

Young Mayor Schemes **Research Paper**

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Introduction

This report draws on research and examples of Young Mayors schemes operating in London including Lewisham, Newham and Tower Hamlets. It explains what a Young Mayor is and the types of activities they can be involved in; the benefits for young people and decision makers and what a Young Mayor scheme needs in order to be effective. It also explains the current arrangements for youth voice in LBHF and suggests some areas for consideration.

What is a Young Mayor?

A Young Mayor is a young person (usually aged 11-18) who is elected by other young people to represent them. They are either directly elected by their peers to represent them or internally elected from a youth council or cabinet. The democratic mandate of Young Mayors provides credibility to represent young people and enables them to take action on the issues that matter to young people in their area. The British Youth Council, who support and advise Young Mayor schemes suggests that to do this effectively, Young Mayors should be politically neutral and represent young people's opinions, not political parties.

A Young Mayor Scheme can be an alternative to, or compliment other participation projects and they can operate in different ways. Young Mayors can act in a purely honorary or civic role, for example by presenting awards at ceremonies, opening community fetes or attending events on behalf of their community (there are equivalent Adult Mayors who do a similar role). Alternatively they can hold budgets and/ or have delegated authority and decision making responsibility or indeed do a combination of both.

Examples: In Lewisham and Newham, the Young Mayor makes decisions with the support of a group of Youth Councillors. Their role is to represent the concerns of the borough's young people outside of the scheme and enable the Young Mayor to make informed decisions. In Tower Hamlets, when being elected the Young Mayor runs on three campaigns; these are then chosen as three areas of work that the Young Mayor undertakes in their year of office. They also have a Youth Council, and although they work closely, they have different agendas and projects.

The main difference between the schemes in London relates to where the Young Mayor is situated within each borough's structure. For instance, in Lambeth the Young Mayor sits within Lambeth Council's Legal and Democratic Services Department, while Newham and Lewisham's are based within the Mayor's Office and in Tower Hamlets the Young Mayor sits in the Intergrated Youth Support Service. Although the Young Mayor is not a constitutional figure and has limited authority, the placement of the scheme has the potential to influence how they operate and how participants and external people view the scheme.

Benefits for young people

- There are personal benefits, in skills and experiences gained, for the Young Mayor, as well as the candidates and nominees via the election process. Confidence, communication, etiquette, presentation, meeting and campaigning skills have all been stated by Young Mayors as skills they have acquired from the scheme. Beyond this there are the thousands of young people who can potentially be touched by the nomination process – and those enjoying the educational experience of casting a vote.
- Young Mayor schemes can help young people to be more informed and involved in local decision making and have a better understanding of the borough's democratic structures.
- A high profile elected representative raises the profile of issues that matter to young people and can help counter negative stereotypes.
- Young Mayor schemes can increase the take up of other youth voice projects, with candidates who stand and fail to be elected, often keen to participate in the youth council.
- Young Mayor can earn accreditations including the British Youth Council Youth Voice Award and have a unique opportunity to add to their CV and reference portfolio.

Benefits for communities and adult decision-makers

- Young Mayors are a high profile demonstration that the local authority is serious about changing the lives of young people in the borough. A Young Mayor acts as a stimulus for corporate commitment to and action on involving and taking account of young people within an authority.
- The act of having a Young Mayor crystallises the need to reference young people across services and departments and can act as a catalyst to strengthen local accountability and improve services for young people; making them responsive, user driven and cutting costs long- term.
- A Young Mayor helps elected members, local officers and their wider partners understand the issues that affect young people, as well as their needs and opinions, leading to better informed decisions.
- Voting at a young age can become a lifelong habit that leads to greater participation in the democratic process and wider civic society. Properly resourced and supported, Young Mayor Schemes typically achieve election turnouts approaching 50%.
- Fulfils statutory duties- local authorities have a duty to inform, consult and involve people in the running of local services, as well as a duty to promote democracy- particularly to young people.

What does a Young Mayor scheme need in order to be effective?

- **Full support and "buy in" of the adult council and elected Mayor and/ or Council Leader.** It is essential that the Young Mayor is supported by and has lots of opportunities to meet with their adult equivalent. This could be in the form of meeting regularly, holding joint surgeries, or presenting to the council together on topics of mutual interest.
- **A formalised structure in which to operate.** There is a need for some form of protocol so that the Young Mayor can easily and effectively feed into the

general workings of the council as a whole. This may take the form of a written constitution or Terms of Reference.

- **A clear idea of what the Young Mayor can and can't do** and therefore establishing boundaries for what impact they can have on decision making processes.
- **A nominated adult champion to lead and support the Young Mayor Scheme** and accompany the Young Mayor on their engagements. The Young Mayor will need lots of support to understand the political system and council decision making structures, to engage with young people in the borough, to research and develop their arguments and to be confident in delivering them.
- **A formalised Local Authority wide democratic election process** (This can be run alongside other elections such as Youth Council or UK Youth Parliament to reduce the resources required).
- **Projects to raise the profile and influence of the Young Mayor.** It is necessary to have the support of the Communications Team, who can help raise the profile of the Young Mayor and the issues they are working on
- **Access to meeting rooms, premises and equipment**
- **Full briefings before all meetings** (not just the notes sent to them)
- **A clear relationship to a broader youth participation structure such as a youth council or parliament.**
- **Support from Electoral Services** (with the election and vote counting etc). (Most boroughs that run the scheme- Electoral Services run the election process in exactly the same way as they do the adult elections).
- **A mechanism to measure the success of the Young Mayor's Involvement**

Case Study- Newham

- The Newham Young Mayor has responsibility for a budget of £25,000.
- The Newham Young Mayor and Youth Council's campaigns have raised the profile of environmental sustainability in the borough, particularly around recycling, energy use and local parks
- The Newham Young Mayor and Youth Council have led the campaign to ensure that all the Olympic and Paralympic venues are available free of charge to local young people after the games. They also helped design the aquatics centre.

1. The H&F Youth Council

The Youth Council is a 'voice' for young residents and is currently made up of 15 members (aged 13-19). They are supported to develop a range of methods to get the views of young people and present them to decision makers, and work with council and health services to give their opinion on policies, activities and services. They are also involved in the recruitment of Children's Services staff. The forum are currently in the process of developing into a fully elected Youth Council or Youth Parliament. (see the proposed timeline below).

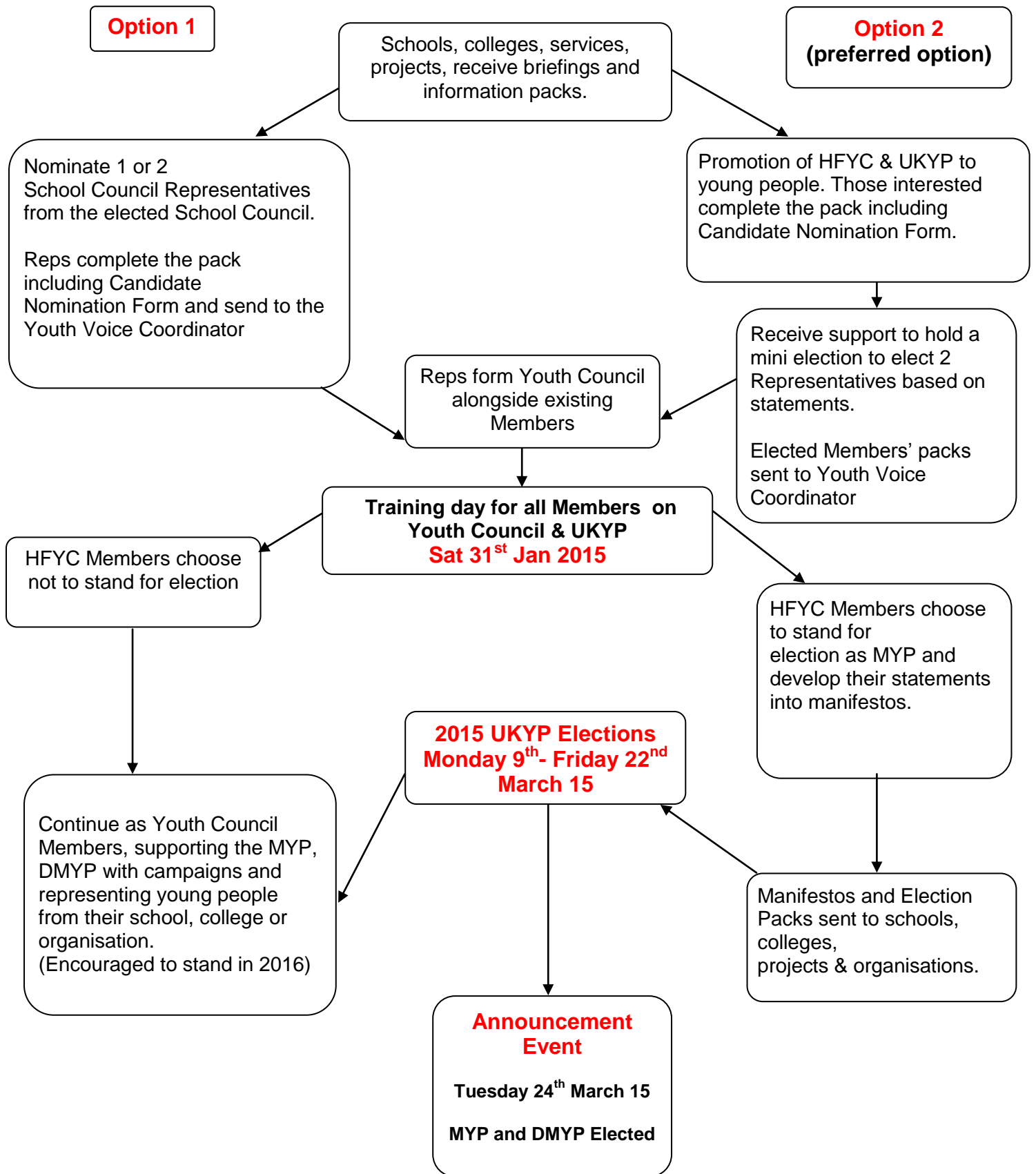
The forum have previously influenced various council policies and did have regular dialogue with Members and Senior Officers, they also had representation as 'expert witnesses' at the various Select Committees. These mechanisms have not however, been fully reviewed since the change in administration and then now tend to be involved on an adhoc basis. Some initial discussions have taken place with Councillor Sue Macmillan, the Cabinet Member for Children and Education on developing the scope of their involvement in council decision making, but this an area for further consideration and development.

2. UK Youth Parliament

We host elections annually in schools, youth projects and through services working with specific groups. Each year a Member of Youth Parliament and Deputy are elected to lead the youth forum, to represent the views of young people in LBHF at a regional and national level and, supported by the Borough Youth Forum, to campaign on issues impacting upon young people in the London Region. Every year, the elected Member leads the 'Make Your Mark' consultation to identify the top issues for young people in the borough. The top 3 issues identified locally, become the focus of local campaigns and the top 5 issues identified nationally, are debated in the House of Commons by all MYP's from across the UK.

Elections for the Youth Council and UK Youth Parliament are due to take place in 2015, with the process starting in January 2015 (see proposed process and timeline below).

Process for the 2015 Youth Council (HFYC) and UKYP Elections



Timeline for Youth Council & UKYP Elections

Date	Event	Details
Monday 5th January' 15	Deadline for information sent out (to schools/youth projects). Schools can access info from Wed 7 th Jan. Info also sent to all projects/community organizations on the list.	Briefing and YP's Packs sent to PHSE/Citizenships Coordinators at schools- From Monday 5 th Jan for Option 2 (projects and services).
Wednesday 14th January' 15	Follow up phone call to Contacts	To check they received packs/whether they need any support
Monday 19th- Thursday 29th January' 15	mini- elections at schools, youth projects and services	Option 2- supported to hold mini-elections to elect 1 or 2 Youth Council Members
Thursday 29th January 15	Deadline for nominations Youth Council Formed Final list of Youth Council Members send email and training	Deadline for all completed YP's packs and Youth Council Members info to be sent to Participation Officer Compile final list of Youth Council Members send congratulations email and details of/ directions for training (follow up phone calls)
Saturday 31st January' 15	Training for New Youth Council Members and Intro to UKYP (to give YP an informed choice about becoming MYP).	Workshop on role and responsibilities of MYP, citizenship, democracy, representation etc. Ending in 'mini-election' for 8 candidates.
Monday 2nd February to Friday 20th February (Half Term Monday 16th-Friday 20th Feb)	Support for candidates to develop their manifestos	Meeting arranged with councillors Manifestos and UKYP election packs/videos to be produced
Monday 23rd Feb '15	Deadline for schools, projects and orgs to receive elections packs, DVD's, ballot boxes and manifestos	
Monday 9th March- Friday 22nd March	2 weeks of UKYP and Elections	Elections for MYP and Deputy MYP take place in schools, colleges, projects and services (Day/times to suit them).
Friday 22nd March'15	•Ballot Boxes Collected •Ballot Papers Counted	“ ”
Tuesday 24th March' 15	Announcement	Announcement/Celebration Day at Town Hall- MYP and DMYP are elected
Wednesday 25th March' 15	Official Handover	
Friday 10th April to Sunday 12th April 2015	Youth Voice Leadership Development Programme Residential for Training residential for MYP and DMYP	“ ”

Areas for Consideration

- How can we strengthen current youth voice arrangements (the Youth Council) and communication with Members and Senior Officers to extend the reach of young people's involvement in council decision making?
- If we are to set up an LBHF Young Mayor scheme:

-Can we establish some clear objectives?

-How will the Young Mayor scheme and Youth Council link with the adult structure and vice versa?

-Will the Young Mayor have a representative or civic role?

-How can the Young Mayor, Member of UK Youth Parliament and H&F Youth Council/Parliament mutually support and communicate with each other, as well as having distinct areas of work to avoid duplication?

-Where will the Young Mayor sit?

-What resources are available to support the Young Mayor?

-Will they have any decisions on financial spend/ be allocated a budget, if so how will this be administered?

- Can we form a steering group to support the planning and implementation of the scheme. This could include:
 - Young people from existing projects,
 - Democratic Services,
 - Electoral Services,
 - Communications and media,
 - Youth Voice Coordinator/ Children's Services
- As mentioned there is the option of hosting the Young Mayor elections at the same time as the UKYP elections. However, timelines for this would be extremely tight and it is recommended that consideration is given to the above areas before we commence with elections. Potentially we could focus on establishing the steering group, defining the terms of reference and strengthening current arrangements and either work towards electing a Young Mayor in the 2016 elections or hosting a separate election process mid-late 2015.

For further advice and Information on Young Mayors Schemes, see:

10th Anniversary Commemorative book celebrating 10 years of the Young Mayor scheme in Lewisham <http://www.gold.ac.uk/media/YoungMayorLewishamBooklet.pdf>

The Young Mayors Network: <http://www.ymn.org.uk>

The British Youth Council www.byc.org.uk