

Local Councillor Shadowing

Award

Handbook



ASDAN

Registered Centre



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Introduction

Welcome to the Local Councillor Shadowing Award from the British Youth Council (BYC). This award has been designed to recognise young people's understanding and involvement in local democracy. Young people can achieve this accreditation by providing evidence of their learning through shadowing a local councillor for a minimum of 10 hours.

It has been developed to offer a superb leadership experience for young people and we also hope that councillors will benefit from their interaction and learn something new during the process.

What are the benefits?

Young people are keen to make a real difference in their local communities and councillor shadowing is a great opportunity for them to share their concerns and aspirations with local leaders.

By engaging with young people in this way, councillors will be exposed to their genuine enthusiasm to learn, coupled with the positive things they are involved in locally.

The award has been designed to fit around locally designed and delivered awards whilst nationally accrediting young people's achievement. The great thing about the award is you only pay a small fee once a young person has completed the award.

How does it work?

The key component of the award is that young people must spend 10 hours shadowing their local councillors in their communities and evidence their experience in a downloadable log book. This is then submitted to the British Youth Council for moderation and in turn submitted to the examination board - ASDAN. Your organisation only pays the award fee once the log book is ready to be submitted for moderation.

How much does it cost?

The cost is per young person log book submitted:

British Youth Council Member's rate: £20.00

Non member rate: £30.00

What support and resources do I get?

As part of the fee for the award we provide:

- A downloadable young person's log book
- A handbook for running the award
- Downloadable template letters and resources to help you in the running of the award

Starting the award in your area

In order for young people to get the award, how many hours must they do?

Each participant has to shadow a councillor(s) for a minimum of 10 hours.

How many councillors need to participate from our council?

We encourage your council to get as many councillors involved as possible. For smaller councils, we recommend that you target fewer councillors to begin with (up to 5/6) and then re-evaluate this number at the end of the initial award.

Can a participant shadow more than one councillor?

Yes. To encourage a diverse and comprehensive experience this can be a valuable way of delivering the programme, by introducing participants to different portfolio holders and councillors from different wards. Having said this, some participants will be happy to work with one councillor as it helps establish familiarity, while others may prefer to work in pairs as the experience may be less intimidating for them to begin with.

Do we receive money to cover the young person's expenses?

No – This award doesn't receive any government or grant funding

Do councillors need CRB checks?

This is a local decision, however we would recommend that you require a current CRB check (up to two years) if the young people taking part are under the age of 18, as do council staff that will be left unsupervised with these participants. We recommend that councils conduct risk assessments where applicable when working with young people.

What happens if a participant drops out?

Nothing, you are not charged until you submit a young persons log book for moderation. We will only submit to the examination board once we have received full payment.

Who do I contact if I have an award query?

Please contact the British Youth Council on

Phone: 0845 458 1489

Email: awards@byc.org.uk

Running the award

What activities can young people do?

To ensure that young people benefit from the award as much as possible, it is important for your council to be able to provide a range of activities which match their interests, while taking into account the diary commitments of councillors.

We have put together a list of activities which could be undertaken as part of the shadowing award. These activities are designed to act as a guide and is by no means is it an exhaustive list.

Every council is different and will be able to offer different types of activities to young people, depending on size, number of councillors, portfolio holders, service delivery and time of year.

What can we do in the introductory meeting?

Before participants and councillors meet, it would be beneficial for councillors to meet with the programme 'co-ordinator' to discuss a possible timetable of activities.

Following this, to break the ice between councillors and participants, we suggest that once the young people have been selected, the two parties meet informally to discuss the types of activities that will make up the award.

To make this initial meeting as effective as possible, we recommend that councillors bring with them their diaries (it has been noted that backbencher diaries are more flexible) which they can discuss with participants. It could also be useful for councillor's secretaries or personal assistants to attend these meetings to discuss logistics.

Things to be discussed in this meeting will be:

- An introduction to council structure and function, to provide a background to the shadowing experience – who the councillor works for, how/when were they elected, how does their council feed into wider/national government etc.
- The councillor introduces themselves – how they got into local politics, what they like/dislike about the job, biggest achievements, why they volunteered to be shadowed etc.
- The young person introduces themselves – why they wanted to take part, what they are hoping to achieve from the shadowing and most importantly the areas that they most wish to get involved in.
- Discuss times and dates that both parties are available for shadowing and the overall timescale – discuss school times, weekend/evening availability etc.
- Begin to produce an award plan of activities which should give focus and structure to the experience with dates/times/venues and other important information laid out:
 - Using the application form, discuss local issues that the young person is interested in and things they would like to find out more about.
 - Discuss upcoming meetings, events and ongoing projects that the councillor/s are involved in, and agree some initial activities.
- Ask the young person to fill in the councillor's details contact details in the young person's log book.

What activities should we include?

We have found that young people are hugely enthusiastic about shadowing councillors in their political *and* civic duties - both of which are important for them to learn about.

As important as it is for young people to see full council meetings for example, it is just as important for them to see councillors performing their civic duties at local fetes etc.

Please see below for examples of activities which could make up your award:

Council Meetings

Although not perceived as the most exciting activity of a councillor by many, we found that participants enjoyed attending some council meetings above everything else.

It has been acknowledged that young people would gain very little from attending certain council meetings, however, they are a necessary and important part of being a councillor and some may be relevant and interesting, so don't be put off! Of particular interest would be:

- Full Council Meetings – although they can be sporadic, if you could fit this into the shadowing timetable, it should prove popular.
- Local Issue Meetings – young people are tremendously passionate about local issues that affect their lives and would be drawn to meetings discussing this. Tenant, Cohesion and Transport meetings proved particularly popular.
- Committee Meeting/Portfolio Meeting – if there are any upcoming topic meetings that match the interests of participants, attending these would be a good opportunity for them to view the various stakeholders and see how policy is decided.
- Leadership, Executive or Joint Board Meeting – to see the decision-making process first hand.

Visits and Tours

- Tour of the council building(s) – including chambers, offices and each department.
- 'Ward walks' – where councillors can show participants the areas that they represent and talk to their constituents about an array of issues.
- Tour of local leisure and youth facilities – to explain how the council helps young people and provides services for them.
- Planning/development site visits – to see how local planning decisions are made and the power that councillors have in determining these.
- Visits to ongoing community projects – to see how councils encourage and foster voluntary and community services in the local community.
- Attending civic functions – including local fetes, the opening of facilities, park and leisure trips, dinner parties etc.

Meeting other Community Groups

- Advice surgeries
- Ward forums
- Meetings with young people
- Meetings with police authority/fire authority
- Other community meetings

Example of award plans

We have put together a few suggestions of different activities and programmes that young people can do.

Please note that the activities are purely suggestions and specific award activities can be decided between the young person and the councillor/s, taking into account their interests and portfolio responsibilities respectively.

Example programme 1

Activity	Brief Description of Activity	Number of Hours	Total Number of Hours
Introduction Meeting	Met my councillor and discussed with him the types of things I am interested in and want to learn. We looked at his diary and set out a plan of activities.	1	1
Council Tour and Brief History of the Council and lunch	Was given a tour of the council by my councillor and the council clerk. Had a look at the council chamber and some of the historical artefacts.	1	2
Ward Walk	Shadowed my councillor on a walk of his ward, meeting residents and listening to their issues and concerns	1	3
Full Council Meeting	Sat in and observed a full council meeting between all parties. Afterwards I had a chat with my councillor about what I saw and wanted to clarify a few things.	3	6
Community Fete	Helped my councillor run the stall and shadowed him during his official responsibilities, including opening a new shop in town.	3	9
Evaluation Meeting	Had a review session with my councillor to discuss what I had learnt and particularly enjoyed about the programme. He gave me some literature about volunteering locally and more things I can get involved in at the council.	1	10

Example programme 2

Activity	Brief Description of Activity	Number of Hours	Total Number of Hours
Introduction Meeting	Met my councillor and discussed with him the types of things I am interested in and want to learn. We looked at his diary and set out a plan of activities.	1	1
Surgery	Attended Saturday morning surgery listening to the concerns of local constituents who are worried about a new supermarket being built and the effect it will have on local businesses.	2	3
Councillors Question Time	Attended a question time where young people were given the chance to quiz councillors on local issues.	1	4
Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting	Meeting to present the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who had been conducting a review of youth engagement.	2	6
Football Match	My councillor is the president of the local football club and I attended a league match with him.	1	7
Police Meeting and Tour	Met with the Superintendent of the county police force and had a meeting about youth crime. Had a tour of the police headquarters and cells.	2	9
Evaluation Meeting	Had a review session with my councillor to discuss what I had learnt and particularly enjoyed about the programme. He gave me some literature about volunteering locally and more things I can get involved in at the council.	1	10

Can the young people meet with other Political Representatives

Although this award is exclusively to shadow councillors, if an opportunity arises during the initiative to meet with a local MP, Mayor or other senior political/civic leader, we would encourage you to try and incorporate this into a timetable as young people get to see the different part of our democracy

Working with the local media

Participating in the Local Councillor Shadowing Award is a great reason to contact and build positive relations with your local media.

To assist with this, a template media release is available for download which you can use as guidance is available for download from our website.

In addition, please feel free to be as creative as possible in your efforts to attract media attention like:

- ▶ Organising a press call inviting media to a particularly newsworthy activity
- ▶ Staging a local question time between participating councillors, inviting young people in the local area to attend
- ▶ Staging charity events such as a rounder's match involving councillors and young people
- ▶ Host an awards evening inviting all participants and their families to congratulate them on their 'graduation' from the programme
- ▶ Tying the award into a national event such as Local Democracy Week to maximise its impact
- ▶ Use the award as a platform to invite young people into the council through 'youth surgeries' where they can directly communicate with councillors about issues that concern them

Please keep BYC informed of your public relations activities, particularly if you have had successful experiences. We can share your stories via our website and e-communications.

Recruiting young people

To assist you with the recruiting of young people we have produced the following materials the can be downloaded from our website:

- **Schools Letter** which you can send to local secondary schools and colleges in the area inviting students to get involved
- **Youth Organisations Letter** which you can send to local youth clubs/youth councils etc... inviting young people to get involved
- **Care Provision Letter** which you can send to the local youth/children's and other relevant service provision inviting staff to nominate or select young people they feel may benefit most from this opportunity
- **Poster Template** which you can add your own contact details to and request to have displayed in corridors/common rooms

Finishing the Award

The young people have finished their shadowing, what next?

Please make sure all the sections of the log book are filled in (this saves us and you a lot of time). Please fill in a moderation form (you can download this from www.byc.org.uk) and email or post to us

When do I get the certificates?

We will invoice you for the moderation costs and once this is received the log books will be moderated and approval sought from the examination board. This normal takes up to 14 days

How should I evaluate what young people thought of the award?

We have produced a sample evaluation form for you to use with young people to help you evaluate the award you have designed. This is available for download on our website

Running the award checklist

Pre programme

- Download all the relevant documents from www.byc.org.uk
- CRB checks for councillors/applicable staff
- Consider any risk assessments that need to be carried out.
- Schools and colleges and/or council services have been contacted about the award inviting young people to get involved using the tools provided
- Interviews/selection takes place.
- An initial meeting has taken place between participants and councillors, agreeing a menu of activities which consists of at least 10 hours (this meeting can contribute to the 10 hours)
- If a councillor is considering using their personal car to transport participants, their insurance policy has been checked and amended as appropriate

During programme

- Ensure that participants are completing their log books after every activity and these have been signed by councillors
- Any pictures, blogs, stories and articles produced have been sent to the British Youth Council to help publicise the award (please provide image consent forms with any publicity you are happy for us to use)
- If a participant(s) appears in any of the images above and is under the age of 18, the image consent form has been signed off by a respective parent/guardian or carer

End of programme

- Log books are returned to the British Youth Council along with a payment for the amount per participant

About BYC

What we do:

The British Youth Council (BYC) is a charity run by young people for young people. We empower young people across the UK to have their say and ensure their voices are heard.

We inspire and empower young people aged 25 and under to have a positive impact through campaigning, engaging with local, national and international democracy, and as volunteers, decision-makers and leaders.

Our membership encompasses over 130 youth organisations large and small around the UK. We reach out to over 600 local youth councils and our networks reach into local communities and around the world.

Our training workshops develop young people's skills so that they can have a say and be heard, while our consultation services tap into the views and opinions of young people across the UK.

Online:

Our free online resource centre (www.byc.org.uk/resources) is packed with information and briefings to help with the running of your organisation. We have tips on how to run meetings effectively, different roles that young people can take at meetings, how to campaign effectively and make a difference. There are also resources covering fundraising, campaigning and managing the media.

In person:

We run a range of events throughout the year to support organisation, from delivering training courses right the way through to our annual Conventions which bring youth councillors from different areas together. To find out what is going on and where, check out our online events listings.

We also provide in-house training for local youth councils. Have a look at the training pages of our website (www.byc.org.uk/training) for the latest training offerings. And if none of these do what you need, we do offer bespoke sessions tailored to your needs.

On the phone:

Whether you're establishing a local youth council or looking for support about the award. Give us a call on 0845 458 1489 or email: awards@byc.org.uk.