

Youth Voice: Positive Stories



March 2015



Central Bedfordshire Manifesto Launch

Youth Voice:

Positive Stories

A report by youth representatives and the workers that support them
March 2015

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

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

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

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

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

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Young People's Stories

East Midlands

Derbyshire

Adam Hoyes, 17, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

The Derbyshire Youth Council had a successful conference on 14th March to continue work on our target campaign areas. Members reviewed their first year in office and looked ahead to the second half of their term and what they would like to achieve in this time. Four campaign areas were also looked into, with Living Wage, Work Experience, Mental Health and E-Safety all being identified as key areas to work on in the next year. Groups created plans to achieve their goals for each topic, building on progress already made in certain areas such as Living Wage and Work Experience. These campaigns will form the Derbyshire Youth Council manifesto for the next year.

Asha Lawson Haynes, 12, Member of Youth Parliament

On Saturday the 14th of March I was elected to be an MYP. I was already a DMYP after being elected previously. However when two MPY'S sadly could not fulfil the role any longer, we had a re-election. All DMYP's had the opportunity to run for the role. There were two other candidates and after performing a speech our council had a vote. The two elected members are me (Asha Lawson-Haynes) and Mitchell. Sadly only two spots were available so one person could not get it but it was a close call.

Lucy Boardman, 15, Member of Youth Parliament & Youth Councilor

Recently I have been enjoying getting publicity for the UK Youth Parliaments Living Wage campaign by speaking to my local MP, Andrew Bingham, regarding his opinions and how to further the campaign with the UK Youth Parliament. My meeting with him was extremely informative and it was wonderful meeting an amazing representative. I have since had an article published in the Buxton Advertiser and The Glossop Chronicle, allowing me to publicise the Living Wage campaign and my meeting with my MP. In have also attended my Youth Council Conference where we discussed how to fully support both the Living Wage campaign and the Mental Health campaign. We have written to several businesses in

Derbyshire and also the local council to make sure that they are Living Wage employers and if they are not we are suggesting how supporting our campaign would benefit them. We have also begun to plan our Mental Health campaign by proposing a series of media videos that give information about Mental Health, we hope to show these films in local schools to be able to educate youths in the near future.

As part of the UKYP campaign on the Living Wage I had two extremely successful meetings with both my local councillor and my local MP, which I wrote about in my last positive story. It was a pleasure to meet my local MP, and we not only discussed the UKYP's national day of action, the Living Wage campaign and his support for this campaign, but also what his life as an MP was like, what his job entailed and what work he has done specifically for his constituency as an MP. It was extremely interesting to learn about his local community projects and his ideas and thoughts regarding the Living Wage campaign, and how I could help promote this campaign in my school and community as part of my role as an MYP. This month I was pleased to have had articles in my local newspapers, both the Buxton Advertiser and the Glossop Chronicle, regarding my meeting with my local MP, Andrew Bingham, and my work as an MYP. It was excellent to know that the work I have been doing and the UKYP's campaign has been getting media attention in my local community.

Rachel Wibberley, 16, PG Representative

In March I have met up with my local area youth council twice in order to work in the national campaigns and local campaigns. I split off into a group specifically focusing on mental health, and we brainstormed ideas on how to begin the campaign. We decided we are going to produce a series of personal yet factual YouTube videos to educate people on mental health issues and to help those with mental health issues. We confirmed that we would circulate these in local schools & feature them in the council website. In Derbyshire was also suggested an idea of an 'agony aunt' service for people with mental health problems, as well as a training service for you people in order to train them how to spot and deal with mental illness. I came up with a strap line for our campaign which is "be curious not judgemental."

Elections took place in Derbyshire to fill my position now that I am PG. I voted in this election and the new MYP for my position is Asha Lawson Haynes as well as Mitchell Duggins.

Mitchell Duggins, 14, Member of Youth Parliament

In the last Derbyshire youth council I had the opportunity to go for the role of being a MYP, before I was elected for a MYP I was a DMYP. I got elected because I was previously a MYP and I got 623 votes on the Make Your Mark campaign which is over 50% of the school so that was a big achievement for me personally and the total sum of votes in South Derbyshire. I hope to do more in the future as a MYP and to continue improving Derbyshire as a whole.

Leicestershire

Daria Eckert

My survey about new school transitions has come a long way; I now have about 297 responses which are currently being working into diagrams etc. I will then write up a feedback pack which I will send to all the schools, the county and borough council as well as our MP, Sir Edward. I hope my work on the survey has and will help the voices of my constituents to be heard. I met with my MP earlier in February since I last wrote a positive story. I talked about the campaigns we are doing and he agrees that Mental Health is an excellent campaign. However he doesn't want to support us with the Living wage campaign because he believes that there are too many things to consider and didn't want to make a rash decision. In CYCLE (Leicestershire Youth Council) we are working on making a survey for young people to find out what their experiences with mental health are, to see what it is that needs improving. Hopefully at our unheard voices event (June) a mental health app will be launched soon by a voluntary sector project who have been working on developing it.

On Tuesday 17th February 2015 I went to Cambridge to meet Alexander Komashie to talk about our mental health campaign. Alexander is a researcher in the patient safety theme of a 5 year long project DoH sponsored project – Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC), East of England. He is a systems engineer so he has interest in understanding the design of services and their performance and also the links between services for example issues regarding information loss as patients go from one service system to another. He believes at the heart of the challenge to healthcare in general and mental health in particular are the very important links between Quality, time and cost. If one is changed it will have an effect on the others.

The CLAHRC team is multi-disciplinary, involving the Engineering Design Centre, the Judge Business School, Department of Psychiatry, Institute of Public Health in the University of Cambridge and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust. He is interested in Mental Health and currently initiating a project looking to the delivery of mental health services for young people and strongly agrees it needs to be improved on but needs a lot of research. For instance, how do you keep a service at a good Quality and with adequate time for the patient with limited resources? Where is the cut-off? He is also has links with staff at the local NHS mental health Trust who are partners on the project. For Mental health it is important services are improved but what strategy should we take? Alexander being a systems engineer means he would be interested in what approach we should take to the second part of our Campaign which is about improving mental health services for young people.

Rina Roy, Member of Youth Parliament

This month has been fantastic starting with ITV Debate, then a visit to 10 Downing Street and finally our Pride of Charnwood Awards. I was asked to take part in the ITV Debate in West Bromwich to talk about Youth Disorientation in politics. This was a wonderful opportunity for me to represent all the young people in the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) , East Midlands and Leicestershire and speak up for young people out there who all have a lot to say about their future. There were four different schools, 40 young people from across East and West Midlands and I was honoured to be invited as a special guest from UKYP. The discussion was about how young people feel about certain issues and at the end of the debate to come up with a manifesto, what we think the issues are that impact on young people. For example, which party we support, about the general election, voting, about the leaders. We also identified issues to include in a manifesto, including lowering voting age, tuition fees, Government cuts on youth services and many more. It was a very interesting day. The next day I was at 10 Downing

Street for Parliamentary question time, as part of the International award winning project Bridge to Work as a Bridge to Work Champion. Bridge to Work is a project run by Loughborough College, it is aimed at young people aged 14-18, who can do short courses, work preparation, and get apprenticeship help. The Bridge to Work Scheme is a fantastic opportunity to increase young people's chances of getting a job, whether they are looking for employment now or when they leave college or school, which Nicky Morgan, our local MP fully supports. I really loved the tour of 10 Downing Street it was very educational and it was fascinating to watch Labour and Conservative MPs debating in House of Commons. Finally Charnwood Youth Council held their awards evening for young people and youth groups in Charnwood. There were five categories and young people were nominated for personal achievement, helping the community, creative award, caring for others and Youth Group of the Year. It was a miraculous evening with many inspiring young people in the community. They were well deserved winners and I hope they carry on the great work they do for the community and themselves. I have also started to organise my own focus group for our mental health campaign at my college, where I will be going through an emotional wellbeing curriculum booklet that we have created in our County Youth Council (CYCLE). We have done quite a bit of work around mental health so far with CYCLE, and we are trying to proceed on it.

Portia Berry-Kilby, Member of Youth Parliament

The month started with our Youth Council annual residential. This year, we spent the three days brainstorming for and developing a Mental Health Pack which has been designed with the intention of being sent out to all secondary schools in the area. The pack includes testimonials, exercises which we hope will encourage the vocal discussion surrounding emotional wellbeing and challenging the associated stigma, as well as offering contact details of helplines and further references. Also this month, I attended a Youth Council meeting. This was once again focused around the Mental Health campaign and I came away with a plan for developing an online survey to find out what young people are looking for in an improved mental health service. I hope to launch this on Survey Monkey, as well as holding consultations within my school. Finally, this month my parish council hosted an event where proposed plans for an outdoor gym were exhibited. I was invited to attend and help with the judging of the proposals, offering my opinions as a young person from the area. It was great to see the diversity of designs and I very much look forward to seeing the chosen design in reality!

Sian Vincent, 14, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

During this month I attended my youth council's residential, within this trip we focused on our Mental Health Pack/ Emotional Well-being Pack, updating it so that it is ready for us to present to people. We are currently in the process of starting to launch Melton's lost for words app, which will be available for anyone to use if they need help with this particular topic. As a DMYP and member of County Youth Council Leicestershire I will be helping us get this pack around and am trying to help make it a success. On another note, we successfully planned any changes for our yearly event 'Unheard Voices', where we get young people to have a look at different presentations and provide fun activities for them. We also do a section on UKYP, which I will be creating the power point for, based on the House of Commons trip.

East of England

Central Bedfordshire

Liam O'Dell, Member of Youth Parliament

Central Bedfordshire Youth Voice's Manifesto Launch Day took place on Monday 23rd March, which saw Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament (CBYP) present their manifesto to the Chief Executive of Central Bedfordshire Council, Director of Children's Services, Leader of the Council, local councillors, stakeholders, key partners and members of the public.

The event allowed CBYP to share their recent work on local and national campaigns (including better work experience, improving mental health services and implementing the living wage), and highlight the benefits of partnership working with local organisations such as HealthWatch.

At the end of the evening, CBYP members were given the opportunity to network with audience members. CBYP hopes the event will open up new opportunities and raise our profile within the local area. As the event drew to a close, the response to the launch, both online and at the event, was positive. We reached an audience of about 200 via our Facebook page.

Rory, a member of CBYP, said: "Youth Parliament was proud to accept the presence of Council Members, members of the public and Charity Members at the unveiling of our manifesto. A great evening was enjoyed by all!"

Central Bedfordshire Youth Voice are set to have their next meeting in April, where members will feedback on the manifesto launch and discuss the next steps that CBYP need to take."



Naomi Sherwood, Member of Youth Parliament

This month, I had the opportunity to stand alongside CBYP at the Manifesto Launch in front of the Chief Executive of Central Bedfordshire Council, Director of Children's Services, Leader of the Council, local councillors, stakeholders, key partners and members of the public. The first step was a prep session where we rehearsed our presentation a number of times. It was encouraging to watch the progress as each member of the group improved their public speaking skills and their confidence improved with every run through. At the Manifesto Launch, we were able to talk with the various people who had come to support our launch. This was really helpful as it eased nerves but also presented opportunities for some of the CBYP to receive invitations to organisation forums and collect beneficial contacts. After our presentation was over, the feedback we were given was incredibly positive and encouraging as we plan for our next meeting and continue our efforts focusing on better work experience, living wage and improved mental health services.

Rory Janes, Member of Youth Parliament

Mental health issues are often assumed to affect the elderly and adults in midlife. However, not enough focus is been put into mental health for young people, so much so that in a recent enquiry the government was heavily criticised for not doing enough for young people and teenagers mental health. The Youth Parliament believes strongly in the protection and preservation of young people's mental health.

On the 23rd of March, mental health charities, members of the community and Councillors who specialise in the protection of young people's mental health, attended our manifesto launch evening at Central Bedfordshire and heard for themselves the commitment that we at the Youth Parliament are making in raising awareness of mental health amongst young people. Although this is not the only issue that Youth Parliament is focussed on, it is nevertheless an important issue that we are wishing to tackle this year. Young People's mental health could be described as an epidemic and something that has not been focussed on enough and something the government realise they cannot ignore. Youth Parliament wishes to be part of the solution in tackling Young People's mental health.

Recently, my school did a fund raising dress up day with the proceeds going to Young Minds. This fundraising activity was a terrific success and the opportunity was also taken to educate the form classes in assembly on the issues of young people's mental health. Would it not be a terrific idea to see this fundraising and awareness opportunity replicated all across Bedfordshire and eventually the United Kingdom! Together, as a group, community and country we can raise awareness and raise funds so that much needed support and research can be done into mental health and long term solutions can be found

Essex

Ashleigh Mears, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

My name is Ash, I'm 16 and the UKYP representative for Basildon. I have wanted to stand for the UKYP ever since I first heard about it through another member who attends my youth council, last year. It interested me so much as I am very passionate about helping and campaigning for young people and amplifying the youth voice, as I feel that our issues are not listened to enough and I want to change this.

After being elected onto the YEA, I applied to my fellow members to vote for me to represent Basildon on to the UKYP, promising not only to in general listen to what young people want and try to make a difference but to focus my attentions on making sure there is youth representation and that they have a voice – specifically votes at 16 – and also on education. I hope to do this by taking part in campaigns to raise awareness and finding and working with other UKYP members and contacts who have the same aims.

Bethany Howell

Hello, my name is Bethany and I attend the Appleton School. I learnt about the YEA through my school council. The election process was an extremely positive experience where my school helped me to become a member by voting. I stood as a UKYP member for the chance to improve the lives of young people in Castle Point. I also want to help make a bigger difference to the country. I plan on making a mark via campaigning against bullying and working with schools on some of my ideas for projects.

Camomile Shumba, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

I got voted onto both the YE and UKYP because I believed that since we youth are the future, the government needs to start prioritising us. We need to be prioritised where it matters most; our mental health needs to be catered for, our voice should be involved in discussions about education and more activities should be made available to us.

I campaigned about these things and got voted in because youth recognise that being prioritised in these areas currently is not happening. However, I am here to make sure all that changes.

So far I have had a meeting with the youth strategy group for Colchester, the area I represent. Already, through this I feel I am making a difference. In this we are discussing what the needs are and using our resources and finances to meet them at a large scale. In addition I set up my own project in Colchester sixth form. The aim of it was to hear exactly what changes youth want to see. So I went around getting youth to write this on a piece of paper and then put it in the box. Already I have had around a 100 responses. In addition, I am working on a project with members of the council to tackle low self esteem by using positive stories from actually youth to empower other youth that they can overcome it. We will be presenting these in the form of workshops and assemblies.

Jamahl Godward

Hi, my name is Jamahl and I'm in Year 7. When I got voted for school council I got interested to the YEA and through the YEA I got involved in the UKYP and that has been a great experience and maybe many more experiences to come.

Jonathan Higgs, Member of Youth Parliament

My name is Jonathan Higgs and I am the MYP for Rochford. I first learned about UKYP via my own initiative and looking for opportunities for me, as a young person, to get involved in. And I came across the website for Make Your Mark and I decided to take part. I gathered over 1100 (Young Essex Assembly) votes from my school's pupils on what the UKYP should campaign on. Furthermore, afterwards, I decided to take part in the upcoming UKYP election. Moreover, what drove me to take part was my firm belief in the necessity of active citizenship from all ages in the preservation of a healthy, thriving democracy. I was also drawn by the lack of opportunities in my local area which I fear will reduce the social mobility of the young people around me in the long run.

I intend to achieve a lot in office; particularly I wish to aid the current national campaign on living wage and mental health.

Joshua Collins, Member of Youth Parliament

I chose to stand for the UK Youth Parliament as I wanted to continue my work and to continue representing young people's views and issues.

The main issue I stood on was votes for 16 and the representation of young people.

Through my campaigning I was successful in being elected onto the UKYP.

Now I am elected I plan to spend my term of office campaigning for and representing both young people in my constituency as well as the young people of the UK as a whole.

Katy Herrington

In the last few years as I have become more interested in how the country is being run I noticed how few young people there were interested in politics. This is why I wanted to have a chance to show young people that politics is important. This is why I stood for YEA in Brentwood and then decided to stand for UKYP as a chance to represent Brentwood in youth parliament.

Laura Spackman

Hello, my name is Laura and I am part of the UKYP. The YEA has opened up so many doors for me. After weeks of campaigning and showing my potential to members of my school I was exhausted, but it was all worth it in the end. When my name was called out at the declaration evening, I was overjoyed and

excited. Now I am in the UKYP I have gained so much confidence and so many friends. It is a brilliant experience and opportunity for all.

Lukman Kazeem

My name is Lukman, as a member of the UKYP and Harlow Youth Council, I now have a lot of opportunities to show some of the ideas that have been bubbling up inside me, for example issues that I personally, as well as other young people, face on a habitual basis, i.e. homelessness, discrimination, prejudice, racism, cultural separation, but most importantly, the youth finding lack of things to do.

I got voted to enable the multitude mass and diversity of young people to have a voice, not just any voice, but a voice that will then lead to actions being carried out by the government and those in the higher-ups.

One thing that I am currently hoping to change or that I am currently delegating is that my school extending their front gate as there are usually a massive hoard of smokers there “huffing and puffing” cigarette smoke each morning as well as lunch-time. Consequently, I really want the school to either extend their grounds or designate an area at the back of the school for smokers.

Matthew Tinker, 14, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

My name is Matthew Tinker, I am 14 and I am the DMYP for the Epping Forest District.

Over the next two years, I want to tackle two important issues for young people: stress and volunteering. Stress can be issues such as exam stress. Young people do need to revise for tests but we also do need social lives to be full and rounded people.

Also volunteering. Volunteering is an important issue for me as I myself am a volunteer; I would like more young people to get involved in volunteering work. For volunteers under the age of 16, finding places to volunteer is hard. As an MYP, I would like to take to MPs to make it easier for young people to get involved – companies and organisations should accept young people as we are just as good as everyone else.

This has been my first month on the UKYP. I have already been to parliament and I have read at my town’s civic service. My school has also been really supportive of me and they have helped me share my views with my community.

I am looking forward to my term of office and making a difference nationally.

Taylor Whigham

I’m Taylor and I’m currently part of the YEA and UKYP. I wanted to stand for YEA because I want to try and take every positive opportunity I’m offered. I also wanted to improve my public speaking and confidence. Most of all I really want to get Harwich as a whole improved as a society for young people to live and grow up in. My main aim is to get the youth centre refurbished so there’s somewhere safe and warm for youths to go and feel welcome. I would also like the great beaches in Harwich to be take

advantage of by having water activities happening on them which will be positive economically and for the public.

I have got hold of the councillors and my town's MP's number and email address and I am going to arrange a meeting to explain everything that I am planning to achieve and would be even better with the support.

Hertfordshire

Amira, 13, Member of Youth Parliament

It feels great to be elected as the member of the Youth Parliament representing St Albans district. I shall be looking forward to working with lots of different people throughout this year as well as working on my priority alongside another MYP which is cyber bullying and to try and make the area a better place for everybody. To be able to be given the opportunity is an honour.

Brandon, 16, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

The first of many Broxbourne Youth Weeks was a phenomenal success. We engaged with up to 700 young people and the Youth Awards received 130 nominations and saw five individuals, six organisations and three charities recognised. This allowed us to celebrate young people and the workers who support them in Broxbourne Borough Council. A white water rafting event was held for Councillors and young people at the Olympic Lee Valley Centre as well as dance and sports activities and a youth debate. I would like to thank all those involved including Broxbourne Borough Council and B3 Living for supporting the very first Youth Awards in the Borough.

Monica, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

Excitement for 1125!

In our County we hold 3 big meetings for young people a year, a bit like a county wide youth council. This is called Herts1125. The next meeting is THIS SATURDAY! I am so excited! There is always so many interesting people to talk to, so many interesting stories to hear. This year we are focusing on our priorities which are young people's rights, cyber bullying, financial help for young people, LGBT+ and hate crimes.

Nicholas, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

Over the past few weeks, various major and minor parties have been visiting our school, discussing their policies, and campaigning for young people's votes. As part of the meetings, I have tabled many questions for the members to answer, and some of them answered better than others. This has opened many young people's minds to politics, and allowed them to engage in the political landscape we currently operate in. I think it is incredibly important for young people to participate in politics, and events like this help to broaden ones horizons.

Sahil, 16, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

Recently, I took part in a presentation to my school about the work of the UK Youth Parliament with fellow MYP for Harrow, Zak. I was very pleased at the interest the students of the Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School showed and I am sure their interest in politics has been raised as a result. I have also begun work on a Hertsmere Youth Council with my fellow candidates of the Hertsmere UK Youth Parliament election this year, and I am certain that the project will turn out to be a success like many youth councils before it. I am very excited at the prospect of continuing to lay the foundations of this new youth council and greatly look forward to the weeks ahead.

Tom, 16, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

On Friday 20th March Chief Police Commissioner for Hertfordshire, David Lloyd spoke at my school (Watford Grammar School for Boys) about his role as commissioner and general aspects of Hertfordshire crime. I asked him about the controversial issue of sentencing on hate crimes and why homo/trans/biphobic hate crimes are sentenced differently to race crimes. I felt that he avoided the question somewhat, instead making the claim that he is looking to crack down on domestic abuse, something I undoubtedly support, but not the issue I queried him upon. I feel racism is no different to homophobia or any other form of xenophobia, when will the law recognise this too?

Norfolk

Chelsie Brociek, Member of Youth Parliament

This month as a Member of Norfolk Youth Parliament, I attended a meeting with the charity 'Step Up To Serve' to discuss Norfolk County Council backing the #Iwill campaign. We wanted Norfolk County Council to be the first local authority to sign up to the campaign and pledge it's support towards young people getting involved in volunteering and social action!

This charity runs the #iwill campaign, it is an amazing campaign that aims to increase the amount of youth social action undergone by 10-20 year olds by 50% nationally by 2020! They do this by collaborating with businesses, voicing the benefits of youth YSA and creating new opportunities for young people.

Myself, Kieren Buxton (another MYP) and Paul Jackson have come together to create a letter to send to 7 Directors of Children's Services from councils across the UK inviting them to our workshop, that will be running in London within the next few months. At this workshop we aim to produce a realistic but meaningful pledge for councils to help our young people gain this well needed experience as well as to help expand the campaigns coverage.

Suffolk

Ben Herbig, 13, Member of Youth Parliament

I'm making good progress on a litter and mental health campaign.

London

Barnet

Louise Hawkins, 15, Youth Councillor

This month has been really exciting because I had work experience this month, so I decided to follow my youth worker Tony Lewis. It was really good to see what the job entailed and was really fun also on one of the days he had to attend the BYC convention in London. Also this month I have been working on my project a lot called Build! From Bullying and I'm hoping to get my workshops up and running within about a month.

Brent

Hamza King, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

NCS graduates who were elected to be Youth Board representatives for their wave were busy in their communities on the 7th of March carrying out their social action day campaigns. I was working with a group of 15 young people organising a Street Care project in which we applied for funding to create care packages, with essential items that a homeless person living in the UK would need, such a toothbrush and hat. We met up early to put together 100 care packages, then went off into our community and gave them out to the homeless, and shelters which support homeless people. There were tears and smiles as us young people made a direct difference in our community.

Camden

Hannah Morris, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

On Monday the 9th of March I attended an event at the town hall on International Women's Day. I gave a speech about the inspirational women I know and why it is so important to have our voices heard and speak for equality between men and women. I was then involved in a difficult but extremely interesting Q&A session. The day also held talks about what the suffragettes went through to achieve the vote and why it is so important we use our voices. In addition there was a presentation and discussion on the 'this girl can' campaign and promoted involvement of girls in sport. Furthermore there were workshops on voting and campaigns, some of which had speakers who I am hoping to have present at upcoming events the youth council and I are planning. It was a great event and we must all fight for equality.

For international women's day on the 9th of March I gave a speech in Camden's council chambers on the amazing women in my life. This consisted of my inspirational teachers, Glenda Jackson Camden's female MP, my friends at school and motivational BYC workers. I also promoted the importance of fighting for

equality and aiming high in life with sheer determination. There were two other speeches from council leader, Sarah Hayward, and editorial director of the Sunday times and columnist Eleanor Mills. Mills spoke of the importance of female votes after all the suffragettes did. Followed by the speeches was a surprise question and answer session which was startling but also extremely interesting. I had to think on my feet for solutions to the inequalities we face today. The day also consisted of two workshops on voting and campaigning and a talk from This Girl Can. Hopefully many of the people at the event were inspired to join up to a new sports team and register to vote.

Camden's shout out event date and time is confirmed and now we're extremely busy planning, planning, planning. Furthermore the youth council are working on a video to promote the living wage within all the private sectors. Finally today, after lots of hard work, I received my pass (which the councillors are given) to allow me into all the main buildings in Camden!

Ealing

Pervin Kaur, 17, Youth Councillor

Ealing Youth Council have been working on their FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) campaign ideas. Whilst it is exam time at the moment so progress is slower than usual, we have decided to try and arrange a FGM info day on the 8th April from 2pm-5pm. We are hoping to get permission to set up a stall outside of Ealing Town Hall and generate interest in the street from young people who could take leaflets and information and talk to Ealing Youth Council members about the issue. In turn we will be able to assess local knowledge on this issue in the youth community. We realise that this is only one small step forward with the campaign but we would like to see what success we have on this day in talking to the community. We have managed to get the additional help from Forward UK (Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development) who are committed to gender equality and safeguarding the rights of African girls and women. They have offered to aid us with leaflets and banners about FGM which is vital as it holds key information about FGM. Furthermore, we were given the opportunity to promote our event at Southall College on 23rd April 15. We hope that this campaign will raise awareness of FGM around our local community and if this is successful, we would discuss on maybe having it at a different locations or maybe going around different school in our borough as we believe that young people in Ealing need as much information about FGM as they can find. In addition, we want to engage our community to amplify the voices of those affected as well as prevent any harmful practices from happening.

Harrow

Ravhi, 15, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

We have been planning a youth conference on gay rights with some guest speakers so we could take that away and build a campaign around homophobia.

Hounslow

Kasim Faraaz, Youth Councillor

Hounslow put on a show at the Lampton Park Conference Centre last Friday to celebrate the achievements of local young people. The Civic Centre was transformed into a Big Top for a circus-themed evening for the Hounslow Youth Achievement Awards. Organised by Hounslow's Early Intervention Service, Hounslow Youth Council and supported by Watermans Arts Centre, the eleventh annual Youth Achievement Awards mixed live performances from local young people in dance, music and drama with eleven awards recognising young people's accomplishments.

Over 110 young people were nominated in the closely-fought categories, recognising sporting, artistic and outdoor achievements as well as volunteering and contributing to the life of the Borough. The coveted Outstanding Contribution to your Community Award was won by the young people of the Voice Youth Project for their homelessness project whilst representatives of all the Borough's youth centres competed for the Young Person of The Year awards. Entertainment ranged from the energetic movements of the Parkour Youth Dance Company to the urban musical stylings of Lennox Phillips and Isis Bell-Sandy from Hogarth Youth Centre in Chiswick. Inclusion was high on the agenda as the Decisions R Us team won the Most Interesting or Innovative Project Award and Hounslow PHAB presented music and movement. Hounslow Youth Council contributed to the design, organisation and hosting of the event and took the opportunity to launch Hounslow's elections for the UK Youth Parliament, with many of the candidates mucking in and volunteering on the evening.

Alice Bradnack, 18, Youth Councillor

On March 13th, we held our Be Heard! Youth Conference along with our local MP Seema Malhotra. Young people from eight local schools attended and took part in a workshop about decision-making and youth services led by us, as well as sessions run by Motivate Hounslow, Empowering Women and Vinspired. The climax of the day was a Question Time chaired by local Councillors and featuring Seema, Inspector Dan Thompson from Hounslow Police and journalist Sunny Hundal. We learn a lot about young people's views from the event and from a pre-event survey we ran and will be presenting a report to the Council.

Sutton

Ethan Smith, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

So far I have had success for my first pledge which is to get councillors into schools to get ideas from young people to understand how to improve the local area. I went to the leader of the council and they have spoken to councillors within the London Borough of Sutton and out of the 54 councillors we have had 21 reply to say they are up for the job. Soon we will initiate sending them into schools within their own ward and will plan out how we are going to do this in weeks to come.

I think that the activities should be young people led not just in our borough but in others as well. Young people know what other young people want so as long as they are trained up to run the activities properly then it will be an efficient step forward and a brilliant way to engage with other young peopl

North East

North Tyneside

Aaron Speirs, Youth Councillor

Deputy Young Mayor Lewis Allan and I are creating a Youth Box; we've received funding from O2 Think Big! It is a project where we donate a box of activities to a school every week, to be used for an after school club. In the youth box there will be fun games, sports equipment and art materials. This will hopefully get children off their gaming consoles and back to being social. They would pay a small fee for the youth box, and that would go to the school and to fund the project. (Replacing the materials). Aaron 😊

Abbie Armstrong, Young Mayor

I was elected Young Mayor of North Tyneside in February 2015 and while working with groups to achieve my pledges. Already I have been given many opportunities and met so many new people. The other Youth Councillors and I are also continuing with The Event (young person's music festival) and the Young Mayor's Games (fun games for young people)

Adam Hunter, Youth Councillor

On the 20th February, I participated in the filming for the POP card promotional video that will be released soon. (Pop card can be used to purchase reduced fare for under 16s) This entailed us travelling across the metro network and using a variety of buses to film in locations that show the extent of just how far you can travel around Tyne & Wear on public transport. This was made possible through funding from O2 Think Big

Allen Oghene, Youth Councillor

I have finished my successful term as Young Mayor. I am now working in North Tyneside Youth Council to improve the life of young people. Today I handed over a cheque for £400 to Yvonne Collins from Youngminds which was money I raised through a raffle and social evening in the local community.

Elizabeth Pybus, Youth Councillor

Recently I've been out collecting money for Marie Curie Cancer care. I haven't been holding the tin as it's against the law for me to. I've raised over £150 for the charity. I did this with my Mum. I've done bag packs and ran races for charity. I'm proud of this and I hope the money has helped. It will be going to the Newcastle hospice.



Jamie Clark, Youth Councillor and Young cabinet Member for Ready for Work & Life

Before the Youth Council and Youth cabinet, I hadn't much of an idea about local government and politics. However being on the council for a mere 3 weeks I have already learned about the devolution proposals for North Tyneside devolution, and I had a lengthy discussion with local residents and business leaders. Next I have also met with local business leaders and pupils to bring them more opportunities in school regarding non STEM subjects. It was great to see how bringing different opportunities for pupils who are usually neglected can change communities, lives and futures.

Mark Strasshine, Youth Councillor

On Monday 30th March Royal Grammar School held its annual football presentation night in which I won 1st XI's players player. It was a great night which brought together, players from a range of age groups, supporters, coaches and officials to share and celebrate in what was a great season for many teams. It was good to see so many young people involved in a sport they love get recognition for a great year of sport. There were jokes, stories of heroics and even an appearance from Newcastle United footballer Ayoze Perez to cap off a brilliant night of achievement and one I was extremely proud to be part of.

Peter Dyers, Youth Councillor

My band "Driving in Aspen" got into the semi finals of The Next Brit Thing competition. This allowed us the chance to play at the Sage in Gateshead in front of a panel of judges from the music industry. We received very positive comments however we didn't make it into the London finals. At the end of the day we earned lots of experience and we were invited to watch the finals in London. It has been a large boost for our musical careers.

Rebecca Moore, Youth Councillor & Member of Youth Parliament

The North Tyneside Health & Wellbeing Young Persons Reference Group has completed our mental health report with consultation of a range of organisations and services such as CAMHS & YMCA. Our report has been presented to adult decision makers who were very impressed. We used our research to put together a lesson and logo which will all be completed to present at a meet5ing with all PHSCE Leads in North Tyneside in April/May. We hope to allow all young people to be educated on mental health.
Rebecca 😊

Sunderland

Brian Terry, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

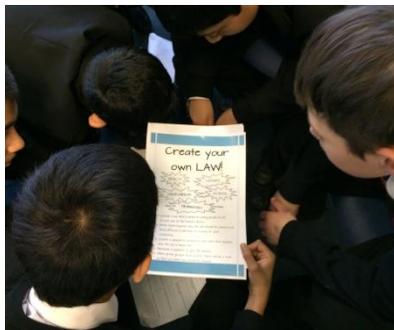
At Sunderland, we have had new members join our internal youth parliament helping to represent a greater range of people. We held a successful requirement drive attracting even more young people to join our committee although I have yet to see any new members (they will likely attend next week). We have worked with NCS to give a presentation on topics including "Islamaphobia" and mental health. Personally, I have begun collecting support for a notion I would like to put forward before the UKYP called 'Equalism'. I have spoken to one MYP about this already and informed SYP of my plans. I intend to continue rallying support over the coming weeks.

North West

Bolton

Lydia, Tresor, Ebony and Erin – Youth Councillors and MYPs

Lydia, Aaliyah and Josh all delivered a session around Local Democracy in Bolton to year 7 for a full day at Ladybridge high school as part of their Super Citizenship Day. We did various activities that were fun for the young people and they all really enjoyed the day as well as learning about Local Democracy



BBC Manchester Radio

We have been asked to submit some questions around health – the question that has been chosen is quite a general one .. “How much more money will need to be spent on Mental Health Services for young people?”

The main focus of the debate is health and the panel is made up of some prospective candidates in the general election. Allan Beswick is chairing the event and one of our Youth Councillors will ask the question.

Youthforia meeting

Five of us attending the last Youthforia meeting on Sunday 22nd March, Trafford Youth Cabinet ran a sessions showing the amazing work that they are doing around Mental Health in school around Manchester. This involved running teacher training sessions and lesson plans around mental health. The Manchester museums delivered a drama about the events at Peter Loo and how they affected workers right and freedom of speech. We had the chance to participate by holding banners and props.

Visits to schools

As Youth MPs and Youth Councillors have been visiting schools talking about how they represent young people in Bolton and highlighting the Local, Regional and National campaigns that they are working on. There has been a great interest in the Living wage Campaign.

Disability Sports Games

We have been asked as Youth Councillors and Youth MPs to support the disability Sports games with young people across Greater Manchester. We will act as mentors and young leaders for the participants.

Meeting with David Crausby to discuss the “Living Wage campaign” and our “Public Transport campaign” #price2change
 Members of Youth Council and Youth MPs met with Bolton MP David Crausby to discuss UK Youth Parliaments “Living Wage campaign” where he agreed to sign a pledge to recognise the need for everybody to be paid the standard living wage, he said it was something that he would support.
 We also talked to David Crausby about our ongoing “Public Transport Campaign”, he is keen to improve all transport services in Bolton in particular trains (**#price2change**)



Gulwali Passarlay, Youth representative

In the start of March, I was enjoying the Cricket World Cup but also busy meeting to finalise things for the 'Religion on Trial' event which I was organising with fellow students from the University of Manchester, as part of ParliaMentors social action project. Together with Team #BelieveMe we were interviewing people from faith forums and community about religious diversity and the conflict within different religions as well as politics. The event took place on Thursday the 12th of March in evening at the University Manchester, we had a lively discussion on religion and faith and should religion have a place in politics. We were joined by an impressive and knowledgeable panel to debate and answer questions on the subject matters: Afzal Khan MEP, Vice-Chair, Security & Defence, Foreign Affairs Committee, Budget Committee, The Revd Dr Terry Biddington - Chaplain of Higher Education, Dr Peter Lawler, Senior Politics Lecturer- IR, Michael Hoelzl - Lecturer in Philosophy of Religion at The University of Manchester. He is the co-director of the Centre for Religion and Political Culture, and Tessy Maritim - Diversity Officer. The event was chaired by Dr Julian Skyrme Director of Social Responsibility. We had a good turnout with informative discussion. I can hope we have challenge the religious stereotypes by bring different faith groups together, informing people we have more in common than our difference; and inspiring change.

On the 7th, we had the NHSYF event; celebrating a year on from when we launch the youth forum. We had a weekend residential with NHSYF members and event on Saturday. It was amazing to reflect on the year that was - a lot of young people and professionals attended our event in Leeds. Workshops were taking place around different areas on how to improve youth voice in the NHS. It was good to see how much we have achieved and plan the year ahead. No doubt the NHSYF has made a huge difference in terms of influencing positive change in the NHS but contributing to youth voices in the organisation. Thanks to the BYC for helping make it a success and NHS England for their support.

In the week starting from 9th, I had a lot of planning to do for different events and meetings with people regarding it. Saturday the 14th, Afghan Youth associations and groups have organised a fundraising event at KCL to raise money for the victims of winter crisis in Afghanistan. Over 400 people were killed in heavy snowfall in one province alone. We came together to show our support and solidarity. I was helping and



supporting the event with other activists and we have raise some money but more so brought the community together.

On the 17th of March. I was invited to Croydon College to speak to some of their international new arrivals students. It was a great pleasure witnessing their impressive work around equality & diversity and respect. I spoke about my experience being a student at university and youth activism work, how we can all achieve and be successful in our life. I was supposed to inspire and empower them but it was the opposite – they motivated me with all they done and struggle to do. The things we take for granted such as speaking English.

At university there was a political and anthropological debate around voting. I was arguing for the motion 'Vote or not to Vote' was the question. It was really interesting to hear the views from the opposing team and the students but nevertheless my team won the debate. I talked about the importance of voting, why it matters; sharing my passion about youth representation and participation in the general election. But what's for sure, politicians needs to do more to inspire and encourage young people to come out not only to vote but get involve with politics.

The next day I was invited to Aljazeera English Head to Head programme. Where Mehdi Hasan challenged the Former NATO General Secretary and who was also the PM of Denmark. I questioned him on NATO role in civilian death in Afg and had a long discussion, how we can rebuild the nation and work toward peace and prosperity. The debate as always was well attendees it was robust questioning the organisation's recent intervention or lack of it in Middle East.

In the last week of the month, participated in the BBC Free Speech debate. I was also invited to an event at the University of Manchester and met with Professor Brain Cox.



I also attended the NCVYS YMB residential at NCVYS office with YMB: short listing, planning the conference/event and reflection. A good Asian food one evening and then a scary tutor of East London Whitechapel and it's history, the situation in the 18th C. Jack the Ripper Tour was interesting but upsetting. The crime and criminality were really taking over the city of London. Also to end the residential a trip on the London Eye and a River cruise with the group.



Organised and planted an event as part of YMB - NCVYS conference 'Shaping Social Action' where I also took part in the panel discussion.

I participated in ITV O'Brien audience debate on racism where I discussed Islamophobia and what we should do about it here in Britain. Finally the third month of 2015 is over and here to the April.

Liverpool

Ciara Brodie, 16, Procedures Group representative

From 6th-8th March, the Green Party hosted their biggest ever conference- in Liverpool! I went along on the Friday evening to represent the British Youth Council on their 'Young, Green-Leaning, but not Voting Panel'. In addition to myself, the 3 other panel members were from Bite the Ballot, the Scottish Greens and also a student blogger. We discussed youth apathy with politics, and how best to engage young people. The best thing was that it wasn't just a discussion for the sake of filling a fringe session- the audience was full of canvassers and campaigners who were carefully taking notes on what they can do to engage young people. We talked about the lack of citizenship education in Further Education Colleges compared to schools; university students not knowing where to register; and whether we should be able to vote online. The panel was chaired and organised by Sahaya James, of the South West Green- thank you for inviting me!

On 19th March, I took part in the #MyLifeMySay radio programme that will be broadcast on a new radio station partnered with CityTalk in Liverpool. I was a panel member alongside Labour MPs, Luciana Berger and Alison McGovern, as well as Miguel Doforo from MD Productions. The audience was generally made up of young people who had never voted, and were unlikely to this May. And by the end... every single one of these young people said they would be voting!! It was a powerful discussion,

and made me realise that there is nothing more engaging than talking directly to people! These young people didn't think they had a clue about politics, but actually as we were talking about issues such as health, education and employment, they realised that they actually did. It was an amazing experience, thoroughly inspiring and I took a lot of thoughts away with me.

As a member of Youthforia, the North West's regional network of youth councils, our regional campaign is currently mental health. We have recently secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to investigate the history of mental health treatment. In sub-groups across the region we will be looking at what has changed over time, and essentially giving our campaign some narrative. Really exciting, a different investigative angle of a campaign than we're used to! I was interviewed by BBC Radio Merseyside on 19th March to talk about the project. It's great that people are interested, and we're hoping to make a big impact on mental health services with our campaign.

Sefton

Ryan Everett, 18, Member of Youth Parliament

It's only been one month into my term as Sefton's new MYP and the ball is yet to start properly rolling still this does not take away any excitement I have for the year ahead. However there is a lot of hard work to be done but this should be made easier as I will be looking to learn from my fellow MYP Laura Curran, so it's pretty obvious who the responsible one is... So far this month there has only really been the recent Youthforia meeting in Oldham which for the first time in my life I opened our BIG debate about Citizenship being on the side which believes citizenship is a choice not a responsibility. Unfortunately I was not able to bring home the bacon with my speech probably due to the lack of fancy words I used but I got a few laughs so it wasn't all too shabby. At the end of the day I felt grateful for the fact I have the chance to represent the people I live amongst knowing I have a responsibility to make them feel as if their voice is as loud as any, considering I spent last year in the shadows as a DMYP. With the first step being to plan a potential Young Persons's Question Time for Sefton which hopefully will involve candidates from all three major parties, key figures from the council and of course yours sincerely me and Laura on the panel. Here's to the year ahead!! #nwib

Wigan

Grace Thompson, 18, Youth Councillor

Onwards and upwards! Wigan Youth Cabinet is now a constituted group. Members have been elected into various roles within the Cabinet (e.g. Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, etc). We hope that this gives each individual member a sense of duty, a feeling of value and a vision for the future! We are very excited about an event which will take place this Wednesday (25th March). As mentioned in a previous positive story, we have organised a Question Time event specifically targeted at young people, especially those who are able to vote at the General Election. We have managed to get representatives of the local political parties to take questions from the audience and to explain what their parties have to offer. Our aim in doing this is to help young people to become more informed about politics and ensure that they know why they are voting and what they are voting for when the election comes around. Wigan and

Leigh College Student Union have been very helpful in organising this event, even providing us with a superb venue!

Wigan Democratic Services will also be there to encourage young people to register to vote. We are happy to be working with these partners and build yet more bridges. The Question Time event is only one of many plans Wigan Youth Cabinet have on the go at this moment in time. Our agenda is always full and we are beginning to think about how we can best implement the campaigns of our Members of Youth Parliament and their deputies. This is a big task, but a fulfilling one. We are looking forward to seeing the results of these campaigns in the future and looking back collectively as a Cabinet to see that our efforts produced positive outcomes for the young people of Wigan.

South East

Brighton and Hove

Maram, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

I was elected as Member of Youth parliament last week and I'm really excited. I will be contacting local MPs soon to talk about the living wage and ask the questions I have prepared. I am also looking forward to the residential coming up soon, which I hope to meet many new people and discuss important ideas. In the youth council we are doing a campaign to raise awareness for children with disabilities and mental health, which is going well so far.

East Hampshire

Mishca Gandhi, 14, Member of Youth Parliament

I have recently been elected Member of Youth Parliament for the constituency of Hart Rushmoor and East Hampshire and I look forward to the next two years of exciting activities. To attain the position, I went through an election process, along with 52 other candidates across Hampshire. All secondary schools across the county were given enough voting codes for their students; these were then distributed to students who cast their vote based on the previously written candidate statement. The statement included why we felt that we were the best person for the role. Of the 53 applicants, there were 8 who were successful, 4 Members and 4 Deputies. On 7th March there was the first meeting where we learnt more about what the role consisted of and plans for what to do next. On 10th-12th April, there was a residential to train and learn skills which are required.

East Sussex

George Kyprianou-Hickman, 13, Member of Youth Parliament

Hi, I'm George Kyprianou-Hickman and this month I have arranged a meeting with my Member of Parliament (Stephen Lloyd) for April the 14th. Also, my school arranged a surprise visit from my MP during school time in which I met him, had a conversation about living wage, and ensured that he knew who I was for our meeting in April.

Robin Holmes, Member of Youth Parliament

February sees a fantastic year of Youth Parliament draw to a close, and what with everything from Make Your Mark to the House of Commons debate, our MYPs and DMYPs have worked extremely hard to ensure young peoples' voices are heard. The excitement continues, however, as in the last fortnight we have had the elections for this year's Youth Parliament representatives. I am very pleased to announce

that I have secured the position of MYP for Lewes and Wealden constituency, with Harry Elphick as my deputy. It's a role I really look forward to fulfilling and know that the coming year will bring so many new experiences and things to learn. I love East Sussex and cannot wait to represent its young people nationally; I hope you are satisfied with what I bring to the table.

Here are all the East Sussex results: I really look forward to working alongside these other successful candidates.

Lewes and Wealden

MYP: Robin Holmes

DMYP: Harry Elphick

Eastbourne and Coastal

MYP: George Kyprianou – Hickman

DMYP: Jessica Batchelor

Hastings and Bexhill and Upper Rother

MYP: Charlotte Thomas

DMYP: Maria Goptareva

This last month has seen plenty of young peoples' great work being paid off as East Sussex hosted the INSPIRE! Youth conference on Thursday 12th March. Organised by a core committee of young people including East Sussex Youth Cabinet members and Young Inspectors, many had been working hard since the autumn to plan a super engaging event for many local schools and youth forums.

The day opened with a visit from motivational speaker and ex – Youth Parliament member, Kamar Hyman, who spoke to us about how anyone and everyone is capable of reaching the goals that they may not feel they can. Each young person then got the chance to attend a workshop of their choice, some of which were hosted by the cabinet and BYC, and covered issues such as Public Speaking, Mental Health, and the upcoming 'Big Vote' opportunity. After lunch, Young Inspector Jason O'Neil gave a really enlightening speech around disability, before everyone took part in a Big Debate, which covered topics such as the importance of marriage in society and footballers' wages compared to those of paramedics. The sides of each debate were opened by members of the cabinet and planning committee, who wrote their own speeches to present the topics. The day ended with an 'access the experts' session, in which young people got the chance to ask questions and discuss key issues with a range of professionals from Young Peoples' services such as CAMHS, Stonewall and East Sussex County Council.

Thanks to all who organised and attended the event; everyone went away feeling well and truly inspired!

Medway

Sophie Hill, Youth Councillor

Recently Medway Youth Parliament were very fortunate to have the great opportunity to meet MP Tristram Hunt, Shadow Secretary of State for Education. Members were able to come in and ask him many questions and gather his views and opinions, as well as his plans for Labour if they won the next general election. The questions we asked went from the grammar school system to sex education to votes at 16. We also asked questions concerning political education in schools and the plans for GCSE and A-level retakes. The answers that Tristram Hunt gave allowed us to have a very good insight to the plans that Labour have for education of young people should they win the next election. The meeting was very informative and interesting. What would be amazing, is if Labour did win the next election, it would be interesting to see exactly how Tristram Hunt would carry out everything he told us in the meeting. For the time being the meeting was very good and we wish him luck for the future.

Kent

Angel Layer, 18, Member of Youth Parliament

March is the start of my new official term as MYP for Kent and this year is already getting off to a promising start, I was shortlisted to get a 'young volunteer award' this month for the 'Swale Volunteer Awards' and it was so exciting, I got runner up alongside two inspirational young people and it is so nice that my borough came together to celebrate some outstanding achievements. At the awards I got speaking to my local councillor which was great and I even convinced him to take a selfie with me, which he has been tweeting about!

I managed to get talking to members of the council about UK Youth Parliament's plans for this year and promised to keep them updated. Overall the night was totally worthwhile and everyone there was keen to celebrate (and I even walked out with a cute certificate in a frame, so that was nice too). In further news, this month I have been talking to young people about the importance of registering to vote and how they can get involved if they want to with spreading the word, so I think we might have ourselves some new voters! I questioned Boris Johnson on how young people from outside the capital can get involved in opportunities inside the capital.

Finally this month I attended Kent Youth County Council's meeting, I had my input in the campaign group of Transport where we spoke of the different issues about transport we have in Kent and spoke about how we can improve it.

Joseph Horsnell, 15, Youth Councillor

Peter Ferguson and I from the Harvey Grammar School, Folkestone interviewed the prospective parliamentary candidates for our constituency of Folkestone & Hythe. I interviewed Damien Collins (Conservative), Lynne Beaumont (Liberal Democrats) and was due to question Janice Atkinson (UKIP), although she was suspended from her Party the day before. Peter interviewed Claire Jeffrey (Labour)

and Martin Whybrow (Green). We asked the candidates about youth issues, such as votes at 16, national issues such as immigration and international events. We gave all the candidates a grilling and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to question the parties.

Votes at 16 was a frequent topic, with the Conservatives against and Labour, the Greens and the Lib Dems in favour. The two Year 12 Politics students grilled the candidates on topics of their choice and the story was covered by the local newspaper. Both said "It was a fantastic opportunity to be able to interview the candidates. We think it is important that young people talk to politicians because, although we cannot vote, we do matter!" The local newspaper commented that the two students used calm and polite interviewing techniques but when the candidates dodged questions, they transformed into Paxman-like interviewers with Mr Horsnell asking Lynne Beaumont who she would prefer as Prime Minister - Ed Miliband or David Cameron - five times.

Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire Members of Youth Parliament

On 4th February we launched our Oxfordshire's Manifesto, which included our own campaign's, ensuring children and young people know about activities, staying safe and improving education outcomes for children in care. It also included national campaigns mental health and living wage

We also included the debate in the House of Commons, the results of the Make Your Mark campaign and Takeover Day, for example Rowan taking over the Children's Commissioners Office.

We launched our Manifesto to families, friends and important members of the authority who have the power and influence to help us with our campaigns. Everyone present, includes the Leader of the Council, signed our Pledge to ensure actions happen.

Here's to the year ahead!

Reading

Adrian Rodriguez, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

Having on been elected in early March, I have already been able to meet my local MP Alok Sharma for Reading West. I discussed this years campaign for the Living Wage to be introduced for under 18s and his views on what the next stage would be. Alok has agreed that in autumn we will arrange a meeting with the Federation of Small Businesses to see what their views are. I have also been able to talk to Cllr Jan Gavin and Debs Edwards and before a full council meeting. Whilst the elections are soon, I thought that it would still be best to talk to as many people as possible before the election. Next week I'll be sitting on the Children's Trust board whereby I will be able to put across the voice of young people with regards to wellbeing and mental health.

Aneesa Bses, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

At the beginning of this year, I was the "Treasurer and Fundraiser" in the RYC. A few weeks after, I have been elected into the BYC as DMYP and it's appearing to be a very exciting year ahead for all of us. This month was all about introducing myself, planning the strategy by which we (the MYP Adrian Rodriguez and I) can tackle the campaigns and learning more about my role. Firstly, we have arranged to meet the Councillors by sending a letter (via email) in order to introduce ourselves and gather their views on the BYC campaigns. Secondly, on the 17th, I took part in helping the Elevate-Me Reading hub (to be available for use in May) gather ideas about the ways it can benefit the youth. I was very happy to give a few suggestions (including features of the service, providing phone chargers and installing a TV) whereby the hub could achieve the required results - it's looking to be very effective and useful for the youth of Reading!

For the past RYC meetings, I have met people who would particularly be able to assist us in the Mental Health campaign, including Andy Kimber (Public Health Programme Manager), Health Watch and Cllr Gavin (Children's Services and Families). On the last meeting - 24th, Adrian and I have met the Reading's Labour Councillors before their council meeting and they have shared their views and advice on the Living Wage. After that, I have set-up a Facebook page dedicated to my role where I'm able to contact members of UKYP from all around the UK.

Throughout this month, I have spoken with my school's librarian, teachers and students in order to widen my knowledge on politics, my local council and the views of the youth regarding the national campaigns as well as the RYC's: Mental Health and PSHE reform. By this, I was able to feedback to my team and complete a survey (PSHE campaign) that would be distributed to schools around Reading by the end of April. Ultimately, what I gained from this month is helping me map-out a plan for the campaigns. Let's get down to business!

South West

Bath and North East Somerset

Edward Joseph, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

This month other than talking about meeting Mary Berry to people, I have action planned for the B&NES Youth Forum's mental health campaign quite extensively with my work and the Deputy member for my area. I have also attended a local safeguarding board meeting and updated the group about how the equality groups have been doing and the work I have done with them about Local Safeguarding. As for the charity I am a trustee of, we had our first full board meeting after recruiting our new trustees. I met with local leader of the independents, Nathan Hartley to discuss local issues, and met again with my worker to log everything I have been doing since November for her Off The Record report. I attended a Child Friendly City meeting which I am on the management committee of, attended a Bzine meeting – a local website by young people, for young people.

Perhaps most importantly, I attended the #TeamSouthWest regional residential where we had workshops to teach us lots of new skills. We all really enjoyed it and made lots of new friends. Being without my phone was great. I felt that it pushed everybody to be more sociable as they were not engrossed in their screens, and the shy members of the group could not hide behind a game, which brought them out of their shells and afforded them new friends. This also meant that workshops had 100% engagement from participants and 0% disruption from beeps, vibrations and ringtones. Feeling detached from the outside world was just what I needed, as were the friends and activities in the signal-less valley. I am glad to have met so many interesting people, been dubbed as 'King Ed', and launched the residential by inviting members to attend the Queen in the House of Peers. I look forward to trying to meet senior politicians over the coming days.

Bristol

Alistair, 13, Youth Councillor

Here in Bristol, we've had our first few meetings and things are going well. We've already got slightly annoyed at the food that we are given but other than that things are good. We are going on our residential in April to form our manifesto for the two years, so things are good!

Ella Marshall, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

March has been my first full month in my elected roles as Member of Youth Parliament for Bristol and as part of Bristol City Youth Council. I can confidently say that it has filled me with an awful lot of enthusiasm for the rest of my term! On the 4th March, I attended the Shadow Safeguarding Board meeting because I feel it is extremely important that we are able to feedback to the adult Safeguarding board in Bristol what is working for young people and what still needs to be done. The session provided

an introduction to what we would be able to achieve working on the board and it was a great opportunity to share and compare experiences of safeguarding with other young people across the city. Some of issues that were raised included self harm, cyber bullying, a lack of mental health education and the extortionate amounts of pressure placed on us by the education system. Interestingly, these are all issues that were raised at our initial campaign meeting for Bristol City Youth Council and the South West UK Youth Parliament.

Myself and Youth Mayor of Bristol, Neha Mehta were asked to feature on BCFM's International Women's Day special radio broadcast, which was a great experience as I got to speak a huge number of inspirational men and women, in addition to publicising our roles within the city. I feel this day was a really great opportunity for everyone to celebrate the importance of feminism and recognise that there is still a way to go before we can truly say we are living in a world of equality. I will be appearing on BCFM's breakfast show on Monday 30th March also to talk more about my role and how I became interested in politics. This month I received my letter to say that I am now on the electoral register, which was hugely satisfying! Although we are not yet old enough to vote I feel it is important that 16 and 17 year olds apply because it is our right and means politicians might just listen to the call for the voting age to be lowered to 16.

I attended the elected Mayor of Bristol's Question Time event on the 12th March. It was great to hear the disengagement of young people with politics being raised as an issue and towards the end I stood up to pose my own Question to George Ferguson concerning whether the council really do have any power to influence what is taught in schools (particularly with regards to political education). I was pleased that the Mayor emphasised the success of this year's Bristol City Youth Council election, having received 10,000 votes it was the biggest yet and he was positive about being able to encourage better education around politics and democracy in schools.

This year's South West UK Youth Parliament regional residential was hosted within the Forest of Dean. There was a huge amount of debate, discussion and development of ideas over the 3 days and it was hugely motivating. The three regional campaigns that were democratically appointed were a "Curriculum for Life", better sexual and mental health education and more constructive careers advice both in and out of schools. Our Bristol campaigns include raising awareness and understanding of mental health issues, a Curriculum for Life (with particular emphasis around political education) and improved sex and relationships education in schools. We now have an action plan in place and will be able to carry this forward and make progress.

Over the weekend, I was particularly moved by Kieran Mulvaney (MYP for Wiltshire) and his team's campaign "Let's think about it", which revolves around improving awareness of mental health issues, reducing the taboo and increasing access to help for those who are suffering. My fellow D/MYPs in the South West are some of the most incredible people I have ever met and I am enthused by the prospect of working with them over the next year.

On Friday 13th March I took part in the Woodspring (North Somerset) Schools Debate Competition final. This debate is chaired and hosted by Dr Liam Fox MP and takes on a parliamentary format. The motion for the final was "This house believes the internet is just as much of a curse as it is a benefit". Myself and my teammate were arguing for the motion and did so with an awful lot of passion and research combined! We were thrilled to win the competition (for the first time ever for St Katherine's School) and are looking forward to a day at the House of Commons in the summer as our prize.

Neha Mehta, 16, Young Mayor and Youth Council member

As a member of the Bristol City Youth Council and a Youth Mayor I have been thrown into various meetings and events. This month's activities have ranged from council meetings to formal commemorations with fancy drinks and canapés.

The month kicked off with an informal chat to the previous Youth Mayors, guiding us on what is expected in our respective roles. It was a good opportunity to fully understand the expectations of a Youth Mayor to ensure that I can fulfil my duties to the best of my ability. On the 8th of March I attended a radio interview at BCFM radio station to celebrate international women's day which was a great time to speak a little about my interests and inspirations but also what I plan to do in the future with regard to future campaigns. This was a great time to get young people's attention and make them aware of the importance of getting involved if they wanted to see change. They have also said they would like to invite me and Ella, who is a MYP, back to talk about our achievements in the near future. I have also spoken on BBC Radio Bristol again about my role as a Youth Mayor but also my opinion on votes at 16. This was another chance to inspire young people and get them interested in politics. To engage with more young people I spoke at the Bristol Hindu Temple during Holi celebrations to raise awareness of the council and what we aim to do. This particularly interested the Asian community and I had loads of people come and speak to me afterwards which was great!

At our first council campaign meeting we discussed various issues we felt passionate about such as a curriculum for life, more in depth PHSE lessons on mental health/drugs/alcohol and more educational opportunities for young people for example work experience and careers advice.

We have attended a Civic Inter Faith Celebration on the topic of tolerance, respect and understanding which was thought provoking and very interesting to listen to the various speakers. We also attended the official naming of the Royal Air Force at the Mansion house which was completely different but also very fascinating and enjoyable. But the most exciting thing was being part of the Learning City Partnership Board. Bristol has decided to become a learning city and this means encouraging citizens to constantly learn throughout their lives and also help improve and develop schemes that will in turn improve education within Bristol. I represented the young people and was thrilled to hear that other older people share the same passion for change as I do! We spoke about developing better links in many schools to various professions to ensure work experience in competitive sectors.

We spoke about a curriculum for life and therefore learning about useful skills such as basic money management and general knowledge on student loans. Mental health education in secondary schools was also a very debated topic as everyone on the board felt that knowledge into these issues will improve students understanding. The next meeting is scheduled for June and we are all so excited to be working with this board as this makes chances of change much higher! In two weeks time is our residential and this will give us all the time to sit and develop our manifestos and goals.

Sophie Giltinan, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

At the beginning of the month Bristol City Youth Council had our first campaign meeting. We decided on what campaigns were most important to each of us. From the 20th of March UKYP South West had our residential at Dean Fields Study Centre. We got to know each other and decided on our area and South West campaigns. We also met with Fixers to discuss how they could help run our campaigns. We even had a camp fire and learnt how to line dance!

Cheltenham

Nathan Sexton, 13, Member of Youth Parliament

I have done so much stuff this month! I went on a residential with all the South West team and I learnt so much more about what I have to do as an MYP. I am also planning to contact the MP for Cheltenham and Tewkesbury, Martin Horwood. I have also joined the campaign "Let's think About It" led by Kieran Mulvaney, which is a campaign to raise awareness on mental health. Thank you everyone who organised the SW residential, it helped me greatly in organising myself.

Cornwall

Cameron Sykes, Member of Youth Parliament

This month has been one I will never forget. I attended, for the first time, the Southwest Regional Residential in the Forest of Dean. As a new MYP, I had no idea what to expect of the weekend. I was sceptical and unsure as to what I was about to experience. This uncertainty however was immediately remedied. Before I'd even walked in to the building, I was met with smiles and waves from a stream of fellow MYPs from the Southwest. The hard work began shortly after. The amount I learned over the 48 hours I spend at the residential was beyond anything I could have prepared myself for. My understanding of the UK Youth Parliament processes and proceedings were explained in depth – I no longer felt like the new guy. I met some fascinating individuals and I left the short stay feeling ecstatic, confident and eager to fulfil my potential as an MYP. Our local and regional manifestos were concluded and the work required in my constituency became apparent. One of the regional manifesto priorities was an issue discussed at one of my local reference groups. For the first time, I really felt like I was making the voices of young people in my local area heard – and the journey hasn't even begun.

Owen Davies, Member of Youth Parliament

This month I have been doing much more as an MYP and finding it really exciting; in early March I sent a questionnaire to all schools in West Cornwall asking what issues were most important to them, and I have received several responses so far. This has been great for informing me about what young people in the area really want - mostly, scrapping university tuition fees and a living wage for all. Other points suggested were more youth services and more funding for the NHS.

Last weekend I went to the South West regional residential, where I met all the other MYPs and DMYPs of the South West. At the resi we planned our regional and local manifestos, and learnt about what our roles were as (D)MYPs. We were also taught about Fixers, which was very useful. Overall the residential was very useful and got me fired up to start campaigning. The day afterwards I went to St. Just Town Council to explain what my role was, and also met Sue James, a local Cornwall Councillor.

Owen Winter, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

I was honoured this month to have my first meeting with Dan Rogerson MP to discuss issues affecting young people and the work of the Youth Parliament. We discussed a number of issues and I was glad to see that the Youth Parliament has the support of my MP. Hopefully in future we will meet again and can work together to get the best deal for Cornish young people.

Also, I went to the South West Regional residential. It was great fun to meet other MYPs and like-minded young people and have workshops and activities about our roles. Everyone was friendly and had a good time. We discussed local campaigns and produced a regional manifesto for this year which included an idea that came from a Cornish 'Young People's Reference Group'. It's great that an idea went all the way from one of these meetings into our manifesto. I have a lot of ideas from the residential to take forward and a clearer view of my role and campaigns.

Saffron Blake, 15, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

This month as the DMYP for Mid-Cornwall I visited a school in the west section of Cornwall called Pool school to speak to 8 different classes for 15 minutes on: what did I have to do to become a member of the youth parliament; how it's like being a member of the youth parliament; what I want to do/change as a DMYouthParliament. This month I also attended a regional residential in Gloucestershire, where I took part in numerous amounts of workshops from learning the code of conduct to working out our regional manifestos!

My favourite part was learning about the company Fixers, as it would benefit me as well as the members of the youth parliament in Cornwall for our local manifestos as well as our personal ones. Next month I am hoping to go to a young reference group so I can hear what people have to say and their views of Cornwall. I am also getting into contact with a person who has started a campaign on first aid lessons in school which was one of my manifestos which I used to apply for this role. Cameron and myself (assisting him from time to time) will be creating a page to search for jobs for unemployed as a teenagers (under the age of 18) as this idea was very popular and relates to most places in the region this is our local manifesto and I think it is also one of our regional manifestos for 2015.

Devon

Ben, 15, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

This weekend the members and deputies from all over the South West came to a weekend residential in Parkend, Gloucestershire. This was a great experience where we met with like minded young people and learnt many new skills. During the day we had talks on how to use social media properly and effectively as well as teambuilding workshops and debating. We also formed our local manifestos and campaigns and learnt how we can best represent the youth in our constituency. I talked to people from across the political spectrum and have had my views broadened as a result. Overall it was an excellent weekend and I am looking forward to the years ahead as a Deputy Member.

Bethany Lee, 14, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

On the weekend 20th – 22nd March, Members and Deputies of Youth Parliament from all over the South West region came together to learn more about the role of a D/MYP. The weekend was filled with various talks, workshops and discussions preparing us for the year ahead – including creating the South West regional manifesto and learning how to contact and work with the media. Some of us also did a workshop with the Fixers charity to make our campaigns more creative to get more people involved. On the Sunday, everyone signed the UK Youth Parliament Code of Conduct. I have learnt a lot from the weekend, and feel much more prepared to take on the role of a DMYP. I also thoroughly enjoyed meeting the newly elected and re-elected members from around the South West. (#teamsouthwest!)

Grace van Zyl, 14, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

Hi my name is Grace van Zyl, I am 14 years old and am the returning Deputy Member of Youth Parliament for Dorset. The point that I ran on was to provide access to more facilities for young people. This has been a hectic month! Firstly we have had our UK Youth Parliament elections which took a huge amount of effort from 30 schools and many people.

Dorset Youth Council Enables (DYCE) has been pushing our ITV Fixers project; we linked up with First bus and the ITV Fixers to create a project that would break down the barriers between bus drivers and young people. This has proved very positive and could possibly go national! We have a meeting next week with a team from ITV Fixers to start producing an educational pack that can include filming, posters, leaflets, workshops and many other ideas that will be aimed at both bus drivers and young people.

I have also been working on my own manifesto (to promote and aid the MAX card), the MAX card enables young people who are disabled, in care or young carers to have access to more facilities and gives them discounts at iconic attractions. Later this week I will hopefully be doing a radio interview explain what the max card is about and our goals for the year ahead. I also had a great experience at the UK Youth Parliament south west residential where I met many new inspiring young people. We debated about rising matters, worked as teams to overcome obstacles and learnt valuable techniques for our roles as members of youth parliament. Over the next year I hope give young people a voice and to encourage others to be productive in anything they do. (Didn't mean for that to sound so cheesy but oh well.) I look forward to what this year has to bring especially regarding Dorset's plan for our manifestos: transport and anti-bullying.

Megan Chapple, 16, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

My first positive story is about why I wanted to be in the youth parliament. I wanted to be in the youth parliament to make a change. I first heard about the youth parliament when I was involved with "save Devon youth service" I got involved when I found out that "the junction" youth Centre's was on the verge of shutting down. The elections process was long and hard competing against two outstanding girls who both got into the youth parliament. We got our results on the 20th march and I became DMYP (deputy member of youth parliament)

A week later we when to our county meeting where I met up with everyone from Devon. We all got on really well and we discussed everything that was going to happen to happen over the next few months.

Two weeks later we had our regional residential where we meet everyone from the south west and they are really nice and friendly. I'm so glad that I put myself forward to boost my confidence in talking to other people and to present our ideas. I'm looking forward to the near future to make a difference in young people's views.

Olivia Duff, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

This month I went on a regional residential at Lidney in Gloucestershire where I got to meet lots of other Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs). We had the chance to take part in different activities including media workshops, team work exercises and line dancing. My favourite activity was getting more knowledge on mental health and learning about my role as a member of youth parliament. I had the chance to work with many different individuals and learnt more about their views and ideas which I will be able to take away with me. I am looking forward to future meetings to learn more about some of the useful information I have been given over the weekend.

Tom Burrows, Member of Youth Parliament

My term for Youth Parliament started slowly, but now is gaining speed.

So far, the team for Devon has decided on the local campaigns, and I'm personally involved in a campaign set for lowering bus prices for 16 and 17 year olds; an exciting campaign set to last for at least a year.

Also, it has been decided that we'll have a new website, which myself and another DMYP have volunteered to maintain, keeping our constituents up to date with our progress.

There's certainly a lot to look forward to for the Devon team!

Dorset

Crystal-Lily, 16, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

Hello, my name is Crystal-Lily Mills, I have recently been elected to be a Deputy Member of Youth Parliament for Dorset. I feel that young people deserve to have a voice and I thank all the young people who voted for me on my manifesto of challenging negative stereotyping by promoting positive publicity for young people. Since the election me and the 3 other members of youth parliament for Dorset have been to London and visited Portcullis house and discussed having our own debate tent for the Tolpuddle festival in Dorset and discussing what we should debate on and our main debate will be votes at 16.

Also on the 20th of March I went on a residential with the south west Members of Parliament it was an amazing experience and having the chance to meet loads of young people with strong positive views it has motivated me more, I learnt so much more about youth parliament and what it is in itself and the workshops were so amazing especially the mental health workshop ran by Kieran Mulvaney it was so interesting learning statistics that can help me with my manifesto and getting more contacts in the south west so we can discuss with each other what we are doing so we can share ideas and spread the ideas we have.

Since the beginning of the year we have also worked with a charity called Fixers which have helped us design a booklet for young and bus drivers of how to act on a bus and learning how to treat other people on the bus which will go out to schools in Dorset. On the residential it was so amazing and I will use all the information to push forward my campaign. I plan working with schools and the police and crime commissioner to challenge the negative stereotyping in Dorset. Thank you again to all the young people who voted for me!

Grace van Zyl, 14, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

This has been a hectic month! Firstly we have had our UK Youth Parliament elections which took a huge amount of effort from 30 schools and many people. Dorset Youth Council Enables (DYCE) has been pushing our ITV Fixers project; we linked up with First bus and the ITV Fixers to create a project that would break down the barriers between bus drivers and young people. This has proved very positive and could possibly go national!

We have a meeting next week with a team from ITV Fixers to start producing an educational pack that can include filming, posters, leaflets, workshops and many other ideas that will be aimed at both bus drivers and young people. I have also been working on my own manifesto (to promote and aid the MAX card), the MAX card enables young people who are: disabled, in care or young carers to enjoy discounts in different places like: leisure centres, sports centres, museums, farms, shops and more! Members from DYCE have been fully supporting and aiding the campaign.

I have also attended a transport meeting along with: representatives of Dorset County Council, Dorset Youth Extra, First Bus, Damory and other organisations. Last week I attended the South West Regional meeting with young people from across the region. And last but not least, a few hours ago I found out that I have been re-elected into UK Youth Parliament! I am very chuffed and look forward to the year ahead, I also want to say good luck to all the D/MYPs for the year ahead.

Iga Sikorska, Youth Councillor

I have took an active part in this month's meeting, despite not being able to attend all I have still made progress in my election campaign about having more cycling paths. I have talked with some locals and people from my school to support me in my campaign, by getting them to write letters about their views on having a healthier society and having more cycling paths. Recently I have done an interview on Page 4 in the Western Gazette, expressing my views on today's society and talking about the future generation of politics in our country. I am looking to working in the future with the problems that affect us daily and making a difference. Even if I will not be elected I still hope to put my manifesto into action and making a difference for everyone.

I would also like to involve more people - Young and old - in sports. It does not have to be anything big, it could even be daily jogging or CYCLING. By having cycling paths we would reduce obesity and diabetes... The government will not have to spend an immense amount of money on treating diabetes.

Jack Dunne, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

Well, this month I met Ed Joseph, MYP for Bath and North East Somerset. But other than him I met loads of other people from all over the place at different events and occasions. My first active month as the new MYP for Dorset started with a trip to London to the houses of parliament to meet with different people and have a tour around the palace itself. First Lucy, Grace, Crystal, Dawn and I met the PCC for Dorset before meeting representatives from the TUC and the Tolpuddle Martyr festival. We talked about a youth debating tent at the festival and making sure our voice and campaigns were heard during the event. The meeting occurred in the food court of Portcullis. A new experience for me as I was able to see MPs and senior cabinet ministers in their jobs. I also had a very new experience in the Gents as I queued behind Danny Alexander, MP, that doesn't normally happen. After the meetings we went to have a quick tour about the palace and saw the banners in the hall. I also got to meet a living legend (my opinion), Dennis Skinner, MP.

I also met my own MP, Richard Drax and we had a great meeting in the café talking about university tuition fees and votes at 16. Plus we also got to talk about non-youth specific subjects such as fixed term governments and our current voting system. After meeting the MPs the group went to watch a live debate in the House of Commons and then the House of Lords. The lords debate was very interesting as it was about zero contract hours, which is something I feel strongly about.

To further our progress with transport in Dorset, I, along with members of DYCE attended a Fixers transport meeting. We all viewed the progress so far and then learnt what Fixers were able to do for us. The team came up with a variety of ideas and themes for our workshop/event, that's hopefully happening later on this year and also the design and content of our booklet, which will be created on the event day. Our aim is to tackle types of behaviour on buses and create a guideline on how to behave on a bus, for both passengers and drivers.

I attended a DYCE meeting at County Hall with other youth representatives from Dorset. The group were able to discuss proposals for youth enterprises with the PCC and talk about having a youth interviewing panel. All the new MYPs and dMYPs were introduced. We all had great fun and were able to make some real progress in ideas and keep updated with all the events that are going on. To finish off a very eventful first month I attended the South West residential. I was not looking forward to it to be honest. It was the last weekend of the Six Nations and I wasn't going to be able to see it because I had no signal or TV in the area I was staying. But when I got there it all changed when I got there. After the extensive amount of icebreakers that occurred all the young elected representatives of the Southwest were able to participate in activities and events. We had team building exercises and learnt about how to conduct ourselves when using media in our occupation as MYPs or dMYPs.

I particularly enjoyed our mock House of Commons debate, where I was able to act as John Bercow and be the speaker. After resigning as speaker I decided to play devil's advocate for the rest of the debate. As well as all the workshops several of us managed to find a computer and catch up with the Six Nations. We all took part in line dancing, which I loved. But I'm not sure if my friend, Ryan 'the right wing rapper' could say the same as he spent most of the night apologising for stepping on my feet. A rather sad goodbye had to happen on Sunday but I am now clear in what I have to do as an MYP (don't be party biased). And also I now have an idea on how I will be able to execute my manifesto and hopefully improve the employability skills and creditable life skills for the young members of Dorset. "Getting it Dunne"

James Jones, 14, Member of Youth Parliament

I must say that I have thoroughly enjoy being a part of this community and being an MYP of Dorset, working with the Dorset Youth Council and representing Dorset for two years now. I believe I have gained so much amazing experience with the meeting's I have attended and with adults/young people I have work within the past which concluded of creating workshops, being part of communities which support certain aspects and manifestos. It is sad to but I will not be re-standing for election to become a Member of Youth Parliament for Dorset but hope to continue Dyce and furthermore help new MYP's with the Youth Council.

This month has been very busy with all schools within Dorset taking part in the new MYP elections, and on Thursday 26th of February, we hope to find out the results of the MYP's for 2015. I attended the Taunton Regional meeting on Thursday 19th February, this was a great meeting where we got to meet Natacha Tagholm from First Bus who has been working with Dorset, we were able to discuss successes on improving transport for young people in the area and get ideas from others. As it is our National Campaign, in the afternoon we discussed employment issues (the need of good work experience and advice...) and share our ideas about how employment opportunities for young people can be improved. We were joined by a panel of experts in this area.

Lucy Armstrong, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

I waited to tonight as we finally found out our UK Youth Parliament election results and I am in utter shock to say that I am now a member of Youth Parliament. I have been amazed by the candidates that stood for election this year, and I know everyone is going to carry on doing amazing things.

It's been my first month as an elected MYP for Dorset and I've already been doing so much, and having lots of fun along the way. After the election results we were invited to go to London and visit the Houses of Parliament. Whilst we were there we had had a meeting about the Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival where I hope to be hosting some debates and workshops with other MYP's and Deputies. Once we finished our meetings we went across to Westminster Hall to look at the Banners and then to the cafe to meet Richard Drax, MP for South Dorset. We spent a good hour with Richard discussing local and national issues facing young people today.

At the beginning of the month I was also asked to join the Plan UK youth advisory panel, so I will be in London this weekend to work with them on girls rights. I cannot believe it is already February and that 2015 has given me so many opportunities. Thank you to everyone who continues to inspire me.

This month I also gained a place on the Plan UK Youth Advisory Panel, and I am so excited to get to work with them this weekend in London. Considering it is only now February I cannot believe how this year has provided me with so many opportunities already. As well as all this I must remember to focus on my GCSE's which are coming up in the next few months, but thank you to everyone who has inspired me.

I left my story to last minute this month, as today we finally got our UK Youth Parliament election results and I am in absolute shock to say that I am now a member of the UK Youth Parliament representing Dorset. I have learnt so much from all the amazing people that stood for election and am absolutely amazed that I got elected. I cannot wait to start this amazing Journey and meet many more amazing young people.

I have just returned from a fantastic weekend in South Gloucestershire where I met up with other MYP's and Deputies from across the South West region. We spent the weekend developing our personal manifestos. My manifesto is to develop an educational pack to promote gender equality - along with this I hope to gain press interest and support by publishing positive media articles across many platforms to get young people involved.

Locally, I am the Chair of Dorchester Youth Council and we have just started Toilet Twinning! An exciting project to twin our public toilets here in Dorchester to support the forty percent of the world's population who don't have somewhere safe, private or hygienic to go to the toilet.

On a national level I am still busy campaigning for NDCS - National Deaf Children's Society and I am really excited that my latest video blog has is on their YouTube channel. So that's all from me - I hope to get my next post to you next month - I'm sure I should be able to fit it in around my GCSE revision!

Sarah Trott, 13, Youth Councilor

This last month I've started a blog where I'll be writing all about my role in DYCE and all the things I do to help get young people's voices heard. www.sarahzsay.blogspot.co.uk

This month seems to have gone by so fast! Unfortunately I missed this month's Dorset Youth Council meeting because I was in London at an event called WeDay. It's held in Wembley Arena and is a concert / inspirational speaking event which aims to empower young people to make a difference in their local and global communities. It was an incredible experience to be sat in a room with 12,000 other young people who are all just as passionate I am about youth creating positive change, I was left feeling really inspired!

This month we've also been working with the ITV Fixers to create a booklet of tips / workshops aimed at year 7 (age 11) pupils that will help to break down the barriers between young people and bus drivers. Next month we are going to be holding a workshop with other young people which will be a test run of the workshop that'll be featured in the booklet. We'll also be shooting the photos and interviewing people on the day. I was also able to attend the PCC Youth Consultation where we looked at the Dorset Police and PCC websites in order to review how effective they were at engaging young people.

Wow. What a month. February has been so busy and I've loved every second of it! The first week of the month was the UK Youth Parliament elections for Dorset. I was one of the candidates and after weeks of putting up posters, doing assemblies and social media campaigns it was finally time to vote. It was an incredible week and it's so surreal to think that there were real young people out there voting for me because they believe that I should be representing their voice.

During the election week we also had our monthly DYCE meeting. This time I brought along my sister and best friend who both wanted to stand for Youth Parliament but weren't selected from our school. Although my friend decided that DYCE wasn't for her, my sister loved it and is now joining me with a lot of the projects I'm involved with. On the 11th a group of young people from all across Dorset met with a Francis Avis from the Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (the people that buy and organise healthcare for people in Dorset) to discuss how we can get young people's views on how the NHS is currently run. We learnt that if we do not change our ways, by 2020 the NHS will be making a deficit of up to £200million!

To get young people's opinions we want to create a poster to go up in all schools, interactive social media pages directed at young people, a conference run by young people in the summer, and we even had the idea of getting a bus and touring to local attractions like Camp Bestival to spread the word! It was a really fun and productive meeting and we had a lot of good ideas which we hope to carry out in the next few months! Just under a week later I attended the South West BYC Convention in Taunton which was a really good day as always. This time we were discussing the ongoing public transport debate and the living wage. In the morning we had Natacha from First Buses who came to talk about a workshop that had happened where young people and bus drivers had to swap places for a day in an attempt to break down the stereotypes that both parties have against each other. I wasn't at the workshop but it looked like a great idea and it certainly seemed to have an effect on those who were there. During the afternoon we had some guests and conducted some carousel style discussions on the living wage and work experience opportunities.

The day after that (sorry this is getting so long, told you it was a busy month!) I attend a meeting for the Dorset Max Card. This is a project that is being mainly run by our current DMYP Grace Van Zyl because it fulfils her manifesto point which was to provide cheaper leisure facilities for young people. For those of you who don't know what the Max Card is, it's a card that is given to 0-19 year olds who are disabled, young carers, or who are in care that allows them (plus one) to get discounts at various places like coffee shops, swimming pools, gyms, play farms etc. We are hoping to work with some local radio stations to help promote the scheme which is amazing!

And now for the really important bit: Election results! The new MYPs are Jack Dunne and Lucy Armstrong and the new DMYPs are Crystal Mills and Grace Van Zyl. So I didn't get elected, but the four that did get in are so deserving and I know that they'll do a phenomenal job! This will not stop me from trying to be a voice for the young people of Dorset, I'll be continuing to work with DYCE and without a doubt I want to stand again next year! Over the last few months I've met some really inspirational young people and made some great friends, I've loved every second of the election process and I just want to say another congrats to the four that did get in, you're all amazing!

Sophie Trott, 13, Youth Councilor

Firstly, this month I attended a meeting discussing many elements regarding the project DYCE are working on with ITV Fixers (supported by first bus) to improve the relationship between passengers and drivers on buses. Following up from February's meeting on the Dorset max card, a card given to looked after young people, disabled young people, young carers and children in care entitling the card holder plus one other person discounted or free access to various attractions, leisure facilities and organisations, I promoted the card and surveyed users of the card at the Dorset parent carer day.

During the month of February I have attended numerous groups and forums including my first DYCE meeting, the NHS clinical commissioning youth group, a maxcard meeting and a transport forum. I also attended the Youth Voice South West convention in Taunton.

A highlight of this month was attending 'Free the children's' We Day UK at Wembley arena. We day is an annual series of stadium events happening internationally with the purpose of empowering young people to 'be the change'. We day brings together activists, celebrities, speakers and performers, the line up this year included; Sir Richard Branson, Martin Sheen, Kweku Mandela and years and years. This event incorporates education with empowerment - it was a very inspirational day for everyone! I also

took part in the Dorset police crime commissioner youth consultation where we were asked to give our opinions on various topics such as the PCC website and a prototype anti bullying leaflet.

I have pledged to take part in the we are silent campaign. This is a campaign which will involve being silent for 24 hours happening on April 16. I am going silent to raise awareness for all the children facing injustices such as exploitation, gender inequality, denial of education , bullying and for all the young people denied a voice because together we can all be heard.

I also started a blog to write about what I am doing to represent young people and writing about the issues that affect young people. www.sophieesspiel.blogspot.com

Gloucestershire

Tyler Hyett, 12, Member of Youth Parliament

Since I became a member of youth parliament I have had a meeting to meet other members of youth parliament. I have learnt a lot already about being a MYP, we have been on a Residential camp for the weekend. I have met a lot of new people from the south west region. At the moment I am trying to get hold of the MP of Gloucester and also the council, as I would like to know more about them and what they do. I am also in the process of contacting other important roles of Gloucester and the Forest of Dean. I am still learning a lot but getting more and more confident in my role.

My plans at the moment is to try my best to see if I could speak to stagecoach to see if they could make bus fares cheaper and if they could make more bus routes around the Forest of Dean. Also looking to improve activities around these areas for young people e.g. more youth clubs, skate parks and after school clubs this will reduce crime by young people as they will be off the streets and entertained.

Alysha Bodman, Member of Youth Parliament

This has been an extremely exciting month! The UK Youth Parliament elections in Stroud and the Cotswolds took place from the 1st to the 6th March. After a long week of campaigning and talking to young people in my area, I was successfully elected to be the MYP! I was thrilled to be elected and am looking forward to voicing the concerns of young people in order to improve Stroud and the Cotswolds. I am really passionate about Politics and keen to engage young people with Politics during my term.

All of the MYPs and DMYPs representing the South West met for the first time in Gloucestershire for our regional residential. It was great to get to know all my fellow MYPs and DMYPs and discuss the main issues affecting our constituencies. We all shared similar interests so we all got on really well. We also had some heated debates about topical issues such as the representation of women in the media and the sacking of Jeremy Clarkson. There was no internet connection at the residential which was admittedly quite refreshing! In addition, we put together our regional manifesto. We decided that the three main issues would be: improved careers education in school, improved mental health education and a curriculum for life.

- Mental health education needs to be drastically improved. The education should start in Year 8 and include stigmas, where to get help and what to do if you know someone who is suffering.

- We would like to introduce a formal 'curriculum for life' that provides students with a UCAS recognized qualification. The teaching should include sexual health, well being, financial skills and political education. This will benefit young people now and in the future.
- We want to improve careers education in schools. In order to get a job we need experience, but to gain experience we need a job. We want to end this vicious cycle and provide an on-line platform to make employment and work experience accessible for all young people

I am so pleased to be a MYP to represent the ideas of young people as I believe that our voices tend to go unheard by decision makers and people in power. I am looking forward to improving my constituency and achieving long lasting change for all young people.



Isles of Scilly

Inca Reynolds, 13, Member of Youth Parliament

This month I have attended the south west regional residential. The residential helped for me and the DMYP to decide on our manifesto for our constituency. I learned new consultation skills and got to see other people's campaigns. This year I ran a session to help us decide on a regional manifesto.

Plymouth

Josh Pope, 17, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

This weekend, of the 20th to the 22nd of March, I attended the annual South West UKYP residential, this year held in Gloucester. The weekend was a fantastic experience, a fantastic combination of new people, new skills and a lot of fun were combined and formed the basis of the weekend. From line dancing to sessions on mental health, it had it all. The lack of phone signal, though annoying at first, proved an incredible addition to the weekend, and as a result forced everyone to physically interact with each other, making the whole meeting new people experience a whole lot easier! A lot was learned this weekend, most importantly about how to be the best youth representative we could be. What our job was, how we could help young people and the local plan for the year that was about to commence. The weekend marked the exciting beginning of what I'm sure will be an incredible year doing incredible work with some incredible people, and I can't wait for it all to kick off!

Sarah Staples, 18, Member of Youth Parliament

Since my last positive story I have been elected as Member of Youth Parliament for Plymouth (I was previously DMYP). I have really hit the ground running, I attended a Q&A and meeting with the Baroness Royall where we discussed how best to execute a campaign on decreasing the stigma around mental health. Myself and Tom Cahill (DMYP) had an interview with BBC Radio Devon to talk about the different ways that young people are engaging with democracy, this was ahead of an event run by the Daily Mirror and British Future in Plymouth as part of the Voice of a Generation tour. I also attended the UK Youth Parliament South West regional residential where I got to meet all my fellow South West members and deputies.

This was such a useful event and a weekend I will always remember. I used this information on my trip to London to take part in the Voice of a Generation follow up event in Westminster. I went as an MYP and it was inspiring to meet and get to question the panel of MPs who attended, Jenny Willott MP, Gloria De Piero MP, Chloe Smith MP and Caroline Lucas MP. I was able to ask a question regarding the national campaign of Mental Health. With all panellists agreeing that this is one of the most important issues. Caroline Lucas MP said that she was very happy that this was something the Youth Parliament was campaigning on. After the event I was able to chat with Gloria De Piero MP who is the shadow minister for women and equalities, this talk really inspired me and made me realise just how important representation is and how important it is that views of everyone are heard.

Poole

Francesca Reed, 18, Member of Youth Parliament

We've had another exciting month here in Poole! To begin with our youth opportunity voucher booklets, developed by myself and last year's Deputy Member of Youth Parliament Thomas Rowledge, arrived and have been distributed to every young person in Poole. Entitled 'The Little Book of Big Vouchers', this booklet provides young people aged 11-18 free and discounted opportunities such as free swims, free fitness classes, free kayaking and free wall climbing to name just a few.

Furthermore, I am absolutely thrilled to have been chosen to sit on the British Youth Council's 2015 UK Youth Select Committee, focusing on mental health services. I am incredibly excited to be involved in this Committee which will write a hard hitting report with recommendations to the Government. This month I also met with the Minister for Care and Support Norman Lamb to discuss Youth Parliament's national campaign on young people's mental health and I also attended a local event with the Minister at Queen Elizabeth's school around mental health services in general, which was attended by various health professionals and pupils.

In addition, just last week I attended the South West Youth Parliament residential in Gloucestershire along with all of the other MYPs and deputies in the South West. During this brilliant residential we took part in workshops which enabled us to develop our local and regional campaigns, for example through the help of Fixers, a charity which supports young people in producing materials to get their voices heard over issues which matter to them. Furthermore, we were also able to develop the skills needed to fulfil our role as MYPs successfully such as communication skills and the successful use of social media.



Somerset

Chelsea White, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

This month I attended the regional UKYP residential for the South West, held in the Forest of Dean. It was a great opportunity to meet the newly elected MYPs and DMYPs from across the region. The weekend, as it always is, was extremely beneficial, as it enabled me to improve my debating skills with debates on issues current in the media or issues affecting young people, communication skills, and the use of the media to name a few. I had the opportunity to facilitate the Code of Conduct workshop which went extremely well with the help of fellow MYPs Sam and Ellie. Workshops such as Mental Health Awareness run by fellow MYP Kieran Mulvaney was extremely helpful for my campaign, as it is 'Healthy Wellbeing of Young People' including topics such as Mental Health and Sexual Health. The weekend was both informative and fun, it was great to catch up with old friends and learn about what was happening in their area and being able to support one another.

Also on the 13th March I helped run Children's Parliament, which is a platform for year 5 and 6s (aged 9-11) to express their concerns on issues affecting them either in school or in their local area. It was amazing to be a part of the judging and facilitating process, along with Callum Mooney DMYP, Kira Lewis MYP and UKYPAG member James Cheung, and to see young people so engaged with the political process even in primary school. The day was an amazing opportunity and I was able to see Tessa Munt MP again and to tell her what I am doing with Youth Parliament and also to meet Jeremy Browne MP.

Lastly I have also been working on my campaign with the UKYPAG (UK youth parliament advisory group in Somerset). We are in the process of creating a questionnaire about Sexual Health to send out to local schools in the Sedgemoor and Mendip district. This is the first aim on my manifesto, and the purpose is to understand young people's awareness of sexual health, before we do anything to try to improve sexual health facilities in the 2 districts. Overall this has been a productive month, and I am looking forward to more.

Kira Lewis, 14, Member of Youth Parliament

During my first month as Member of Youth Parliament for Taunton Deane & West Somerset, I have actively engaged with my constituents and prospective MPs to introduce myself and my campaign (Young People For A Safe Community: a campaign to educate young people on 'Legal Highs', research into young people's involvement in Anti-Social Behaviour, and bridge gaps between young people and the police). I have met with a wide range of local election candidates, and a few county councillors through meetings and hustings events, helped run Somerset's Children's Parliament day for year 5 and 6s from across Somerset, attended a UK Youth Parliament Advisory Group (UKYPAG) meeting in support of my fellow members and to further my campaign, and met MYPs and Deputy MYPs from across the South-West at a British Youth Council residential in the Forest of Dean.

I also joined Kieran Mulvaney's campaign entitled 'Let's Think About It' as a Procedure's Group representative for Somerset. LTAB is a campaign helping change social stereotypes against mental illness; a campaign which is close to my heart, and I believe is extremely beneficial to young people.

Callum Mooney, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

Within my first month in my newly elected role of Deputy Member of the Youth Parliament for South Somerset, I couldn't wait to meet my fellow Team South West members and how I wasn't disappointed! The feeling when you see a family member is the same feeling everyone instantly got when they met their fellow MYP's for the first time. Throughout some icebreaker challenges we all started to become closer and to end the first evening with a two hour long debate only got the conversation flowing evermore. Issues from the EU and feminism to the infamous figure that is Jeremy Clarkson, it was sure to be a lively evening that would carry on throughout the weekend.

Saturday morning arose and so did its beholding MYP's (just more heavy eyed and bedraggled) but never fear we were whipped into shape and began the workshops the day entailed. Throughout the day we were educated about our new roles and how to conduct ourselves in different situations with decision makers. We also formulated the regional manifesto that has now been completed – our points involve Mental Health and Political Education amongst the youth of today. It was followed by some very exhilarating team building challenges and a flag/banner making activity for those in the team gifted with artistic fingers. We rounded off the evening with some indifferent line dancing which could be looked at two ways – a phenomenon or a car crash!

Sunday morning was the same as the previous day, with my fellow MYP's and myself exhausted from the previous evening antics. However the final day was the day that the two regional secretaries were to be elected and the excitement was at breaking point amongst the team. I am delighted to report that Chloe Lintern and I were the victors and we are both dedicated to the year ahead in supporting Jess and all our fellow Team South West members with their campaigns.

Throughout the weekend I met some inspiring young individuals and it only gives me the determination for them and myself to succeed in our campaigns!

#teamsouthwest

Swindon

Member of Youth Parliament

A few days ago was the youth parliament residential where we discussed various issues such as media training and reflection on the previous year. However the most important part of it was ways in which I can take my campaign forward, namely in working on a press-release and drafting a presentation for anti-bullying, though in what capacity I am as of yet unsure.

Ellie James, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

The South West regional residential kicked off a great start to the Youth Parliament year. Firstly, meeting all the newly elected D/MYPs with new passions and fresh eyes created an invigorating atmosphere that gives me great excitement and hope for the year ahead! Being able to look to the future, refocus my campaigns and think about where I will be going in this next year with other MYPs sharing similar ambitions helped me find even more motivation within myself.

Also, the reflection workshop where I was able to look back and what I would have liked to have done better and what I have done well was really valuable. I could appreciate the room for change yet

celebrate what I have achieved. The team spirit found within the South West is something that I know will make this year one of great success.

After the residential I was interviewed for a student radio show at Bournemouth University where they asked me about youth engagement in politics in relation to the upcoming election. I was proud to talk about what UK Youth Parliament has done to try and encourage involvement in politics with campaigns on votes at 16, a curriculum for life and media representation of young people that are involved in youth politics and do make changes. I feel this election is vitally important for young people and our position in social change. Therefore, from this month onwards, I know that myself alongside UK Youth Parliament will do all we can to show how important eradicating voter apathy in young people is.

Torbay

Sam McCarthy, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

This month marked the start of our radio broadcast. We have arranged a live show at Churston Grammar School on April the 24th, where we will present and ask question to local decision makers in front of a live audience! This is arranged for 2:45 to 3:30 it's now only a matter of getting everyone into the right places at the right time. A question of timing. The regional residential was fantastic, informative and genuinely good fun! Specific to our area, the talk on mental health ran by Kieran was perfect for our own campaigns and which we hope to roll out in Torbay!! Big thanks to Jess and the team for a great weekend. We also are looking to get in touch with Fixers over our idea for a job database for the purpose of providing part-time employment for young people. A productive month. Adieu, Sam McCarthy

Sophie, 17, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

March has been a busy month with everything happening at once, first of all the new 5 shadow members got elected in with great manifestos. We have all agreed on our Torbay manifesto which is; mental health and bullying, curriculum for life, healthy living and jobs/careers/apprenticeships. We agreed on these by choosing the most common points on our individual manifestos. My top point which I am most passionate about is mental health and bullying.

The regional residential took place in Gloucestershire at Dean Field Study Centre. Even though we got lost on the way there we eventually made it. Despite having no signal and wifi it was an awesome weekend away. I enjoyed meeting all the newly elected people and catching up with all the oldies. I learnt a lot over the weekend and found it very useful. It helped me a great amount by giving me tips on how to approach and do my campaign on bullying and mental health. The best bit of the whole weekend was the singing around the campfire, it was great to see everyone enjoying themselves. As a constituency this month we have been planning our radio show which will be taking place in April. We are doing it live from one of our grammar schools in Torbay.

It will have a panel consisting of headteacher from around the bay and many different representatives. Hopefully we will get an audience of around 150 young people plus more tuning in to the fm station. We will be discussing four topics with questions coming in from Twitter, Facebook and emails also the floor of live audience. It's going to be a brilliant event. At the moment we are all working hard to make sure it

is planned properly, so it runs smoothly. So next month you will be hearing all about the finished product and how it went.

West Wiltshire

James, 13, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

During the course of my first month of being a DMYP I have become a Member of my Local Youth Network and attended one of its management meetings, where I represent the UK Youth Parliament. I have also attended the South West UK Youth Parliament regional residential where we established a regional manifesto, and held workshops that would benefit us and our campaign throughout our terms that we would be serving. I have also started to get a clearer idea on what I want to do for my campaign based around a curriculum for life. I went to an introductory Wiltshire Assembly of Youth meeting as well.

Wiltshire

Chloe Lintern, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

During this month we had our first Wiltshire Assembly of Youth Meeting in which we met the new members and did a lot of activities to make us work together as a team, including my personal favourite game of the skittles game. I also ran a session on the terms of reference so that people know what is expected of them during their term in office and we also set the ground rules for the next year. We also had the annual South West regional residential in the middle of nowhere with no wifi OR signal. However this didn't stop us from making friends, reflecting upon the last year and planning for the year ahead. I met a lot of D/MYP's and all their campaigns look super interesting and I know that they will succeed very well with them, but personally my campaign is to create a resource pack for schools to encourage better political and financial education which would hopefully prepare young people for a better future.

We planned as a region for the next year with our three main priorities which were: mental health, curriculum for life and careers advice with Wiltshires being, mental health, a curriculum for life and better post 18 education as not everyone wants to go to university. I, along with Callum from Somerset, was elected as regional secretary which I was super happy about which means that I will help and support the PG in the organizing of the conventions and put our plan into action for Make Your Mark 2015!! The weekend was really amazing and I made a lot of friends for life. It's going to be a year filled with great things and opportunities and I'm excited for what lies ahead for us.

At the end of the month I will also be attending our local residential in Wiltshire in which we will be looking at our campaign in local terms and planning for the year ahead as well as hopefully having an Easter egg hunt!! I'm excited for that as well. I love representing young people :')

Freya Pigott, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

This month I have been settling into my role as MYP for east Wiltshire which I am already loving! At the start of the month I set out my agenda of how I was going to work towards my aims on my manifesto

and have been speaking with my school council to get feedback on this. At the weekend I went to the Forest of Dean with other D/MYPs from the South West and had an amazing time.

It was my first time meeting many of them and it was so empowering to know that they are so incredibly passionate about what they stand for, be that better public transport, reducing the stigma around mental health or providing political education, for example. My favourite activity was the debate session we held on the Friday evening which enabled everyone to speak up for what they believe in on topics including EU and Trident. Overall the weekend was truly inspiring - being surrounded by so many amazing individuals with so much passion for what they believe in was an experience I will never forget.

Jake Le'Maire, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

During my first month as an MYP I have attended the UKYP residential weekend in the Forest of Dean. I have learnt many skills such as; team work, campaigning and writing positive stories such as this one. I found this experience extremely motivational and enlightening. I will take all this experience I have gained forward to the future.

Kieran Mulvaney, 17, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

Over the UKYP residential weekend for the South west we have achieved a lot for the progression of both local and regional agendas for the year. Personally I have rebuilt my interpersonal skills and learnt how to work well with new younger members of the UKYP SW.

My mental health campaign has been phenomenal and grown massively over the last few weeks with involvement from ITV News and BBC Radio 1. As well as local and national decision makers. The local MP's have shown great support. The D/MYP's of the SW also showed great enthusiasm towards the campaign and seemed to thoroughly enjoy the workshops. Our group has grown to 32 members excluding myself and we have had to reform the group to enable it to function a cross the SW. We now have a South West Procedures Group who individually are in charge of the campaign in their LA's.

Suzanna Cetintas, 16, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

Over the course of the weekend I attended the South West Youth Parliament Residential. I have learnt many new skills, for example how to write a press release, how to contact the media and how to use Fixers in the best possible way. I have also become so much closer to everyone in our South West team. I can't wait to work with everyone!

During the weekend I also got the chance to stand up in front of everyone and help to present Kieran Mulvaney's mental health campaign "Let's Think About It!!". I thoroughly enjoy presenting and feel that it is an area in which I thrive. The presentation was inspiring to me and gave me the platform and confidence I have needed to speak in front of an entire room of young people about my first hand experiences with mental health conditions.

I was able to offer my knowledge and advice to many young people and I am in deep gratitude to the UK Youth Parliament organisation for giving me the chance to speak in order to help others.



I have actually just been appointed to be the first ever PG for my local area representing the “Let’s Think About It!!” mental health campaign!

I can’t wait to get started on all of the other projects we have planned over the coming year to make a real difference and impact to young people’s lives in the UK!

West Midlands

Birmingham

Ciara O'Donoghue, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

This month UKYP Birmingham met at our local meeting in order to recap on our previous efforts in regards to Make Your Mark. In preparation for this meeting we had contacted all the academies in Birmingham in order to better understand what they already do in regards to mental health. All the information we gained back from the academies has helped formulate crucial research on the subject. We then decided to email councillors in order to gain their support with Make Your Mark but more importantly to ask them to help us to contact the academies.

During the meeting we discussed different ideas on how we could communicate the message of Make Your Mark to the local community and ideas included surveys in the library and Make Your Mark events in the square. Overall it was agreed that we needed to communicate the message to the greater public in a large way that would include as many of the young people as possible. We also agreed that it would be beneficial to attend and speak in the next council meeting to gain the opinions of the councillors on the subject matter which would further contribute to our research. We ended the meeting with the customary goodbye and all set out enacting our ideas in time for the deadline of the 26th.

Sarah Rani Iqbal, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

In this positive story I will be writing about the launch of Erdington's young people's parliament in my academy which is called; north Birmingham academy. Our academy was privileged to have this launch taken place in our school. We just want to thank Jack Dromey and his team on how supportive he was and the how much trust and care he has for all young people's voices to be heard and shared an inspirational speech on what he wants to be taken place. There were many photographs and a few speeches read. I read a speech on behalf of my academy on what experiences being an MYP has given me. Also how passionate I am for all young people's voices to be heard are.

Also what I think my main topic is which was Building awareness of more youth centres in local areas and how this can rapidly change a young person's lifestyle, by doing something in free time and school holidays can distract young people to commit and stop them going through bad phases in their life that does not need to be taken place. This can essentially tackle the issue and always have some type of carer resolving or pushing away the problem depending on if there is one, as youth centres are distractive and interactive. In addition, there found my speech a very intellectual and inspirational speech also.

Also including the day which was on Friday 5th February. The day flowed lovely by meeting different schools who attended and sharing their views with me, also meeting many inspirational people. Lastly, I was also on the newsletter with my pictures with Jack Dromey which was such a privilege and a delight. This just shows how important and extensively privileged my role is. It was a very outstanding and interactive day at my academy on Friday. Also, we recently had a meeting which was very interactive

talking about letter to academies and what each member of Birmingham UKYP has done for the chosen campaign which was mental health. The meeting was very productive and everyone shared their ideas eloquently and clearly which was an interesting meeting with our youth worker also.

Sam Holmes, 18, Member of Youth Parliament

This month I organised a community question time for young people involving local politicians, including parliamentary candidates, and cabinet members of the council. Many young people came, filling the room completely. The event provided young people with an opportunity to interrogate local representatives from the major parties about their key policies and what they were doing for young people. We also used the event as an opportunity to encourage people to vote.

I believe the event was very much enjoyed by everyone who attended, not only for the insight it provided, but also for one of the candidates 'interesting' economic theory and policy which involved printing money for everyone except bankers. It was good to see that the audience weren't simply accepting what they were told, but questioning and analysing. For instance on the being given money policy, the audience questioned the soundness of the policy, as they considered the repositions. Young people don't want to be bribed, or treated like idiots; we just want to be listened to, and understood. I hope the event offered the opportunity for this to occur.

Dudley

Connor Hill, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

This month has been very productive for the Dudley area. Most of what I want to talk about is the Dudley Youth Awards. Below is the press release that was put into local papers; Night of celebration for young people. The achievements of young people will be celebrated this week (March 6) at the annual Dudley Youth Awards.

Dudley Youth Council, together with the council's youth service, is hosting the awards ceremony at Stourbridge Town Hall. An audience of 400 young people and guests including Mayor of Dudley, Cllr Margaret Aston, will enjoy the evening's celebration of inspirational young people aged 11 to 19 (up to 25 for young people with a disability).

There are six categories including Arts and Entertainment, Sport, Contribution to School or College and the Green Award for improving the local environment, making their community a greener place. An inspiration category, introduced in 2013/14, has been expanded into two awards this year. The first, inspiration: overcoming adversity award will be presented by two-time Paralympian, Darren Harris, whose international blind football career has spanned two decades. The award for inspiring others will be introduced by successful poet and boxer, Matt Windle.

One group award for Community, Charity and Voluntary work will recognise those who have made a joint impact on the lives of others in the local community. Finally, the Mary Growcott award will be given to an inspirational adult who young people consider to have made a difference to the lives of youngsters. Mary Growcott was a local lady who dedicated her life to helping young people and this is awarded in her memory. Chair of Dudley Youth Council, Connor Hill said: "The Youth Awards is a great

night for not only everyone who attends but just to show actually who young people are! It gives us the opportunity to defeat negative stereotypes about young people and show that we are actually giving positive contributions to the community and to the people. It will be a great night and I would like to thank all Youth Councillors and staff for all the hard work, and also to our sponsor Aspire People. Good luck to all of the shortlisted young people!".

We have also recently just had the Dudley Live Politics event which gave us the idea of who is standing to be an MP in an area in our constituency, Dudley North. I attended this event and it was very informative. We have in Dudley North, a UKIP candidate, Bill Etheridge, our current MP from Labour Ian Austin, from the Green Party Vicky Duckworth, someone from the liberal democrats who's name I've tried to search but can't find anywhere (sorry) and a pending conservative candidate, Afzal Amin. These were all very good candidates and gave us their views on different things such as EMA, Exam resits reform and cuts to the Youth Services. I found it really useful to know what parties think of what and I agree with them all under certain respects.

I would like to further meet up with the candidates to talk more in depth about what they want to provide for the young people of the area I represent. On the 25th will also mark the Annual General Meeting of the Dudley Youth Council and the final meeting for the team of that year. I would like to, as Chair, personally thank all of the Youth Councillors for all of their hard work over the last year as they really have been an outstanding Youth Council for the young people of Dudley. Especially when helping us MYPs out with make your mark by collectively gathering 18,097 ballots which toted us to 7th in the whole country. Thank you Dudley Youth councillors for all of your hard work!

I have also been re-elected for another 2 years as an MYP and am thoroughly looking forward to my 2nd 2 year term! #youthvoice

Maisy Neale, 14, Youth Councillor

I'm sure all of you will know that the UKYP elections have taken place recently. As part of this, this month we have had a vote count. A few of us from the youth council and other young people who weren't involved in the election had a full day of counting both the UKYP votes and the local school rep vote for Dudley Youth Council.

It was a very long day of tallying but very enjoyable and we laughed a lot at the void votes (such as a vote for 'Barack Obama for President) and as the Dudley Youth Service always does we were provided with very nice food for our efforts....it was a great experience! We had just over 25% of the local youth population vote which was a very promising increase from the last election! In general DYC is running up to the highlight of the year, the Dudley Youth Awards – it is just under a week away! And it will have happened by the time this is out! So after much preparation we have just had our first rehearsal; everything seemed to go swimmingly. It was an awesome evening running through the programme, having a tour and other things like a team game from our chair (allele kika konga) Google it if you don't know it. We also had an actor come in to run a workshop which was interesting but I have never seen us all laugh so hard at peoples efforts to



read a book “more enthusiastically” anyway it was a great evening and it won’t be long until we have our final rehearsal!!

Wolverhampton

Kashmire Hawker, 17, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

Another few busy months ticked off and I think the word busy is probably an understatement! The very end of January gave me an opportunity I was never going to miss-meeting a big name MP; that being Shadow Chancellor of The Exchequer Ed Balls! I and 1 of 2 Wolverhampton's Youth Police & Crime Commissioner Eugenio Ciliberti got a last minute invite from a local Councillor to attend an event at Molineux on January 29th which he began that constituency's (Wolverhampton South West) Labour group to get former MP Rob Marris back into Westminster. I truly thought it would be 100% political; not Ed talking about why he was glad his wife Yvette Cooper (Shadow Secretary of State for Home Affairs) didn't change her surname to Balls... Personally I don't blame her! All in all it was a fab night.



Moving into February and things started off quickly as on 7th February, I hopped down to BYC's fantastic HQ in Central London to have the 1st session for South of England Panel for Grow Wild Applications for 2015. I & 5 other Young People along with Doug

Hallam (Youth Democracy Co-ordinator for the North East) are in charge of choosing projects to fund in the South of England-the session included how the process would work and creating the things that is now on the application forms. We all look forward to seeing the applications and choosing in May who gets what. I certainly don't mind missing Millwall coming to town...

2 long days later, it was that time again-UKYP Elections on February 9th! The election however this year had to be within our Youth Council due to issues with ensuring funding for our Youth Democracy work stays which after months of talking I'm pleased to report that we managed to secure funding for the next year for Youth Voice & other stuff related to our massively important Youth Council.

In terms of the Election, the fact that I've submitted this under Deputy Member of Youth Parliament & Youth Councillor gives my answer on my result-a THIRD year in a row with UKYP! I may have gone back to DMYP from MYP but I'm super glad my last year with UKYP will give all the experience to the new Reps being Youth Council's Chair Emma Curran & 12 year old Darram Konner who are now MYP's and my fellow DMYP being Youth Council's Finance Officer Hope Cameron-Douglas. A massive thanks to now old UKYP Reps Arnold Majecha (My fellow MYP), Kelsey Edwards & Paul Kazadi (Fellow DMYP's) for all the graft they put in to make 2014-15 a massive success.

Other things in February included a visit to Wigan Youth Zone during the development of Wolverhampton's facility which opens January 2016 and again presenting in front of the board who includes Wolves Chairman Steve Morgan, delivering a SEND Reforms training session in Walsall with a group of disabled young people on behalf the Council for Disabled Children and taking a 3 day visit to the city that is hosting UKYP's Annual Sitting this year, Exeter! A beautiful place you should all enjoy for those of you going; with fantastic people one of which I stayed with for those 48 hours.

Now March has come; a new Term of Office begins and my busy schedule doesn't stop. One thing I particularly enjoyed was taking part in Uprising's My Voice My Vote programme which consisted in a Weekend residential on March 7th & 8th, two evening sessions on March 11th & 19th & finally getting to grill 4 MP Candidates, an MP & a journalist on March 26th at a National Youth Debate before the General Election. From debating to developing a Social Media Social Action campaign, the project really enabled people to express themselves in a big way and I was glad to of taken part. Also a fab moment was on March 16th; my first visit back to Westminster since the House of Commons! I and 5 other Young People with a disability, from a BME background are in a leadership programme called Rights For All, led by regional charity Changing Our Lives. The main bit of business after a tour of the old part of the Palace of Westminster was meeting 3 fellow BME MP's: Paul Uppal (Rob Marris's successor in 2010 in Wolverhampton South West), Adam Afriyie (Conservative, Windsor) & the man who if he isn't Mayor of London come 2016 I will slightly cry at, Labour's MP for Tottenham, David Lammy-all of which who took a long time to get to MP status. Of course when this goes out, they won't be MP's any more so it was good to see them at this point.

Other activities that filled my diary included on March 10th help present a communication strategy with fellow disabled young people which we put together on the Local Offer and how a better website for the use of Wolverhampton's Young People should look, March 18th I and a fellow disabled Young Leader Caprice Haughton (Again with Changing Our Lives) spoke at the 21st Birthday event of the Wolverhampton Parent Partnership Service about CoL's work & asking others to get involved; (many seemed very keen to!) and on March 20th, 6 Reps from Youth Council attended Wolves Championship game V Derby County in an Executive Box! A well deserved reward for ensuring our Youth Democracy was saved.

Finally March 30th saw me start my term on the 1st ever National Express Youth Panel along with 9 other Young People, run by BYC & led by Sally Palmer, another one of BYC's crop with a meeting in Birmingham. I'll talk more about this and the National Youth Debate from Uprising and a few more things in the April issue.

To end, I would like to make an announcement about my future role within Youth Democracy: I wish to announce that I

intend to stand for the role as a Trustee as for the British Youth Council! I don't want my journey within BYC to end yet and I feel with the last few years I have had, it will only make me into an even stronger person and gear me up for a possible career in Politics. Enough said for now; let see apart from a lot of Politicians screaming down your letter box campaigning for votes what happens in April!



Yorkshire and Humber

Doncaster

Alannah Bragg, Youth Councillor

Yorkshire & Humber Youth Residential at Kingswood Activity Centre was great. I really enjoyed getting really involved into all the activities.

I also really liked meeting so many new people and learning new things.



Phoebe Womack, Youth Councillor

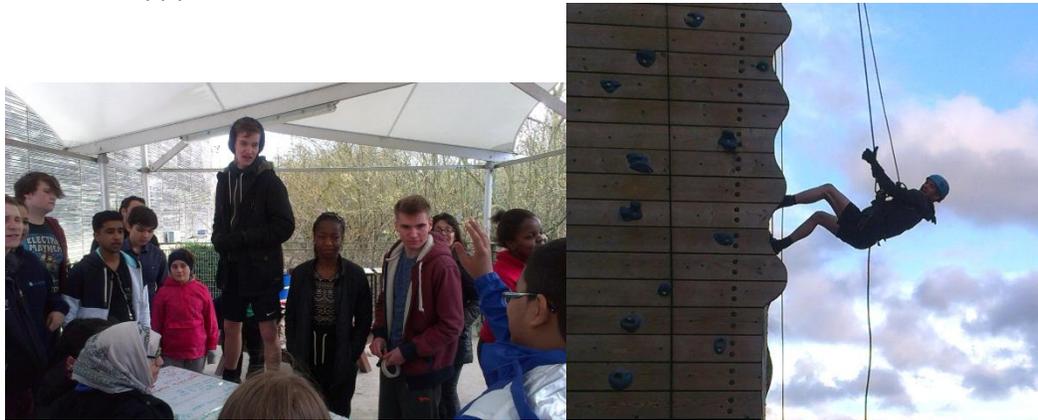
I was invited to take part in a focus group session. The session was about delivering differently, focussing on youth work. The group consisted of 3 Youth Councillors and 5 representatives from Doncaster Hub Student Union. Together we discussed our experiences of youth services and the services it provided us with. We all had different experiences to share with one another such as, sports programmes in the community, local youth centres, school mentors, training providers and key workers. The aim of the focus group was to discuss what do we as young people want and need from youth providers and what do we need to do differently and how will it meet the needs of all our young people.



This information will be put into a report and fed back to the senior leadership team. The session was really good and went so quick, the representatives from the Hub were very vocal and had lots of confidence and great ideas. I really enjoyed being part of the group and working with the student Hub reps.

Sam Bramall, Young Carers Councillor

The Y&H Residential was really good, I've really enjoyed spending time with people who are friendly and who understand things. I enjoyed all the group work as well because meeting new people was good and it was all happy.



This is me doing group work and presenting in front of everyone and this is me doing abseiling at first I couldn't do it, it was too high, then once I did it I ended up doing it loads of times 😊

North Lincolnshire

Stefani Salvatierra, 16, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

Earlier this month I attended a Children and Young People's Partnership meeting at the Learning Development Centre which I found both interesting and useful. I had the opportunity to speak to various representatives of North Lincolnshire Council. I got some good ideas on how to go forward with raising awareness of work experience opportunities for young people, and making sure everyone has an equal opportunity to access this.

It was helpful to understand the results of the Adolescent Lifestyle Survey and how the information will be fed back to young people in North Lincolnshire.

Overall I enjoyed partaking and look forward to future meetings.

Azila Hussain, 16, Youth Councillor

The elections in North Lincolnshire aren't just a 'sign up and wait' kind of thing but in order to achieve anything, we were pushed to learn about our community and work with our community. The experience has raised my confidence to a whole other level. From being too shy to perform a presentation in class to feeling confident presenting myself to a whole school, college and more.

I've met people who I never would have done without it and worked with places that I visit every day. It taught me how to be good mannered and polite which will stay with me forever because sometimes it's the small things that matter.

Due to youth council I've met many, many extraordinary people. The lesson from that experience is that the more people you know, the more you learn, the more places you'll go.

I recommend everyone to join North Lincolnshire Youth Council for opportunities like this to be given to you, for your confidence to be raised high, to reach your potential and lastly- to learn about yourself, get to know yourself.

Kian Borg-Jackson, 13, Young Mayor

In the past month, since I got voted in as Young Mayor, I have already started spreading word about Youth Council meetings and we have booked a drop-in and talk event at cafeINDIE (a local community café). As well as this, I have been to the Priory Lane Community School opening and I got to meet people and get to know them. I have ideas from young people that I would like to put into action and I am getting involved in youth council events such as Dearne valley, residential trip, YES LGBT meetings and the 'Creativiteens' event and hope to help the community the best I can.

Amber Crabb, 18, Youth Councillor

This month I have been involved in a square table event with the Children's and Young People's Partnership members. We had a group discussion on the improvements needed to be made to the mental health services in North Lincolnshire. Key issues for us to work on are providing more reliable sources of information to young people and how to build resilience.

With this in mind, we formed a young people's mental health working group, and held our first meeting this week. I was elected chair. Our first aim is to produce a leaflet on how to improve emotional wellbeing in young people.

I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to take part in this event and hope as a group we can improve resources available to young people about mental health.

Sonia Akther 14, Youth Councillor

As part of a school competition, I was asked to watch the 2014 BNY Mellon boat race between Oxford and Cambridge University and write a report based on the events that had occurred. After submitting it into the school competition and winning it, I was asked to submit my article into a national competition to find Young Sports Reporter of the Year 2015. At the time, I was pretty pessimistic of the outcome and

wasn't too expectant of even being picked. However, to my surprise, myself and four other entrants were shortlisted out of thousands of other entrants in the UK! It's taken a little while to sink in at first but as time progressed, I began to realise more and more of what I had even achieved so far! My journey isn't over just yet; for me to win the last leg of this competition, I am relying on the public's votes to certify my win. Voting closes on 1st April, so fingers crossed

North Yorkshire

Young representative

This month had been all about planning Yorkshire and Humber's induction weekend which is at the end of this month. There will be group building ice breakers designed to let everybody get to know each other right from the start. We'll also have physically exercises allowing us to learn to trust one another and push comfort barriers. After all the fun though we'll have some serious work to do, getting to grips with our new roles learning what we're going to do throughout our term!

This month has involved meetings and organising our regional induction which was a very interesting meeting, including the change of venue compared to previous years and how this can be beneficial to our agenda making it more engaging for the young people.

Rotherham

Ashley Gregory, 16, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

UKYP Rotherham have been working hard this month to engage with young people in Rotherham in the form of an open consultation/question time event. The event was structured similar to that of the BBC Question Time show. Here, young people were given the opportunity to ask their D/MYPs any questions they liked - some of which from the day included the provision of mental health services and what Youth Parliament intended to do on this issue. The event was a great success and the Rother Valley MP Sir Kevin Barron also attended to ask questions and listen to the consultation taking place. The local press also attended and the event was published in an article in the local newspaper. UKYP Rotherham hopes to hold many more Question Time events in the near future.

Youth Parliament Rotherham will also be attending the celebration event of Rotherham MYP, Toni Paxford's, personal campaign. Her campaign is titled 'The Other Person's Shoe' and looks to promote cultural diversity in Rotherham. Her campaign has been running for the past couple of months and has the support of many local councillors. Those taking part in the campaign are given the opportunity to learn about other cultures through things such as cooking, research and meeting a range of influential speakers from the borough. The celebration event is on Tuesday 3rd March 2015 and D/MYPs will be attending to show their support.

Sheffield

Abbi Kirk, 13, Youth Councillor

The week of voting was so chaotic because I was worried if what was in my manifesto was what young people in the East of Sheffield wanted. Every day I had teachers and fellow students from my school coming up to me to ask about my experience. I would always reply 'It has been amazing so far, I have met some great people from different backgrounds and discovered a new confident me'. On the night of the election I was full of mixed emotions, I was excited and nervous to see how the results turned out but I was more happy to see who else succeeded. When my name was called out to be a Youth Councillor I was so thrilled and ecstatic that I jumped out of my seat and rushed to the front to be awarded my rosette! When I got back to my table I was congratulated by my mother and the other candidates who looked so pleased for me.

Now that I have been elected as a Youth Councillor I am excited for what my journey will entail and the people I will get to work with. I also feel privileged to have been voted into Sheffield Youth Cabinet because all the manifestos were so good and this is such a life benefiting experience which I intend to make the most of. From a personal point of view I would like to gain confidence and skills such as team work and communication. As a representative of the East of Sheffield I hope to put across the views of young people and improve the area they are living in by being their voice!

Anne Solademi, 14, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

When I think of being elected as the Deputy Member of Youth Parliament, representing the Youth of the North of Sheffield, I still can't believe it and I am still in shock. But I know that I did not do it on my own. My family, my teachers and my peers of Hinde House School were so supportive and encouraging, they backed me all the way and didn't fail to celebrate with me when I won. The determination and support of my parents and school was the key to me winning and I am very grateful for their encouragement.

This role is a great opportunity and will enable me to address my concerns presented in my manifesto and further establish the voice of young people in society because I am a strong believer that, 'Life is an empty box and every young person irrespective of creed or background should be given a chance at life, to create their own world in it.' and as the future decision makers of this country it's about time we create our own world in the emptiness that is this world. We need to create the change we need, to prosper and succeed. I thank my parents, my mentor Sue Mia and my school for giving me the confidence to believe in myself.

I have a lot to give and I know this foundational experience is just the beginning of prosperous growth, not just for me but for the youth of Sheffield, this is a great opportunity to eradicate the stigma that comes with politics and make our mark on the future. I am glad and honoured to be part of such a movement.

Wakefield

Morgan Lois Binnersley, 14, Deputy Member of Youth Parliament

This month Wakefield have been mega busy and I mean MEGA BUSY I have been leading the Wakefield anti bullying charter Mark and I am planning the launch event along with my colleagues I have shared out the jobs we are having food taster sessions it will be a blast. The council have been so much support to us allow access of the logo helping with cost. Venue may finally be sorted the date is 6th May for all high schools in Wakefield it is mega exciting. We are also partaking in the health watch yearly sessions the first one is about drugs and alcohol and the mental health is the second part to our campaign so we are way in front. We have completed the checklist and moved on to mental health star chart winner 2015/2016 can you see it Simmie will be buzzing. We are so excited for the residential with our new recruits. Thanks see you all at the resi.

I am partaking in my school show musical extravaganza grease little shop of horrors wizard of oz and smike

Northern Ireland

Belfast East

Ross McVittie, 18, Member of Youth Parliament

It's been nearly a month since I was elected MYP for Belfast East and following the initial excitement of being elected and receiving loads of congratulation messages from friends and family it dawned on me that I now have to start delivering on my campaign promises! My first public engagement as an MYP was attending a reception along with my fellow NI MYPs at Belfast City Hall on Friday 13th March hosted by Belfast City Council Lord Mayor Nichola Mallon. At the reception we got to meet and talk with the Lord Mayor and got some pictures taken with official Councillor robes on and one sitting in the Lord Mayor's chair. Maybe in years to come I could be sitting in the chair for real! We also had a very interesting tour of the historic Belfast City Hall including the debating chamber and I learnt so much about the history of Belfast City Hall as well as seeing some of the historic documents on display such as the Ulster Covenant signed in 1912. This was also the first time that I was able to meet the rest of the newly elected NI MYPs who I look forward to working with over the next year. The next day was the official NI MYP Induction Day that involved various ice breakers to introduce ourselves and tell the others why we had stood for election as a MYP etc. We then discussed our campaign issues and got advice on how to take these forward including how to engage with our local politicians. This was a great opportunity for us as NI MYPs to get to know each other better and build friendships and discuss common issues and causes. We also heard about all the exciting events planned for us over the next year including the residential in Kent. Inspired by the induction and keen to start doing something to promote my campaign issues I had a meeting the following week with my local MP Naomi Long and NI Assembly MLA Chris Lyttle (Alliance Party) to discuss my campaign issues. This proved a very useful afternoon as they supported most of my key issues and agreed to discuss them with their party colleagues and raise them in the NI Assembly and Westminster. The meeting provided me with lots of good advice and an impressive list of local contacts for me to follow up over the next few weeks. All in all a fantastic first month and I'm really looking forward to the next month where I plan to meet the other East Belfast MLAs and contact a number of voluntary and community groups about my youth volunteering ideas. I also intend sending draft Parliamentary Questions and Assembly Questions to my local politicians on my key campaign issues and hopefully they will submit them to the relevant Ministers in Westminster and NI Assembly and I'll get some answers. Finally I'm really looking forward to the Kent residential in April and meeting the rest of the UK MYPs it should be awesome!

Belfast North

Nicole McCann, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

I'm Nicole McCann and I'm the MYP for Belfast North in Northern Ireland. I was recently elected into UKYP in February. My experience of UKYP so far has been amazing, from the moment I opened the email and saw the word "elected" beside my name my excitement for my term in UKYP has grown. I attended

the induction a few weeks ago and meet so many amazing young, political enthusiasts who I am lucky enough to be sharing my term with. From the opening ice breakers of that day I knew that these young representatives were deeply empowered by their new roles as MYPs just as much as I was. In a couple of weeks time we will be heading to Kent for our residential and I can honestly say that I'm beyond excited. I can't wait to get to know my fellow MYPs more and hope to create long lasting friendships from this experience!!

East Antrim

Sophie Bell, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

My name is Sophie Bell, I am 17 and the Member of Youth Parliament for East Antrim. I was elected on my campaign issue which is Child Poverty. During my term in office I want to raise the profile of this key issue to our politicians especially during a time on economic hardship as well as playing my part in supporting the adoption of the living wage which will ultimately reduce child poverty. Other issues which I am passionate about are the under representation of women in the political and professional world, sectarianism and votes at 16. Whether it regional, national or international I love politics. With a keen interest in politics, I have always been passionate about the participation of young people in politics and more importantly the lack of it. Too many of our generation are politically unaware and don't have the knowledge needed to become an informed member of the electorate. I believe the UK Youth Parliament is the best platform to encourage young people to gain an understanding of politics and I am really looking forward to my year in office. I am currently at Carrickfergus Grammar School studying my A-levels of French, Spanish, History and Politics. In my spare time I enjoy politicising, drinking mochas and being a lover of French.

East Londonderry

Emma McCaughern, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

Hi, my name's Emma and I'm sixteen years old. I was recently elected the Member of Youth Parliament for the East Londonderry constituency, winning my election with over 65% of the votes. I cannot wait to begin my year as part of the UK Youth Parliament, and I believe that this year will be an experience I will never forget. I believe that although young people can't vote for their politicians, their voices should be heard. This is why, as a MYP, I will work as a link between our MLAs and the young people of Northern Ireland, ensuring their opinions aren't overlooked.

In my manifesto, I listed education as my number one issue. The Department of Education is facing a reduction in its resource budget of £162.5 million, an excessive amount which will significantly affect the quality of teaching across the country. In my first term of office I will be sending out letters to MLAs, and



by the end of this year I hope to have been in contact with John O'Dowd to discuss how schools can be made more efficient without drastic cuts that result in many good teachers losing their jobs.

I hope to work with MYPs from other constituencies to work on projects that tackle nation-wide issues such as votes at 16, equal marriage rights and a living wage for all. Voter turnout has always been low among young people compared with older people, but the falling overall turnout at General Elections has been greatest amongst voters aged 18-24. This is why, during this year I would also like to start a campaign encouraging young people to vote when they turn eighteen, and discussing with them the consequences of not voting.

This has been my first month as a Member of the Youth Parliament. I cannot wait to begin my year as part of the UK Youth Parliament, and I believe that this year will be an experience I will never forget. On the 13th of March I had a brilliant time at a reception in the Belfast City Hall along with a meet and greet from the Lord Mayor herself Nichola Mahon. It was great to hear her encouraging words and learn more about Belfast City Hall. At this event I also met the other MYP's for the first time, and I am very excited to be working with them throughout the year. On Saturday the 14th of March, we had our first induction meeting. I had a chance to properly meet the other MYP's and quickly made new friends. At the meeting we discussed what we would be doing over the year, including the different events we would be attending. We then discussed our manifestos. This included what we wanted to do in our year and office and who could help us. Next month I will be going to Kent for a residential which I am very excited about. I also hope to be in touch with my MLA.

Foyle

Thomas Chambers, 18, Member of Youth Parliament

I am Thomas Chambers, a student at St Columb's College and I am the newly elected Member of Youth Parliament for Foyle. I am 18 years old and have been an active member in youth politics for a number of years as a member of Foyle Youth Council, being Derry's Youth Mayor and being co-opted to be a member of the Northern Ireland Youth Congress for Foyle. I am currently studying for my A-levels in Maths, History, Politics and French.



My main aim for the year is to ensure that each young person receives the highest quality education that prepares them for life. To do this, I want each and every pupil to receive valuable and relevant mental health education by making it a compulsory part of the curriculum. I would like positive mental health to be promoted in every school, in every class, to every pupil. This will help tackle the taboo surrounding mental health and help provide young people with the support and advice they need. To enable our education to truly prepare us for life, I also believe that we need worthwhile work experience. Too often work experience is a matter of who your parents know and the options are limited for many students. Therefore, I want to see a system in place so that local businesses, local government and schools work together to give students the opportunity to work in a career area that interests them and will provide the essential skills they need to get ahead. By

working to see these changes implemented and protecting the current level of education funding, I will aim to deliver a future for the young people of Foyle which is full of progress, prosperity and possibilities for all.

Lagan Valley

Ryan Simpson, Member of Youth Parliament

Hello, my name is Ryan Simpson and I am the incumbent Member of Youth Parliament for Lagan Valley. I represent my constituents at a national level and ensure their voices are heard. I was originally elected to the Youth Parliament in 2014 in a landslide victory, but more recently I was re-elected in February 2015. During my re-election campaign I pledged to work on four policies throughout 2015.



- Modern Languages
- Political Participation
- Living Wage
- Mental Health

During my tenure as MYP I will write to, meet with and lobby the Education Minister and Education Committee about Modern Languages and promote languages such as Mandarin, German and Hindi. I will be encouraging all schools in my constituency to host Mock General Elections, especially given that this is an election year. Also to increase political engagement I will aim to increase Lagan Valley's Make Your Mark ballot scheme turnout to 15%.

The next two policies are Youth Parliament's National and Devolved policies, the Living Wage and Mental Health respectively. On these matters, I will be trying to pass a Council Motion through my local council. I hope this will send a message, that we believe people should be paid a decent wage and that Mental Health services should be improved.

I have already begun my work towards achieving these vital issues. I have already written to Councillors, MLAs and MPs, but there is still far more to do. I hope not just to campaign on these issues, but any issues my constituents bring to me.

This month saw the beginning of my second term of office as MYP, in fact the only MYP reelected in Northern Ireland. Over the course of the month I have been very busy arranging meetings with my public representatives on a local, regional and national level. At the beginning of the month (after finishing House of Cards) I attended an event about how the Northern Ireland government is delivering on the UNCRC. This was a fun activity and so important to young people in NI. The first time all the MYPs in the region met, we were at Belfast City Hall, attending a reception hosted by Lord Mayor Nichola

Mallon. Next I attended one of the NI MYP's monthly meeting which saw us all get the starting bureaucracy out of the way and get to know each other better. Finally to round off my month I was invited to sit on the Youth Select Committee, so that I can scrutinise Government's policy on Mental Health to better my constituents.

Mid Ulster

Jack Logue, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

Hello my name is Jack Logue and I am from Magherafelt in Co. Derry and I am the current member of the Youth Parliament for Mid Ulster campaigning to reduce the legal age to begin employment from 16 to 14.

During my time in office I am going to build a portfolio on the benefits of youth employment for employers, families and the individuals themselves. In order to do this I am going to try and meet with the Minister of my local MP Francie Molloy to get his thoughts and opinions on my campaign and get advice from him on the steps I can take to further my campaign. I will also talk to a variety of business people within my local area for example the Six Brothers of Genesis bakery to get their thoughts on youth employment and what they think the benefits and drawbacks for them as a national company is. I will also talk to small independent retailers like Paul Stewart who owns a successful supermarket in Magherafelt to see what the benefits of employing young people for him are.

Once I have gathered enough information to build up my portfolio I would then like to run a series of assemblies to raise awareness of my campaign. I would like to do this so that I can inform everyone of the benefits and the skills that young people can bring to the workplace and the benefits that it brings to them as individuals for example preparing them for the world of work.

I understand that during my first year as a member of the Youth Parliament it will be hard to reform the whole employment system but by taking small and realistic steps it can definitely make a huge impact in raising awareness for youth employment.

Since being elected as a member of the youth parliament to represent the youth of Mid-Ulster I have been to a meeting in the Belfast City Hall where we were greeted by the Lord Mayor Nichola Mahon and she congratulated us on our success. I have wrote to my local MP requesting a meeting where I wish to discuss my campaign and get ideas and opinions on it.



Newry & Armagh

Gareth Hampton, Member of Youth Parliament

During my year in office I hope to meet and discuss a large range of issues and put these across to councillors, MLAs and MPs my main points are: Support for increase in transport by increase rural bus links and a train station in Armagh City. Support the healthcare facilities within our constituency. Supporting the re-opening of Armagh's Minor Injury unit and maintenance of services at Daisy Hill. Increased leisure space for young people and finally, community cohesion.



North Antrim

Niesha Kelly, 14, Member of Youth Parliament

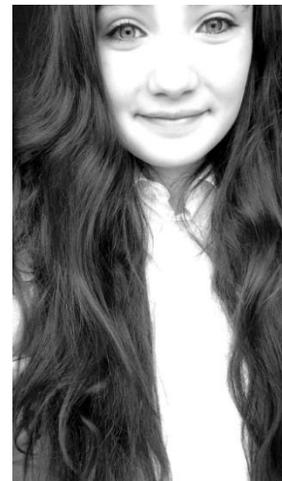
My name is Niesha Kelly and I am proud to be the new MYP for the North Antrim Constituency. I am 14 years old and attend Slemish Integrated College. I am the youngest MYP but I feel people around my age have a lot to say and their voices need to be heard. My campaign is based on Depression and mental health awareness. Depression is becoming increasingly important but not being dealt with enough. This year in the office, I will work on building up the awareness of depression and to do this build programs across Northern Ireland to teach teenagers about depression, what it is, how to cope with it, but most importantly how it can be reduced.

People, especially teenagers need to feel they are not alone and that they are worth living and that they can get through this difficult chapter that they are going through. Many teenagers feel they can't be saved although I promise you, you can be.

I will fight for mental health organisations to be raised and make teenagers want to pick up the phone and know that they can be saved and that they deserve to be in this world and they are not alone. Together we can raise awareness for depression in the UK and save our teenagers and future generation.

I hope to achieve by the end of this year that youth voices of depression will be reduced, that there will be programs in schools across Northern Ireland teaching about depression awareness, for mental health organisations to be raised and most importantly that teenagers know and feel that they can call up these organisations and they can be saved.

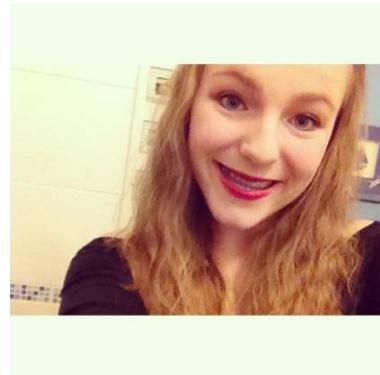
I look forward to the year ahead of me and am ready to start working, and am excited for the future 2015 youth Parliament members!



North Down

Sarah Walker, 15, Member of Youth Parliament

My name is Sarah Walker and I am 15 years old. I am the MYP for North Down and I live in Bangor. My interests include politics, French and music and I am currently studying for my GCSEs. Over the next year there are several issues I wish to address. My main issue is increasing youth involvement in council policy making. At the minute I feel that councils don't do enough to engage young people and their opinions when forming policies that will affect them both indirectly and directly. I intend to change this by working alongside the new super council of Ards and North Down to establish an effective youth council where the issues discussed and the conclusions drawn up will be discussed seriously by the council to bring about changes in our community. I also hope to carry out at least one youth consultation in North Down to gauge the issues which are of most importance to the young people of the area. I want to fully represent the young people in North Down and I feel the only way that is possible is to talk to them. So during my year in office I am going to talk to as many young people as possible to bridge the gap between decision makers and young people. I am so excited for the next year and I can't wait to meet new people and make effective changes in my community.

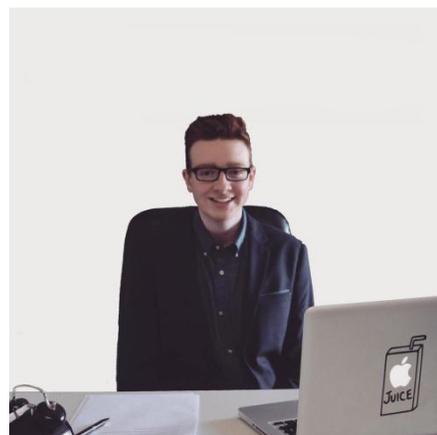


South Antrim

Jordan Graham, 16, Member of Youth Parliament

In the year ahead, possessing the somewhat regal title of 'Member of Youth Parliament for the Constituency of South Antrim', I plan to ensure that the voices of our young people are heard *clearly* at a national level. I firmly believe that effective democracy should be present in every region of the United Kingdom and I see it as a great pity that here in Northern Ireland, as a result of childlike governmental feuds, it is still an ideal as opposed to a reality. This is the root of my interest (and frustration) in politics, and the reason why I considered the nomination for the UK Youth Parliament.

One key injustice faced by the youth of Northern Ireland is the unreasonable price of car insurance for first time drivers. It is understandable that inexperienced drivers are more at risk to accidents but this is not the issue which concerns me. The Consumer Council has found that a young person in Northern Ireland can expect to pay, on average, £300 more for their car insurance than a 17 year old in the same position in the rest of the United Kingdom. It is my belief that this is blatant location discrimination and needs further



investigation and ultimately resolved. It is not acceptable that young people can be disadvantaged in this way simply because of their postcode, particularly when it is pricing them off the road and consequentially: out of employment and education. After the general election I plan to create an online petition to get a sense of the public awareness of this issue.

This issue is among many others which I feel affect my constituents and I plan to hold regular meetings with my local Member of Parliament to convey the needs of the young people of South Antrim.

In my first month as South Antrim's MYP, I got to meet Northern Ireland's other elected representatives a couple of times. We discussed all of our campaign issues and helped each other to come up with an action plan for achieving our goals for the year ahead. This month we all had the pleasure of being invited to Belfast City Hall for tea with the Lord Mayor, Nicola Mallon SDLP. She congratulated us for winning the election and said how encouraged she was that politics is still an important thing in the lives of young people. I have also been in regular email contact with my constituency's MP, William McCrea, and we will soon be meeting up to discuss my campaign issues. I then plan to meet up with the other candidates for this year's general election for South Antrim to find their opinions on my campaign issue but also for the UKYP national campaign issues, including votes at 16.

South Down

Helen Jennings, 17, Member of Youth Parliament



My name is Helen Jennings. I am seventeen years old, and a student of Assumption Grammar School in Ballynahinch.

As a peer advocate for children's rights with the Belfast Children's Law Centre, I have strived to represent the variety of views and issues concerning children and young people to decision-makers in Northern Ireland. This has included successfully completing a lobbying campaign directed at the Department of Education regarding mental health, specifically young people's access to counselling in schools. Through this work, I have learned about the decision making process within Northern Ireland and internationally, specifically in relation to the relevance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. My current goal with the Children's Law Centre is to compile a

young people's alternative report to the UNCRC.

As a Trustee on the Northern Ireland Youth Forum Executive Committee, I continue in my role as advocate. With my fellow trustees, I hold the responsibility of the management of this regional charity, which exists to support the voice of young people. I plan to study Law at university, and pursue a career as a barrister and children's rights advocate.

As Member of Youth Parliament for South Down, I will campaign to have plans for a youth council in place for the council area of Newry, Mourne and Down by the councils' merging date of 1st April 2015, and to have a Newry, Mourne and Down Youth Council established and self-supporting by the end of my term as MYP.

I have lived and worked in South Down for my entire life. I am committed to working for those in my constituency, to make sure their voices are heard, and to promote the importance of young people's views and participation in decision making.

Strangford

Aaron Addidle, Member of Youth Parliament



My name is Aaron Addidle and I am the MYP for Strangford in Northern Ireland. I ran for the UK Youth Parliament because I believe that young people should have a voice and should be heard. Too often our politicians don't listen to what young people think about issues that really affect them. I have promised my constituents that I will be the voice for them and I will make our politicians stand up and listen to young people. I am passionate about politics and hope to have a career in it one day. The ever-changing world of politics excites me and I am so glad to be a part of it.

The main issue that I will campaign on in my year of office is making sure that the government doesn't forget about young people when they are making decisions about transport. Young people heavily rely on transport because most of them are unable to drive and we, as young people, provide a lot of money for the public transport companies but with rising fares and less staff in public transport, young people, particularly in rural areas, are being forgotten about by these companies. I will campaign so that every young person has a chance to get a bus cheaply and regularly. I will also be campaigning on getting a Youth Assembly set up in Northern Ireland so that young people from Northern Ireland can have a say on what goes on in Northern Ireland. I want young people and politicians to work together to help those young people and listen to the views of young people. I believe that no child should be in poverty and I will stand to see this reduced across Northern Ireland particularly in Strangford where 20% of children are in poverty.

I have had an enjoyable first month in office with lots of things to do! All the Northern Ireland MYPs met with the Lord Mayor of Belfast the Rt. Hon. Nicola Mallon in her parlour. She spoke to us about our campaign and election and she gave us some advice and tips for our year in office. The following day we had a very successful induction meeting where we all met together and got to know each other and discussed our campaigns. In my local constituency I have met with a local councillor and have received a letter from my local MP Jim Shannon. I have also sent out a survey asking people for some feedback about the constituency. Lots of good work started and lots more to do!

Upper Bann

Abigail Taylor, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

Hi, I'm Abigail Taylor and I'm the Upper Bann representative for the UKYP, I'm a 17 year old student at Lurgan College, where I study politics, geography and R.E.



This year I plan to make my impact on a number of areas, one which I feel extremely passionate about, is to change the view for young people on politics. For too long, politics has been dominated by the same group of Middle aged, males who are middle class. I think it is time to give the power back to the people and, more specifically, the new generation of young people. So in accordance with this, I plan to help deliver the vote to anyone of age 16 or over, in doing this, we empower the younger generation to get involved in politics and to make a difference, why is it that at 16, we can join the army, be given a weapon and can legally kill other human beings including children our age? I say that we as young people deserve to have a say in this.

Another point I feel strongly about is the reduction of transport costs for young people. The prices are beginning to soar, and they show no signs of stopping, for young people in certain areas they may have an overall charge of £5 in one journey, which over a month can leave them with a deficit of up to £100 a month! In an age where tax money is wasted on fighting wars which have no benefit to our nation, no child, or family should be made to foot this cost.

So far in my campaign, I have been actively working in my area in order to make my voice and the young people of my constituency's voices heard too! As a result of this, the Lord Mayor of Craigavon has already made plans to meet with me to discuss my action plan and has agreed to participate in, engage and encourage my campaign as much as possible. With this I have been given the opportunity to sit down with Mike Nesbit, UUP Party Leader, and interview/have a conversation on what our government is doing for the people and specifically the young people of Northern Ireland! David Simpson MP has also had an important role in making our voices heard and has made a fantastic effort to help me! With a letter and an email, Mr Simpson has proven that he is very interested in helping to push forward all of my policies and has said that he will always be there to help! Along with this Councillor and Deputy Mayor Catherine Seeley, has put forward an invitation to a meeting of the new ABC council! It has been an amazing first month, the support from the public, schools and politicians has been overwhelming and I cannot wait to see what the rest of the year brings!

West Tyrone

Zara Hemphill, 17, Member of Youth Parliament

My name is Zara Hemphill and I am the elected MYP for West Tyrone. I have always had a very strong passion for politics and I am currently studying it at A-Level along with Religion and History, eventually I would love to go on to study humanitarian law at university.

Being the elected MYP for my constituency is such a privilege as I am now able to help have young people's voices heard in the political environment. Youth Parliament is a fantastic place that ensures that young people's voices are heard and are listened to which is so important, as the youths of today are tomorrow's future.



In my manifesto I included three issues that I felt needed to be targeted to improve the future for young people in the UK. These issues were, reducing the age of smear testing for women from 25 till 16,

reducing the cost of provisional licenses so that they would be in line with the rest of the UK and being able to vote at 16.

During my year in office I aim to make youths more involved in politics and for them to have an understanding how their voices can help make a difference. In order to achieve my aims in my manifestos I intend to create petitions, meet with organisations who are campaigning on similar matters and hopefully work with them to achieve these aims. I would also like to hold discussions with youths to hear on what their opinions and views are on these issues.

I'm truly excited to carry out my year in office and cannot wait to experience this fantastic opportunity to represent the youths of my local area which is such an honour!

My first month of representing young people has been such a fantastic and rewarding experience! On Friday 13th March I had my first opportunity to meet the other MYP's from Northern Ireland at the Belfast Lord Mayor Nichola Mallon's reception in City Hall. The reception was so enjoyable as I was able to interact with the other MYP's and they all were so friendly and welcoming to each other, and I'm looking forward to the rest of the year with such amazing people. During the reception we had the opportunity of having a tour around City Hall which was a fantastic experience to see the building and what is carried out through City Hall. Also during my first month in this role I have started work in my campaign, I have wrote a letter to my local MP to arrange a meeting to discuss what I hope to achieve, I am also in the process of writing letters to the Health Minister on my issue of smear testing and currently arranging a petition to present to the Health Minister, which will hopefully highlight and help my campaign. Overall I have had a fantastic first month and I'm so excited to the rest of the year and looking forward to being able to make a change for the youth of today!

Support worker's Stories

East Midlands

Leicestershire

Nicola O'Neill, Support Worker

Kelly Gibbs, Lost For Words – Emotional Well-Being App

It's not rocket science – it's sign-posting, pure and simple. Several teenage suicides and several adult suicides in one small town in the East Midlands, and an atmosphere of desperation settled as everybody from parents, relatives, doctors, school nurses to police and teachers realised, almost simultaneously, that nobody knew what to do or who to ask for help. That was back in 2011 / 2012. Because I knew one of the boys that had died, people kept stopping me on the street to ask how his mother was. But, interestingly, floodgates into their own personal depressions, worries, fears and even notions of suicide were shared with me – there – on the street. I learned to listen. What I realised that was what nobody else was doing. Is that why those young souls had decided to end it all? Because they didn't know how to say what they were feeling, or because they didn't think there was anybody to listen? And so was born 'Lost For Words'. The first meeting was big, the next smaller, but I managed to form a basic committee of concerned people. Then I sat down and wrote a list of all the charities and services I could find that could help people who were suffering emotionally or mentally in some way and created a website. I asked a local rotary club to pay for some books on mental health and paid the other half myself. Then, I hired a market stall and started giving them away. That's when the floodgates opened – Lost For Words was asking people to talk. Telling them it was allowed. Sign-posting services like counselling via the GP, the Samaritans and Mind – services that offered an ear without judgement, just someone to listen. However, it was on the streets that I realised there were deeper issues. The services on offer via the NHS were failing to see people who needed it quickly enough. Yet, between seeing the GP to ask for counselling, and waiting for an appointment, no care or advice was being offered to bridge the gap. Procedures involving too much form-filling were off-putting to those seeking counselling. People were supporting themselves with medication, or worse ending their own lives, while waiting for treatment. And so, the need for sign-posting was made so much more poignant. That's when the idea of the APP came up during a committee meeting. Young people use their phones now, not computers. They like quick access to information, but won't read too many words. Top this with an increasing number of people self-harming, drug using and attempting to end their own lives, and a need for a simple sign-posting APP seemed more than valid. The idea was welcomed by the town rotary who forwarded the money to fund a simple phone version of the Lost For Words Website. Then, I met Nicola O'Neill, from the Leicestershire County Council, who was interested in promoting young people's emotional well-being via her group 'Cycle'. With the help and advice of these young people, I changed to APP design, to include some simple steps to follow when dealing with different issues – self-harm, study-stress, depression...twelve in all: twelve key areas of mental and emotional health. The young people gave their ideas to develop visual icons for the twelve sections and the Lost For Words APP design was done. Two years down the line, the APP is ready to go public – later than I would have liked – fund-raising to provide a youth counselling service took precedence for a while, as did a short film project, but I'm now proud to have finally finished the APP and to see it is still one of the first of its kind. Quite simply, Lost For Words has been a catalyst for change. A tiny volunteering group, that dared to talk about emotional and mental health and challenge a legacy of

silence which is now changing. The government, along with key public services seem to be listening to the charities and volunteering groups that highlight the real impact of poor mental health services in this country. It has been a challenge and a triumph for me to use my spare time to do something, however small, to help.

East of England

Central Bedfordshire

Chiwoniso Mukome, Support Worker

Youth parliament unveils three priorities for 2015/16 at manifesto launch by CB Communications Team

Central Bedfordshire's Youth Parliament has unveiled its priorities for the next 12 months in its 2015/16 manifesto.

At the manifesto launch on Monday 23rd March, members revealed that they will be campaigning locally for better work experience for all young people, improved mental health services for young people and a living wage of at least £7.85 per hour for all workers, regardless of age. Over the next year they will work with the council, other agencies and service providers on these three priorities.

The Youth Parliament is an elected group of young people aged 11 to 19 (or up to 25 for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities) who work to improve services for young people and their communities. They are not affiliated to any political party.

It is made up of two groups: two UK Youth Parliament Members and their Deputies, who represent Central Bedfordshire at a regional and national level; and Central Bedfordshire Youth Voice, which represents young people at a local level.

Speaking at the launch, MYP Ellen Burke said:

"It's really exciting to finally launch our manifesto for the next year after everyone has worked so hard putting it together. Although we will continue to campaign for young people on a range of different issues, the manifesto focuses on our priorities for 2015/16"

"The campaigns for improved mental health services for young people and a living wage for everyone are incredibly important issues in Central Bedfordshire. Out of the 5,976 votes cast across Central Bedfordshire, 1,375 voted for Living Wage making this the top issue across the area. These were closely followed by more meaningful work placements for people over the age of 16; this is really important in helping to shape future careers and give young people an idea of the qualifications they need to follow a particular path".

"We are looking forward to working with as many groups as possible over the next year to ensure that young people's voices continue to be heard in Central Bedfordshire."

The council's Director of Children's Services Sue Harrison, **who attended Monday's launch**, said:

"I am constantly impressed with the different and creative approaches that Youth Parliament members take to get their messages heard and the work they do to improve the lives of fellow young people"

“They have set some ambitious priorities for the next 12 months but I have no doubt that through their tenacity they will be able to build on the Youth Parliament’s previous excellent work and achieve further success. I look forward to working with members in the coming months.”



London

Wandsworth

Ania Cunnington, Support Worker

Positive Stories By Wandsworth Youth Council It has been a barmy, bonkers, busy last couple of months for us and the Wandsworth Youth Council have been as busy as a long tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. Some of our youth voice adventures include:

1. Housing Project – Putney Vale We are:

- Project planning a Housing Inspection in May half term. Our aim to leave no stone upturned and to make this inspection a 100% youth full voice proof.
- Writing all the training session for this escapade, Plotting creative ways to recruit young people using all of our negotiating and communication skills.
- Creating a legacy, publicise effectively and sharing good practice.

2. Artist in residence

We had 20 applications from creative artists all over the borough, asking for funding for music workshops, circus tricks, spoken word forums and 3D installation exhibitions. Shortlisting was tough and our questioning skills are as sharp as a silver tongued fox. We funded 4 inspirational projects that have now engaged over a 100 young people in each project. #checkoutourhulahoopskills

3. Youth Voice Question Time

We ran our largest Youth Voice Question Time this quarter, everyone from Police Cadets, Faith groups, Youth Council members and 4 Secondary Schools attended.

We recruited the following decision makers:

1. Cabinet lead for Children and Young People
2. Southfield's Community College Head Teacher
3. Wandsworth Borough Commander
4. Member of Wandsworth's Chamber of Commerce

Before the event we facilitated a question-making session to help young people prepare and formulate their questions. All of the themes and outcomes will be taken into account when we plan 2015's Youth Momentum Conference.

4. Stop and Search Scrutiny group

We ran a consultation workshop with the local Wandsworth Metropolitan Police force and 36 young people. Together, they scrutinised the current Stop and Search Policy, projecting common fears and myths associated with the procedure and coming up with tangible solutions. Youth Council member (15) said "It been a really worth while experience, accessing first hand statistics but frightening to think I used to believe that police worked to targets. We had a great debate on why the relationship between young people and police is often exacerbated".

5. Coming up...

April hosts a wealth of activity for us, including:

- Youth Opportunity Fund – granting £25,000 to local youth groups
- Mental Health Campaign, In preparation for Mental Health Awareness Week
- Drawing up the project plans for Youth Momentum 2! 200 young people and 50 decision makers in the biggest Youth Voice event so far.
- Running focus groups with most of the local schools, increasing awareness, engaging more participation and creating social change in our locality.

Follow us @WBCYouthCouncil (Twitter) or @Wandsworth Youth Council (Facebook)

North East

Sunderland

Jane Wheeler, Support Worker

Sunderland City Equals group recently planned an event for young people with regarding the new Education Health and Care Plans called The event was held at Sunningdale School in Sunderland. As the event was aimed at young people aged 14-25 with learning difficulties, City Equals decided to do a drama to help young people to understand. They created the drama in partnership with Big Little Butterfly who make exciting film, drama and visual arts projects for youth and community groups. City Equals showcased the drama at event and have created their own DVD. The whole event was a great success!!!

South Tyneside

Alex D'Ambrosie, Support Worker

1. Child Sexual Exploitation Workshop

We are the FAB Junior LSCB group. FAB stands for Friends Against Bullies, highlighting the anti-bullying work we're so passionate about and Junior LSCB means a young people's version of South Tyneside's Local Safeguarding Children's Board. We meet fortnightly to discuss issues that affect young people living in South Tyneside and plan events, activities and campaigns to help. During February ½ term we, along with



members from South Tyneside's Young Peoples Parliament and South Tyneside Council's Children In Care Council 'MAGIC' took part in a Child Sexual Exploitation

workshop. This was an interactive workshop that educated us in what CSE is, what signs we should look out for and ways we can help. As a result we have been inspired to support this area of work further and are taking part in the helping hands campaign taking place on Wednesday 18th March, which is where anyone can write a pledge on their hand and share it on social media sites with the hashtag '#HelpingHands' in order to raise awareness and show support.



2. Getting Shirty With Bullies

Members of the Friends Against Bullying group have encouraged their friends in schools across the Borough to sign mini paper pink T-shirts in support of International Stand Up to Bullying Day.

The campaign, which encourages people to sign and wear a pink T-shirt, was started by two American students who took a stand for a fellow student who was bullied for wearing a pink shirt to school.

The mini T-shirts have been combined to make a giant T-shirt which has gone on display at Simonside Climbing Wall in South Shields. Councillor Joan Atkinson, Lead Member for Children, Young People and Families, said: "I'm delighted that so many young people have supported this campaign. This giant shirt sends a very powerful message that bullying will simply not be tolerated in South Tyneside. Bullying can cause misery for those affected and the culture of bullying is completely unacceptable." She added: "It is encouraging to see our young people working so hard to tackle this issue. By continuing to work in partnership, we aim to eradicate bullies from our schools and communities."



3. Regional Children in Care Council Event

During the February ½ term, young people from South Tyneside Council's CiCC 'MAGIC', which stands for Making A Great Important Change attended an event at the Rising Sun County Park in North Tyneside along with other CiCC's from different local authorities to look at ways in which they could collaborate in order to improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers across the region.

The young people came up with some great ideas with all of the information is being collated alongside an action plan to then be shared with the local authorities that attended.

4. John Muir Award

The John Muir Award is a way of engaging people of all ages and backgrounds with the outdoors and helping them appreciate the natural beauty that comes with it.

The award is split into three levels; the Discovery, Explorer and Conserver awards, each of which is progressively committing. Within each of these levels, there are four tasks to complete. These are to discover an area, explore it, conserve it, and finally to share what has been done. The following is the third successful presentation of the John Muir Award for young people that meet at Simonside Climbing Wall.

The area the group chose was Akenshaw Burn within Kielder Forest in Northumberland. For the discovery task, the group visited Kielder Castle and the wild salmon centre. This gave them a good insight into the types of wildlife that can be found in and around Kielder forest.

In order to complete the explore task, the group went outdoor rock climbing. This was a fun way for them to learn about the effects a human presence can have on a natural area, and the damage that can be caused. It also showed how to avoid some of that damage while enjoying and helping to preserve the natural area.

In order to help conserve Akenshaw Burn, the group decided to build four wooden benches which users of the cottages can sit on to appreciate the area, (see images below).

Finally, for the share task, the group created leaflets which detail some of the wildlife users of Akenshaw Burn can expect to see while they visit.



North West

Manchester

Joanne Aungier, Support Worker

Delivering Differently Event Monday 2nd March

MYC have been busy representing young people of Manchester at the Delivering Differently Consultation Event. 10 young people gave a presentation to leaders of council services and discussed what young people need in the city. MYC members hosted tables to discuss issues which included: can adults know and decide what young people need for the future? Why do adults continue to undervalue young people? Why are young people not aware of what services are available to them? Could there be less youth provision but better support? Why can't all young people be offered work experience? How can young people prepare for the world of work? Why is the number of young people with mental health and wellbeing issues increasing? Why do things have to become drastic before you get help for your mental health? Is it possible for there to be more youth workers and youth zones for young people in the city centre and every area of Manchester? Is it possible for young people to create their own clubs in schools outside of school hours? Why do parents and young people think our parks are unsafe after dark? Why are more young people staying at home in the evenings? The feedback from the consultation will be used to shape our future youth services in Manchester.

We Stand Together Event 5th March

MYC members represented young people at the launch event for the We Stand Together Social Media Campaign. The aim was to bring together leaders of communities and faiths to send out a message that Manchester has a long and proud history of diversity. Global events have caused concern among communities and Manchester is standing together to support communities and tackle issues together. We Stand Together - to celebrate our difference against hatred and intolerance, to build a safer and stronger United Kingdom. MYC members spoke to Sir Howard Bernstein, Tony Lloyd and other leaders to share ideas of how young people can make the change for Manchester and lead the way.

Rochdale

Heather Mellalieu, Support Worker

Elections took place seeing Ethan Marriott aged 15 from Falinge Park High School elected as our new Member of UK Youth Parliament. Tabitha Rusden aged 14 and also from Falinge Park High School was elected as his deputy. Ethan won the election with 27% of the vote. Young people from schools and colleges from across the borough voted in the elections with 8918 young people taking part. Ethan's campaign points were: Exam Re-sits in particular Maths & English Media Representation of Young People

Raising Awareness of and Better Services for Young People with Issues around Mental Health The Result event was held at Rochdale Town Hall and attended by Senior Council Officers, Chief Exec and Elected Members - and of course young people from the Borough

South East

Buckinghamshire

Simon Billenness, Support Worker

A young voters Question Time event took place at Aylesbury High School on Friday the 6th of March, with an audience of over 100 young people from across Buckinghamshire. The Buckinghamshire Youth Parliament's regional campaign has been to increase political awareness among young people and encourage more young people to vote in the forthcoming general election, as they are being under-represented in elections because too few participate in elections, with the turnout for voters aged 18-24 being 44% against the average turnout of 66%. Buckinghamshire Youth Parliament is run and supported by Buckinghamshire County Council Youth Service, @BucksYouthVoice. Organising a Question Time event, featuring a panel that represented various political parties as well as an independent, non-partisan speaker, would serve to bring politicians forward to engage with young people and also allow for young people to voice their political concerns. That evening, our panel featured the following: Chair: The Right Hon. John Bercow, MP for Buckingham and Speaker of the House of Commons Labour: Anneliese Dodds, MEP for South East England Conservative: Councillor Mike Appleyard, Deputy Leader of Buckinghamshire County Council Liberal Democrat: Dr Kirsten Johnson, Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Candidate for Chesham and Amersham UKIP: Phil Yerby, Councillor for Aston Clinton, Aylesbury District Council Independent: Jonathan Birdwell, Head of the Citizenship and Political Participation at Demos The evening began with a speech from Charlotte Tosti, Member of Youth Parliament for Aylesbury, and Evie Towersey, the Deputy Member of Youth Parliament for Aylesbury who advised young people to exercise their democratic right to vote and read a letter of support from the Right Hon. Labour MP Glenda Jackson, who stated: "It is vital that young people take this opportunity to stand up and make their voices heard in the democratic process or else they will find themselves entirely governed by pensioners!". It then proceeded to the questions, which were on three topics, these being: Social inequality and welfare; The economy and the environment; EU membership and foreign policy, where a whole range of topics were covered. Overall, the evening produced highly positive results, with many young people finding that the event really informed them about policy and made them more confident about voting in May. The young people were very grateful to all the panellists for encouraging their engagement in politics. The event closed with a very well improvised speech from John Bercow, who provided very humorous anecdotes and again encouraged young people to engage more in politics to promote desirable social ends. After the event, some of the panellists tweeted Aylesbury High School and the Bucks Youth Parliament to thank us, such as Anneliese Dodds and Jonathan Birdwell, which can be found on @AylesburyHigh.

South West

Dorset

Dawn Ball, Support Worker

Work for the newly elected Members of Youth Parliament for Dorset started straight away when they travelled to London to attend a meeting in Portcullis House a week after being elected. After bumping into Martin Underhill, PCC for Dorset on his way to PMQ and posing for a selfie on Westminster Bridge, Youth Parliament Members met with Nigel Costley TUC to discuss the MYP's involvement in this year's



Tolpuddle Festival: It was agreed that they will have at least two discussion sessions on the Saturday of the Festival, a debate over Votes at 16 and compulsory voting, it is hoped that speakers both for and against this would attend with suggested contributions from the League of Young Voters and the Scottish TUC Youth. For the second session would be on

Engaging the next generation and how young people protest: this would include engagement in politics, trade unions and workplace democracy.... ***if you are reading this and have a genuine interest in participating in this Tolpuddle Festival Debates, then it would great to hear from you...please do get in touch and we can look at how to get you involved!!***

It was also agreed that members of Youth Parliament together with Dorset Youth Council would look at hosting a LiberTeas event at Tolpuddle in June to join in the National celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the magna carta, emails with local organisations have already been exchanged and sponsorship for this event is being sourced, it is hoped that the new barn on the Martyrs Museum site will be erected by then as it would make a 'perfect base' for this event. MYP's enjoyed looking around the fabulous democracy banners on display in Westminster Hall before meeting up with Richard Drax MP, for tea to discuss various policies affecting young people and the personal manifesto's of the MYP's.

Whilst the MYP's were busy in Westminster members of Dorset Youth Council (DYCE) attended a Dorset Police and OPCC Youth Shadow Group meeting at Police HQ in Winthrift: Outcomes and actions included, The Young Peoples Police and Crime Plan has now been finalised and printed, It is available on the PCC website: www.dorset.pcc.police.uk . A suggestion was made to survey the Police to find out what they think of young people, a decision is being sought whether to include it in the staff survey, or whether to ask the OPCC to use survey monkey and sent it anonymously. The group also looked at the Dorset Police Website and the Dorset Police Anti Bullying Leaflets gave their feedback and suggested improvements to



make it more young person friendly and relevant. The group said it would be nice to have a logo designed for the group and they would also like name badges and lanyards. The monthly DYCE meeting brought everyone together for the first time since the election, with faces old and new to look forward to a busy year ahead: Jade Leahy joined us once again to discuss bids for the PCC Safer Dorset Fund, and Action for Children came along for an interview training and skills sharing session: The Dorset Transport Strategy

group was well attended with representation from Dorset Youth Council, the Young Inspectors and Dorchester Youth Extra and MYP's, updates and progress with the FIXERS project was shared with members, and first Bus were pleased to announce that they have had interest in the project from First Cymru who are keen to promote and replicate the project..Look out for #DorsetgoesNational.

The SW Regional Residential brought all the newly elected member together for the first time, lots of networking, discussion and debating took place on the first night with friendships being forged over the Official Opening Ceremony. The Parliamentary resources used for this event were a huge hit and the ceremonial mace was given pride of place, by the time the debate had finished for the evening many of the members were just beginning to realise that the rumours of 'no wifi and no mobile' coverage were true and the telephone box outside of the Steam Railway was not part of the 'vintage effect'.



Not letting the lack of twitter and Facebook dampen spirits though the weekend bought plenty of workshops, debates and discussions, both regional and local campaigns were planned and Members for Dorset decided on their Dorset Manifesto for 2015. Great planning ensured everyone remained active and enjoyed a really fab residential, a huge thank you to all at Team SW and the Regional Youth Work Unit for organising 'Dean Forest 2015' and to the hard working, inspirational and dedicated young people who make the job so very worthwhile, I'm looking forward to a great year..

Gloucestershire

Vicky Wright, Support Worker

We held election during the first week of March, via a text vote. over 1000 votes were received for 10 candidates standing for MYP/DMYP across the county. The following results were announced online on Friday 6th March. Cheltenham/Tewkesbury MYP - Nathan Sexton DMYP - Phoebe Hill Gloucester/Forest MYP - Tyler Hyett DYMP - no candidate Stroud/Cotswolds MYP - Alysha Bodman DMYP - Esther Mounce Congratulations to them all, I look forward to working with them over the next couple of years. .

West Midlands

Worcestershire

Support worker

This month one of Worcestershire's amazing young people, Rona, shaved her hair for charity. This is something Rona has been wanting to do for a while and in doing so she raised over £600!! The money has been split between two charities: Shine and Young Minds. Young Minds is a charity that supports young people's wellbeing and mental health by raising awareness of these issues and reducing the stigma that can be associated with them. Shine supports individuals suffering with Spina Bidfida and Hydrocephalus. Both charities are extremely close to Rona's heart. She also donated her hair to The Little Princess Trust, who provide real hair wigs to children across the UK who have lost their own hair due to cancer treatment. One of our youth workers, Sally, promised Rona that if she raised £250, she would let Rona dye her hair any colour she wanted. Sally is now sporting red, pink and purple hair! Another one of Worcestershire's young people has been up to amazing things. Matt has jumped out of plane for Shooting Stars Chase. This is a hospice that supports children and their families. Matt raised a whopping £433.72!! He tells us that he has something else in mind for the future... Elections have been held in Worcestershire to determine our new MYPs. Over 3600 young people across Worcestershire took part in the voting in schools, colleges and youth groups. We are pleased to announce that our new MYPs are: Glen, Redditch; Joe, Wyre Forest; Katie, Malvern Hills. They are all excited to get started in their roles! This month Worcestershire Youth Cabinet (WYC) held a celebration event to welcome new members, introduce our new MYPs and to celebrate all the wonderful things they have achieved. As part of the event, WYC introduced its new and prestigious Friends of Worcestershire Youth Cabinet (FOWYC) Award! This award was presented to individuals, organisations and some schools who continuously show support for the youth cabinet and enable them to work. It is intended that this will now be an annual award to symbolises a commitment to Youth Voice. As well this month, WYC and our Worcestershire Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum, Who Cares We Care and Speak Out, teamed up to develop a presentation for Worcestershire's Safeguarding Board. They spoke about issues around safety for Worcestershire's young people. This included mental health, e-safety, bullying and parents' drug and alcohol use and the impact this can have on children. There are plans to work closely with the board in the future. Finally this month, WYC went on a residential! This was a chance for our new members, MYPs and existing members to get to know each other and take part in team building activities. Everyone had a lot of fun but worked hard too. During the stay the group developed their manifesto and action plans for their upcoming campaigns - so expect to hear about these soon. Everyone achieved something, whether that was overcoming their fear of heights or learning something new about their friends. We even had requests that we go for longer next time!

Yorkshire and Humber

North East Lincolnshire

Pippa Curtin, Support Worker

Young Reporters from North East Lincolnshire recently secured O2 Think Big funding to pilot a scheme locally where our Young Reporters ran 2 full day workshops with 17 'Younger Reporters' age 8-11 years to give them the opportunity to be heard through the local newspaper Grimsby Telegraph. The days were a real success with really positive feedback from the children young people parents and the local library we used as a venue. The children received support and guidance from existing Young Reporters to write their own articles about issues they feel are important. These have already started to be featured in the paper and are currently being published every Thursday in the newspaper and online www.grimsbytelegraph.co.uk/youngerreporters The success will result in an application to O2 Think Bigger to develop the idea as a regular opportunity and feature locally. This is another exciting and innovative idea from young people involved in the Young Reporters. This particular idea has been led by Natasha Mitchell age 18 supported by a number of other young reporters from 15-19 years old.



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>