



● annual review 2015/16  
young voices stronger together



# Chair's Introduction



## **Welcome to this review of another busy and eventful year at the British Youth Council.**

We reached a record breaking 969,972 young people through our award winning consultation 'Make Your Mark'. Thanks to all the volunteers who led this initiative to establish a mandate for representation of some of the key issues important to young people, such as education, equality, transport and health. We followed up by commissioning our fifth British Youth Council Youth Select Committee to hold an enquiry on better mental health services which called Ministers from Health and Education to give evidence on their departments' record. The subsequent report and recommendations prompted an official Government response and commitment to implement some, and to work together on others. The Youth Select Committee and accompanying campaigns, is now one of the most effective youth-led change-making mechanisms to be established by the British Youth Council in recent years. Other flagship projects included our work to promote democracy through schools by successfully piloting the Discovering Democracy Awards, providing advice on better health services through our NHS Youth Forum, and representing youth views to Europe and

overseas through our Young Ambassadors initiatives.

To support these achievements and promote the cause of youth empowerment, we provided over 2738 training and volunteering opportunities through 20 British Youth Council events and residentials, enabling young people from all backgrounds to confidently develop and apply leadership and campaigning skills. We also provided more training for youth workers, and made awards to best practice projects and individuals, to ensure the work is embedded, recognised and sustained, so that British Youth Council values, and the culture of empowerment spreads, making us a movement, as well as an opportunity, for change.

There is still a long way to go and we still need decision makers to listen to, and respect young people, and build a partnership for a better future.

The British Youth Council believes in a world where all young people are respected and able to inform and influence decisions which affect us or on which we have strong beliefs. Join us, support us and the great team who work for us to achieve this vision.

Finally, it would also be remiss of me not to reflect on dedicated service and imminent departure of our long serving Chief Executive James Cathcart. Over 8 and half years, James has worked tirelessly to secure the British Youth Council's position as the voice of young people in the UK. Seeing the passion James has for young people and for this organisation has been one of the greatest pleasures of my year as Chair. We will miss James greatly and I know I speak for every member of the British Youth Council in wishing him well for the future.

As we look forward to a new era for the British Youth Council, I reflect on a year when I have been proud to have joined you as Chair for part of that journey. I'd like to thank everyone who has worked so hard and wish you all the best as our successors take up the challenge.

**Jon Foster, Chair of the British Youth Council**

# About the British Youth Council

We are young people, and our charity aims to help other young people, whatever their background or barriers they face, to make the world a better place for us all through active citizenship and youth-led social action.

## Our vision

A world where all young people are respected and able to influence and inform decisions that affect their lives or on which they have strong beliefs.

## Our mission

- To be, as the national youth council of the United Kingdom, committed to ensuring that those aged 25 and under are represented and participate fully and actively as citizens.
- To inspire people about the positive contribution that young people can make to their communities, our nation and the world.
- To empower young people with skills, knowledge and confidence to advance their rights and views to take part in decision-making.
- To campaign with our members and those who share our values, for a better world that gives young people the recognition they deserve.

## Our values

**Participation** – We value meaningful participation of young people, enabling and empowering them to bring about a better world for all.

**Inclusion** – We value the inclusion of all, by working with young people from all backgrounds, cultures and ages to ensure a rich mix.

**Equality** – We value all young people equally, promoting their rights equally in the UK and around the world.

**Youth Leadership** – We value and nurture youth leadership, creating tomorrow's leaders today for a better future.

**Recognition** – We value the recognition of young people's achievements, publicly valuing them as part of our society.



UK Youth Parliament House of Commons Debate, 2015

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# Involving our members

The British Youth Council is the National Youth Council of the UK, made up of more than 230 member organisations supporting a common vision for young people. These members elect our Board, determine our policies and prioritise our campaigns. They also act as the link between the charity and millions of individuals within the membership of our members, promoting opportunities to them to volunteer for social action.

The British Youth Council team of trustees, staff, and volunteers seek to represent the views of young people and members, on issues affecting them, to stakeholders and decision makers at a local, national and international level. We are non-party political but active within our democracy, through the ballot box to elect representatives and prioritise campaigns. Last year we offered a range of opportunities and platforms to meet decision makers. We also continued our work to make representations to Westminster and Whitehall on public policy, notably through our Youth Select Committee enquiry on Mental Health which had a formal Government response, as well as advising on better public services such as through the NHS Youth Forum. We also campaigned for Votes at 16 in the EU Referendum, and promoted voter registration to increase turnout and better engagement by politicians with a young electorate. We engaged over 3 million young people during the campaign, assuring us of ongoing input, as the National Youth Council of the UK, into Brexit negotiations with the Department for Exiting the European Union. We also enabled young people to represent themselves more effectively at local, national and international level through our training and volunteering programmes, notably the UK Youth Parliament and Young Ambassadors initiatives.

At a national level we have access to some government departments through our Youth Voice initiatives and offer support to all local authorities in England with their youth participation initiatives.

## Our membership at a glance...

### Type of organisation

Cultural groups	1
Faith groups	5
Local Youth Councils	185
National organisation	17
School groups	1
Regional organisation	7
Youth wings of trade unions	1
Uniform organisations	6
Under-represented groups	6
Other	2

**Total** **231**

**Members at training and consultation events:** Throughout 2015/16, 1,273 young people (compared with 1,148 last year) from British Youth Council member organisations attended 20 regional conventions for training and support.

These one day events develop the skills and knowledge of young people in representational roles within their local communities, including but not limited to Members of Youth Parliament, Deputy MYPs, Young Mayors, Youth Councillors and Children in Care Council members.

In addition representatives from membership organisations were invited to national events and consultations, including the All-Party Group on Youth Affairs. All of these opportunities aimed to equip and empower members to influence decision-makers and Government Policy through campaigning, consultation, and dialogue.



At the end of the membership year there were **231** membership organisations in the British Youth Council



## In 2016/17

Our strategy calls for us to 'engage our members', emphasising the relationship of membership to be interactive – such as support for policy and campaign development, seeking views through events, training and volunteering opportunities for members. We will continue to provide and explore new opportunities for young people to represent their members within our activities.

# Empowering through campaigning and consulting

## Priority campaigns 2015/16

British Youth Council members vote for our priority campaigns following the Annual Council Meeting (ACM). In addition members of the Youth Parliament meet in the House of Commons, having consulted young people through the Make Youth Mark ballot to debate and vote for the UK Youth Parliament's national priority campaigns. Last year Make Your Mark, which in 2015 engaged nearly one million young people, won a Charity Times Campaign Team Award 2015 (Highly Commended).



Five year goals. At the time of the last General Election in 2015, members prioritised five issues they wanted the subsequent new five-year Parliament 2015-2020 to address. The five priority issues in “Our Parliament Our Vision” are:

1. Votes 16
2. Better mental health
3. Save our youth services
4. First aid for all
5. Living wage

The first three listed were also voted as priority campaigns for 2015/16 by ACM.



**Voter Registration** campaigns were introduced by the British Youth Council during the European Elections in 2014. These are now a regular feature, having been voted to be a priority by members, and having been approved as an official partner of the Electoral Commission.

The campaign was repeated for the 2015 General Election and the European Union Referendum in 2016. We also challenged politicians to engage with the youth agenda, giving young people something to vote for and laying out their promises in special youth manifestos, and commit to introducing a Youth Minister. Two parties introduced youth manifestos for the first time in 2015.



## Don't Hate – Educate

This campaign was developed as a result of the UK Youth Parliament voting to make tackling racism and religious discrimination a priority for 2016. As well as commissioning a Youth Select Committee enquiry, we worked in partnership with ‘Kick It Out’ to develop a resource kit for youth-led campaigning in schools, and provided training to volunteers to deliver it throughout the year. Representatives were also supported to meet their elected councillors, MPs, or local media, to secure pledges of support. The committee will report in November and seek a debate on the topic in Westminster.

## Our Minds Matter

Mental health was voted a priority by our members in 2015 and 2016. We have hosted debates at the All Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs on the topic, and attended Government consultations and policy forums. As well as more investment, shorter waiting times, and a counsellor in schools, we want to reduce the stigma of mental health and want more help to be available when and where it is needed. This topic remains a priority for members in 2016.



## Votes at 16 Coalition

The British Youth Council, with support from NUS and the Electoral Reform Society reviewed and re-launched a new website for the voters at 16 coalition. Visit and sign up as a support at [www.votesat16.org](http://www.votesat16.org)

## Consulting with young people

Our campaigns have more credibility than ever before, not only because of the diversity and background of those young people chosen by their peers to lead them, but also the depth of consultation, that demonstrates that the issues are not just the preference of the few, but the mandate of the many.

As well as drawing on numerous local consultations by individual campaigners, representatives and partner organisations, the British Youth Council runs a number of its own national consultations through its projects.



### Make Your Mark

Now in its 6th year Make Your Mark has grown annually to be one of the largest single consultations of young people aged 11-18 in the UK. Last year volunteers, schools and

supporters reached 969,992 voters, an average of 1 in 5 eligible, but with some exceptional high local turnouts such as Blackpool 65% and Ealing 64%. They prioritised a list of ten

topics chosen by members of the Youth Parliament, five of which were debated in the House of Commons to determine the priority campaigns. A report is produced to show the results for every local area in the UK and is a rich source of data on turnout and local priorities. Government recognises the process, attends the debate, and gives an official response.



### European Young Ambassadors

The ambassadors representing the British Youth Council and the four nations of the UK are engaged in 'structured dialogue' with Government European institutions, and have consulted their peers to inform their work. 1,385 took part in surveys and 1175 in a YouGov poll. One of the outputs was a report called Political Participation which was launched in the House of Commons in December 2015.



### NHS Youth Forum

Now an established partnership between the British Youth Council, NHS England, Public Health England and Department of Health, this advisory forum of 25 young people is recruited, trained and supported by the British Youth Council to provide advice and input young people's priorities into health policy and practice. It's an example of ongoing youth 'at the table' in a specialist area, something we would like to see other decision making bodies embrace as standard.



### Youth Select Committee

The British Youth Council's fifth Youth Select Committee on racism and religious discrimination started work in 2016 alongside the 'Don't Hate, Educate!' campaign.

This model of gathering views to underpin action is the next step in empowering young people to not only have a say, but make a difference. It gathers written evidence, calls oral evidence, questions scrutinises and reflects before making recommendations that can be the basis for campaigns and action. It is hoped the topics of Youth Select Committee's will now be debated by MPs in Westminster and Government and decisions makers already agreeing to some recommendations with improvements being made in Transport, Curriculum for Life, and Votes at 16.

## Plan for 2016/17

- Mental Health, Votes at 16 and Save our Youth Services will remain as priorities from the 'Our Parliament Our Vision' 2015-2020 manifesto.
- We will continue to promote voter registration and democratic engagement to provide a mandate and priorities for all our campaigns, whilst taking advantage of opportunities to push a particular campaign, or respond to current affairs.
- We will consult young people on their views on the priority for Brexit negotiations and ensure their voice is heard.
- ACM 2016 will refresh our manifesto and our members will vote to renew or amend our campaigns for 2017.
- The Make Your Mark ballot will put ten topics to the UK youth population to choose what UK Youth Parliament will debate and prioritise for 2017.

# Empowering through the ballot box

The British Youth Council runs a number a democratic youth-led networks and programmes which provide young people with opportunities to get involved as active citizens, on a local and national level, as campaigners, candidates or voters. Our youth-led networks include:



## UK Youth Parliament

UK Youth Parliament provides opportunities for 11-18 year olds to use their elected voice to bring about social change through meaningful representation and campaigning. At a national level we support the initiative with leadership and campaign training so that Members of Youth Parliament can develop, debate and adopt a range of new policy motions to include in the UK Youth Parliament Manifesto. Ten campaigns are put to a national public ballot of young people aged 11-18 (Make Your Mark). This achieved a record 969,972 votes which resulted in five topics referred for debate to the House of Commons:

- Living Wage for all
- A Curriculum for Life
- Accessible, Affordable public Transport
- Better, accessible Mental Health
- Tackling Race & Religious Discrimination

The debates, along with a special Magna Carta debate, were broadcast live from the House of Commons in November 2015. Tackling racism/religious discrimination was voted the UK wide campaign, and better mental health services the devolved campaign. Young people and the British Youth Council developed resources and campaign opportunities for both these topics, which continue to raise awareness and press for change in 2016.

UK Youth Parliament continues despite cuts to some local support services and national income. However, following the presentation of a strong case for the role of UK Youth Parliament by the British Youth Council, the Government Minister for Civil Society Rob Wilson MP announced in January 2016 that the initiative would receive four year part-

funding until 2020 in line with the wishes of Parliament for it to be allowed to meet in the House of Commons chamber for the lifetime of this Parliament. Other stakeholders and supporters include UK Parliament, Erasmus Plus funding and local authorities. Most of the local activity, including local elections and contact with local authority decision makers is managed by our partners in local government. In the devolved nations we also work in partnership with the Scottish Youth Parliament, the Northern Ireland Youth Forum and Children in Wales (though cuts have resulted in reduced levels of funded participation). UK Youth Parliament and its representatives are frequently integrated into other youth participation bodies such as youth councils and Young Mayors schemes, and it is enriched by inclusion and representation of harder to reach groups at a local level. We now collect data to demonstrate the diversity and inclusions of all these groups, showing that it spreads across a representative range of backgrounds.



## Young Mayor Network

**A network that gives directly-elected young mayors the chance to support each other and come together.**

Young mayors are invited to attend a British Youth Council run young leaders residential every Spring, and can share good practice and news on their own website.

“As Minister for Civil Society, I am dedicated to championing the contribution that young people make to society, and I will continue to ensure that your voices are heard in Whitehall and well beyond.”

**Rob Wilson MP Minister for Civil Society, Cabinet Office**



## Local Youth Council Network

Supporting local youth councils across the UK to represent the views of young people at a local level.

Some youth councils elect their MYPs and Young Mayor from wider networks of elected local youth councillors.

All three bodies meet together at a series of British Youth Council or partnership regional and national conventions throughout the year.

Whilst these focus on training and policy development they are also regularly attended by inspiring speakers, elected representatives or those seeking to consult young people on their views.

**969,972** votes were cast by young people across the UK in the 2015 Make Your Mark ballot, breaking last year's record and making it the largest youth consultation in the UK.



Charity Times Awards 2015, Highly Commended "Campaign Team of the Year"

## Plan for 2016/17

The 2016 Make Your Mark ballot aims to reach as many young people as possible – with 1.8 million ballots printed, and more schools and partners asked to pledge their support as Democracy Champions.

# Empowering through training and recognition

**Training courses** were either delivered at one of 18 regional Conventions or special events run in partnership with the Northern Ireland Youth Forum, Scottish Youth Parliament, Children in Wales, or bespoke training commissioned by individual organisations. These events combine skills training with policy consultations, frequently with decisions makers from Government or other agencies. They include but are not limited to members of the Youth Parliament, Young Mayors, Local Councils Network and Children in Care Councils.

## **Youth Voice Leadership Development Programme:**

British Youth Council training is a combination of theory and application and includes leadership, campaigning and participation skills. One popular method is to use role play to enable young people to practice their arguments on decision-makers, get feedback, and learn what is effective, before taking their campaign back to their communities. We encourage young trainees to be passionate, prepared and persistent.

More information about training opportunities and accreditation/ recognition can be found on our website.

## Evaluation Outcomes

### “As a result of BYC training...”

- **86%** agreed they were more likely to do something as a result of the training/support
- **80%** agreed they now had the skills to make a difference
- **86%** agreed they would now pass on what they had learnt to others
- **77%** stated they were feeling motivated
- **61%** stated they were inspired



## **Youth On Board Awards**

The British Youth Council believes that charities and other organisations working with young people need to ensure that they are acting in the interests of all of their stakeholders, including young people. The Youth on Board campaign calls on organisations to make a commitment to involving young people in their decision-making through consultation, round the table and in the boardroom. To encourage this we make around four Youth On Board awards each quarter. See our website for how to nominate, or apply for, a Youth On Board award.

## **Youth Voice Awards**

The British Youth Council has developed a range of learning awards accredited by ASDAN to recognise and reward young people's amazing involvement and dedication in youth voice and community involvement activities. Young people complete at least ten hours of varying activities in order to gain the ASDAN accredited award. An easy-to-use downloadable log book as well as staff handbook are available to accompany the award to make the process as easy and straightforward as possible.

79 young people from 11 organisations have received one of the British Youth Council Accredited awards for volunteering in their local community.



## **The 'Discovering Democracy'**

campaign and awards was successfully piloted to recognise those schools who promote democratic activities and opportunities for students, both within the curriculum and running of the school (clubs, councils, governance) and

external engagement with democracy (meeting politicians, hustings, voter registration). 60 award winners were invited to a joint Government /British Youth Council presentation in the House of Commons by Minister for Constitutional Affairs Jon Penrose MP.



## Plan for 2016/17

- We plan to run 20 Conventions/Events in the nine regions of England, plus Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- Increased number of consultancy and individual training courses
- We will continue to run a volunteer social action network.
- We will continue the Youth Voice initiative (England only) to continue the work of the UK Youth Parliament, support every Local Authority choice in youth voice, run a national Youth Select Committee in Westminster and inform and influence Government through consultations.
- We will continue the Youth on Board award scheme to recognise organisations and young people who promote youth participation and include a new award targeted politicians and stakeholders.

# Empowering locally to globally

The British Youth Council's vision is for a world in which all young people are respected, where all young people are able to influence and inform decisions which affect their lives, and to take action on the issues that matter to them. To make this a reality the work of the British Youth Council continues to reflect the changing, and interconnected global society in which young people are living and learning.

The British Youth Council's international work has three priorities



**Global Voice** - we support young people to have voice and influence locally, nationally and internationally. Through our international youth participation programmes young people are able to take part in discussions and influence decisions made at an international level.



**Global Action** - we support young people to get involved in international projects and campaigns.



**Global Learning** - we support young people to learn about global issues and to connect and share with other young people around the world.

## Achievements in 2015/16

Last year the British Youth Council's international programmes, mainly through the UK Young Ambassadors programme, provided 187 opportunities to young people directly in its work and more than 2500 indirectly through consultations.

### International Forums and Events:

We have supported 29 young people to represent the UK at international forums and events in 7 different countries

- 4 x European Youth Forum – Belgium, Spain, Germany, Greece
- 3 x European Structured Dialogue Conferences – Latvia, Luxembourg and the Netherlands
- 1 x Hosted BBC+ Region meeting of the European Youth Forum in London
- 1 x jointly British Youth Council/ European Youth Card Association hosted workshop and reception at Westminster – attended by representatives from Finland, Norway, Scotland, which also sponsored
- 2 x Votes at 16 conferences in Belgium and Estonia
- CEO represented the British Youth Council to the European Youth Card Association conference in Sweden

### Training and Consultancy:

We provided leadership training in the Horn of Africa/Sudan for the British Council.

### Study Visits:

We welcomed five delegations of young leaders to London for study visits from: Vietnam, Pakistan, Bahrain, Canada and China.



We also published and launched a report “**Political Participation**” containing research and recommendations on participation in the UK. This was an outcome of an initiative led by the UK Young Ambassadors initiative, as part of a wider European project on youth policy dialogue.

## Plan for 2016/17

- Consulting and representing young people's views on the priorities for Brexit negotiations.
- Strengthening European youth representation and continuing the opportunities from Structured Dialogue through our National Working Group and UK Young Ambassador initiatives.
- Providing UK representation to the Commonwealth Youth Council.
- Developing our capacity to support youth participation in national and global governance.
- Hosting study visits from other youth councils and developing good practice partnerships.



The main vehicle for international youth representation through the British Youth Council is the *UK Young Ambassadors* initiative which is a partnership project supported by the British Youth Council, Northern Ireland Youth Forum and the

Scottish Youth Parliament. As there is no Welsh youth assembly the British Youth Council directly recruited and supported its young ambassadors. The project aims to ensure the central role of young people in international decision-making through effective and inclusive representation, securing lasting and positive change for young people in the UK. There are 10 Ambassadors and 2 Commonwealth representatives, and during this year there was a changeover as one group came to the end of their term and others were elected / selected. During the whole year there were a total of 22.

The British Youth Council also coordinated the UK National Working Group for Structured Dialogue, which supports policy dialogue between young people and decision-makers in the UK, leads youth research and consultation on European youth policy, and prepares and shares youth policy reports to European youth policy conferences every 6 months.

# Getting our message across

## Online reach

- Unique Web-visitors: 63,558 (British Youth Council) and est. 75,000 (UK Youth Parliament)
- E-bulletin: 12,000 +
- Facebook: 18,500 likes for both British Youth Council and UK Youth Parliament Facebooks (up from 15,500)
- Twitter followers 60,500 (British Youth Council and UK Youth Parliament, up 24% from last year)
- Press stories: 616 across print, broadcast and online media

## Providing free resources

We have over 400 publications and training courses online. New publications for 2015/16 include:

- Make Your Mark – ballot results 2015
- Mental Health – Youth Select Committee report 2015
- Political Participation – reflections and recommendations 2015
- Positive Stories Bulletin

### Where our money came from in 2015/16

Restricted Grant income	£626,979
Unrestricted Income	£255,622

*(Including membership fees, donations, publications, events, reimbursements, training and consultancy)*

<b>Total</b>	<b>£885,601</b>
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### What we spent it on

Programmes and Training	£547,958
Policy and Communications	£268,450
International Activities	£180,973
Fundraising	£24,116
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,021,497</b>

Our full audited accounts will be available online later in 2016 at [www.charity-commission.gov.uk](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk)



# Inclusive, Diverse & Representative

**27%**  
from black,  
asian and  
minority ethnic  
groups

**11%**  
identify as  
bi-sexual, gay,  
lesbian or  
transgender

**13%**  
identify as  
disabled

**20%**  
face challenges  
or barriers to  
participation

**10.6%** with  
mental health  
issues and **4.6%**  
with literacy  
issues

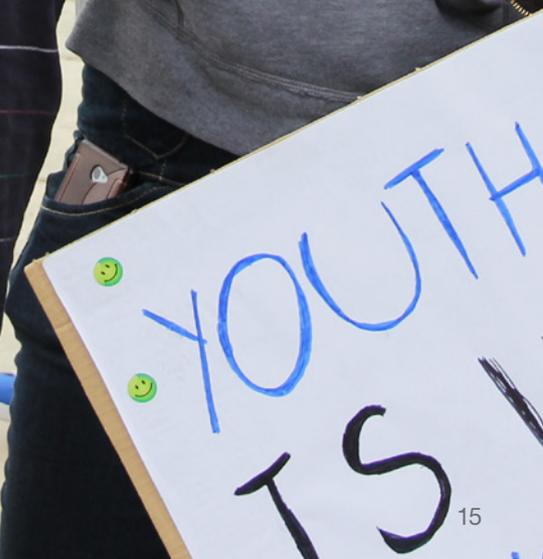
**8%**  
had received  
free school  
meals

**8%**  
from low  
income  
families

**8%**  
bullied

**4%**  
young  
carers

**2%**  
in/leaving  
care



# Thank you to our supporters and volunteers

## British Youth Council Trustees (Sept 2015-August 2016)

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Jon Foster

Vice-Chair (Campaigns & Communications)  
Ife Grillo

Vice-Chair (Participation & Development)  
Anna Barker

Vice-Chair (Finance)  
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Joe Stockley (Wales)

Arooj Khan (Wales)

Margarita Petkova (N.Ireland)

Sophie Bell (N.Ireland)

## UK Youth Parliament Paul Boskett Award

Ewan McCall (Scotland)

Darragh O'Reilly (N.Ireland)

In 2015/16 our work was made possible  
by the generous support of the following  
funding partners:

Awards for All Awards

British Council

Cabinet Office Youth Policy

Cabinet Office Democratic Engagement

Erasmus + (Europe)

NHS England

Public Health England

Parliament Outreach and Engagement

Service

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Youth in Action (Europe)



## British Youth Council 2016

Tel: 020 7250 8374

Email: [mail@byc.org.uk](mailto:mail@byc.org.uk)

Web: [byc.org.uk](http://byc.org.uk)

Twitter: @bycliffe

Facebook: /britishyouthcouncil

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Company Limited by Guarantee no. 6226595

Registered in England and Wales

Registered Office:

49-51, East Road, London, N1 6AH

