



— The —  
**Participation**  
— People —

# Young Mayor Case Study

May 2013



## Quotes

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*"The Young Mayor scheme saved me. If I look at all the young people I used to hang out with, some are in prison, some are still at home and some have just disappeared."*

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*"I travelled around the UK, met other young people and made a change in my community. I also saw how long it actually takes to get things done through the Council, which was huge! I used to complain that it always took too long to do anything. Now I know how to use the system."*

The aim of this case study is to map the journey of six young people who grew up in Tower Hamlets and took part in the Young Mayor project 2009 to 2013

## Background

The Young Mayor model offers numerous benefits to young people, elected members and local government officers.

# There are many benefits for both young people and adults...



**Uma Akther,  
Young Mayor 2009**

*“One day I was coming out of college and saw my face on the side of a bus, as did all of my friends. At first I was really embarrassed, as this made me different to everyone else. Then, I realized that I was really proud to represent my community and what it had done for me. Tower Hamlets is a big place to grow up in, particularly if you are unsure of yourself and what you want. Now, I help others, and want to give back to the community and family that gave me so much.”*

## Benefits for young people

- **Power and influence** - a high profile elected representative raises the profile of issues that matter to young people, and influences local opinion-formers. Control over a budget is a hallmark of the scheme, which enables young people to act on their concerns.
- **Getting their voices heard** - Young Mayor schemes ensure that young people are more informed and involved in local decision-making. They can see that they are being listened to and that their concerns are being acted on.
- **Understanding and development** - young people gain new skills

and develop valuable experiences. Representation promotes the understanding of local democracy and political processes.

- **Positive representation** - Young Mayors represent young people in the media; countering negative stereotypes and promoting positive images.

*“I would have been in so much trouble if I hadn't taken part in the Young Mayor scheme. I look back and ask myself if that was really me before, and am really proud of where I am now. The biggest thing I learnt was to speak publically. More than that, I know how to influence, negotiate and get what I want heard in a way that people want to help me. Who else can say that?”*



# Adults and young people in partnership

#youthvoice

## Benefits for local authorities

- **Informing policy makers** - a Young Mayor and Youth Council are local partners that help elected members, local officers and their wider partners understand the issues that affect young people, as well as their needs and opinions.
- **Developing civic identity** - voting at a young age can become a lifelong habit that leads to greater participation in the democratic process and wider civic society.
- **Increasing legitimacy** - Young Mayors provide a voice for a section of the population that often goes unheard. Representation of young people lends credence and focus to the work they undertake with adult politicians.
- **Improving services** - youth representation acts as a catalyst to strengthen local accountability and improve services for young people; making them responsive and user driven.
- **Fulfilling 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.

All the young people who took part in the Young Mayor programme 2009, had come from one or more of the following backgrounds:

- Low socio economic backgrounds
- Low academic achievement
- Youth offending team
- School exclusion
- Young carer
- Drug user

They were attracted to the programme for the following reasons:

- Friends had taken part
- The role was seen as being a local youth celebrity
- It was an opportunity to escape from bad influences
- The project had been recommended by their workers and teachers

Within their year of office, they took part in a number of projects:

- Designed and delivered a School Council Conference for 120 young people to spend £120,000 of Council money through a Participatory Budgeting exercise.
- A project to get young people back into education, training or employment.
- A Young Mayor's Roadshow, where they consulted 300 young people on the street about their issues.
- Presenting to decision makers the voice of young people in their community.

Since then, they have:

- Applied and been accepted to University or apprenticeships.
- Continued to volunteer
- Two young people are setting up a charity to help young people in Tower Hamlets from low economic backgrounds.
- One young person has set up projects to help Muslim young women in the UK
- One young person is volunteering as a Police Community Safety Officer
- Travelled to other countries
- One young person has led their own TEDx talk.



*"Before the Young Mayor scheme I was shy and didn't know how to manage my time. The project supported me to take responsibility for myself and the team. I understand the value of team work, setting goals and the commitment it takes to achieve what I want."*