, Charlie Doherty and Stephen Gearing. For me it was my second sitting for the others their first.

The excitement of entering the chamber was overwhelming and definitely a rare type. The debates proceeded and each MYP gave outstanding speeches as per usual. Unfortunately I didn't get picked to speak but Charlie did and gave a brilliant speech on Tackling Racism and Religious discrimination.

Our campaigns which were decided on that day are Mental Health (England only) and Tackling Racism and Religious discrimination (national).

South West

Bristol

Sophie Giltinan, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

November

November has been a busy but very exciting month for me.

On the 7th November I attended a special screening of 'He Named Me Malala' at the Watershed in Bristol. I was invited by Rife Magazine which is a magazine for young people, written by young people, covering film, music, art, culture, social issues and politics. Once the documentary finished everyone had the opportunity to sit down with some snacks (which were delicious!) and discuss it. I really enjoyed the documentary and found it truly inspirational. I liked the way a lot of it was based around her and her father's relationship because it is clear that is where Malala found her voice. However, I would have liked to have seen more about how her mother felt about her speaking in public about girls' education. It was great to see her home life and her relationship with her brothers but it was also interesting to see what some people thought of her back in Swat Valley where she used to live some of whom believe she did not deserve the Nobel Peace Prize and that she is just an 'agent for the West'.

On the 11th I met with Jodie from Fixers about our posters for our Healthy Body, Healthy Mind campaign with the Bristol City Youth Council. We are due to start distributing these posters soon! Young People's Festival of Ideas is inspired by the Bristol Festival of Ideas. It encourages discussion on issues such as Class & Education, Pornography and the Power of Social Media. On Wednesday 11th the Arnolfini hosted 'Let's Talk About Mental Health' which explored mental health and how it affects the lives of young people today. The panel consisted of Laura Brain who is a Participation and Rights worker at Off The Record, Jonny Benjamin who is a mental health campaigner, author and vlogger, Ailsa Fineron who uses photography and writing to communicate thoughts and Tanaka Chigwada, a young social entrepreneur. The discussion covered stereotypes, stigma, education, services and biopsychosocial factors. I spoke about what the Bristol City Youth Council and UK Youth Parliament are doing to tackle all of these issues.

Friday 13th November was certainly not an unlucky day! It was the day I travelled to the House of Commons to take part in the annual UK Youth Parliament campaign debate. The event saw some great speakers and received praise from politicians across the country. I was extremely impressed with the diversity of the people who attended. 29% of MYPs are from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds compared with 6.6% of MPs and 51% of MYPs are female compared to only 23% of MPs. My favourite speech was from fellow South West MYP Alysha Bodman who made a powerful speech about gender equality in relation to the 800th year anniversary of the Magna Carta. The debates covered five topics: Tackling Racism and Religious Discrimination, Mental Health, Public Transport, Curriculum for Life and Living Wage. I was given the incredible opportunity to speak on the final topic of Living Wage (the blue

hair got me picked!). I'm very pleased that Tackling Racism and Religious Discrimination was chosen as the UK wide campaign and Mental Health was chosen as the England only priority.

Bristol City Youth Council had a formal meeting on the 18th. Stroud District Youth Council and some volunteers from YMCA sat in to take a look at how our meetings work. John Atkinson from the One Tree Per Child project visited us to speak about the project. One Tree Per Child aims to have every one of the 36,000 children in Bristol's 130 primary schools planting at least one tree. The scheme was launched on the 24 February 2015 in partnership with Bristol City Council and is the successor project to Tree Pips (tree planting involving primary schools). I have agreed to work with John to get Oasis Academy Long Cross signed up to the project. During the meeting we spoke with Vicki Abel about the Castle Park consultation. Bristol City Council are looking for the views of people across Bristol on Castle Park. You can find a survey here: www.bristol.gov.uk/castleparksurvey or collect a paper copy from Central Library. Also on the 18th, the House of Lords backed calls for Votes at 16 in the EU Referendum. Whilst this is great news we still need to rally support from as many MPs as possible to pass the bill when it returns to the House of Commons. Bristol City Youth Council are still petitioning for the Bristol City Council to debate and vote on their position on votes at 16. You can sign the petition here: http://epetitions.bristol.gov.uk/epetition_core/view/votesat16

On Thursday 19th myself and four other members of the Bristol City Youth Council presented our manifesto to the Children and Families Board. They have agreed to support us mainly with our Neighbourhoods and Health and Wellbeing priorities and our UKYP priorities.

Parliament Week ran from the 16th-22nd. It was amazing to see so many schools and young people getting involved nationwide as well as politicians promoting the event. I believe it's really important for young people to get involved in democracy as it means politicians are more likely to listen to young people and will increase voter turnout at an earlier stage. It also empowers young people and can teach how to get your voice heard. One of the biggest reasons people view young people as politically apathetic is because young people don't always know how to get involved and often don't believe they will be listened to. On the 29th I took part in the Bristol March for Climate, Justice and Jobs. The aims of the march are to encourage legally binding emissions reductions targets from world leaders at the UN COP21 in Paris in December, to encourage rich nations (who are responsible for the majority of global warming) to bear the greatest burden of addressing the climate crisis and to get our own government to invest in the renewable energy sector, to create low carbon jobs. As Bristol's year as European Green Capital is coming to an end it seemed like the perfect time for the march.

Over the course of the month I took part in the consultation for the NHS England mandate for 2016/17. I think it's really important that a wide variety of people take part in consultations like this because the services in from the NHS vary massively across the country and for different ages. In my opinion this particular consultation was not publicised widely enough and I would like to see more of an effort to encourage people of all walks of life to take part in consultations like these in the future.

This month I launched a survey on PSHE lessons and Curriculum for Life for young people who currently attend a secondary school in Bristol. Curriculum for Life came a close second in the Bristol Make Your Mark votes and second nationally so I feel it's a really important issue. Young people need to be equipped with the knowledge to make positive choices for themselves and this is why I want every school in Bristol to be committed to be teaching a Curriculum For Life. I am currently emailing schools

with the link because I would like responses from every secondary school in Bristol before the end of the term.

December

On the 2nd of December I traveled to Stroud with some others from Bristol City Youth Council to visit Stroud District Youth Council who were welcoming delegates from Vietnam who are hoping to set up a Vietnam Youth Parliament. They were accompanied by representatives from the British Council, British Youth Council (BYC) and the National Assembly. We sat down and had a conversation about how we all run our organisations. It did get a bit confusing as the Stroud and Bristol systems differ massively!

Also on the 2nd, Rife Magazine released their 24 Influential Bristolians Under 24 list for 2015 and I am delighted to be able to say that I made the list for my interest in politics. Also on the list from Bristol City Youth Council is Neha Mehta, Ella Marshall, Thanushan Jayarajah and Becky Dudley. You can find the list at rife.at/24under24k15

The Horfield and Lockleaze Neighbourhood Partnership meeting took place in Horfield C of E Primary School on the 3rd. It was interesting to see how youth clubs are laid out in relation to areas of deprivation and potential correlations between areas with high rates of antisocial behaviour and youth clubs. We also discussed plans for new all weather sports pitches at Horfield Leisure Centre and the proposal for diesel generators in Lockleaze. Many of us were planning to write statements to the council to oppose the proposal but it was withdrawn the next day. At the meeting I had the opportunity to talk about the Bristol City Youth Council manifesto.

On the 8th of December Natalie Bennett visited Bristol and myself and Neha Mehta (one of Bristol's Young Mayors) had the amazing opportunity to meet her as well as the rest of the Bristol Green Party. We handed her a copy of the BCYC manifesto and had a great discussion about our Mental Health priority. Also on the 8th, I attended a talk by Sir Mark Walport, Government Chief Scientific Adviser, named 'The Future of Energy'. The talk aimed to introduce the audience to the options available to power the UK in the future. It was fascinating to see the various options and it is very encouraging to see the improvements in power generating technology.

The Bristol peace march took place on the 9th. Organised by seven Sixth Form pupils from St Mary's Redcliffe and Temple School, the march was to oppose the government's decision to implement airstrikes in Syria.

After the march I made my way to Brunel House for a BCYC formal meeting. The most interesting part of the meeting was looking at the report compiled of statistics from youth clubs across Bristol. The youth council will be checking the statistics throughout the year to see improvements and question any discrepancies. It is important that we are able to understand the differences in success rates throughout different areas in Bristol.

The Case for Culture Scrutiny Day took place on the 10th of December with the aim to gather ideas on how we can get more people from all ages and backgrounds involved in culture. One of the main barriers that came up is transport. One suggestion is that we have special bus services operating to transport people from all areas of the city to events such as the St Paul's Carnival. However, this does not help for smaller events and sessions. We all agreed that we need to ensure that there is a range of

activities happening all over Bristol and not just in the centre. Sport is something that is often not thought of as 'cultural' so I was pleased to see it in the plan for Bristol. However, whilst it is important that our professional football, rugby, cricket clubs etc. invest in grassroots sport, we need to ensure that people have access to a wide range of sports including those that are less traditional.

After the scrutiny day I traveled out to Brislington to meet with Moyra Akure, a candidate for UK Youth Parliament for Bath and North East Somerset. We discussed how Bristol and BANES run their elections and spoke about my election manifesto and the current BCYC manifesto. It was great to meet Moyra and give her some hints and tips.

Santas on the Run took place in Bristol on Sunday 13th. Myself, a few of my family and 2000 others dressed as Santa danced in the amphitheatre to warm up for the 2km run through the centre. The event was to raise money for Children's Hospice South West and was great fun for everyone involved. The Bristol City Youth Council Christmas meal was on the 15th. We took a trip to Cosmo in Clifton and had a lot of great food. It was lovely to see everyone and I had a great time.

On the 17th I visited Oasis Academy Brightstowe for their Christmas Fayre. It was lovely to see some of my old teachers and help raise money for Oasis Academy Musotu in Uganda and the Oasis North Bristol Hub. The South West finally had their Convention 3 on Monday 21st. We started by looking at how to motivate people to take part in our campaigns which was an interesting activity (with lots of Star Wars references!). We also learnt about the #DearNHS campaign. First we started by naming important problems with the NHS in our own areas and then spoke about them. One that came up a lot was communication which is why the #DearNHS campaign is such a great idea. It gives the public the opportunity to speak about these issues. Each group put together a video with questions and issues they wanted to raise. I chose to ask 'how can we ensure quality remains consistent through service reforms?' We finished the convention off with a Christmas themed quiz and plenty of Christmas music!

This month saw a lot of responses for my Curriculum for Life/PSHE survey. A big thanks has to go out to Bristol Grammar School who gave the most responses. The common trend is that the PSHE lessons are lacking details on mental health, finance and politics. Next year I am hoping to put together a pack of resources to go into more depth on all topics and get schools in Bristol to sign up to teaching this more detailed curriculum.

Cornwall

Owen Davies, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

December

I attended a stop the war protest in Penzance protesting the bombing of Syria - several people I talked to my age were opposed but couldn't make it so I was representing their views, gathering feedback on what young people think of current political events such as Jeremy Corbyn, votes at sixteen and so on.

I can't remember if this was this month or November but Cornish MYPs put together a report voicing u18s views in favour of votes @ 16, which helped to encourage Cornwall council to vote in favour of campaigning for votes @ 16.

Owen Winter, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

December

At the beginning of this month I was given the opportunity to shadow John Manzoni, the Chief Executive of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office in Whitehall. This was part of the Whitehall Takeover where young people were invited to visit Whitehall and shadow ministers and senior civil servants.

The day after this I was extremely fortunate to be given the chance to represent the British Humanist Association in the House of Lords' debate about increasing diversity in parliament. I made the point that it is difficult for minority groups to become involved in politics because our voting system is very unrepresentative and elects MPs disproportionately.

This month I also attended the BYC's convention in Taunton.

Devon

Bethany Lee, 15, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

November

This month has been a very interesting one. On Saturday 7th, we had our Devon county meeting, where we spoke to Francis – an ex member of Youth Parliament – about our disabilities campaign, and as a result, we now have a much clearer view of the outcomes of our campaign. And of course, Friday 13th brought the House of Commons sitting. I wish that I could have attended, because it looked like a fantastic experience, and congratulations to all those who spoke in the debates –everyone did brilliant. A week later – on the 20th – was National Takeover Day. In Devon, our DMYPs had the chance to meet the cabinet members of Devon County Council. We learnt a lot from the day about how hard it is to make tough decisions, and it also gave us a clear idea of who we needed to talk to for our local and regional campaigns to have an impact. I look forward to building on our campaigns come December, and to taking part in another regional convention.

December

This month at our local Devon meeting, we decided how to further our campaigns and saw the Fixers film that a group of us had been producing. In the South West, we had our regional convention on the 21st December, which was very enjoyable. We were spoken to about Holocaust Memorial Day, and the NHS Youth Forum, and we also had a workshop about motivating others to get involved in campaigns. There was also a bit of festivities, but all in all it was a very productive meeting. I look forward to continuing our campaigns in the new year!

Olivia Duff, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

December

this month I went to the regional meeting to take part in different activity's around the holocaust and the regional campaigns (talking racism and religious discrimination and mental health) also this month I attended my local meeting and filed out feedback evaluation forms and talked more about the campaigns we will be starting in 2016. I also took surveys out to young people so they could feed back to us.

Dorset

Jack Dunne, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

November

This month started with another great DYCE meeting. However our Youth Council meeting was lacking somewhat, as our youth worker had been taken ill. Even though Dawn was missing we carried on anyway with the meeting and welcomed some rather interesting guests from Dorset Health and the NHS. I had the role of chairing our meeting, which was jam packed with lots of young people and guests. All the new candidates for the UK Youth Parliament elections had come to their first meeting so we spent most of the time introducing people. Everyone contributed to our questions and answer session on mental health and transition within Dorset healthcare. Even without youth worker we managed to complete the meeting. It was one of our most orderly and well behaved meeting we have had for a long time.

Order, order. I move this motion of a positive story to one of the most unique and best experiences of my life. As most people are aware the UK Youth Parliament took their annual place this year on the prestigious green seats of the House of Commons. I feel privileged and honoured to have sat on the benches of some great politicians and some pretty awful ones as well. The Youth Parliament did a truly amazing job at representing young people from all across the country. Issues were debated such as the living wage, which struck a chord with most of the representatives in the chamber. When we look back a year ago this nation was under threat of being split up with the Scottish referendum. And even with the rise of nationalist parties our future does not look good. But, when I see young representatives from all of the four corners of our nation I feel a surge of pride, knowing that we can work together and we can unite in solidarity for a common cause which we all are so passionate about. From the opening of the debate from my friend in Scotland, the points in Wales on minimum wage and to the passionate and emotive speech on tax credit cuts from representatives in Northern Ireland we as a representing body showed the nation that the voices of young people need to be heard, and what's more we showed many people that we talk a lot more sense than some of the elected and non elected speakers on these issues. The day spent in the House of Commons was a truly fantastic experience and one I will treasure for a long time, or at least until I hopefully have the opportunity again. I am not sure how many people have danced in the House of Commons, but I would like to say that I am the first. The engagement from all representatives to the laughter and exchanges made by the deputy of the house and the shadow leader

of the house made the experience one I will cherish. Though not brilliant with his choosing of people, I am not bitter, Mr Bercow was as brilliant as ever and added an atmosphere to the occasion which I am both grateful for and joyed. The Youth Parliament showed such a great strength in voices and actions of young people I feel that we did many a young person proud, even if we didn't uphold to democracy and mandates of the people, but that is representative politics for you. The UK Youth Parliament is a truly unique collective body and we show everyone how to work together by uniting. What's more, is we truly represent society with a justified and appropriate split between male and female representative, something our adult counterparts could learn.

Though the highlight of the month, or even year as gone by the work did not stop and only today did I help with the filming of the candidates manifesto points for the upcoming elections. It feels so soon since the time when I was filming my own manifesto point. I am now starting to feel somewhat sad that my time in UK Youth Parliament is coming to an end. However, I rejoice in the saying that "you are the change, you want to be". Even though I, like so many other this upcoming election will be standing down from UK Youth Parliament I feel that I have learnt a great deal from my experiences. I now know to carry on fighting injustice and inequality, not just accepting what you get but to question all and state your voice loud and proud. No one can oppress you other than yourself. Always take opportunities and never have any regrets that will haunt you otherwise you have failed in ambition. Together we can achieve far more than we can achieve alone, but to do this we must work together and create opportunities.

Grace van Zyl, 15, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

November

Woah! I am feeling really pumped because for the past month I have been to: a DYCE meeting; an amazing inspirational workshop by the fabulous Kamal Hyman, this was the second time I have met him but he is still brilliant!

I have also helped out at an NHS Youth Conference to gather the opinions of the very opinionated young people of today.

As of Earlier today I am officially standing for UK Youth Parliament!!!! It was absolutely brilliant; being around bright-eyed, vocal and very diverse young people. It seems that this year, like UK Youth Parliament's national campaign, mental health is a very popular manifesto to stand on but frankly with the candidates of Dorset so passionate about their views... they will be making a big difference. In a few days I will also be part of the filming of DYCE's ongoing GUS project (through Fixers). I am really looking forward to it (obviously) because this fab campaign will be broadcasted to the nation in January!. I would like to say a massive well done to: my youth worker the fabulous Dawn Ball who has been rather ill but has prevailed!! All of the MYPs who were up in the House of Commons. I am also praying for Paris, Syria, Baghdad, Japan and the many countries who are facing a terrible crisis.

Jake Perkins

November

November started off as standard, with the monthly DYCE meeting. This was followed up by a Dorset Police and Crimes Commissioner conference, it was fantastic event. With guest speaker Kamal Hyman

giving a truly inspirational talk and a national theatre company came in and performed “Chelsea's choice”.

Towards the end of the month, I attended the UK Youth Parliament candidate training day. We sharpened our manifestos, filmed our campaign videos and all while having a great day. It was all thanks to our amazing youth worker, Dawn Ball.

Sarah Trott, Youth Councillor

November

Phew! November has been quite a busy month for me. I started the month by attending the monthly Dorset Youth Council meeting, which unfortunately our great youth worker Dawn couldn't attend as she was sadly in hospital. However the show must go on, and we had a very successful meeting with visitors from Dorset Healthcare. We spent a large majority of the meeting discussing mental health services as our local Young Inspectors have just completed a review of CAMHS in Dorset. It's very clear that as a group the Dorset Youth Council will be taking on mental health as one of our campaigns in the coming months!

Last Thursday I was also able to attend the Dorset PCC conference which was a huge success. Kamal Hyman, ex member of Youth Parliament turned motivational speaker attended and completely blew us away with his incredible speech, talking about how we should all try to 'aim a little higher'.

Today I've just finished filming my youth parliament manifesto video, along with the other 13 candidates. We have a lovely bunch of people standing for election this year so it's going to be an amazing year for Youth Parliament in Dorset whatever the outcome of the election is!

Finally, next Tuesday I am travelling up to London with an organisation called the #iwill Campaign, which is a charity that promotes 10-20 year olds getting involved in social action projects, as I have recently been selected to represent them as one of their 50 young ambassadors. I am very excited as this is huge opportunity for me and I can't wait to see what the next year brings!

Libby Foxwell, Member of Dorset Youth Council

November

Hello my name is Libby and I'm a new member of DYCE and I'm a candidate for the UKYP, These past months have been busy for me because I have been practicing for my manifesto video. In the past month I have attended my first DYCE meeting and met loads new people, I have also gone to the Dorset crime and commissioner conference with school and learned about offensive weapons and cyber bullying. In addition I have gone to the UKYP training day to film my manifesto video. Overall I have had a really exciting month and I look forwards to participating in other things with DYCE.

Archie Rowell, Member of Dorset Youth Council

November

At the present I am a youth councillor for the Dorset Youth Council. I attended my first Dyce meeting this month which was tackling the issue of mental health issues and how the NHS should spend some of

their budget. It was a really eye-opening and enjoyable experience; I am certainly going to attend the monthly meetings.

I have just returned from the UK Youth Parliament training day where I and the other candidates filmed our manifesto videos, all of the other points made by other people are extremely valid, there is a very stiff competition this year, it could go either way. I am campaigning for the improvement in the understanding and awareness of mental health in young people, I am going to soon be going around schools in Dorset to try and catch their votes.

Gloucestershire

Alysha Bodman, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

November

On Friday the 13th November, I joined almost 300 elected Members of Youth Parliament at a national debate in the House of Commons to decide the UK Youth Parliament's priority campaigns for 2016. I was selected to represent the South West to deliver a speech about the relevance of Magna Carta. I linked this to the topic of gender equality which she is extremely passionate about. I highlighted how far we have come as a society in terms of gender equality since 1215 but how far we still have to go. In addition, I questioned how we can feel represented in our parliament when only 29% of all MPs are female and this received applause, showing that this resounded with the chamber and they also hoped for a more diverse Parliament in the future. Moreover, I received a standing ovation at the end! This was a very proud moment.



Although I was apprehensive to be speaking in such a prestigious place, I managed to use these nerves to my advantage and deliver a passionate speech about gender equality. It is a topic that I believe is very important so I am very glad that I was able to highlight the unrepresentative Parliament we have in terms of gender. Hopefully, we can work towards a 50:50 parliament in the future!

In the main debates; working together to combat racism and religious discrimination, particularly against people who are Muslim and Jewish was chosen as the issue for the national campaign for 2015 and mental health was chosen as the UK Youth Parliament's priority campaign for England.

These motions were two of five debated by the UK Youth Parliament in the House of Commons chamber, during a session chaired by Speaker of the House of Commons the Rt Hon John Bercow MP. The votes cast were:

UK Wide:

"Working together to combat racism and religious discrimination: 155

"Everyone should be paid at least the Living Wage: 117

Devolved:

"Mental health services should be improved with our help: 176

"A curriculum to prepare us for life: 110 "Make public transport cheaper, better and accessible for all: 33

I am extremely happy about the new chosen campaign topics. It's important that we can continue to work on removing the stigma of mental health and start working towards making our society more accepting as these are important for young people all over the UK.

This sitting marked the importance of youth voice all over the country, and proves that young people are enthusiastic about achieving social change. I am looking forward to another year of campaigning!

December

Last week I attended a Stroud District Youth Council meeting at the Museum in the Park in Stroud. We were taken on a tour around the museum which includes artefacts from around the area and listened to the information given by our wonderful tour guide. It was really interesting! Afterwards, the youth council discussed their recent activities such as the visit from the Vietnamese youth delegation and gave the usual update from schools and colleges in the area.

I also notified the youth council of my recent work and told them about my upcoming meeting with Neil Carmichael MP and Geoffrey Clifton Brown MP in February. I encouraged them to let me know of any issue they wanted me to bring up at the meeting. This meeting has been scheduled in order to discuss the UK Youth Parliament's upcoming campaigns and I look forward to discussing my work with these two MPs. If there is anything you want me to mention at this meeting with the local MPs, please contact me!

Moreover, I also attended the 3rd South West regional convention and it was really enjoyable to be reunited with all the MYPs and DMYPs! Our first task was to discuss the motivation and teamwork which could be utilised to get our new national campaigns up and running. We had to create and perform a 2 minute presentation to notify the audience of the importance of one of the chosen campaigns. My team chose 'tackling racism and religious discrimination' and our piece involved a young girl (myself) being bullied about her religion (Islam) and being encouraged by an onlooker to speak out about it. My character responded to the bullies by saying 'There are 1.2 billion Muslims in the world. A small minority

does not define us.' This workshop was really useful to help us start thinking about our own ideas and motivation for the upcoming campaigns. In the afternoon, I partook in the #DearNHS workshop which informed us of the work of the NHS youth forum. They asked us to think about the problems with the NHS for young people and ideas for how they could be tackled. We then used these ideas to create our own short videos which included us speaking about our hopes for improvement of the NHS. I spoke about how I wanted there to be increased communication between departments within hospitals to help people who suffer from a broad range of illnesses. Overall, the youth voice convention was very enjoyable and informative! I will definitely be using the information I received to help with my work for the upcoming campaigns in the new year.

Yorkshire and Humber

Doncaster

Caitlin Boyle, Member of Youth Parliament

November

What a fantastic experience attending the House Of Commons Debate, this was my first time and WOW did I enjoy it. I did try to get a question in but was sadly not chosen by Mr Speaker something I will try to sort for next year.

We had an early start and late finish but it did give me and Emma the chance to plan and reflect our thoughts and experience of the day. I'm busy thinking how we can work on the 2 issues voted in as the priorities for 2015/16. What an experience what an opportunity it was great.



Emma Spencer, Member of Youth Parliament

November

This is me and Caitlin on our way to London a 5:00am start for us both but as you can see we were excited and eager to get there. We have both had a fantastic day, we discussed and debated the top 5 issues in the House of Commons, Tackling Racism and Mental Health were the top issues of priority chosen for 2015/16, we discussed ideas on the train journey home of how we could work on the priorities in Doncaster and how we could engage with our peers and partners to work together to really make an impact on these issues..



Owen Hamilton – Davies, Youth Councillor

November

Just wanted to give an update on our youth surgery programme, we run youth surgeries roughly every 3/4 months working in partnership with our locally elected ward members, together we attend our youth centres across the borough and listen to young people's concerns about their community, we then share these concerns with decision makers with a view to addressing the issues. So far all ward members have attended the surgeries in their ward. Doncaster's political members are really helping us to shape services for young people.

Georgia Kerry – Sir Thomas Wharton Community College

November

I was one of two students to be given the opportunity to take part in the Childrens Commissioner National Take over Day Challenge organised by the Local Authority in Doncaster. My day was to shadow the Assistant Director of the Childrens Trust Jackie Wilson, we started our day by attending the Partnership Summit held at Doncaster College, the summit had about 150 people attending, professionals and young people together to discuss Doncaster past 12 months, where we are now and what's in store for the future. At the summit I was asked to sit on a panel that would take questions from the room, I was quite nervous but Jackie was very reassuring and encouraged me to share my thoughts and opinions as a panel member.

After the summit I went on with Jackie to the Childrens Trust town centre office, I attended a meeting where we discussed the forthcoming Toy and Gift appeal, I also helped to develop a gap analysis exercise for staff. I really enjoyed my day working with the Childrens Trust it gave me a small insight to the hard work that the social care teams do for children and young people across Doncaster.



After my day had finished with Jackie I was to meet back at the Civic Office to meet with the Chief Executive of the Council, what a surprise when I got there she was in a meeting with Ed Miliband and Rosie Winterton 2 of our MP's, it was great meeting Ed and Rosie and me and William the other student who was given the opportunity to job shadow managed to get a photo with them both. What a great day, what a valuable experience, I would definitely recommend Take Over Day to others and encourage them to get involved.

Emma Spencer, Member of Youth Parliament

December

I really enjoyed the Convention and the roles I was involved in. Meeting friends from the Youth Parliament was really exciting. I presented our team plan for the priorities for 2016 at convention 3. In January myself and Caitlin will be delivering our plan to the Children and Families Partnership Board.

Kieron Franks, Youth Councillor

December

I enjoyed representing Doncaster Youth Council and the activities that took place at Convention 3



Robyn Wainwright, Youth Councillor

December

Today's Convention was well organised and I enjoyed the activities that we participated in.

Chloe Green, 18, Chair of Children in Care Council

December

Since June this year we have been working on a number of projects including a group of us working with The New Media Company who are helping us to develop a professional logo that we hope will represent who we are as a Children In Care Council. We hope to use this logo as an endorsement on documents that are aimed at young people so that they know we have given our approval. We have also attended two regional Children in care council meetings in Scarborough and Rotherham where we shared our thoughts and best ideas. A small group of us visited Westminster and attended the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers where we took part in a debate around sibling contact and how to make this meaningful. We are currently working on finding our 'priority' and have identified 6 areas that we feel are important to all children in care and we are planning on undertaking a vote in the New Year. Every 3rd meeting we have an activity and up to now we have been bowling as a group and we have all met to have Christmas dinner together recently.

Leeds

Sam Slater, MYP

November

We are slowly coming to an end of an action packed programme towards the end of 2015 and we are now working out how best to tackle the new Make Your Mark campaigns. Although it has been busy, it has been very enjoyable with highlights including the Make Your Mark Campaign and the Convention 2 in Rotherham with the pinnacle being the visit to the House of Commons on the 13th November.

Shamim Miah, Member of Youth Parliament

November

My greatest achievement!

What can top speaking at the biggest political frontier in the UK? This day was the pivotal part of my UKYP journey, as I was chosen to speak at the House of commons dispatch for my community, Leeds, Yorkshire and Humber and everyone effected by racism and religious discrimination. I loved having the opportunity to do such a thing as I represented my society on one of the most important issues around the world today, and the most exciting bit...

My issue of tackling racism and religious discrimination was passed in the House of Commons 2015 annual debate! WHAT AN ACHIEVMENT, I can't wait to be active in such a prominent issue and help to combat and wipe out race and religious discrimination for good.



Nicole Sabau, Member of Youth Parliament

November

Over the past year, Leeds MYP's have been coming up with ways to ensure that young people in Leeds receive the right level of support in schools and other youth settings. In Leeds MYP's have been working on the national campaign 'improving mental health services for young people'.

Having the right mental health support is such an important issue to young people, MYP's believe it's time that everyone worked together to ensure that the correct support is available.

As Members of Youth Parliament, representing other young people in our city, Leeds MYP's have created a short film to get their message out – to help fight stigma and prejudice and to highlight some of the fantastic services we have here in Leeds to support young people who may be feeling anxious or depressed.

MYP's developed and created an information pack for schools and other professionals working with young people in Leeds. The pack was focussed around the short video that MYP's created. A link to the video can be found here: <https://youtu.be/vTM3O-8z8cA>

Students from Green Meadows Primary School

December

Our school has been part of the national 'Take Over Day.' Our learners have been teachers and teaching assistants in class, they have trained to be Passenger Assistants and some learners have been the Lead Practitioner and Principle for the day!

We have learnt how important these jobs are and how these jobs help others.

Being a Passenger Assistant:

First we conducted a survey about our school journey. Then we learnt about health and safety and how to help someone put on a seat belt. Finally we learnt how to help out on the minibus and finished the survey.

Young person from Acorn Lodge Children's Home

I wanted to be the chef for the day at Acorn Lodge as I love food and cooking.

I asked all the staff what they wanted for lunch and wrote it down (with some help from the staff) I also asked the other young people what they wanted. I had to show some pictures of food to one young person to help them decide.

I went into the kitchen and washed my hands and put my apron on.

I looked at the list and remembered what everyone had wanted for their lunch. I got the ingredients out of the fridge and made everyone their lunch.

I had a great time and want to be the chef all the time.

Written by Class 10 students at Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School

It came to our attention that we had a problem....a big problem. We had one of the lowest recycling rates in Leeds and, with less than a year of landfill left, we knew we had to do something..... children at Corpus Christi Primary School wanted to make a difference so we started to research the problem...many people were unsure of what they could recycle and where they could take their bigger items to reuse. People were anxious about putting the correct household items in the right bins or banks. We needed to change how people separated their rubbish and make them aware of what was happening to our environment and more importantly our future. Landfill sites are where rubbish goes when it isn't, or can't be, recycled. There are areas of land where rubbish is dumped to either fill a hole or directly on the ground called land raising. What implications does this have on our future, if we do not change our ways then how much money, how much pollution and how much rubbish is there going to be?

"Recycle today, recycle tomorrow, recycle for the future, you know it makes sense"

At Corpus Christi Primary we wanted to make a difference, we knew we couldn't let the low recycling rate continue so every class appointed a Recycling ambassador to encourage recycling in school and to spread the word. We now regularly check the recycling in each class throughout school, explaining to teachers and children how important it is to recycle. We always recycle our milk cartons and fruit and each class now has recycling bins for paper.

We go into the local community encouraging local shop owners to recycle. Already one of our local fish and chip shops has started to use biodegradable containers rather than plastic bags - we made a difference!

To get a better understanding of our waste and where it goes we headed to East Leeds Household Waste Sorting Site where we met Mags and Janice who explained to us where our waste goes and different ways we can recycle. We were given the opportunity to visit Revive, the shop where people bring unwanted items that are too good to send to the sorting site. We were all surprised as to how many great items could be found and how busy it was.

We made posters to spread the word and encourage recycling and put them around our school. Every parent and carer received a flyer stating the statistics and how to separate their waste. Our parents were surprised at the many different items that could be recycled and how easy it was to do.

Sheffield

Ella Jones, 14, Member of Youth Parliament

November

This month has been busy and exciting, mainly because of my trip to the House of Commons for UKYP's annual debate. Whilst I didn't get the chance to speak it was wonderful to feel the atmosphere in the room as everyone was so excited to be there and most people had prepared something to say in case they got picked by the speaker John Bercow. To be able to sit on the green benches in the chamber and to find out what it's like to be in the middle of a very real and very exciting debate is something I shall never forget.

Abbi Kirk, 15, Youth Councillor

December

This month I went to the last Convention of the year in Grimsby. The day was really fun and I learnt how to be better organised when planning. My favourite part of the day was the debate about our mental health campaign because we got to hear people's personal opinions and experiences. Also this month I have been to our Full Cabinet meeting, where we discussed our action groups, the Convention, our National Campaign Day in January 2016 and other important issues. I have also attended our work experience action group. This month we discussed where to go next regarding this issue and whether lack of funding in schools could be the main issue stopping young people from doing work experience. Overall this month has been really fun and successful and Convention 3 was once again really good!

Arman Maleki-Dizaji, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

November

In Sheffield we are continuing with our legal highs campaign by working with a local drugs organisation and we are also trying to set up a database to make it easier for young people to find work experience in our other campaign. Three MYPs from Sheffield were lucky enough to attend the Annual Debate in the House of Commons on 13th November of which I was one. It was a really great experience to be sitting in the House of Commons listening to the excellent speeches from other MYPs, I feel like I have benefited from this as I learnt what was important for young people in other parts of the country. Unfortunately I didn't get picked to say anything but I did try! I was pleased with the two campaigns as I think it gives Sheffield Youth Cabinet plenty to work on

Eleri Kirkpatrick-Lorente, 17, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

November

This month I was lucky enough to go and sit on the green benches of the House of Commons! This was my first year going, and the whole day was amazing. In Sheffield, I had managed to gain over 1000

ballots in the Make your Mark, and overall 12,922 people had voted. The top issues which came out of Sheffield were the five that were debated in the House of Commons: “Give everyone a living wage”, “Improve Mental Health services” “Improve transport”, “A curriculum to prepare us for life” and “Tackling Racism and religious discrimination”. I personally am very passionate about “Tackling racism and religious discrimination”, and so I was really keen to speak on this issue. Luckily, after some frantic (and slightly dangerous) jumping I was chosen by the speaker to talk. Though I was really nervous, the experience of talking in the Commons was fantastic, and I’m really happy I was able to speak out on an issue which really matters to me. When the time for voting came, the Youth Parliament voted to make “Tackling racism and religious discrimination” our national campaign and “Improving mental health services” the England-only campaign. I can’t wait to work on both of these, and I hope that we can really make a difference to young people’s lives. It’s my last year in the Youth Parliament now, but there is still lots of work to do.

York

Daniel S. Bonser, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

On the 13th of November 2015, I had the honour of representing the young people of the City of York at the UK Youth Parliament’s annual House of Commons sitting.

By the time I arrived at York Station ready for our train, I was already unbelievable excited, I was expecting to be really nervous but to my surprise my only concern was whether I was underdressed! We met the other MYPs from North Yorkshire on the train down and they put me at ease so that by the time we arrived just after 10am I was ready for the day.

When we entered the Chamber I was struck by two things; the first was a sense of awe at where I found myself, the second was simply how much smaller the Chamber is compared to how it looks on BBC Parliament.

The Speaker of the House Mr John Bercow entered at 11.00am. We all stood as the doorkeeper bellowed the single word, “SPEAKER” as Mr Bercow rounded the corner. Once he took up his seat we all settled into the day’s proceedings. We enjoyed speeches from the Deputy Leader of the House of Commons, Dr Therese Coffey MP and the Shadow Leader of the House of Commons, Mr Chris Bryant MP (of whom I am a particular fan).

We then began the main part of the day; the debates to decide the national campaigns of the UK Youth Parliament for 2016. The first debate was surrounding how the UKYP could help to tackle racism and discrimination particularly toward those who are Muslim or Jewish. This was a very heated debate but I have a special respect for those who had the integrity and, frankly, courage to argue against this motion.

Secondly, the motion entitled “Mental Health services should be improved with our help”. Personally, I thought this was the topic closest to my heart as a person who suffers with ongoing anxiety which in the past has led to depression. This was the first debate I found myself getting involved in; jumping out of my seat to try and get my chance to speak about my experience of the Mental Health services on offer

here. Unfortunately I was not called upon but I was content with the points made by the other MYPs and was happy because I had tried to speak in the House of Commons which is amazing!

We had three more debates after that which I won't get into on this occasion, they were on the subjects of Public Transport, A Curriculum for Life, and the Living Wage and were all extremely enjoyable but I haven't the space here to go into every explicit detail.

Then it came time to vote on the next year's campaigns. We were ushered into the lobbies by the HoC doorkeepers (who were very kind and took great care of us) and cast our votes. After they were counted it was announced that the campaigns were; **Improving Mental Health services**, and **Combatting Racism and Discrimination**.

After this, all of the "thank you"s and closing speeches were made and the day drew to a close. It was a truly amazing experience and I will never forget it.

I am so grateful to HoC for having me and the other MYPs and to Mr John Bercow and all the HoC Staff for spending their day with us and to the BYC and all others involved in the organisation and smooth running of the day for making this day happen and making it so memorable for us all.



Northern Ireland

Belfast East

Ross McVittie, 18, Member of Youth Parliament

November

This month has been a very exciting one indeed, myself and my fellow MYP's were reunited in the House of Commons on Friday 13th November to debate and vote on the top five Make Your Mark issues that were voted on by 968,091 young people across the UK. But prior to this, I was quite active in terms of meetings and representation.

On 29th October I organised a catch-up meeting with my MP for Belfast East Gavin Robinson MP in his constituency office. During the meeting I thanked him for encouraging the schools in East Belfast to sign up for the Make Your Mark youth consultation exercise by writing letters on Westminster stationary and then spent some time telling him the outcome of the national ballot and how well East Belfast, Northern Ireland and the UK had performed.

Gavin was amazed at the big improvement (increased from 912 to 3,496 votes) in young people taking part from East Belfast compared to last year and was interested to hear the top 3 issues for young people in East Belfast which were Living Wage, Curriculum to prepare us for Life and Extended special needs support as well as the top 5 NI and UK issues. Gavin asked me to send his congratulations to all the NI MYP's who worked so hard to achieve the fantastic result as well as the UK MYPs for what they also achieved.

On the 30th October I met my newly appointed MLA for Belfast East Andy Allen from the UUP (Ulster Unionist Party) and during the meeting I asked him about his role as an MLA and what sort of issues he had come across since taking over as a MLA for East Belfast. I told him about the UK Youth Parliament and the results of the national ballot and Andy was very interested in the East Belfast and NI results.

I must say it was a privilege meeting Andy who used to be in the Royal Irish Regiment and served as a Ranger in Afghanistan during 2008. Whilst on patrol an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) device exploded which left his right leg torn off and then eventually due to infection Andy lost his left leg. Andy was part of the BBC documentary called Wounded which won a BAFTA award. You can see the documentary here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-B1F5izOIY>

Whilst recovering in hospital Andy set up a charity organisation in NI called "AA Veterans Support" that provides British Army service men and women with Practical, Training, Emotional and Financial support to those who are serving or have ever served along with their families.

Andy was pleased to see that mental health was one of the top five Make Your Mark issues voted for in East Belfast, NI and the UK and we spent half an hour chatting about what actions could be taken to

improve mental health in NI. I told him about my work as part of the NI Assembly Erasmus+ Connections mental health awareness project that produced 3 mental health awareness films during the summer.

On Remembrance Sunday (8th of November) I attended a short service in Omagh Academy followed by a parade of veterans, local politicians, local public services, schools and youth organisations through the town to the Omagh War Memorial. I then had the honour of laying a wreath on behalf on the UK Youth Parliament alongside the other political representatives. Despite the heavy rain it was one of the most important and rewarding duties that I've undertaken as a MYP. I also met the Lord Lieutenant of Tyrone Robert Scott OBE at the event and I discussed my role as a MYP, the outcome of the Make Your Mark ballot and some "bread and butter" issues that affect young people. This seemed to impress him very much!!

I wish to extend my thanks to the UUP West Tyrone MLA Ross Hussey MLA who contacted Omagh Council and the Royal British Legion seeking permission for me to lay a wreath, after Belfast City Council had rejected my request. I feel blessed to have such a wide variety of MLA's from across the different NI parties who are keen to support me and other young people in taking part in local community and political activities.

On Friday 13th November, the biggest highlight of my MYP year, I had the honour of representing the young people of East Belfast in the House of Commons debate. It was a historic and symbolic occasion because MYPs were on TV and we got to sit on the famous Green Benches the only people other than MPs allowed to do so!! It was brilliant to see MYPs from every region of the UK and hearing the speeches by the debate leads and Magna Carta speakers.

Ryan Simpson MYP (Lagan Valley) had the honour of representing NI as Debate Lead and Ryan did a fantastic job of summing up the pros and cons of the debate on the Transport issue. Helen Jennings MYP (South Down) had the honour of representing NI in the Magna Carta speeches and in my view Helen made the best Magna Carta speech of all! I'm so proud of both of them and also Sophie Bell MYP (East Antrim), Niesha Kelly MYP (North Antrim), Gareth Hampton MYP (Newry & Armagh), Jack Logue MYP (Mid Ulster) and Darragh O'Reilly MYP (Fermanagh & South Tyrone) who all managed to catch the Speaker's eye and get to speak.

Unfortunately I didn't get the chance to speak on my preferred motion - "Tackling Racism and Religious Discrimination" but I really enjoyed standing up and trying to get the Speaker's attention. I was delighted that the motion "Tackling Racism and Religious Discrimination" was voted as the UKYP National Campaign for the year.

Finally, on the 21st November I attended the DUP Annual Conference as an observer. This was no ordinary conference as it was the last one for the current leader and First Minister of NI Peter Robinson MLA as he is retiring soon. I also managed to get photographs with the First Minister Peter Robinson MLA and Finance Minister Arlene Foster MLA who is likely to be the next First Minister.

It was also great catching up with my MP Gavin Robinson MP and MLA's Sammy Douglas and Robin Newton. I told them about the House of Commons vote and the issue "Tackling Racism and Religious Discrimination" being selected as the national campaign. All were keen to support the issue and I'm

making final arrangements to meet them all on January 22nd as part of the National Campaign Day.
Onwards !!
God Bless Ross McVittie MYP Belfast East



December

This month has been slightly less hectic than November which had all the excitement of attending the House of Commons debate on Friday 13th but December did have the advantage of lots of Christmas lunches !!

On 12th December I attended a meeting of the Translink Youth Forum followed by Christmas lunch in Havana in Belfast which was really tasty. On 16th December I met up with my NI Assembly Erasmus+ Connections Project to review our Mental Health Awareness film for NI schools (<http://education.niassembly.gov.uk/video-gallery/video/mental-health-schools/short-film-explores-mental-health-schools>) and agree who would do what at our presentation to the Committee for Education of our film on 19th January 2016. Unfortunately I can't make the session in January but more about that later. This was the last formal meeting of the Erasmus+ Connections Project and I must say that I've really enjoyed the experience and would encourage any young person to get involved in next year's project which should be announced in the New Year. We then all were taken out by the co-ordinators to the Stormont Hotel for Christmas lunch which again was really tasty.

On Thursday 17th December I organised another catch-up meeting with my MP for Belfast East Gavin Robinson MP in his constituency office. At the meeting we discussed the launch of the UK Youth Parliament's National Campaign "Working together to combat racism and religious discrimination" (#Don'tHateEducate) on 22nd January 2016. Gavin is keen to promote the campaign with me and agreed to try and get the other DUP MPs involved. I also gave Gavin a Christmas bubble of the famous Harland & Wolff cranes in East Belfast to thank him for all his help during the year and he was very pleased and said he will put it up in his home.

The other big thing we talked about were the arrangements for my work experience/job shadowing with Gavin at Westminster during the 18th-20th January 2016 which is like getting an early Christmas present !! This should be an amazing opportunity for me to learn and experience what a MP does when at Westminster. I'll be able to attend a couple of Committee meetings with Gavin and listen to debates in the House of Commons Chamber and might even get to witness Prime Minister's Questions from the public gallery if Gavin can secure a ticket for me. I'm really looking forward to spending a few days in Westminster as when I was there in November we didn't get much time to explore the place.

On 21st December I met up with my fellow NI MYPs and PG (who could come !) to go out for a Christmas lunch in Chiquito's in Victoria Shopping Centre which was brilliant and was so good to spend time with NI MYPs who have all become my friends over the last year. Sad that we are all coming to an end of being MYPs and for quite a few of us we will be too old to stand again in 2017 next year. The banter was fantastic and special thanks go to Emma McCaughern MYP East Londonderry for the lovely brownies she made us and to Jordan Graham South Antrim MYP for making us all an individually themed mug ! Mine had the DUP logo on the mug with Ross McVittie MP printed below. If I ever become a MP I will make sure to have it with me on election night !!

Finally given that it is Christmas I decided to send as many GB based MYPs as I could a Christmas card but unfortunately ran out after 55 cards ! Apologies for those who didn't get one but here is the message:

It has been great knowing you and I wish you all the best for the future.

From Ross McVittie MYP God Bless.

I also added the following verse: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21 Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year !!

Onwards !!

God Bless

Ross McVittie MYP Belfast East

Strangford

Member of Youth Parliament

When I look back at 2015 I am filled with happiness about my year in which office but also hope for the future. I have done many amazing things such as going to Kent and Exeter, visiting Stormont and meeting with my local representatives to talk about the issues that really matter to young people. I have learnt so many things throughout my time as MYP and I am looking forward to all the hard work that is ahead.

Wales

Caerphilly

Project Group Work

This year's priority issue was health: Raising awareness about Domestic Abuse. The young people have said there are not enough services for different age groups affected.

The youth forum have been meeting on a weekly basis to discuss the issue and have come up with ways to raise awareness about domestic abuse.

The Youth Forum has come up with three ideas that they feel will raise awareness on the issue. We are going to give you an update on where we are with the ideas.

The first idea was to create a poster focusing on Healthy Relationships.

The Wrist Bands we created to tie in with the White Ribbon campaign have been produced and are certainly in storage waiting to be out given out in November at our Launch.

We have completed an Agored: Freedom from Violence Level 1.

This will be promoted around schools and youth settings and hopefully make raise awareness around the signs and effects Domestic Violence as on the victim.

The Final project we have completed alongside the Welsh Assembly Government is creating an animation around unhealthy relationships..

How healthy is your relationship?
Pa mor iach yw eich perthynas?

Control
Lies
Abuse
Isolation
Criticism
No trust

Rheolaeth
Celwydd
Camdriniaeth
Unigedd
Beirniadaeth
Diffyg ymddiried

Support
Respect
Honesty
Love
Equality
Privacy

Cymorth
Parch
Gonestrwydd
Cariad
Cydraddoldeb
Preifatrwydd

Live Fear Free
Helpline / Llinell Gymorth:
0808 80 10 800

Keeping your silence won't stop the violence
Codwch eich llais er mwyn rhwystro'r trais

Llamau **Youth** **Ieuencid** **Safer Caerphilly County Borough** **Caerphilly**

Side 1

NO EXCUSE FOR ABUSE RESPECTIVE RELATIONSHIP

Side 2

LIVE FEAR FREE 0808 80 10 800

Healthy relationship

- Support each other.
- Respect each other's opinions and values.
- **Honest** to one another.
- Genuine and truthful **love**.
- **Equal** rights in a relationship.
- Respect each other's **privacy**.

Unhealthy relationships

- Takes **control** of your decisions.
- Constant **lies**.
- Can be **abusive** in different ways.
- **Isolates** you from communicating with friends and family.
- **Criticise** you and puts you down.
- **No trust** in the relationship.

What is domestic abuse?
Domestic Abuse is any violent or abusive behaviour. Abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual or financial. Which is used by one person to have power and control over another person.

Different types of abuse

PHYSICAL - Physical abuse is behaviour which includes physical/actual body harm of another person, examples of this abuse includes: Punching, slapping, pushing/shoving, biting, kicking and misuse of medication.

SEXUAL - Sexual abuse is when a person engages in sexual contact or intercourse without the other persons consent. Sexual abuse includes: Rape, forcing oral sex, being forced to watch pornography.

FINANCIAL - Financial abuse is where one person controls another persons money income. Financial abuse can come in many different forms. They may withhold money from someone, make them have a joint account but they will have no access, preventing a victim from having a job.

EMOTIONAL - Usually happens alongside other forms of abuse, it involves threats, name calling, humiliation, constant negative comments and put downs.

THE CYCLE OF ABUSE

- HONEYMOON PERIOD**
Happiness, Promises, Gifts, Apologies, Blaming.
- TENSION BUILDS**
Criticisms, Anger, Threats, Yelling, Isolation, Swearing.
- EXPLOSION**
Humiliation, Attacks and Threats, Break ups, (Physical, Emotional, Sexual).

Statistics

- For every 2 victims of Domestic Abuse there will be female, two will be male
- An estimated 20% of the adult population have experienced domestic abuse at some point since the age of 16
- 70% of teenage victims of domestic abuse experienced physical abuse, and 11% sexual abuse

You're not alone

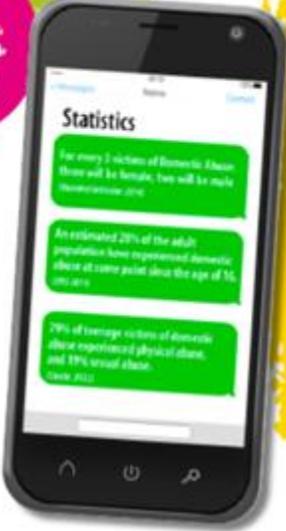
If you feel you are in an Unhealthy relationship or know a friend or family member who may be.

Please do not hesitate to speak out!

You can speak to a Youth Worker or Teacher at any time and below are phone numbers to contact

0808 80 10 800
Live fear free and the website livefearfree.org.uk

02920 860255
Llŷmau Domestic Abuse Service



Caerphilly Youth Forum Cabinet Elections

58 young people represented schools, youth clubs, youth projects and voluntary orgs from all over the borough attended Youth Forum Cabinet Elections at ty Penallta. 9 positions were up for grabs and 27 young people stood for election delivering speeches in the chamber.

After the votes were counted the results were announced and the New Cabinet is (photo attached)–

Chair - Lauren Prosser
Vice Chair – Matthew Diggle
Media Officer – Emily Jones
Fundraising Officer – Ryley Partridge
Education Rep – Dylan Thomas
Environment Rep – Curtis Gingell
Health Rep – Luke Parker
Regeneration Rep – Luke Rodrick
UKYP Rep – Daniel Rodrick
Young Wales rep – Summer Lewis

Also the forum voted in Velindre again as their charity for the next 12 months.

Support worker's Stories

South East

Buckinghamshire

Simon Billenness, Support Worker

Young People and Democracy Alongside District and County Councillors Deputy Member of Youth Parliament Laura Gonsalves attended a session at Amersham and Wycombe College to promote democracy to young people. 26 level 3 business students attended the session along with Elected Members and Officers. The group took part in Budget Simulation exercise that reflected figures from previous budgets for the County council. The group also took part in voting for the next Youth Parliament candidates and had a Q&A session with Councillors. As a result of carrying out this work 88% of the students said they were more likely to vote in the next local elections. On Thursday 19th November Youth Parliament members address the Full County council meeting in Aylesbury. The young people gave an update on the work they have been involved in so far, what they have gained and about the current elections for new members. Feedback was also given by 2 of the Students from Amersham and Wycombe college and how they had learnt so much through engaging with elected members. More work is being done to connect elected members with schools and colleges to promote democracy and engagement in local and general elections. Young People Takeover the Cabinet On Friday 20th November on National Takeover day 12 young people from across Buckinghamshire came to County Hall to take over the county cabinet. The young people spent the day with Cabinet members and Senior officers to learn about their roles, how the council works and makes decisions. Focusing on the top 3 priorities drawn from the Children and Young People's Voice Survey (Keeping Children and young people safe from harm, Supporting Children and Young People with emotional health needs, Supporting Children and young people in School) the young people discussed the key areas to be tackled and actions that they want the council to take. In the afternoon the young people formally sat as the council cabinet taking on the roles of Leader, Chief Executive, Director of Children services and Cabinet members. The key outcomes of the meeting will be presented to the council cabinet next month for their consideration. Quotes from young people: "I've realised today that it isn't a battle between the youth and adults, it is a community with the same aim" Aarushi, 16. "It has been a wonderful experience to learn about the way in which our local democracy works and how young people can engage in it." Kirsty, 16 "Great educational day of fun!" Ben, 13.

Yorkshire and Humber

Doncaster

Linda Hardy, Support Worker

Euthanasia came out as the second most important issue in Doncaster from the 2014 'Make Your Mark' (MYM) consultation, this raised some concern and we were asked to identify which young people and what area this issue had come from. Therefore, this year we implemented a strategy to ensure that we capture an explicit breakdown of the results for MYM 2015 from each school and service provider in all areas across the borough. We also set a 21% target for individual schools and services just as Government set each local authority a 21% target. This resulted in a very comprehensive breakdown of information and we were able to provide specific data to all the schools and services that participated and supported the MYM consultation with regards to the issues of importance from the young people they are working with. This year's consultation saw an increase in school participation, a total of 15 schools took part and we engaged with over 8,700 young people from across all areas of the borough. Therefore, we achieved a participation reach of 30.27%, this is an increase of 5% from 2014. The top 3 issues for young people in Doncaster are as follows: 1st Living Wage, 2nd A Curriculum for Life and the 3rd issue is Transport. We are looking forward to supporting the Youth Council and UKYP members with their campaigns in the New Year!

Linda Hardy & Debbie Burton: Support Workers

Young people were very much involved with Team Doncaster Partnership Summit Friday 20 November. This year's theme was 'Connecting Young People to Opportunities', a very apt theme as the Summit was held on the same day as the Children's Commissioner TakeOver Challenge. We invited three Schools to participate in the event and explained they would have the opportunity to ask key figures from across the borough about opportunities available for young people and to share their thoughts about barriers that prevent young people from engaging. An 'Open Space' session was also held and some of the delegates that took control and set the agenda for discussion groups were young people. The Open Space activity was extremely good; with lots of lively conversation and very candid and open discussions with young people about mental health and issues that affect them. This information will help inform the work that we do in Doncaster in terms of Mental Health given the fact that it voted as the campaign this year for England.



Nick Cotton, Support Worker

December

Youth Councillors and a member of Youth Parliament from Doncaster attended the Yorkshire and Humber Convention 3 which was hosted at Grimsby Town Hall. Many attendees had recently attended the House of Commons debate and had expressed an interest to taking part in such a debate at the Convention. The agenda stated that today there was to be a mock full council/HOC debate on Mental Health Awareness, each local authority was to discuss what they were proposing to do to highlight awareness within their Borough. The morning focussed on some initial preparation and all three young people took part and came up with some really good ideas and recommendations

Emma delivered the teams recommendations within the Council Chambers with confidence and belief that the team's ideas were the way forward.



To make the setting more authentic several leading figures from across the Borough gave up their own time to chair the proceedings and record the morning's events. It should be pointed out that those participating in the debate showed considerable confidence and knowledge and represented their Boroughs in a very professional way. We as Youth Workers were very proud of what we witnessed.

Doncaster's forward thinking ideas were to go into schools earlier to address Mental Health. Use local celebrity figure heads to promote issues and to develop Mental Health Awareness Wrist Bands to have a musical tone recognised by all as unique to Mental Health. The wrist band would also feature a Bar Code

that when scanned against a Mobile App would give access to Mental Health contacts. These ideas obtained a good many votes but not enough to win the debate. That accolade went to Leeds. The afternoon activities featured varying workshops that looked at motivating others and setting and achieving goals. Presentations at the end were a fitting finale to what was a fantastic day enjoyed by all. Thank You to Grimsby. Well organised and well delivered.

Leeds

Leeds Children's Mayor

November

The Leeds Children's Mayor election took place earlier this term and what a way to celebrate! An estimated 800 manifestos were written by Year 6 pupils across the city and over 13,800 votes were cast by primary school pupils. The 12 finalists attended the awards night on Thursday 12th November at Leeds Civic Hall, where they individually read out their manifestos in the Council Chamber before the Lord Mayor announced the winner. We are delighted to welcome Hannah Begum as our new Children's Mayor. She is a pupil at Hunslet Moor Primary School and her manifesto entitled "*Global Families*" proved to be the most popular in the voting.

Hannah's campaigning has been incredible, and really shows how she will go the extra mile.

During October 2015 Hannah showed her enthusiasm and commitment to the Children's Mayor programme and her belief in her manifesto. She has campaigned widely to get the votes. She has done assemblies at schools in her community, delivered flyers about her manifesto and the Children's Mayor programme in her local community and even wrote to Rt Hon Hilary Benn, MP for Leeds Council, at the House of Commons asking for support. Hannah received a letter back wishing her luck and offering her campaign advice.

Rainbow House Interviews (written by Rainbow House)

November

The manager at Rainbow House, Chris Graefe, was approached by the voice and influence team, to ask if any of our young people would be interested in helping out with some interviewing.

Chris asked some of our young people if they were interested. Josh and Olivia were keen to participate. We spoke to parents to see if this was ok, as the young people needed to attend training and arrangements with school needed to be made.

Once both young people had agreed to help out and we had gained permission of their parents we arranged for them both to be at Rainbow together to do some training with myself and Chris. We discussed with them both the job they were interviewing for, which was Transition Manager. My-self and Chris explained what this role involved. We asked the young people to think of qualities they thought someone needed for this role.

They came up with answers like:

- They need to be good listeners.
- They need to communicate well with young people.
- They should be kind, friendly and approachable.
- They need to give young people choices and listen to them.

We then took all the qualities and turned these points into suitable questions. Both Olivia and Josh came up with 5 questions each to ask the candidates. These were a few of the questions they wanted to ask.

- How would you keep me safe?
- How would you help me live on my own?
- Tell me about yourself/ what makes you happy?

Olivia and Josh then wrote their questions down on flash cards and practised asking staff these questions.

We then did some work around equal opportunities and treating people equally and fairly. They looked through magazines and cut out photos of lots of different people. They stuck them on a collage and wrote down words to describe them. Words like man, women, fat, gay, black, white and many more. Olivia said that they are all humans and should be treated the same. This was a very valuable training session. Both young people enjoyed their time training. They had a sense of importance and value. They felt important that their views and feelings were going to be taken into account.

On the day of the interview. The two young people were picked up from school early to be at Rainbow House in time for the interviews. Josh greeted the candidates; he asked them to sign in, offered them drinks, showed them where to sit and chatted with them very confidently. When Olivia arrived we had a practise run through the questions to make sure they felt comfortable.

The two young people asked their questions in turn, very clearly and confidently. I sat and took notes. When the questions were finished. Olivia chatted to them and asked them if they would like to join us for tea at the Harvester. Both candidates declined as they were busy. Olivia showed them both out.

We then sat with Hannah from the voice and influence team to go through their answers. Both young people had good ideas about what they liked about both candidates. They couldn't come up with any negative points as they were very impressed with both candidates. We made our recommendations and hoped for the best.

I am so proud of Olivia and Josh for agreeing to help out. They showed themselves to be very confident, make excellent choices and enjoyed having a voice and influence.

They both would like to do interviewing in the future. They very much enjoyed their tea out at Harvester, as a treat to say Thank you.

Well done Olivia and Josh everyone at Rainbow House is very proud of you.

Unicef Blog

November

Sam is a 21 year old from Leeds who grew up in care. He wanted to raise awareness of the difficulties young people in care and leaving care experience.

Sam told Unicef how important the film is for him, and said that it's "not just because it's my life being portrayed but more because of the fact that it shows some of the issues and difficulties that young people

both care leavers and in care face on a daily basis. The message needs to get out there that there needs to be more support in these areas.”

Indeed, care experienced young people often face serious challenges when transitioning to independence. In [Leeds](#), Unicef UK is working with the council using a child rights-based approach to improve the experience of young people who are preparing to or leaving care. There is a particular focus on pathway planning, which is the process used to support young people in care to move to independence and ensure they have the support needed to do that.

To read Sam’s blog and view his film visit: <http://blogs.unicef.org.uk/2015/11/18/sam-leeds-child-rights-leaving-care/>

Staff at Parklands Primary

December

On the 20th November Parklands Primary School carried out their first ever takeover day and what a success it was!

With 15 Roles available to the 152 children, 91 applications put forward and all the teachers taking time out of a normal school day to make this day special and exciting for the children; this day was certainly one to remember for Parklands.

The Children really enjoyed the day and said they had learnt a lot from the roles they were given. Their confidence in communicating with the other children, staff and visitors just showed how much they were committed to being professional in their roles for the day.

"Yes it was amazing, I really enjoyed it. I can't even say how amazing it was being a reception teacher."

"I bet you lost loads of weight walking up and down these corridors!"

Job descriptions for the roles were given to the children and from there students interested in roles from Key Stage 2 wrote an application form for their preferred role. The School Council then looked over the applications anonymously and picked the best applications for the jobs.

Seeing the way the children took on their roles in the school and how they behaved while doing this was a delight. They were well behaved and looked like they were all extremely enjoying the jobs they were given.

<https://animoto.com/play/1w1j9NnChJrTGnKYlZNSPA?autostart=1>

Richard Cracknell, Voice and Influence Team

December

Children in Care and Care Leavers Takeover!

The Leeds City Council Corporate Parenting Board received an early Christmas present this year when their meeting was taken over by representatives from the Leeds Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Council as part of National Takeover Challenge.

Members of each group contributed to a presentation to tell the assembled councillors and senior officers what they had achieved over the year. The “Have a Voice” children in care council updated board members on their recruitment drive over the summer which resulted in their membership doubling and handed out copies of a newsletter they wrote and sent to every looked after young person in the city. They also discussed their experiences of designing and delivering training to designated teachers.



The Leeds Care Leavers Council then stepped up to share the details of their “On Our Way” event from earlier in the year. The Care Leavers Council planned this day-long event for other care leavers that featured workshops and Q&A panels with experts in housing advice, entitlements, legal rights and education and apprenticeships. In addition to this, Care Leavers shared how much they enjoy delivering their monthly training to new Foster Carers as part of the “Skills2Foster” programme.

The meeting finished with members of “Have a Voice” sharing a quote from Leeds’ recent ‘outstanding’ OFSTED report where a whole paragraph was dedicated to the successes of their group.

For more information about the work of the Have a Voice or Care Leavers Council visit www.breezeleeds.org/haveyoursay or follow Leeds Youth Voice on Twitter @LeedsYV

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>