



## *Final Report*

Evaluation of Young Advisors Pilot Programme

Neighbourhood Renewal Unit





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Neighbourhood  
Renewal Unit

October 2006

Department for Communities and Local Government

On 5th May 2006 the responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

Department for Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU  
Telephone: 020 7944 4400  
Website: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

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We very much appreciate your time and commitment to this evaluation. Without it, this evaluation would not have been possible.

## Glossary

ASB	Antisocial Behaviour
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DoC	Developing our Communities
DoH	Department of Health
EB4U	East Brighton 4 U
GO	Regional Government Office
GO:NE	Government Office for the: North East
HO	Home Office
JAR	Joint Area Review
JCU	Joint Children’s Unit
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LAP	Local Action Panel
LGA	Local Government Association
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NDC	New Deal for Communities
NMP	Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder
NRA	Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor
NRU	Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
WMNT	West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust
WRC	Warden Resource Centre
Y4tF	Youth 4 the Future
YSS	Youth Support Services

# Young Advisors



## Executive Summary

- Youth engagement is currently high on the government agenda. The current political context has seen many central policies being decentralised resulting in the planned development of a number of key local strategies. The timing of this has fitted well with the establishment of Young Advisor schemes and **opened up a wide range of opportunities** for Young Advisors to develop their work and also show the value of youth engagement at local policy level.
- This pilot programme has formed a high profile part of central government youth engagement work offering a new perspective and different opportunities to increase the participation of young people. It also offers a solution to moving away from engaging with children and young people through consultation to **achieving more effective participation** in decision making processes
- The Young Advisor Programme is a new concept aimed at recruiting and training young people to become “**young consultants**” to adult service providers and agencies as a way of increasing youth participation in all areas of their work.
- Attitudes to engaging young people in decision making processes are beginning to change. Whilst 6 months is not long enough to begin changing actual working practices, we can confirm **a change in stakeholder perceptions** over the length of the pilot programme with many stakeholders now utilising the services of Young Advisors in their work.
- Some organisations are becoming very keen to engage Young Advisors and this involvement alone is a **change in their normal working practice**.
- Young Advisors are involved in 3 **key areas of work**: promotion and marketing; youth proofing and project work. Expectations are rising as they become integrated in local agendas. They are already involved in a number of key local strategies and this is expected to increase in coming months
- Young Advisors are being recognised as **linkers**, by enabling young people to link with service providers and for agencies and organisations to link with young people. They are also building up a reputation for **breaking down barriers** between adults and young people and services. Young Advisors are also being regarded as a **conduit** for decision makers to engage with young people.
- Pilot schemes developed **local models** of working to suit their existing structures. Three different models were developed within the pilot programme and the evidence suggests that each model has been effective to a degree although none are totally problem free. One fails to fully integrate partner agencies to the pilot and as a result has problems sustaining mentors. Another makes excellent use of partners but Young Advisors work in separate areas making it difficult to meet regularly and share good practice. The final model was managed by a local authority youth service and has not been well integrated with the NDC or other partners, focusing more on youth service agendas.

- Each of the models has illustrated some success. However, it is not feasible to design one model for use in all schemes. Success of any model is dependent on local infrastructures, adapting and developing key partnerships and local issues and the commitment of key individuals with the appropriate knowledge and skills.
- The role of the **lead officers** within this pilot programme has been pivotal to the successes gained to date. Their commitment and creativity has raised the profile of Young Advisors in their areas and also integrated them into a number of key areas of work.
- There needs to be clear criteria for work undertaken by Young Advisors to ensure that agencies do not use Young Advisors in a tokenistic way. This should be developed within each young Advisor scheme.
- The amount of lead officer time needed to manage the local pilots was grossly underestimated. This has meant an overload in their already full work schedules. Current lead officers have continually been under increasing pressure to ensure the success of their schemes. A **dedicated lead officer post** (part time) should be established to manage new schemes and ensure Young Advisors can reach their full potential.
- Good **mentors** are essential in supporting the work of the Young Advisors and maintaining cohesion to the project. This has been identified as a key area for concern within the pilot programme. Mentors should be in place prior to the start of the project and training made available to ensure they fully appreciate the role of Young Advisors and are able to support them in developing their work.
- It must be recognised that Young Advisors have been operational for only 6 months. In that time they have become involved in a wide range of activities. They have established **positive relationships** with many stakeholders and their workload continues to increase very quickly.
- The Young Advisors programme is neither a capacity building nor youth work programme. Employing young people does build up their capacity and open them up to new opportunities and experiences. As a result of the young Advisor experience they have become more **marketable and employable**.
- **Implementation** of the pilot process was rushed and this created difficulties for lead officers. Better lead in times are essential if programmes of this nature are to develop positively.
- **Administrative and financial procedures** were problematic for pilot schemes. Local and national systems were not compatible thus increasing the workload for lead officers and causing delays in payments.
- In Manchester funding has been secured through NDC to **mainstream** the existing pilot for the next year. Additional funding is also in place to recruit themed Advisors. (Crime and Grime, Arts and Culture).
- Brighton and Hove Youth Support Service have secured funding through the Youth Opportunities Fund and the Youth Capital Fund to **roll out Young Advisors** across the city. Hull are also exploring this option.

# 1. Introduction

The Young Advisor Programme was developed following concerns from a number of New Deal for Communities (NDC) and Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder (NMP) schemes about engaging young people in their communities, particularly in decision making processes and service development. This pilot programme was designed to provide the opportunity for young people to make a positive contribution alongside adults at a range of levels.

The Young Advisors programme was not developed as a youth engagement project or a youth work project. This idea was completely new and aimed to recruit and train young people to become “young consultants” to adult service providers and agencies as a way of increasing youth participation in all areas of their work.

The role of a Young Advisor is:

*“To show community leaders and decision makers how to engage with other young people in community life, regeneration and renewal.”<sup>1</sup>*

As young consultants, Young Advisors are tasked with showing organisations, committees and projects how best to involve young people and how to attract and maintain the interest of young people in the planning, management and the reviewing of community services and activities. Young Advisors become the voice of young people in the area. They consult with young people and highlight to decision makers what young people believe their communities need as opposed to what local planners think is feasible.

Working alongside agencies, departments and projects, Young Advisors provide both inputs and insight to youth issues and take consultation through to action. The young Advisor role has been developed at local level within each of the pilot areas resulting in a range of models and management styles. A commonality across all 4 pilot areas is the desire to increase youth participation, empower young people “to have their say”, and also link young people with services.

Whilst many agencies, departments and local authorities express a commitment to engaging young people in their work, this is often limited in practice. Young Advisors are positioned to bridge the gap between services and young people. This entails engaging with young people but also playing a key role in changing working practices and cultures within organisations to embed youth engagement and participation in their every day working practices and policy development.

<sup>1</sup> Communities need Young Advisors NRU 2005

## 1.1 Policy Context

The Government is committed to delivering a “new localism” that will lead to people shaping public services, taking decisions about their own neighbourhoods and playing a greater role in local democracy. Recent publications from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) include “Citizen Engagement and Public Services”, “Why Neighbourhoods Matter”, the Local Government Strategy and a 5 year plan for “People, Places and Prosperity”. The Home Office (HO) Civil Renewal Unit also shows a heavy commitment to empowering people<sup>2</sup>. (This Unit has now transferred to the DCLG as part of the recent restructure). Their “Together We Can” Initiative aims at empowering citizens to work with public bodies to set out and achieve common objectives. Ensuring that children and young people have a role to play in this initiative is one of the public policy areas. The aim here is for residents to become champions – this includes children and young people. Young Advisors are one example of this.

As stated in the Young Advisors Baseline Report<sup>3</sup> in response to the Every Child Matters Green Paper it has been recognised that all local children’s services need to reflect the needs of children and young people as well as local authorities and partners and this means that a good level of participation of children and young people in the design and delivery of services is essential.

Youth Matters (2005) went on to identify that teenagers were not sufficiently involved in decisions about service provision and proposed additional duties on local authorities to create more opportunities for young people to make a contribution to decision making processes. It states:

*“We want young people to have more direct involvement in all stages of service, design, development, delivery and evaluation. By involving them we can help to ensure that they will share ownership of decisions and use facilities and services responsibly and that the investment of public, private or charitable funds is directed to meet their needs.”<sup>4</sup>*

The Young Advisor Pilot has a clear role to play in achieving increased participation of young people, involvement in decision making processes, supporting agencies to facilitate engagement, linking young people to services, developing understanding of both professionals and young people on the value of such engagement and providing a “role model” for other young people to develop their skills and knowledge to take a key role in creating sustainable communities.

<sup>2</sup> NRU Forum Presentation May 2006

<sup>3</sup> SDD Baseline Report March 2006

<sup>4</sup> Youth Matters 2005

## 2. Outline of Evaluation

### 2.1 Aims and Objectives

The aim and objectives of the Young Advisor Programme are closely aligned to those of the NRU Youth Engagement Programme.

This includes the strengthening youth engagement within NRU neighbourhoods and young people becoming more actively involved in decision making processes in terms of policy and services.

The aim of the Young Advisor Pilot Programme is to:

*“Strengthen the skills of existing key practitioners, develop a pool of new and future leaders, and encourage a change in climate and culture of organisations with respect to youth engagement”<sup>5</sup>*

The aims of the Young Advisor pilot programme are aligned to the wider Youth Engagement Project as specified in the Baseline Report.

The key outcomes for the Youth Engagement Project, to which the Young Advisor pilot contributes are:

- Youth engagement is strengthened (both quality and numbers engaged) in neighbourhoods with NRU programmes
- Young people are involved in planning, delivering and evaluating all aspects of policy including training in active involvement for the ODPM staff, NRA’s, GO leads and within programmes
- Young people are involved directly in the youth engagement project through the young adviser pilot and achieve personal development goals and receive appropriate recognition for this.

The key research questions for this evaluation are:

1. What differences have Young Advisors made within their local neighbourhood, with local authorities and services, and at national and regional level?
2. How has the scheme design and implementation influenced outcomes? What has and hasn’t worked and why?
3. Were there any preconditions in terms of design or implementation that influenced outcomes?
4. How has the institutional and political context in which the Young Advisors operate influenced outcomes?
5. What effect has the pilot had on individual Young Advisors and youth as a group?
6. Where are the examples of innovative and good practice?
7. What are the lessons and how can NRU and their partners build on the experience of the pilots?

<sup>5</sup> Summary of Approach Document October 2005

The Young Advisor Programme is a completely **new concept**. Whilst youth engagement has been within national and local political agendas and built into much of the work carried out by voluntary sector organisations<sup>6</sup> for a number of years, the idea of employing young people to act as consultants to support organisations and departments to ensure they engage with young people in policy and decision making processes takes youth engagement to another level. It is acknowledged that some areas have employed young people in specific roles such as peer education and mentoring<sup>7</sup>. The Connexions Service promote a system of rewards and incentives as a way of employing young people to have some influence on how the Connexions Partnerships and their partner organisations work. As a new concept, the Young Advisers pilot was designed to influence a new way of working by employing young people as “consultant. This evaluation will draw out some of the learning from this process.

## 2.2 Methodology

This final report follows on from the Baseline Report in providing the endline investigation of stakeholder perceptions and also includes the views and perceptions of the Young Advisors from each of the pilot scheme areas.

A range of stakeholders have been interviewed across all 4 pilot areas and their views and comments are incorporated into this report. (See Annex 1)

The evaluation framework included Young Advisors carrying out some of the evaluation tasks. The aim was for them to carry out some of the stakeholder interviews. However, contract deadlines and young Advisor commitments (school exams) made this impossible to achieve. All stakeholder interviews carried out within the endline phase of the evaluation were carried out by Social Development Direct. Semi structured interviews were used. An interview guide provided key topics and subject areas and allowed the interviewer to build on conversation around each subject area.<sup>8</sup>

The baseline investigations assessed the development and implementation of each of the schemes and attempted to draw out views and perceptions of the pilot from the key stakeholders and Young Advisors. This final report explores how these have developed throughout the lifetime of the pilot schemes, identifies new developments and good practice and explores sustainability.

As mentioned, logistically it was not possible for Young Advisors to carry out peer review with stakeholders. However, as Young Advisors had expressed an interest in carrying out some of the evaluation tasks, an element of peer review across the Young Advisor pilots was carried out.<sup>9</sup> This was fitted into a pre-arranged residential involving two of the pilot schemes and Young Advisors carried out a review of their

<sup>6</sup> The Children's Society, Barnardo's, NCH have all carried out a number of projects to increase participation of children and young people in decision making processes. These include Right Up our Street: Listening to Children to promote positive change in communities. The Children's Society 1997

<sup>7</sup> Manchester and Middlesbrough had similar schemes developed through the NDC

<sup>8</sup> Quinn Patton, M (2002) Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods

<sup>9</sup> Hull and Middlesbrough pilot schemes met to review their working practices and experiences to date

work to date. Interactive methods were used to facilitate this session. Young Advisors broke off into pairs, interviewed each other, set challenges and then presented their findings to the wider group.

Other methods included in the endline investigations include use of a range of participatory tools with the Young Advisors. Examples of these tools will be included in later sections. An Evaluation Workshop was arranged so that all the Young Advisors would have an opportunity to come together to share their views and perceptions and provide an opportunity for them to build on each others experiences. The Evaluation Workshop took on a very interactive style, providing the opportunity for Young Advisors to express themselves, utilise many of the skills they have developed in their role eg listening, presentation and interviewing skills. Each pilot area was represented at the Evaluation Workshop with a total of 14 Young Advisors. (Annex 2)

## 2.3 Critical Areas of Investigation

As Young Advisors is a new concept, we have nothing to use as a comparison and a lack of literature to support such a model. This pilot programme is regarded as the “start” of something which can be redesigned and redefined as it rolls out to other areas. To this end it is critical that the evaluation not only answers the research questions but also identifies emerging themes and concepts throughout its lifetime. The Baseline Report identified the following critical areas of investigation:

- Gaining and understanding of critical factors influencing the implementation of the pilot programmes;
- Identify any preconditions eg existing infrastructures, that could affect outcomes;
- The role Young Advisors have in establishing changes to service development and delivery;
- Perceptions of stakeholders in terms of take up of service and changes in working practice;
- Affect on local, regional and national agendas;
- Professional and personal effects of the Young Advisor role on those involved.

As the evaluation progressed additional critical areas of investigation were identified.

These included:

- The importance of the lead officer and mentor role in the ongoing development of the pilot schemes
- The procedures essential to facilitate not only Young Advisors but youth engagement in general
- The reality of facilitating large institutional changes in working practices and cultures within a short term programme.

# 3. Design and Implementation

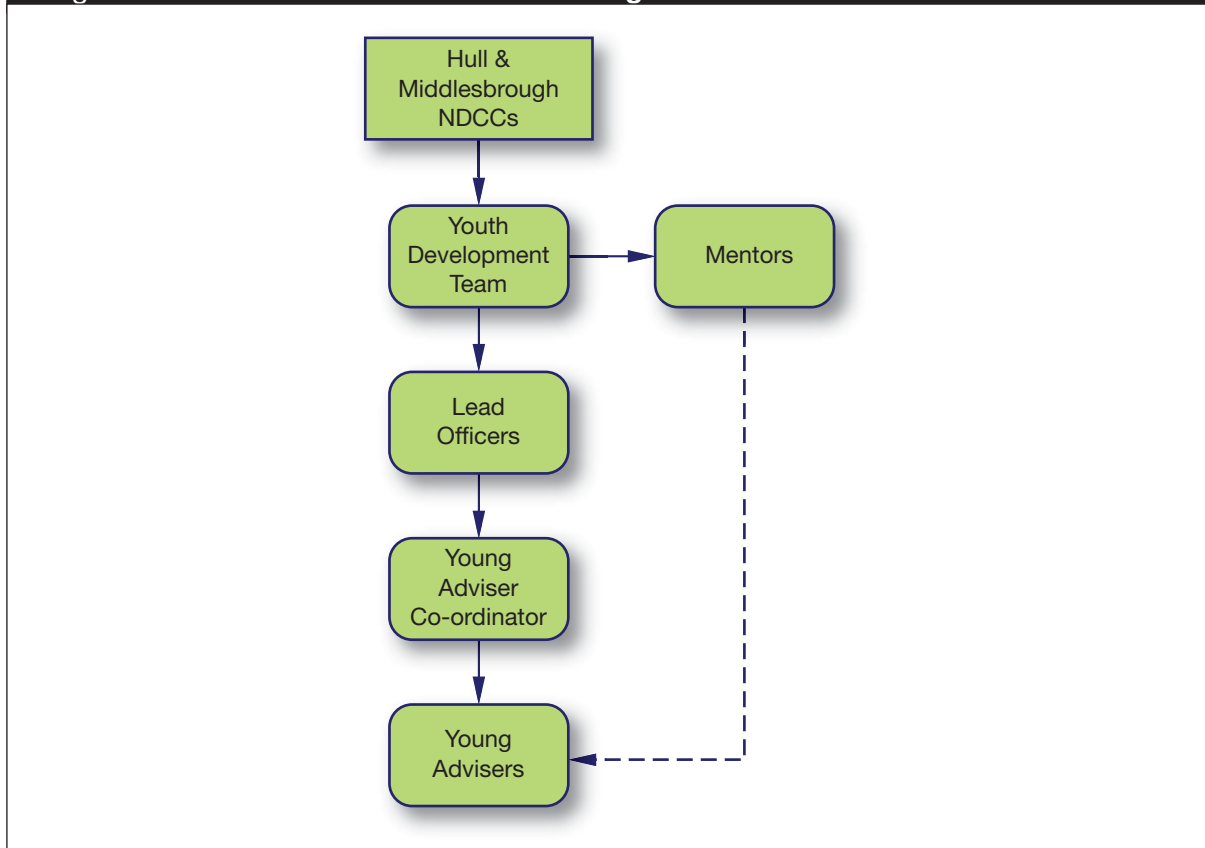
## 3.1 Models

Models of working in the 4 pilot schemes have been very different. Each of the Young Advisor pilot schemes were developed at local level based on existing frameworks and infrastructures.<sup>10</sup> This nature of design has meant that each of the pilots has been involved in a range of core activities (to be explored in Section 4) and that more project specific activities have been dependent on existing infrastructures and relationships.

Initial design and implementation was covered in the Baseline Report. This report will focus more directly on the models operationalised within the pilot and their effects in terms of development and implementation.

All 4 schemes were awarded pilot status as a result of tendering through their respective New Deal for Communities Programme (NDC). In 2 of the 4 areas (Middlesbrough and Hull – Model 1), development of the programme was allocated to the Youth Development Programme within their NDC's. In another area (Manchester – Model 2) the NDC Social Regeneration Unit took the lead the pilot scheme, they had mechanisms in place to provide major inputs to its design and development from a wide range of agencies. (The Youth Inclusion Working Group)<sup>11</sup> In the final area (Brighton – Model 3), the NDC commission/contract out all youth provision to Brighton Youth Support Service (YSS).

Diagram 1: Model 1 – Hull and Middlesbrough



<sup>10</sup> Lead Officer Interviews – February 2006

<sup>11</sup> Youth Inclusion Working Group had been developed as part of the East Manchester NDC structures.

This model resulted in the Youth Development sections within the NDC taking on the development of the pilot schemes. This placed Young Advisors within existing structures of youth activity and provided avenues and opportunities for them to develop their role as young Advisors.

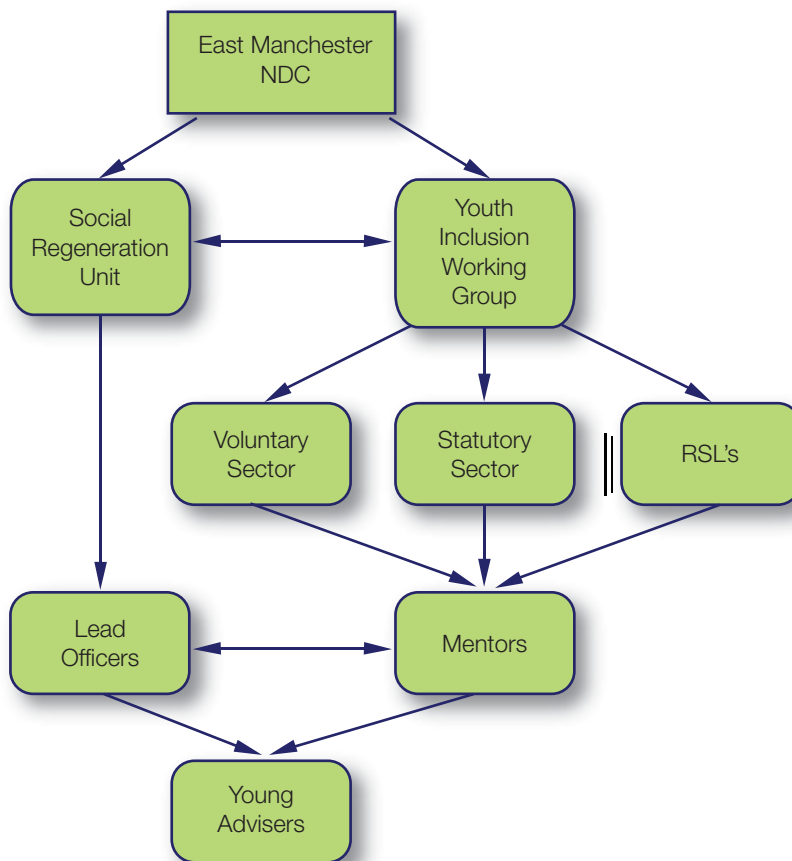
It also resulted in the Youth Development leads taking over the Lead Officer role for Young Advisors. This was an additional task on an already overloaded work schedule. Both areas went some way in alleviating this problem by appointing a Young Advisor in a co-ordinator role to support the lead officers in co-ordinating and developing Young Advisor work, tackling logistical and practical issues such as arranging meetings.

This model encountered difficulties in recruiting and maintaining mentors for the Young Advisors which meant additional support and mentoring to Young Advisors had to be provided by the lead officers.

Another key learning point from this model is that all Young Advisor work was developed based on existing relationships between the lead officers and agencies and organisations in the local area.

This model has been particularly successful in promoting Young Advisors and their skills within the NDCs and to external agencies and departments across the local areas. As time has gone on, word of mouth has meant that the profile of Young Advisors has been raised, both local people and agencies are aware of the advantages Young Advisors can offer and are beginning to make requests for Young Advisor input. Examples of this include a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) requesting input from Young Advisors on how they can best engage with and consult with young people in their area and a request from the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to youth proof the Community Strategy and produce a video to open out the strategy to more young people in the area.

Diagram 2: Model 2 – Manchester



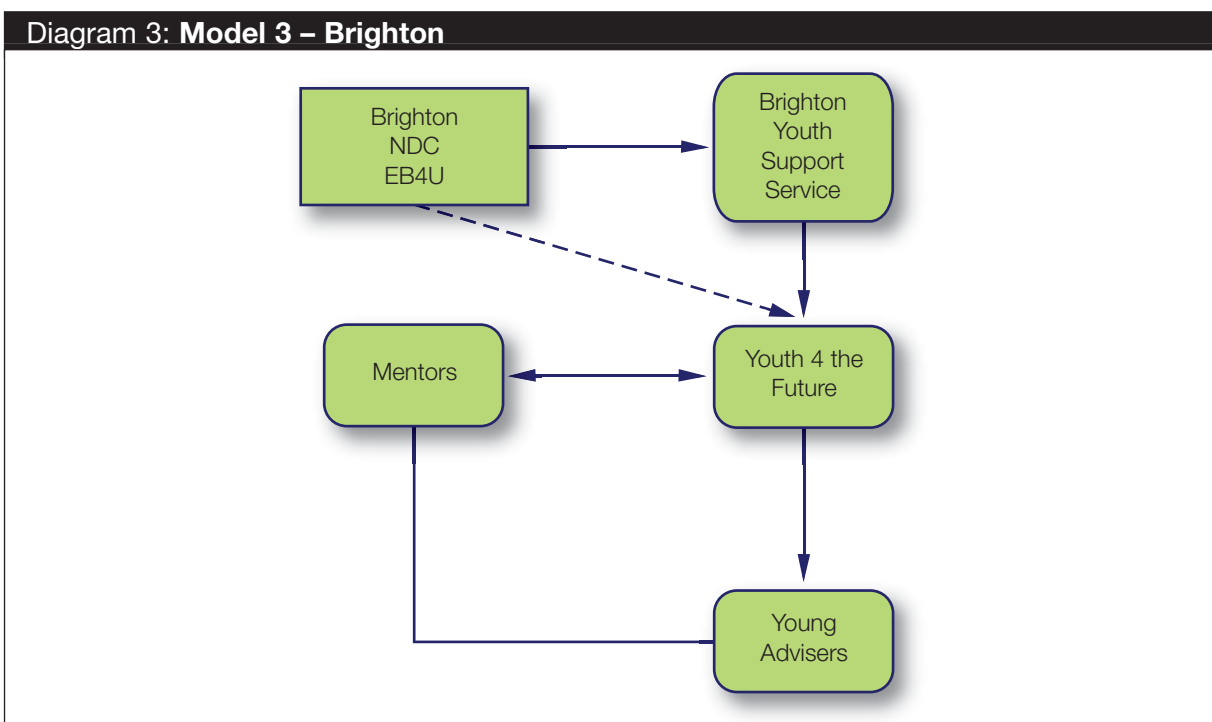
This model places a much higher emphasis on influencing the existing infrastructure within East Manchester. Over the past 5 years East Manchester NDC has worked effectively to integrate local authority and NDC services within the area. They work as a collective unit and this is reflected in the design and implementation of the Young Advisers pilot scheme.

The Youth Inclusion Working Group is made up of a range of key stakeholders operating within the area. This includes the voluntary sector, Youth Services, Education, and Registered Social Landlords. Young Advisers operate in 5 areas (initially 6 but one young Advisor resigned due to college demands). Young Advisers were allocated to work in the area they lived in and assigned to a mentor working in each of these areas within a specific organisation.

This model has resulted in a wider range of partners being actively involved in the design, development and more direct input to the Young Advisers. It has also meant that each of the Young Advisers have regular contacts with their mentors who work with Young Advisers to develop their individual workloads within each of their chosen organisations. This model has also meant that the lead officer has not had to provide a mentoring service for any Young Advisor as part of his role.

However, whilst this model demonstrates a range of positive aspects in terms of increased partnership working and opportunities,<sup>12</sup> Young Advisors report that the design of this scheme means they work largely in isolation of other Young Advisors and that there has been a lack of peer support at times throughout the programme.<sup>13</sup> The geography of the 5 areas involved and the planned roll out across East Manchester has highlighted logistical problems in getting the Young Advisors together regularly with the lead officer which in turn means more individual contact and additional lead officer time.

Increased levels of partnership working and regular inputs to the pilot have meant that the work of Young Advisors has become widespread across the agencies involved and not NDC specific projects. This has meant that the profile of Young Advisors in East Manchester is now very high and there is a real danger of demand outstripping resources.



Brighton NDC (East Brighton 4 U, EB4u) commissioned Brighton and Hove City Council to provide all NDC youth provision in the East Brighton area. The Young Advisors became a part of this programme and have been managed through the Brighton Youth Support Service (YSS). The NDC programme of work, Youth 4 the Future (Y4tF) is managed by the Youth Support Service.

The Youth 4 the Future co-ordinator initially took on the role of Lead Officer for the Young Advisors and each of the Young Advisors were appointed mentors through this service.

This model meant that Young Advisors could forge direct links with youth service activities in the wider area and from very early in the pilot, Young Advisors had already begun to expand their boundaries to citywide and wider local authority issues.

<sup>12</sup> Lead Officer/Mentor Interviews

<sup>13</sup> Manchester Young Advisors Participatory Exercises and supported by Lead Officer interviews

Brighton Youth Support Service portrays a deep commitment to the increased participation of young people although some generally feel they have a long way to go to achieve this in practice.

Young Advisors were seen as an opportunity to embed participation into their practice more effectively.<sup>14</sup> Again this model built on existing relationships between staff within youth services, primarily within the statutory sector. Most Young Advisors worked within the Youth Support Service contacts with some involvement with voluntary sector organisations.

This model also allowed for wide ranging examples of work to be carried out by Young Advisors. These will be discussed further in Section 4. However, the model has not been unproblematic as the statutory sector tends to have regimented systems and less flexibility than other sectors. This became apparent when the lead officer left temporarily and systems made it difficult to replace her quickly. This also meant Young Advisors and the pilot scheme were operating for a time without management supervision, which has ultimately resulted in a reduction of support to Young Advisors April-June 2006.<sup>15</sup>

The evidence suggests that each of these models have been effective to a degree and none are totally problem free. Model 1 fails to fully integrate partner agencies to the pilot and as a result has problems sustaining mentors. Model 2 makes excellent use of partners but the fact that Young Advisors work individually in separate areas makes it difficult to meet regularly to share good practice and new ideas. Model 3 highlights a lack of accountability between the NDC, Youth Support Service and Youth 4 the Future which resulted in Young Advisor work focusing very much on the youth service agendas as opposed to the wider agendas within the NDC.

It is not possible to develop one model to fit all schemes. Models need to be developed locally, linked in to existing partnerships and regarded as an opportunity to bring new partners on board to aid development of the programme.

## 3.2 Management

All pilot schemes were managed by the lead officers. Three of them (Hull, Manchester and Middlesbrough) were integrated within the wider NDC structures and had clear streams of accountability within those<sup>16</sup>. The commissioning of the EB4U work to the YSS does not illustrate such clear streams of accountability. Whilst both YSS and NDC stipulate the existence of such accountability mechanisms, the evidence<sup>17</sup> suggests that these are not clear and not utilised to their full potential. The Young Advisor pilot in Brighton effectively ended in March 2006 although a minimum of support was provided up until May 2006. It is acknowledged that the changeover in lead officer at this project resulted in an overspend of project budget as Young Advisors were working more hours than initially planned. This meant that the Youth Support Service had to cover the overspend from their own budget putting further strain on their resources.

<sup>14</sup> YSS staff interview

<sup>15</sup> YSS and NDC endline interviews

<sup>16</sup> NDC interviews

<sup>17</sup> Young Advisor discussions, NRA interview

The initial lead officer in Brighton had adopted a more hands-off management style, providing support and guidance when needed but allowing the Young Advisors to become involved in areas of work of interest to them. This resulted in Young Advisors in Brighton becoming very proactive in their role, often making the necessary contacts themselves rather than through the lead officer.<sup>18</sup> This meant that throughout the gap in lead officers, some of the Young Advisors were able to continue with their work.

The management style adopted in the Middlesbrough pilot saw the lead officer taking a much more directive role with the work of the Young Advisors. He developed the contacts, followed leads for potential work, marketed the Young Advisors through his established networks, then mentored and supported the Young Advisors in carrying out the work. Another element was that Young Advisors in this area received additional training from the lead officer to prepare them for the tasks at hand.<sup>19</sup>

Hull adopted a similar management style to Middlesbrough with the lead officer taking a lead in marketing Young Advisors to some key agencies and supporting them to carry out the work. However, Young Advisors report they were given the opportunity to identify potential work through their own developing networks and had control on whether or not to accept potential pieces of work put forward by the lead officer. The Young Advisors have weekly meetings with the lead officer in order to ensure they are fully engaged with any decisions made.

The lead officer in Manchester has adopted a more strategic management role and the operational management is split between the mentors and their organisations. The existing infrastructure within East Manchester means that the lead officer is well placed to promote Young Advisors not only within a wide range of agencies and organisations but also to offer specific inputs to city wide strategies and policies.<sup>20</sup> Young Advisor workload in Manchester is dictated to a large extent by the mentor organisations as Young Advisors play a role in a range of their project work. They report good relationships with their mentors and high levels of support and guidance. This is extended to the lead officer who maintains regular contact with the Young Advisors (not always face to face) and their mentors. The Youth Inclusion Working Group is used as a conduit to discuss the work Young Advisors will take on.

### 3.3 Systems

All pilot schemes found that existing administrative and financial systems were not conducive to employing young people. All 4 schemes contracted out payments to Young Advisors. Brighton and Manchester opted for a voluntary sector organisation to pay Young Advisors. NDC staff in Middlesbrough are paid through the local authority who is the accountable body. As Middlesbrough already had some experience of paying young people for another project, systems were in place and a management fee was agreed with the local authority for them to include the Young Advisors. This fee had not been accounted for in the budget but ODPM agreed to cover the costs. Hull also has a similar arrangement for payment through the local authority alongside NDC staff. It is noted that this was made simpler due to none of the Young Advisors being under 16 years.

<sup>18</sup> Brighton Young Advisors – Evaluation Workshop

<sup>19</sup> Middlesbrough Young Advisors – Evaluation Workshop

<sup>20</sup> NDC Officer, Manchester, Lead Officer Interviews

It also became apparent that central government financial systems created some difficulties for claiming back monies spent. Existing ODPM claim forms did not fit with existing local financial systems which meant additional time and effort was necessary to submit claim forms.<sup>21</sup> Whilst this task was carried out by the finance section in each of the areas, all lead officers reported that preparing all the documentation and evidence of spend was very time consuming. One lead officer stated:

*“The YA programme has been a real frustration in many ways. Systems were not in place to support the pilots. One impact of this has been covering the Young Advisors’ wages. It has been really stressful and problematic. I have spent so much time trying to sort out the admin involved that if it wasn’t for the impact on the young people themselves we would have probably withdrawn.”<sup>22</sup>*

Lead officers reported that in an ideal world such systems would be in place prior to the start of the schemes as dealing with such problems take time away from project development. In reality, this would have meant major delays in implementing the pilot programme.

It could be argued that neither local nor national systems supported the work of the pilot schemes and as a result created additional work and problems for lead officers. Financial requirements tend to be quite rigid within local and central government and this can act as a barrier to developing work with young people. Whilst the need for strict financial procedures is not in question, the ability to adapt these for specific programmes operating outside the norm is a necessity. This is an issue that needs to be addressed at both local and national levels if work with young people is to continue to develop.

NDC structures did allow for schemes to spend and reclaim retrospectively but the breakdown in financial mechanisms meant long delays. This was a particular problem for Brighton YSS who had very limited resources.

The existing administrative and financial procedures also impacted on the ability of Young Advisors to attend conferences, particularly at short notice. An inability to provide funds to cover costs and the need to book travel and accommodation in advance to work through existing mechanisms has meant that on occasion difficulties have arisen in getting Young Advisors to planned events. This would indicate the need for a petty cash scheme for use in such emergencies.

It is also worth noting that under employment laws work permits are required from the Local Authority (usually Education Department) to employ young people under 16 years old. This did create delays for Young Advisors in 2 areas and needs to be taken into account in the planning phases of new schemes

<sup>21</sup> Lead Officer Interviews February 2006

<sup>22</sup> Lead Officer Interview February 2006

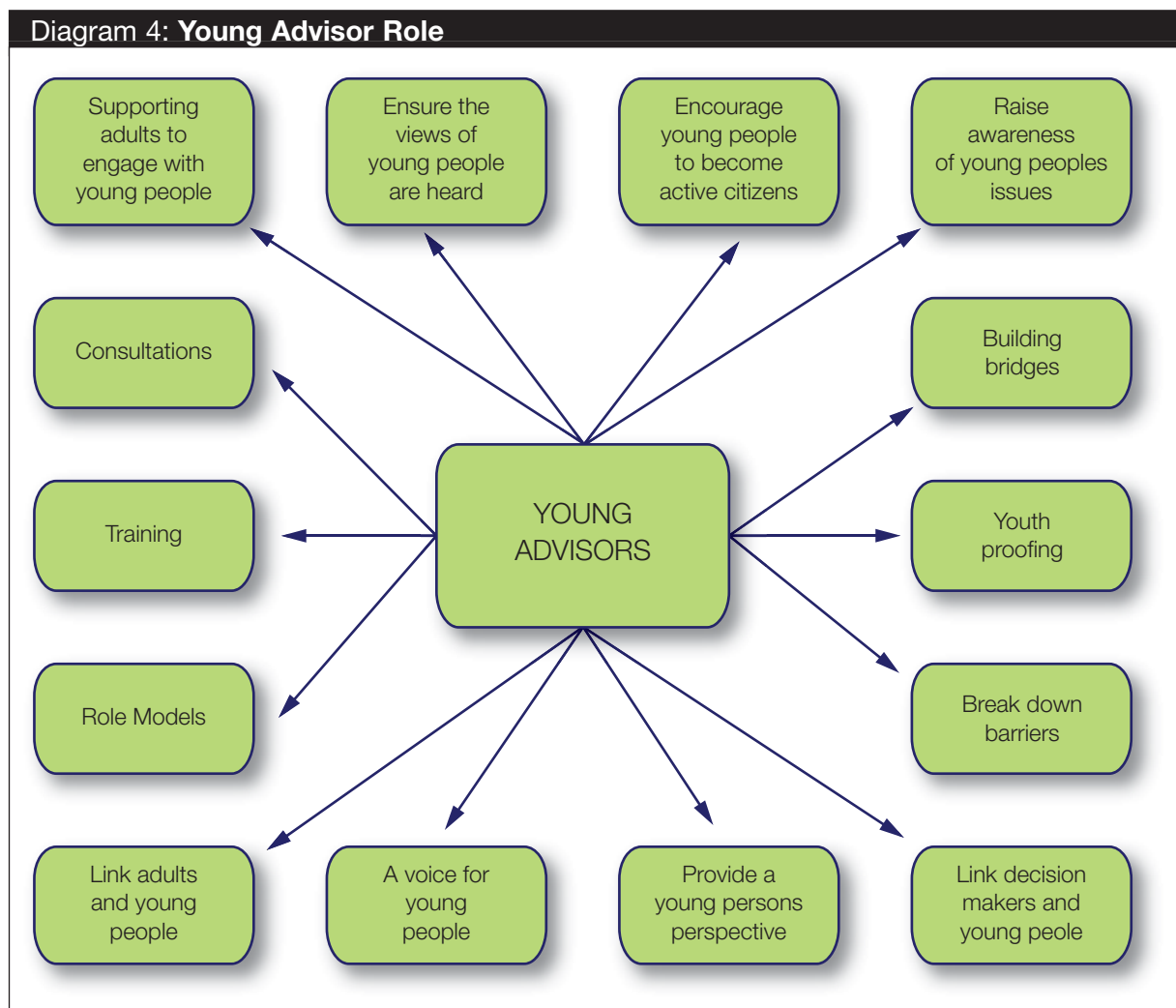
## 4. Progress to Date

### 4.1 Activities

The baseline report sets out activities being undertaken in each of the areas. (See Annex 3). Whilst much of the work illustrated in the baseline report is longer term work and is continuing, the Young Advisors have also continued to take on additional project work. Work completed to date includes the youth proofing of a number of documents, a workshop for wardens on engaging young people and setting up a Youth Forum.

This final report will focus on Young Advisor inputs at different levels – local, regional and national and also identify some of the more high profile work that Young Advisors have become involved with.

Across the 4 pilot areas the Young Advisors have developed their role to suit the needs of their area and workloads. They have attempted to address issues and provide the opportunity for adults and services to engage with and include young people in key decisions.<sup>23</sup> Within their activities, the Young Advisor role has become well established across the pilot areas. These include:



<sup>23</sup> Young Advisor Evaluation Workshop – June 2006

Whilst some of the roles shown in Diagram 4 were anticipated in the early planning of the pilot programme,<sup>24</sup> a number have evolved as work has progressed. Those worthy of particular note are:

- Young Advisors as role models
- Contributing to community engagement
- Contributing to community development
- Encouraging young people to become more actively engaged within their communities
- Young Advisors as a “Linker”
- Young Advisors as a “Conduit” between young people and key decision making processes
- Building bridges between adults and young people
- Challenging the stereotypical view of young people among adults

As a result of recent government initiatives and legislation – Youth Matters (2005), Every Child Matters (2003), the Children Act (2004), local authorities have been tasked with **the production of a range of strategies**. Young Advisors within all 4 pilot areas have become involved with a range of strategies. (See Diagram 5) This has involved consultation, input and youth proofing. One element of this work has been to engage other young people in strategy development.

Many of the Stakeholders report that Young Advisor input to date has been very positive and valued. Much of this work has yet to be completed but Young Advisors have a fundamental role in engaging other young people and also ensuring that strategies relevant to young people are accessible to young people, particularly in terms of language and design.

<sup>24</sup> Communities Need Young Advisors (2005) NRU



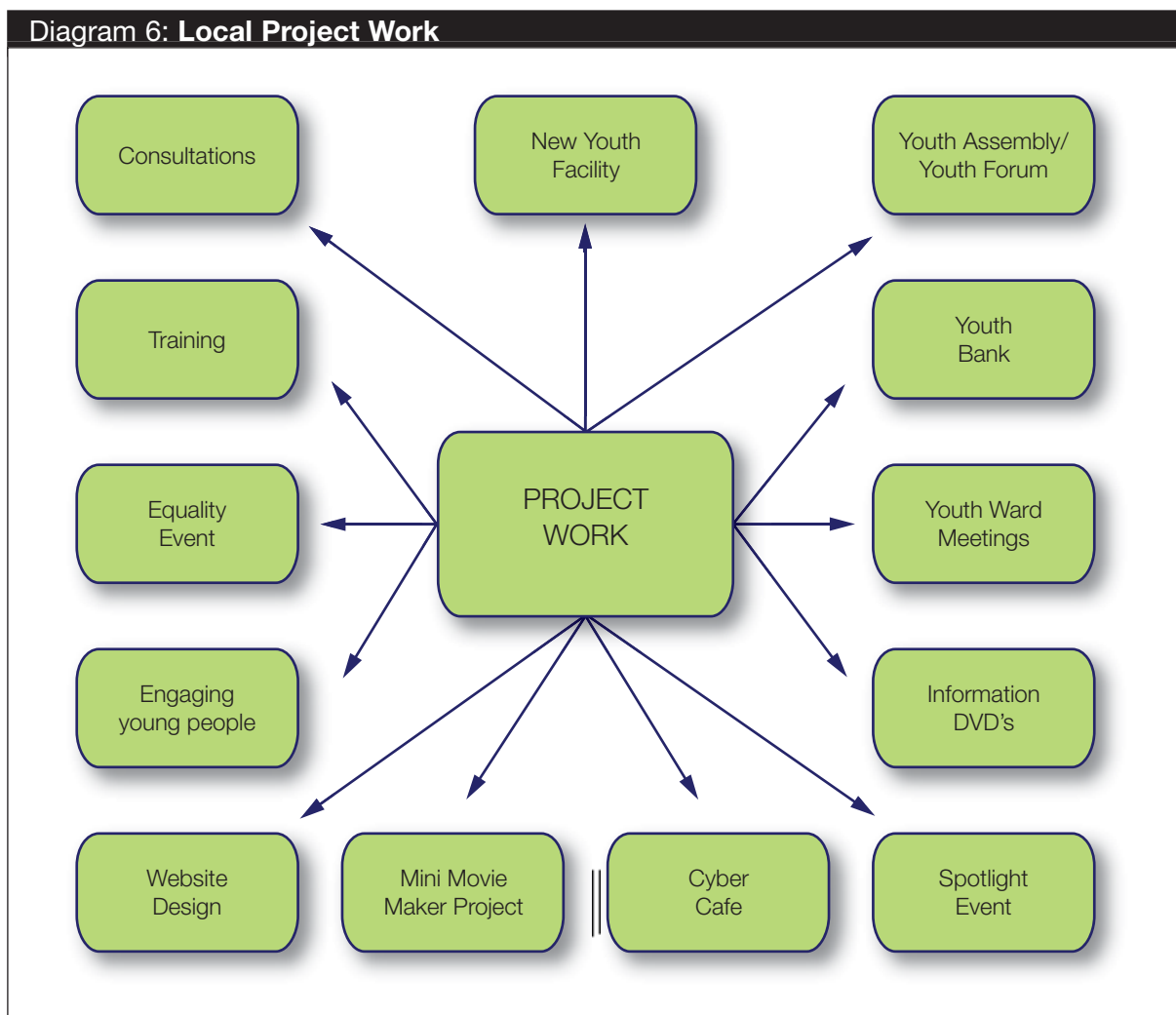
To date the above strategies are locally led. Hull was chosen as a pilot area for the Respect Agenda and Young Advisors in that area have been asked to play a large role in engaging young people, raising awareness and youth proofing. This will be resource intensive and has highlighted the need to include young people from the Youth Forum to take on some of this work.

Youth alcohol related incidents in Brighton have been deemed as a priority issue by the YSS. Young Advisor involvement in the Alcohol Strategy work resulted in research being carried out into the idea of youth bars and the YSS is keen to explore this model further as a way of addressing the issue.

Alongside the more **high** profile work Young Advisors have also been involved in a number of **local projects and initiatives**. This work has proved to be important in building the reputation of Young Advisors within the NDC structures and the local areas. Whilst building on existing networks of lead officers, Young Advisors are now in a position to build up networks of their own.<sup>25</sup> This is likely to aid the continuance of existing work and also the development of new work.

<sup>25</sup> Young Advisors, Evaluation Workshop June 2006

Diagram 6: Local Project Work



Local project work has played a major role in increasing awareness of Young Advisors in the area. To date much of the project work has included consulting with young people in the areas, encouraging young people to become involved in project work and in many cases, providing a positive role model for other young people in the area.

The “positive role model” is particularly prominent in Hull and Manchester.<sup>26</sup> In Hull as other young people in the area see what is being achieved by Young Advisors, they are becoming more active in their communities, increasing participation in local forums and there is some indication that some of these young people will begin to take on a Young Advisor role in the future as part of their personal development.<sup>27</sup>

Another example is in Manchester where a Young Advisor has worked with other young people to develop their skills and confidence. Young people are beginning to see that they can make a difference. See Case Study 1.<sup>28</sup>

26 Lead officers and Mentor interviews – February and June 2006

27 Lead Officer interview – June 2006

28 Mentor, Music Stuff interviews – June 2006

### **Case Study 1: Cyber Cafe, Crossley Youth Centre, Manchester**

In Manchester, one young adviser has worked steadily with a group of young people attending a youth centre to engage them in developing a Cyber Café at the centre. Some of these young people are now on the steering group for this project.

The young adviser has consulted with young people, designed and implemented a questionnaire and worked with small groups of young people in the centre to consult with other young people. A small budget was allocated to this work and managed by the young adviser who has been a key player in the progress of this project and has already expanded the work to include other youth centres in the area.

This project links together both voluntary and statutory sector agencies and the young adviser forms the link between both sectors and young people.

Working with a young adviser has shown other what a young person can achieve and some of them have expressed a wish to become a young adviser in the future.

Young Advisors in Brighton worked with a voluntary sector organisation to consult young people and adults in one area to assess views and opinions on merging the activities of 2 existing community buildings into one new purpose built community facility. Findings were inconclusive as high levels of territorialism made this a difficult situation to assess as approximately 50% of respondents wanted to maintain the status quo as they would not attend activities in another section of the estate. Results of the consultation have been made available to inform the decision makers. A final decision has not yet been made.

Young Advisors in Hull have been actively involved in the design of a new youth facility in their area. See Case Study 2.<sup>29</sup> This involved engaging with young people, breaking down barriers with adults as to potential sites for the facility, working with the architect and contractor to develop the design and usage of the space.



<sup>29</sup> Key stakeholder interviews – June 2006

## Case Study 2: Preston Road Youth Facility, Hull

Young advisers worked alongside the architect and the contractor is ensuring the design of the new youth facility would meet the needs of young people in the area.

Early attempts to design the building without such involvement had meant extensive delays in the project. Young advisers consulted with young people in the area as to their requirements for the centre. They also met with adults in the area who had expressed concerns as to where this centre would be situated and addressed some of the issues with them. This resulted in a more positive involvement from adults.

Young advisers worked alongside the architect talking through documents and drawings, providing an accurate idea of what was needed. They used interactive ways to explore interrelated space as a way of ensuring the design would maximise the space available.

An understanding of the budget was essential to keep things 'real' which allowed them to differentiate between what was a necessity and what was practical resulting in a simple design but an effective use of space.

The model was produced as a 3D virtual reality building and this has been used in a number of workshops and conferences and in a presentation to the Deputy Prime Minister on a visit to the area.

The building is now underway and is expected to be opened and fully operational by December 2006.

A key role for Young Advisors in Hull, Middlesbrough and Brighton has been **youth proofing**. This is an area of work that helps to ensure that policies and strategies receive input from young people, question whether such policies and strategies on young people issues include the views of young people or whether they are an adult perspective of a youth issue. Often, such strategies are not attractive to young people or easy to read and as a result of youth proofing by Young Advisors, summary documents have been produced for young people. One example of this is the Community Strategy in Hull where Young Advisors youth proofed the Community Strategy, gave very critical feedback, particularly about language and presentation. A summary document was then produced which was much easier to digest for both adults and young people.<sup>30</sup> See Case Study 4 below.

Young Advisors in all 4 pilot schemes have also been involved in a vast number of **conferences and workshops both locally and nationally**. This has been a major factor in raising awareness and the profile of Young Advisors to a wider audience.

At a local level, workshops have been provided with wardens, residents, and youth work staff. Whilst these have played a role in further advertising Young Advisors, many have been issue based eg breaking down barriers, conflict resolution with young people, how to engage with young people effectively. Requests for this type of workshop continue to come in and while stakeholders report some positive feedback from these events, Young Advisors report both positively and negatively and have yet to be convinced that participants take on board or in some cases value what they are doing.

<sup>30</sup> LSP Representative interview – June 2006



Positive feedback to facilitating workshops included:

*"It was a good workshop, they listened very well to what we had to say and provided some constructive feedback."*

*"Some people were friendly and understanding and on the same level as young people."*

*"Barriers between adults and young people started to break down."*

*"It made me feel really good because I gave adults a view of what young people may face and how they could overcome this."*

Negative feedback from Young Advisors on response to some workshops included:

*"I don't think they really want to change their views on young people"*

*"They talked over the top of us and would not let us finish what we were saying"*

*"There was a negative view at times and I felt they only attended the workshop with Young Advisors so they could say they have worked with young people."*

*"They changed our agenda completely."*

An illustration of a ‘bad experience’ was in Brighton. (See Case Study 3)

### Case Study 3: Politics Show, Brighton

Young Advisers in Brighton were invited to participate in the Politics Show on local TV. This was regarded as a wonderful opportunity to raise the profile of young advisers in the area and raise awareness of their role. In reality, the experience was very negative. The remit of the show was changed without notice and the whole of the broadcast focused not on what young advisers could offer but on the fact that they were paid and how this could be justified. One young adviser commented:

“It was awful, it didn’t matter what we were actually doing but I had to justify why I was getting paid to do it. Adults don’t have to do that and especially not on TV.”

Whilst this is not something young advisers have been asked to do generally it does illustrate a reluctance to accept that young people can provide a valuable contribution to the sustainability of their areas. The interviewer and other members of the panel did not question the value of such a pilot but focused on justification of payment for the work. This leads us on to a number of questions.

1. Does this mean that they are happy for young people to make a contribution free of charge?
2. Would an adult take on a consultancy role free of charge?
3. If someone is employed to do a specific job, why should age be a key factor in whether or not they get paid for doing it?

The young advisers did write a letter of complaint to the TV station asking these questions but did not receive a reply.

Another key task for Young Advisors to date has been giving presentations and facilitating workshops at local and national conferences. Many requests for their input to national conferences have come from the DCLG and the Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor (NRA) lead on this pilot programme.



National Conferences include:

- Young Advisor Conference, Birmingham
- Local Government Association Conference
- South West Regional Conference, Bournemouth
- The National Residents Conference, Birmingham
- Neighbourhood Management Conference, York
- Active Citizens Conference, London
- Tranmere and Rock Ferry Launch



Young Advisor input to the above conferences has been a presentation slot or workshop facilitation. Young Advisors have played an active role in publicising young Advisors to the wider audiences. These conferences have already resulted in a number of potential schemes signing up for training.<sup>31</sup>

One Young Advisor was involved in an international conference. She gave a presentation to the European Conference for “Integrated Children and Youth Policies in Europe – a need for disadvantaged neighbourhoods.” This conference was held in Strasbourg and resulted in developing networks with workers in France and Sweden and other countries who were very interested in the Young Advisor concept. It is anticipated that future contacts are likely to include exchange visits.

<sup>31</sup> NRA interview – June 2006

In some areas Young Advisors have been approached **to speak to young people on behalf of agencies** eg the police in Hull requested that Young Advisors talk to young people involved in antisocial behaviour in a particular area of the town. Young Advisors consulted with these young people, offered information on diversionary activities and discussed the reasons they were hanging out in a particular area. This information was fed back to the police. Young Advisors also spoke to the victims of this antisocial behaviour.

Bearing in mind that Young Advisors have been operational for such a short time, the work they have been involved in is very wide ranging and provides a good indication of future potential.

Young Advisors have shown a real commitment to the work they are doing. They have been very enthusiastic in taking on board new challenges and also in challenging institutional thinking about young people. As their role has progressed it has become clear that they are not only acting as a **link** between young people and service providers but also as a **conduit** for decision makers to engage with young people. Stakeholders are already beginning to see the value of such a role and requests for Young Advisor input are increasing in 3 of the 4 areas.<sup>32</sup> This illustrates a vital role for Young Advisors that will provide added value to many agencies and organisations in the future with potential to increase youth engagement in decision making processes immensely.

For Young Advisors to reach its potential there is a need for additional resources being made available to continue the current work and further develop these schemes. It is important that the work to date comes to fruition providing further evidence of the value of Young Advisors. Lead officers have a crucial role to play in the future development of these pilot schemes. This includes ensuring Young Advisors continue to be involved with key agencies and strategies, ensuring the move away from consultation to decision making and action continues and sustainability.

## 4.2 Potential New Work

Young Advisors and Lead officers are already in the process of identifying potential work for the future. Planning for this work is in its early stages but appears to fall within 3 distinct themes.<sup>33</sup>

Conferences	Training/Recruiting	Project Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chair Conference</li> <li>• Workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train new Young Advisors</li> <li>• Input to Training Materials</li> <li>• Visiting new schemes to share best practice</li> <li>• Being shadowed</li> <li>• Involved in recruitment</li> <li>• Recruit new Young Advisors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recycling/Environmental Projects</li> <li>• Funding applications</li> <li>• Social Enterprise</li> <li>• Expand existing project work to other areas</li> <li>• Young People Events</li> </ul>

<sup>32</sup> Lead officers – Evaluation Workshop June 2006

<sup>33</sup> Young Advisor Evaluation Workshop – June 2006

These examples illustrate the cementing of existing work, skills development, new learning experiences and additional project work. Much of the current work mentioned earlier is longer term project work and continues to form part of their work programmes.

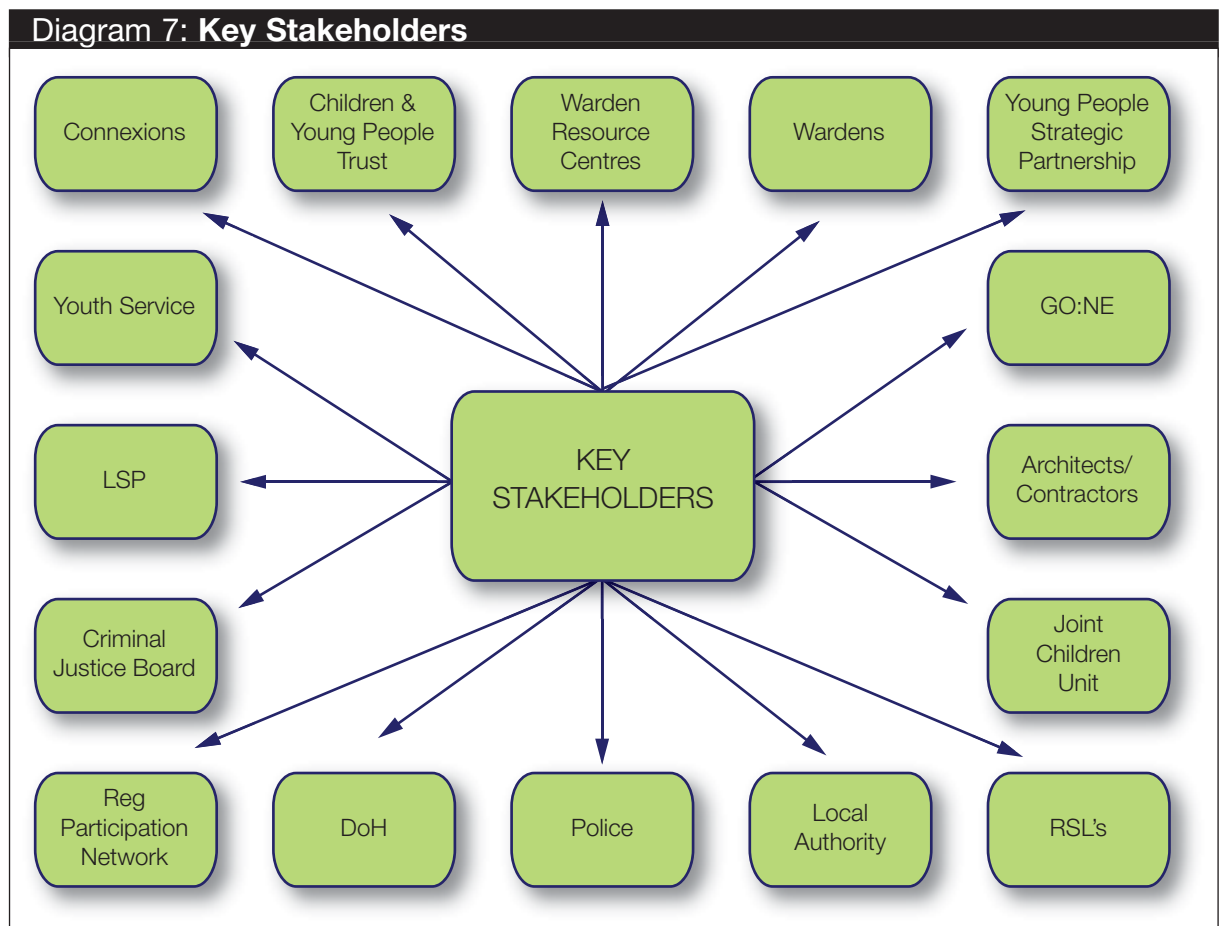
### 4.3 Partnership Working

Working in partnership is a key element of how NDC’s operate generally. Across all 4 pilot schemes initial work was developed through lead officers’ existing links and partnerships. This worked very well in establishing a work base for Young Advisors to build on.

The baseline report identified key stakeholders in each of the 4 pilot areas. (See Annex 4) These stakeholders continue to play a key role in the development and progress of each of the pilots. Some stakeholders are project specific eg Community Strategy, Children’s Services Plan, others longer term and progressive eg Connexions.

The importance of positive partnerships between NDC, their partners, and Young Advisors has remained constant throughout this pilot programme. In essence it has been these partnerships that have resulted in Young Advisors becoming involved with specific organisations and in project work. Lead officers played a key role with their partners to introduce Young Advisors to work being carried out with young people in the area. Existing links were a crucial element of the successes achieved to date.

Across the 4 pilot areas a wide range of key stakeholders are involved.



Lead officers have proven very successful in their marketing strategies with existing partnerships in raising awareness of Young Advisors which has resulted in Young Advisors becoming involved in some high profile areas of work across the 4 areas.

Work with one RSL in Manchester has resulted in Youth Ward Meetings being established. These meetings are attended by local councillors, the police and a range of service providers to provide opportunities for young people to express their views. Young Advisors have taken a lead role in setting up and facilitating these meetings and it is expected that further meetings will be held in other wards across the East Manchester area.



Requests are being made from partners for their documents to be youth proofed by the Young Advisors. Key partners include the Local Strategic Partnership (Hull), Criminal Justice Board (Hull), Department of Health (DoH), Joint Children's Unit (JCU, Manchester) and Connexions (Middlesbrough). (See Case Studies 4 and 5). Reactions to this work have been varied. Feedback from some partners has been very slow eg Department of Health, Manchester although additional involvement has been requested from other partners. This has also resulted in Young Advisors working with additional partners and for partners to work in a very different way.

#### **Case Study 4: Community Strategy, Hull**

Following the youth proofing of the Community Strategy, the LSP decided there was a need for the Community Strategy to be translated into a DVD to illustrate the key issues of housing, employment and success through the eyes of young people.

Young advisers have worked alongside a Production Company to design the DVD, produce a script and star in the filming. The DVD will also include young adviser voice overs. This DVD will be used to launch the Community Strategy and will be sent to every school and college in the area with a summary version of the Strategy to be used in citizenship lessons.

The video production company reported that working with young people in this way had been a very different experience for them. They had worked with young people on other projects but had taken on a much more directive role. This work involved placing the DVD completely in the hands of the young advisers and this has proved to be a very interesting process. Lessons had been learned, particularly in terms of scheduling around young peoples commitments. "It has been a very good learning curve for the company."



A point worthy of note is that in other areas links with the LSP have yet to develop to this stage. The LSP in Middlesbrough were supportive of Young Advisor work but did not take up the offer of support or youth proofing. However, some organisations represented on the LSP (Children's Services) have asked Young Advisors to become involved in some of their work.<sup>34</sup> The lack of involvement of LSP's is slightly disappointing and an area of work to be developed in the future. It is anticipated that the development of Local Area Agreements will go some way to addressing this issue.

Lead Officers in both Hull and Middlesbrough report difficulties in maintaining links with the mainstream youth service providers. Whilst there are some links, they have had little success in integrating Young Advisors into the work of the statutory youth services.

Another example of a positive partnership approach is illustrated in Case Study 5.<sup>35</sup> These examples illustrate ongoing work with an agency that has a responsibility to engage children and young people in their services. The Connexions Service operates across all 4 pilot areas but links across the pilot schemes are varied.

<sup>34</sup> Lead Officer interview – June 2006

<sup>35</sup> JCU Manchester Interview – June 2006

### **Case Study 5: Connexions, Middlesbrough**

Young adviser involvement in the 14-19 Strategy places young advisers within Connexions Middlesbrough and Tees Valley and the Children's & Young Peoples Partnership (a sub-group of the LSP).

Young advisers have been tasked with youth proofing the Action Plan and Report and to make it a more youth friendly document. They have also agreed to work with other young people to discuss the strategy with them to find out what they think about it and what they can do.

One of the wider objectives is to look at service provision and access to services.

Connexions have a strong ethos for the engagement of young people in their services. They have a number of initiatives designed to engage young people in their service provision. Young Advisers are regarded as another tool to ensure and facilitate improved engagement of young people.

This work means young advisers are operating Middlesbrough wide, expanding their NDC boundaries and their networks.

This work also illustrates the expansion of the Young Advisor role to beyond the NDC boundaries. In effect this is happening in all 4 pilot areas. In Hull, Young Advisors are operating across the city on the Community Strategy. Brighton Young Advisors have been working on the Youth Bank and Alcohol Strategy which are city wide initiatives and in Manchester Young Advisors were involved in the Joint Area Review (JAR) which involved the NDC, Children's Services Department, Youth Service, Health and Voluntary Sector operating across the whole of East Manchester.

An example of how Young Advisors can be involved in influencing change is their work within the Children's Services. In response to the Laming Report and the Green Paper, Every Child Matters which led to the Children Act 2004 and the Every Child Matters Change Programme, there have been major changes in the commissioning of children's services and how they are planned and implemented. It has also been recognised that children and young people need to engage with this process of change and that local authorities must engage children and young people. The JCU have developed a good working relationship with the Young Advisors and have involved them in their task of implementing the Children Act 2004. (Case Study 6)

### **Case Study 6: Joint Children’s Unit, Manchester**

The joint Children’s Unit is working towards the implementation of the Children Act 2004 in Manchester. Young Advisors are currently involved in producing the Manchester Children and Young People’s Engagement Strategy as part of this process.

The JCU are working with young advisers to engage effectively with young people across the city and to involve children in the implementation of the Strategy.

Potentially this is a large piece of work which is currently in its early stages, building up understanding of the complexities of such a Strategy and to enable them to input on the production of relevant materials to improve accessibility.

Young advisers are now reviewing the Strategy and identifying ways of ensuring that young people are engaged in the decision making processes.

The JCU have been involved in lots of consultation work with children in the past but this has not linked into decision making processes within the city. They are aiming to be more accessible to young people and to involve them in decision making in their area and to service development.

The existing infrastructure in East Manchester has meant that the NDC has been able to utilise existing partners in the design and development of the Young Advisors pilot but also for partners to take some responsibility and lead in much of the work carried out. The evidence suggests that placing Young Advisors to individual organisations is a good model to duplicate although it is noted that such an inherent infrastructure is not freely available to all pilots.<sup>36</sup>

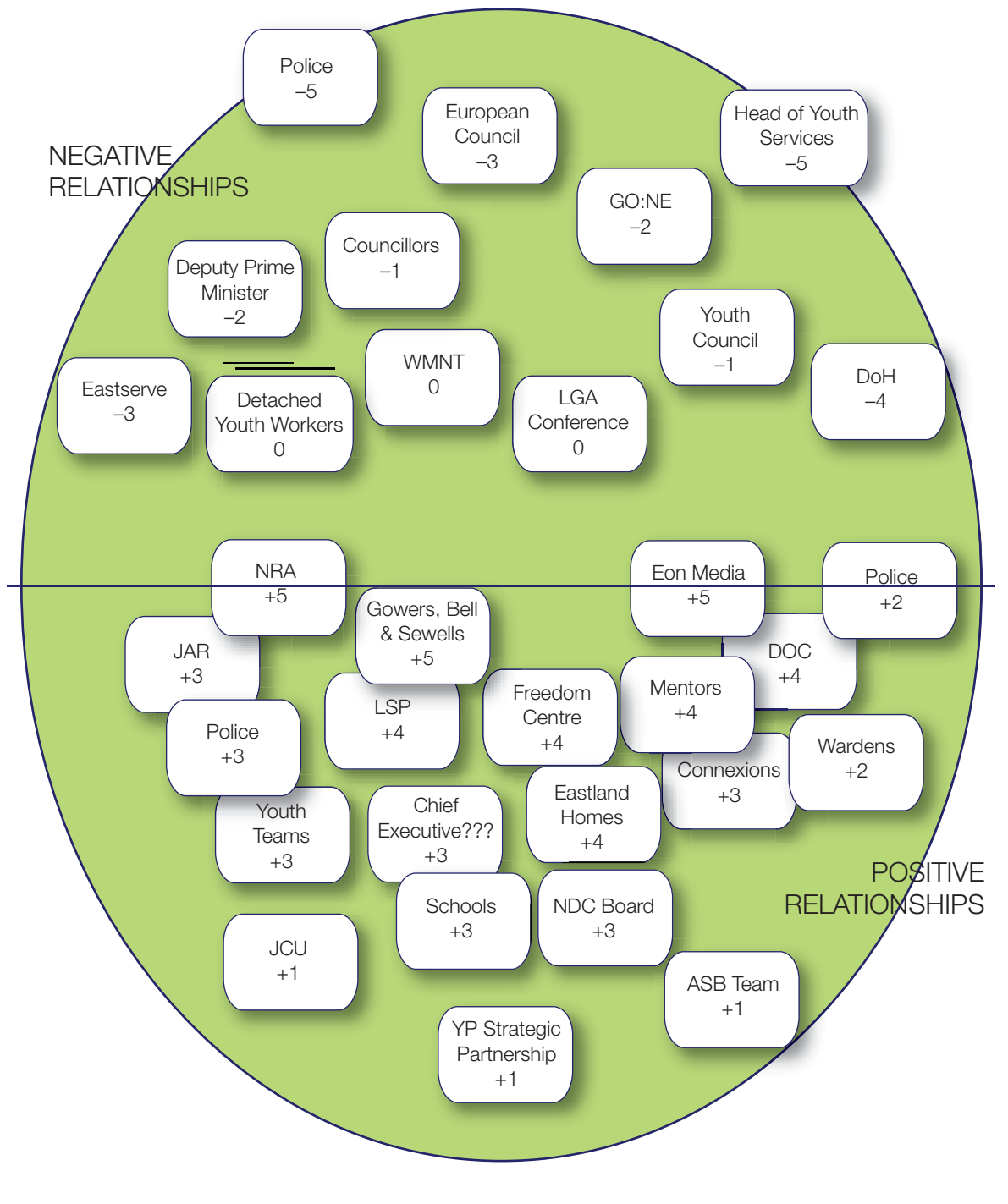
Pilot schemes in Middlesbrough and Hull involved local partners in identifying potential Young Advisors. Middlesbrough young Advisors were referred through NDC, the Youth Service, Youth Offending Team and the schools. Whilst NDC recognise a relationship with the Youth Service and Youth Offending Teams in the area, these were not developed further to include them offering support and guidance to Young Advisors. The referral only input has meant that the pilot has experienced some difficulties in providing mentors for the Young Advisors.

Young Advisors explored and analysed their relationships with their clients. Generally most Young Advisors reported positive relationships.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Youth Service Manager Interview – June 2006

<sup>37</sup> Relationship Mapping – Young Advisors Evaluation Workshop – June 2006

Diagram 8: Links and Relationship Mapping



Young Advisors reported very positive relationships with a range of their key stakeholders. These relationships were primarily linked with engagement in project work and stakeholder response to Young Advisor inputs. Reasons for negative relationships included poor response, lack of feedback or no further action. Scoring was based on how young Advisors felt these agencies had responded to engagement with Young Advisors.

### Reason for Scoring:

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good relationship with contact person</li> <li>• Feel valued</li> <li>• Listened to</li> <li>• Interesting</li> <li>• Challenging</li> <li>• Liked the people involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of response</li> <li>• Making promises but not keeping them</li> <li>• Wasting our time</li> <li>• Not happy with outcome</li> <li>• Don't relate well to young people</li> <li>• No further action</li> </ul>

Relationships with the police varied from area to area. In some areas, relationships with the police were very negative (-5 lack of interest), in other areas police were noted as a much more positive relationship. It would appear that these variations are linked to the strength of existing relationships between the NDC and the police.

The models used within this pilot programme do illustrate that the involvement of partners in the scheme does help overcome barriers such as ensuring Young Advisors have a mentor but also expand the range of work carried out. Manchester has Young Advisors placed with an RSL, 2 voluntary sector organisations and within the Youth Service. Alongside these, there is the added value of very strong NDC partnerships and links with local and national agendas.

Although major changes to working practices are not something that can happen in such a short space of time, as central government continues its drive towards better youth engagement backed up by legislation and early work being undertaken by Young Advisors begins to come to fruition, there are some indications that key agencies are beginning to see the benefits of involving Young Advisors in their work as a way of ensuring services meet the needs of young people and also that young people are involved in more of the decision making processes. Evidence from the stakeholder interviews across all 4 pilot areas indicates that some changes are being made. What is not absolutely clear is whether these changes are a result of Young Advisors or new legislation placing stronger requirements, particularly on local authorities, to engage more effectively with young people. What is becoming clear is that these stakeholders are beginning to recognise that Young Advisors provide an opportunity or a tool in helping them achieve their targets. The timing is right.

## 4.4 Links to Local, Regional and National Agendas

Alongside the more generic youth engagement agenda within central government, Young Advisors are currently working within a number of local and national agendas.

**Locally**, Young Advisors across all 4 pilot schemes have been involved in setting up youth forums and youth assemblies. These are regarded as a mechanism to enhance and sustain future youth engagement.

NDC Boards either have or are looking to recruit young people as a way of ensuring young people's voices are heard in all future decision making processes. This is not a new idea. For many years a number of the major children's charities have been working to increase young people's participation in their management structures.<sup>38</sup> Young people are represented on these boards but there is little evidence to assess the overall benefits and success of this. NDC's are recognising that there is a need for more than just having a young person on the Board.<sup>39</sup> Extra work is required to ensure that the contribution of these young people is given equal value to that of adults to inform decision making.

To date Young Advisors have developed some strong links with local agendas and have become involved in a number of local agendas across the 4 pilot areas. These include:

- Local Area Agreements (LAA)
- Joint Area Reviews (JAR)
- Community Strategies
- Local Action Panels (LAP)
- Respect Agenda
- Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP)
- Children and Young People's Plan
- Crime & Disorder
- Sports Agenda
- Strategy for approaching young people
- Engagement and Participation Strategy
- Youth Strategy
- Learning Entitlement

Some **regional** links have been explored with some Young Advisors meeting with the Regional Active Participation Network in the North East who were very supportive of the Young Advisor concept but they have failed to utilise this link further by incorporating Young Advisors in some of their work.

Staff in a number of regional Warden Resource Centres have undergone "Training the Trainers" for Young Advisors and have begun to provide training for local schemes wishing to establish Young Advisor projects. This is regarded as a key element in future sustainability of the Young Advisor concept both regionally and nationally.

<sup>38</sup> The Children's Society, Barnardo's, NCH

<sup>39</sup> NDC lead interviews – February 2006, June 2006

There appears to have been little input from the Government Offices in the regions. Youth Leads and Neighbourhood Renewal Leads in each of the Government Offices were given briefings on Young Advisors but so far Young Advisors have had only one approach. In Middlesbrough Young Advisors were asked to produce a DVD on how to engage with young people. This DVD was completed but so far Young Advisors have received no feedback from Government Office for the North East on how they have used it or what the benefits of such a product have been.

The other 3 pilot areas report no sustainable contact with their Government Offices. It is understood that Government Office structures have changed in recent months and that this could be a key factor in the lack of response and uptake. This was identified as an area for concern and further action in the NRU Youth Scoping Report. This report stated that:

*The NRU and Government Offices can provide stronger emphasis on youth issues and youth engagement in NDC and NMP areas as well as give more attention to young people as part of the general guidance issued on neighbourhood renewal matters. . . .*<sup>40</sup>

There is no evidence to suggest that Young Advisors have been integrated into the report recommendations or regular inputs from Government Office Youth Leads in development and action planning. This issue therefore remains an area of concern.

**Nationally**, the links between central NRU and Young Advisors appears strong, with good communication systems. The NRA has played a pivotal role in sustaining these links at national level but effective regional links have yet to be developed.

The role of Young Advisors was designed to fit neatly within a number of national agendas and many of the local agendas mentioned above form part of a wider national strategy. At the onset of the Young Advisor programme it was envisaged that they would become involved at a national level. What was not anticipated was the levels of involvement Young Advisors could achieve within these in such a short period of time.

40 NRU Scoping Report (2004) J Le Sueur, L Hills

Key national agendas include:

- Every Child Matters
- Youth Matters
- The Children Act 2004
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Why Neighbourhoods Matter
- Children & Young Peoples Strategy
- Children's Services Plans
- Community Action Plans
- Joint Area Reviews
- Citizen Engagement and Public Services
- Local Area Agreements

Including Young Advisors within all of the above mentioned strategies is not common practice for agencies across all 4 pilot areas at this stage. There are indications<sup>41</sup> that a deeper understanding of the value of Young Advisors within these processes is beginning to increase and there is potential for their input to become more widespread as time progresses.

## 4.5 Changes in Perceptions

Changes in perceptions are difficult to measure at this time. Many of the key agencies involved profess that youth engagement is inherent in their practice. However, stakeholder interviews highlight a more in-depth input to ensure youth engagement. This could indicate that they see Young Advisors as a method for more effectively achieving this.

Nationally, local authorities are required to engage young people in their decision making processes and the more recent legislation mentioned above stipulates the need to more actively engage children and young people in many aspects of their practice. For many this is a complete culture change – asking young people what they want as opposed to adults deciding what they need. Such a change in culture will take time to erode and Young Advisors have not had the opportunity to facilitate major changes as a result of the pilot programme. However, the fact that LSP's, sub groups like Children and Young People Strategic Partnerships and local authority Children's Services are already on board indicates that some inroads are being made.

As the pilot has progressed, additional agencies are beginning to see the value of Young Advisor input and are becoming keen to engage. It is important in this case that Young Advisor input is not used for these agencies and departments to meet specific targets. Involvement is important but results are necessary to ensure inputs result in action.

<sup>41</sup> Stakeholder interviews – June 2006

Evidence from key stakeholders also suggests that some agencies and organisations are beginning to adopt a new way of working to include Young Advisors within their framework. This cannot be attributed directly solely to the pilot programme as current changes in legislation demand some of these changes. But what is becoming apparent is that agencies and organisations are seeing Young Advisors as the vehicle for implementing legislative changes.

Young Advisors working with architects, contractors and production companies have resulted in new ways of working and new experiences. While most had previously involved children in their work to a degree the experience of Young Advisors were being key players meant more influence on direction and more accountability. This experience was new and a major learning experience for the companies involved.<sup>42</sup>

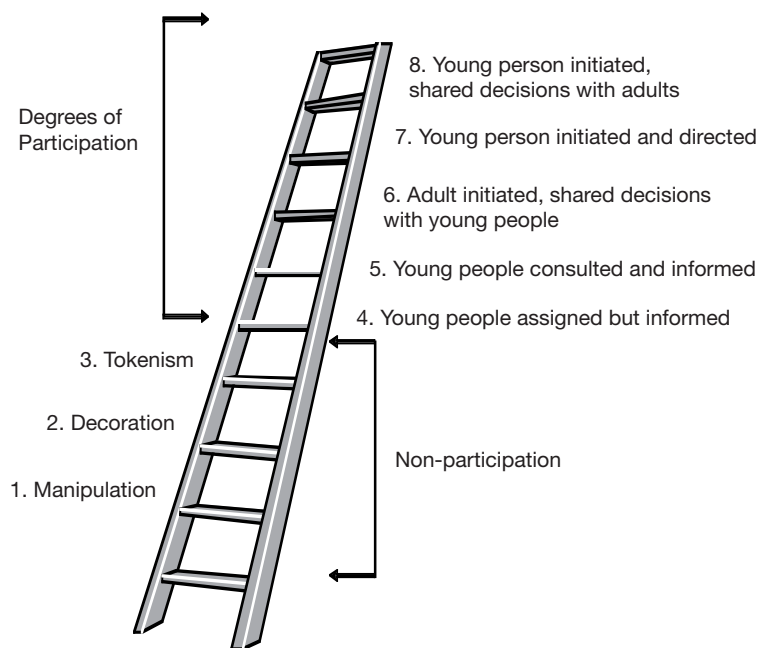
In Brighton a Young Advisor worked with youth workers to assess how they engage with young people. See Case Study 7

**Case Study 7: Ladder of Participation**

The ladder of participation was useful with a group of youth workers to assess how workers view their own levels of participation in practice. A young adviser discussed their levels of participation based on the Ladder of Participation theory which they had acquired and tested at the young adviser training event. Initially they placed themselves high on the ladder but after discussions about their practice they begin to realise that their working practice actually placed them much lower on the ladder.

As a result of this exercise youth workers have had to revise their view of their activities and perceptions of participation and will ultimately have to begin changing their practice.

**THE LADDER OF PARTICIPATION**



<sup>42</sup> Stakeholder Interviews – June 2006

Young Advisors across all 4 pilot areas have had experiences of raising awareness and challenging practices. Whilst it is too early to measure actual results of this at this time, it has the potential to be instrumental in some changes in the future.

## 4.6 Potential Impacts

In a short term programme like this pilot it is not feasible to fully assess impacts as more time is needed to measure the change. An impact evaluation gauges the extent to which a programme produces the intended improvements to programme objectives. Whilst the outcomes mentioned below go some way to assessing impacts, the timeframe of the programme is not long enough to sufficiently evidence impacts.

The methodology used within this evaluation is particularly useful for capturing differences among people and programmes. Using the baseline and endline approach it is possible to identify results to date and to make an assessment of changes achieved so far.

**Outputs** to date have included a number of products achieved as a result of this pilot programme. These include:

- An Equal Opportunities Toolkit
- A summary document for the Community Strategy
- A training DVD for staff on how to engage with young people
- A number of information DVD's about the role of young people in their communities.
- Community Strategy DVD
- Presentations and workshops
- Facilitating events,
- A Young Peoples Ward Meeting
- The establishment of Youth Forums and Youth Assemblies.<sup>43</sup>
- The Spotlight Event in Manchester (See Case Study 8).

### Case Study 8: Spotlight Event

The Spotlight Event was a multi-agency event which forms part of the 100 day Challenge. It brings together key agencies and young people to explore their image of East Manchester. The event includes:

Graffiti Workshop: The image of East Manchester

Lyrical Writing Workshop: Issues and Opportunities in the area

Drama Workshop: Accessibility of Services

Dance Workshop: Perceptions of Young People

Check out the day at:

<http://www.eastserve.com/opencms/opencms/youth/spotlight/index.html>

Information from this day formed the basis of the first Young Peoples Ward Meeting. This meeting has provoked the police to launch an operation to deal with prostitution and dealing near a local youth club; Manchester Leisure Services to work on thinning trees and shrubbery where young people feel vulnerable; the Parks Department to hold a formal consultation with residents of all ages to see if a local park could have lighting installed and for the Highways Department to consult on traffic calming measures in areas identified by young people.

For the purposes of the evaluation, respondents have identified potential future impacts based on **outcomes to date**, current knowledge, experience and planned work.

### Signs of embedding new approaches...

Evidence suggests that some agencies and organisations are committed to the engagement of young people in their services and that they are working to embedding this into all their working practice. Already some have involved Young Advisors to increase the participation of young people and as illustrated earlier in Section 4, indications are that this is likely to continue.

### The concept is taking off...

In addition to the pilot programme, national conferencing and publicity drives make it likely that there will be approx 100 new Young Advisors trained by the end of 2006. New schemes are already in the early stages of development and others have already signed up for training of Young Advisors. This means that Young Advisor activity is set to increase nationally, further raising the potential for increased youth engagement.

### A recognition of what youth engagement means and brings...

Key stakeholders now recognise the need to engage more widely with young people. Many organisations<sup>44</sup> have already moved on to encouraging other young people to become part of their management structures. Music Stuff already has a Youth Management Group but is looking to recruit a Young Advisor to act as the link officer between the group and the organisation.

44 NDC's, Youth Services, Music Stuff

## Changes in culture

Agencies across all 4 pilot areas are beginning to see the value of increasing the participation of young people in their decision making processes. This is a long term process that cannot be fully achieved within a 6 month pilot. However, the pilot has already achieved so much in engaging with LSP's, Children's Services Planning structures, Connexions and local authorities who are all involved in taking forward the new legislation and this can be seen as a start to this process of change. For example, the JCU in Manchester are now exploring the feasibility of establishing a "Shadow Children's Board".<sup>45</sup> Current experience with Young Advisors is informing this process. Potentially this group will become the sounding board for adult decision making processes within the organisation.

## Continued funding, a sign of success...

Funding has been agreed to additional Young Advisors both through national and local areas of work. These include a Wardens Resource Centres, an RSL and a Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme.

Another outcome is that East Manchester NDC has already committed additional funds to prolong the pilot programme for a further year. Funding has also been secured for additional Young Advisors to work within Arts and Culture and Crime and Grime agendas. The JCU is also exploring the possibility of funding to employ Young Advisors to work with them as part of their team.

Brighton and Hove Youth Support Service has recently secured funding from the Youth Opportunities Fund to employ Young Advisors across the city linked directly with senior youth work staff. There has been some discussion as to whether the age range and job descriptions will be changed. No firm decisions have been made at this time. While the roll out of Young Advisors across the city is a positive outcome for the pilot scheme, it is not clear whether existing Young Advisors will input to the new programme of work.

## 4.7 Barriers

The majority of respondents view the Young Advisor concept as a real opportunity to increase youth engagement and the participation of young people in the decision making processes. This section explores some of the barriers to success.

**The fact that the programme was a pilot** served to create a barrier for pilot schemes. This is a totally new concept. Whilst employing young people is not an original idea, the actual role of Young Advisors is. This meant that pilot schemes were starting from the very beginning. Although some schemes (Middlesbrough and Manchester) built on to previous work carried out eg peer education and peer mentoring schemes, Young Advisors was an original concept with no way of knowing what to expect.

<sup>45</sup> JCU representative interview – June 2006

This has meant that there was no prior knowledge on which to learn and build. All lead officers' report grossly **under-estimating the time** involved in developing and supporting a scheme of this nature.<sup>46</sup> Time commitment across the 4 areas varied but all lead officers reported that in order for a scheme of this nature to develop strategically, a specific post should be built in to any budgeting. The commitment of lead officers has never been in question but the time they feel they need to ensure sustainability is well documented.

A key point of this pilot is that schemes have had to learn by doing. With little existing guidance, schemes have managed to develop focused on their localities and issues. This could easily be classified as a barrier but in reality what has happened is that schemes have worked through a major learning curve that has served them well in developing each of the pilots.

Another barrier identified in some areas is the **lack of response** of some agencies.<sup>47</sup> Although identified as a barrier, a prompter response from an even wider range of agencies could have meant Young Advisors were over-extended.

Young Advisors have underlined a number of **practical barriers**. These include frustration at **waiting for adults to respond to their calls**. There was a consensus that some adults did not respond quickly as they saw them as “young people” and not professionals and as such did not require a prompt response. Young Advisors in Manchester reported increasing frustration at local councillors not responding to their calls. At a meeting, they challenged this lack of response with the councillors by introducing themselves and their roles to them and asking for a response to their requests for local councillors to meet with them. This direct approach worked very well and relationships in Manchester have become more positive and well established.

In the early stages of the pilot, Young Advisors reported a **“misunderstanding of their role”** as a key barrier. This is something that is ongoing and links with how Young Advisors are perceived within the more adult environments.

Young Advisors also identified personalities and accountability of some key stakeholders as a barrier.<sup>48</sup> This primarily involved the continued use of jargon, people not getting back to them and an element of making promises that were not kept or failing to work through a proposed piece of work with the Young Advisors. One example of this relates to Young Advisor input to the website design of a local computing company. Young Advisors were asked to youth proof the current website, assess and report on accessibility issues and engage other young people to identify what young people would like to see included in the website. Website designers have been very slow taking this work forward and the old website remains in place which is not attractive or accessible to young people.

<sup>46</sup> Lead Officer Interviews – February and June 2006

<sup>47</sup> Young Advisor Focus Group – February 2006

<sup>48</sup> Young Advisors Evaluation Workshop – Barriers and Opportunities Tool – June 2006

Another practical barrier for some Young Advisors has been the **lack of a mentor**. Only the Manchester pilot achieved sustainable mentors for all Young Advisors. The design of the programme recommended that all Young Advisors be allocated a mentor but in Hull and Middlesbrough the Lead Officer took on the bulk of this role alongside their other Young Advisor duties as they found it difficult to encourage staff, particularly from partner agencies to take on this role.

Some Young Advisors who had mentors reported that the experience was not always beneficial. Some found the experience frustrating as mentors were not fully aware of what Young Advisors were trying to achieve and in some cases held them back. Others reported mentors to be very helpful and supportive. Neither lead officers nor mentors were provided with any training through the programme. This is an area of work that needs to be considered in future roll out bearing in mind the importance and levels of inputs that are put into the schemes.

**Lead officers** report the main barriers encountered as:<sup>49</sup>

- The short set up timescales
- The lack of youth friendly systems for payments
- A mismatch of invoicing procedures resulting in extra work
- Under-estimated time commitment
- Working through the legislation for employing Young Advisors under 16 years old
- The lack of mentors

Some lead officers commented that some agencies continue to be unresponsive to the concept of Young Advisors. Whilst they have identified a range of solutions to address this, there is a view that the capacity of Young Advisors is close to its limit at this time. The response from agencies that have actively engaged Young Advisors continues to be largely positive.

## 5. Good Practice

### 5.1 Innovative and Good Practice

Innovation is the key to the Young Advisor concept. It could be argued that the programme provides a new method for increasing youth engagement and encouraging agencies to begin developing their services with input from young people and to encourage young people to become more active citizens in their communities and provide this valuable input.

All 4 pilot schemes were developed locally. The schemes all illustrate some lateral thinking in terms of how they begin to address the issues and promote youth engagement. Practically and logistically, scheme development has not been unproblematic but nonetheless, pilot schemes have continued to develop their engagement strategies and networks.

As a new concept, this pilot programme was aiming at providing an innovative solution to increasing young people's participation in decision making processes. It offered a new, challenging way of achieving this. The ability to challenge current working practices of some of the primary organisations and agencies was ambitious, particularly bearing in mind the time frame of the pilot programme.

Each pilot scheme has shown high levels of innovation in the work they have carried out to date. The way pilot schemes have broken down barriers to link Young Advisors with a range of strategies and projects has included creativity on the part of lead officers. Although making a presentation is not regarded as highly innovative in itself, the fact that many of the presentations were to people who would not normally become actively engaged with young people makes this a much more meaningful experience.

Good practice examples are provided throughout the report (see case studies). One worthy of particular note is the youth facility work (Case Study 2) which placed Young Advisors at the heart of this project. Through involvement at all stages, consulting with young people, breaking down barriers with adults, designing and planning space and presenting results to the wider community, Young Advisors will leave a legacy for the whole community.

Other good practice identified within the evaluation includes involving Young Advisors in Local Action Panels, Residents Groups, Ward Meetings, a range of steering groups and school councils. These could mean that Young Advisors will become more readily embedded into community structures. This is very important in terms of future sustainability and ensuring that young people more generally begin to take ownership of their communities by becoming more active citizens.

Other examples of good practice include:

- Early development of schemes utilising existing partnerships and infrastructures
- Building profile of Young Advisors within the organisation through presentations, workshops
- Young Advisors actively engaging larger groups of young people in project work
- Mentors being allocated from partner organisations
- Challenging negative perceptions of young people in organisations and nurturing a more positive culture of participation
- Challenging young people on acceptable behaviour
- Youth proofing
- Employing a Young Advisor in a co-ordinating role for provide support and direction to other Young Advisors, planning and administrative tasks

Future schemes may benefit from incorporating some of these good practice examples into their development from an early stage. Current schemes learned as they developed.

## 5.2 Lessons Learned

One of the key lessons of the pilot programme has been the **time commitment** necessary for lead officers. All pilot schemes grossly underestimated this commitment and as a result have found themselves stretched beyond capacity. All lead officers commented that they had become “over committed” at times throughout the pilot. There is evidence to suggest that the role of lead officer should be budgeted for in the planning and implementation of any Young Advisor programme.<sup>50</sup>

They also identified that a **reasonable lead in time** to identify, appoint and train Young Advisors and mentors is essential. This would provide a better understanding, knowledge base and skill levels to carry out the role.

Lead officers also felt that a workshop for young people to ensure they **understood the role** of Young Advisors fully before they sign up. Early confusion as to their remit resulted in some delays and additional work for lead officers to clarify the situation.

It could be argued that development of an **infrastructure** to support the young Advisor programme prior to its inception would be beneficial. The existing infrastructure in Manchester resulted in local partners taking a key role in identifying, supporting and promoting the work of Young Advisors. While deep rooted infrastructures like this are not often found, setting up a small group of committed partners to initiate development and share responsibility may provide a more integrated approach as achieved in Manchester.

<sup>50</sup> Lead Officer interviews and Evaluation Workshop – February and June 2006

**Good mentors** are essential in supporting the work of young Advisors and maintaining cohesion to the project. This has been identified as an area for concern within the pilot programme. Mentors need to be in place prior to the inception of the scheme. The formation of a Young Advisor Steering Group may help to bring on board mentors from a range of relevant organisations who can take responsibility for the operational aspect of Young Advisors. Mentors need to be committed and to understand their role.

Establishing a **Young Advisor Steering Group** (services working with young people) prior to Young Advisors commencing work may also ensure that opportunities are developed for Young Advisors to influence these organisations and improve the possibility of embedding youth engagement into their practice.

Resources for such schemes are limited and this means that there needs to be some **clarity of roles** for Young Advisors. Sharing workloads will help ensure some Young Advisors do not get overloaded. Clarity about what is expected from Young Advisors is also essential. There is a need to ensure that Young Advisors are not over committed with exams, work, college, etc.

A lot of agencies may want to access young Advisors. There needs to be a **clear criteria** of Young Advisor involvement to ensure agencies are not using Young Advisors in a tokenistic way. Vetting opportunities can be very time consuming for lead officers. Young Advisors should be trained and supported in vetting opportunities. Young Advisors should meet regularly as a group and clients can be asked to attend these meetings to request Young Advisor inputs. Young Advisors can then decide which pieces of work they will commit to. This will help ensure workloads remain manageable and get service agencies to be very clear about what they are proposing.

There is also a need for a **clear marketing policy** to ensure the work of Young Advisors is promoted and recognised. This has been partially achieved but not systematically.

It is important that Young Advisors are not seen as the sole voice of young people. Their role is to engage with other young people encouraging and empowering them to actively participate. Young Advisor inputs need to be based on **consultation with a much wider audience**.

A lot of investment can go into recruiting, training and supporting Young Advisors. However it must be recognised that things can change quickly in a young person's life and they may need to move on. One example of this is a Young Advisor moving out of the area to attend university. It is essential that mechanisms are put in place to ensure **Young Advisors roll out their training and experience** to other young people as a way of preparing them for the role and increasing their capacity to facilitate them taking on such a role.

## 6. The Young Advisor Experience

It is recognised that the Young Advisor programme is neither a capacity building nor youth work programme and although it links closely with engaging young people, it is not a youth engagement project. However, employing young people as Young Advisors, building up their capacity and opening them up to new opportunities and experiences are likely to have an affect on their personal development and future aspirations. Using a range of participatory methods Young Advisors have explored the effects that the Young Advisor experience has had on them.

### 6.1 Views and Opinions

Young Advisors reported that their experiences of being a Young Advisor had been very positive. Young Advisors had set themselves a number of goals that they were hoping to achieve in this scheme.<sup>51</sup>

Using a range of participatory exercises with young Advisors it was possible to measure how far Young Advisors have gone in meeting these goals. These included:

Goals	Outcomes
Help young people voice their opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other young people becoming more involved eg Steering Groups</li> <li>• Young people becoming more confident and willing to engage</li> </ul>
Break down barriers between young people and organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wardens more responsive to young people</li> <li>• Children and adults reaching a compromise about the youth facility</li> </ul>
Work with/support organisations and agencies in consulting with young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carrying out local consultations with young people and adults</li> <li>• Providing information to organisations on how to consult with young people</li> <li>• Workshops</li> </ul>
Change and challenge peoples perception of young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Advisors being invited to key community meetings</li> <li>• Increased confidence, more able to challenge stereotypical perceptions of young people</li> <li>• Change way local residents perceive young people in their area</li> </ul>
Make a difference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Advisors are being approached by organisations to work with them</li> <li>• Young People friendly summary documents – young people have a better understanding</li> <li>• Organisations and agencies are “<b>listening</b>” to Young Advisors</li> </ul>
Help organisations to realise that young peoples opinions count	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The youth facility designed to meet young people’s needs</li> <li>• A move to involving more young people in organisations in addition to Young Advisors<sup>52</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>51</sup> Evaluation Workshop – June 2006

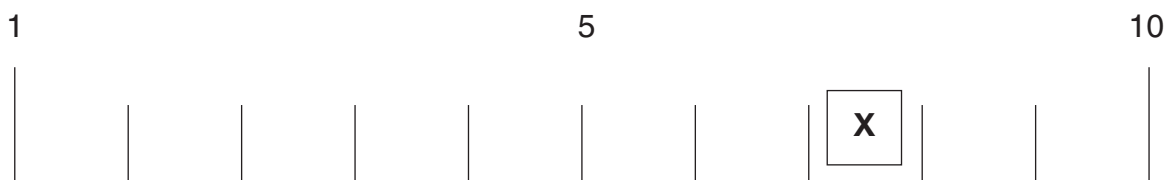
<sup>52</sup> Young people in Manchester are beginning to participate in steering groups, meetings etc with support from Young Advisors

The Young Advisors felt they had moved forward very quickly in engaging with young people and enabling their voices to be heard. They had also designed and facilitated a number of workshops aimed at breaking down barriers between young people, adults and organisations. Already there were some positive examples eg the youth facility, of where young Advisors had achieved this and built up a better understanding among all groups of what was needed and how to reach a compromise.

Although it is still early days, they also felt that organisations are beginning to understand the value of young people’s contributions in making decisions. What has yet to be achieved more effectively is that this becomes an integral part of their practice by not only listening to, but involving young people in the decision making as a right. Generally they reported that they had begun to make some headway but that there was a lot of work still to do to achieve this goal.

Using a basic scoring exercise Young Advisors agreed that they had achieved many of these goals and that this was a good base on which to build and develop.

**Achieving Goals**



Young Advisors have enjoyed the challenges and opportunities that their roles have given them and generally feel they have been able to meet many of these challenges. It was also recognised by Young Advisors that lead officers have been key to their success in reaching these goals. Their support and guidance has been invaluable to helping Young Advisors to meet the needs of their new roles and to develop skills to meet the challenges and opportunities.

Overall Young Advisors report that they made good headway in achieving all of their goals up to a point. Additional time would appear to be the key factor in enabling them to reach a high level and increase their score. It would be a very insightful and valuable exercise to repeat this exercise with the same group of Young Advisors over time.

**6.2 Opportunities**

Young Advisors report that the experience has been one of learning. This is not just about increased knowledge and skills but about opening them up to new opportunities.

Being able to engage with adults and organisations on a more equal footing was seen as a major opportunity and learning curve. Young Advisors felt that they were treated differently than young people on the street and that some professionals had begun to recognise that Young Advisors were also skilled professionals in their own right.

The role of Young Advisor opened up a range of opportunities for the young people involved. Young Advisors reported:<sup>53</sup>

- Giving presentations to adults
- Making a real difference for local people
- To be involved in exchange visits to other areas
- Visiting new places eg London
- Gaining more knowledge about the area, services what is available
- A better understanding of an adult perspective
- Meeting new people
- Working with people from around the country
- Working as a team
- Building up wider networks
- Chairing conferences
- Attending national conferences
- Training opportunities
- Opening up possibilities for more Young Advisors
- Training other young people to become Young Advisors
- Having direct links with central government departments
- Being valued
- To be involved in actually making changes
- Learning new skills

Young Advisors report that opening them up to such a wide range of opportunities has made a difference to them both personally and professionally.

## 6.3 Personal Development

Personal development of Young Advisors has been a key outcome of the pilot programme. Young Advisors were recruited to offer a wide range of skills and abilities to adult led organisations. Some Young Advisors were already involved in existing NDC project work, had been part of a mentoring or peer education programme and started with a good range of skills. Others started from a lower point and had further to travel to reach their potential as Young Advisors.

The fact that Young Advisors have achieved so much in a short period of time has proved to them that they are capable of taking on new challenges and doing a good job. The most important learning experiences for Young Advisors have been:

- Increased self confidence
- A belief in themselves
- Want to learn more
- Helped future career choices
- Liked working as a team
- Gained more respect for and from other people
- A good knowledge of young peoples services

A key theme for personal development across the Young Advisors is increased self confidence. This has meant that Young Advisors have become more outgoing, better prepared to deal with things, confident to challenge perceptions and ask questions. Young Advisors are carrying out tasks they would never have thought possible in the past. One Young Advisor commented:

*“Standing up and presenting to 400 people was really scary but I did and I felt really good about it. I never believed I would ever do something like this.”<sup>54</sup>*

Participating in a number of national conferences and showcasing events, Young Advisors are becoming accustomed to public speaking. As their experience grows, so does their confidence. Whereas nerves were a major problem for some in the early days these have now been overcome and many Young Advisors now portray high levels of confidence in their presentation skills. Experiences encountered as a Young Advisor is reported as a major influence on this.

The quick fire tool used during the Evaluation Workshop gives a clear visual indication of what difference becoming a Young Advisor has made to them. (Annex 5) In addition to self confidence and self esteem, Young Advisors report feeling:

- Valued
- Listened to
- Able to make a positive contribution
- Become a more positive person
- Developed as a person and gained new skills and qualities
- Willing to take more chances and risks to get a better outcome
- A wider circle of friends

<sup>54</sup> A Brighton Young Advisor referring to the European Conference in Strasbourg

When asked if being a Young Advisor had made a difference to their lives, all Young Advisors felt that it had. Improved confidence, new skills, increased knowledge, a better understanding of issues involving young people have resulted in a high level of personal development for the Young Advisors.

Aspirations for the future have changed with a large number of Young Advisors exploring youth work and community work as a career option. One Young Advisor stated:

*“Being a young Advisor has helped me decide what I want to do in the future. I now know that I can make a difference and have enjoyed the things I have been doing.”<sup>55</sup>*

Another Young Advisor also commented that his role has made a difference to his behaviour:

*I have changed completely, I was always getting into trouble before but now I have stopped hanging around with some of my mates and even my mum has noticed a difference in my behaviour.”<sup>56</sup>*

## 6.4 Impacts

It is too early to measure the impacts of such personal development on the Young Advisors. However, it is clear at this point in time that Young Advisors do benefit from the experiences. Expectations of Young Advisors in the area are high but life expectations of Young Advisors themselves are also rising. The fact that they can evidence some results of their contributions to their community is one reason for this.

Some Young Advisors see the experience as a stepping stone to longer term plans. They are now in a position to offer transferable skills, a professional attitude and a willingness to learn from any new opportunities that arise. This could either be in the sustainability of existing schemes or future employment opportunities. On accepting the challenges of becoming a Young Advisor, beginning an exciting phase in youth engagement, being instrumental in changes, they have become more marketable and employable. It is anticipated that this will become a major impact in the future.

<sup>55</sup> A Manchester Young Advisor

<sup>56</sup> Focus Group, Brighton – February 2006

## 7. Sustainability

### 7.1 Pilot Sustainability

Sustainability within the pilot schemes is currently under review. Manchester has secured funding through NDC to mainstream the scheme for the next year. Funding is also in place to recruit themed Advisors. (Crime & Grime, Arts & Culture). Longer term sustainability will require someone else taking on the development. Current levels of lead officer time will have to be greatly reduced within the sustainability planning.<sup>57</sup> They are hoping to deploy the lead officer role to partners who will take on some of the strategic development role.

No firm decision has been made as to the sustainability of the Hull and Middlesbrough pilots. Both schemes are hoping to continue in their current form until additional funding can be found. They are currently looking at the possibility of establishing a social enterprise providing Young Advisors across the region. A bid to the Lottery is being considered for this work.

Hull City Council are also exploring the possibility of rolling Young Advisors out across the city with a view to further roll out across Humberside.<sup>58</sup> This is a new development and will require follow up.

Although the Brighton pilot has undergone some difficulties at an operational level and lack of funding has been a key factor in this pilot coming to a close, the concept of Young Advisors is regarded as positive. As a result of the pilot, agreement has been reached at committee level to roll out Young Advisors across the City of Brighton and Hove. These Young Advisors will be linked directly with senior youth work staff and will form part of the Youth Service infrastructure. The new stream of Young Advisors will feed into the City-Wide Forum. What is not clear at this time is how current Young Advisors will be utilised within this roll out. It is likely that the age range will change, that pay scales will change and that current Young Advisors who wish to continue in their role will have to reapply. It is recommended that mechanisms are put in place to ensure learning from the current pilot scheme informs the new development. One option would be for Young Advisors to be involved in the recruitment of new Young Advisors and undertake some of the training for the new recruits.

At this stage, it seems likely that Middlesbrough and Hull will continue while the idea of establishing a social enterprise is explored more comprehensively. Funding through the Youth Development budgets of the NDC is likely to bridge any funding gaps in the short term. Manchester will be mainstreamed and expanded to include themed Young Advisors. Some changes in lead officer input will be required to ensure longer term sustainability of this scheme.

<sup>57</sup> NDC Lead Officer interview – June 2006

<sup>58</sup> NRA Discussion – July 2006

## 7.2 Roll Out

Alongside potential roll out within the pilot areas, the DCLG have made a commitment to support additional Young Advisor schemes. These are being termed as Wave 2 and are intended to try out the Young Advisor concept in different contexts and organisations.

Currently this includes a Wardens Regional Resource Centre (in Thurrock), a Housing Association (PoplarHarca in Tower Hamlets) and a Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder (in Tranmere) training for them is underway. Discussions are well advanced in two Local Authorities, one urban and one a County Council two tier authority.

Approaches have also been made to the NRU from a variety of organisations and Local Authorities about establishing additional Young Advisor schemes across the country. These schemes will not be funded centrally but provide some insight to the commitment of some organisations to increase youth engagement and put in place mechanisms to improve the participation of young people. These schemes have received some support and guidance from NRU and through the NRA.

## 7.3 Training

Training for Young Advisors is managed through Renewal Academy. They have been responsible for developing training packs and materials. The NRA has been responsible for delivering all training to date. However, this is due to change in the near future. A training pack for trainers has now been developed and a training programme completed. The Train the Trainers programme has been initially rolled out through the Warden Resource Centres. As a result, training for Young Advisors can be provided at a local level.

It is hoped that both Young Advisors and lead officers will become involved in delivering training. This would provide very practical training based on experience. Young Advisors have already been involved in youth proofing training documentation based on their training experiences. This learning will also help focus future training on key issues.

To date training has been controlled by the NRA with input from a wider group of trainers, youth workers and consultants. This is expected to change in the future. Whilst there is a need for a very structured training programme to ensure Young Advisors are fully equipped to take on the role, trainers require the ability to adapt to group dynamics and abilities. Efforts to follow the training pack directly could prove problematic so an element of flexibility will need to be built in if the training programme is to be successful. The Train the Trainers Package has attempted to address this issue by including an activity for participants to engage in taking an exercise, adapting it to their style and teaching others in their tutor group and receiving feedback.

## 7.4 Quality Assurance

Planned roll out of both Young Advisor schemes and training programmes will require that an element of quality control is built in so that new schemes have some accountability mechanisms to ensure the quality of work is not diluted. There is a real need to ensure that current standards are safeguarded and also that there continues to be a clear differentiation between Young Advisor programmes and other youth engagement projects.

Renewal Academy will continue to maintain some quality assurance on the training materials and whilst funding through the DCLG for the Wave 2 roll out means mechanisms will remain in place to ensure the quality of practice and outputs, schemes coming on board funded locally may need sign up to the Young Advisor principles and practice.

There are plans to establish a Young Advisor Charitable Trust. The Trust is exploring the possibility of “trade marking” the Young Advisor and becoming an umbrella organisation for all Young Advisor schemes. This will provide a mechanism and opportunities for ensuring quality control of the Young Advisor concept.

# 8. Recommendations

## Practical Issues

- Development of suitable financial systems to facilitate easier payments to young people. This is vital if working with young people is to become part of current practice.
- An early agreement of suitable financial procedures for claiming back money from central government – a larger degree of flexibility. This could mean a change from retrospective claiming with project funding being assigned at strategic points within the project or a uniformed approach in terms of claim forms that will link easily to existing financial procedures.
- The role of lead officer should be budgeted for in the planning and implementation of any Young Advisor programme. Evidence suggests that a minimum of 2 days a week of lead officer time be allocated to each scheme. This could mean buying out existing staff time or recruiting a dedicated lead officer post.

## Training

- Young Advisors become involved in training new Young Advisors – possibly linking with WRC's and other accredited trainers to offer practical advice and support.
- Training for lead officers and mentors. It is essential that lead officers fully understand the implications of their roles and that they receive good quality training in preparation.

## Partnerships

- Develop stronger links with LSP's to ensure that young people are engaged within this process.
- Develop stronger links with local authority youth services and voluntary youth organisations. Young Advisors have a vital role to play in the provision of services for young people. Positive relationships need to be established – this could be achieved through smaller project work initially on which to build a more sustainable integration.

## Future Practice

- A clear criteria for Young Advisor involvement should be agreed to ensure they are not used in a tokenistic way. Young Advisors should be trained and supported to vet all requests for their input by meeting regularly as a group and inviting clients to attend to make their request, provide information and also demonstrate feedback mechanisms and action.

- There is a need to ensure that current standards are safeguarded and also that there continues to be a clear differentiation between the Young Advisors programmes and other youth engagement projects. Mechanisms to achieve this need to be developed promptly.

### Roll Out/Sustainability

- Mechanisms are put into place to build current Young Advisor learning and experience into new schemes. Young Advisors have developed a vast range of experiences that will help new Young Advisors in understanding their roles and offer practical guidance on how to approach tasks.
- A national register of Young Advisor schemes is developed. The Young Advisor Charitable Trust could become a catalyst in monitoring and evaluating new schemes, providing training and support and wider publicity.
- Links with Government Offices in the regions need to be strengthened. Current schemes have attempted links from grassroots level but this has not been successful so a top down approach through central government may be necessary to facilitate this.

# Annexes

Annex 1 List of Stakeholders Interviewed

Annex 2 List of Young Advisors

Annex 3 Baseline Activities

Annex 4 Baseline Stakeholders

Annex 5 Quick Fire Participatory Tool

# Annex 1

## Stakeholder Interviews

List of people interviewed within the baseline and/or endline phase of the evaluation

### Brighton:

Alan Teague – NDC Chair  
Paula Beesty – Bridges for Employment/Mentor  
Kay Haggerty – Youth 4 the Future/Mentor  
Chris Parfitt – Deputy Manager, Youth Support Service  
Finton Tynan – Community Involvement Team  
Janice Hoiles – NDC Customer Relations Officer  
Tim Cotter – Youth Support Service/Mentor  
Sue Feighery – Young Advisor Lead Officer

### Hull:

Jean Brown – Freedom Centre  
Rob Pritchard – Hull Community Network  
Gavin Boniface – NDC Youth Team/Mentor  
Gillian Dyson – ARC  
Sarah Hatfield – Young Advisor Lead Officer  
Rachel Mathers – LSP  
Chris Gowers – Architect  
Elisa Reece – NDC Youth Team  
Terry Quinn – Warden co-ordinator  
Rob Cawkwell – Building Contractor  
Karen Tozer – Participation Officer, Freedom Centre  
Jonathon Feel – EON Media  
Don Smallwood – NDC Chair

### Manchester:

Kath Byrne – Crossley Youth Centre/Mentor  
Martina Convery – AMP Youth Project/Mentor  
Bridget Halliday – Eastland Homes/Mentor  
Jeff Byrnes – 4CT/Mentor  
Sue Brookes – Neighbourhood Manager, Youth Service  
Gary Buxton – Young Advisor Lead Officer  
Phil Bradley – NDC Ward Co-ordinator  
Mandi Bassi – Joint Children’s Unit  
Tracy Annette – Resident Liaison Officer  
Len Portersmith – Music Stuff

### Middlesbrough:

Paul Wales – NDC Programme Manager  
Mira Chatterjee – Team Co-ordinator, Connexions Middlesbrough  
Sian Bunn – Warden Resource Centre Manager  
Sean Murphy – Young Peoples Participation Manager, Connexions Tees Valley  
Kevin Franks – Young Advisor Lead Officer  
Denis Curren – Connexions

# Annex 2

## Young Advisors

### Brighton

Kalishia LeCoutre  
Leanne Spenser  
Katie Bridle  
Jade Grant  
George Prior  
Stevie Barker

### Hull

Ann Marie Edwards  
Becky Walgate  
Michaela Alexander  
Martin Wise  
Danny Searle

### Manchester

Emma Richardson  
Leonie Gasper  
Danny Robinson  
Laura Percival  
Katie Murphy

### Middlesbrough

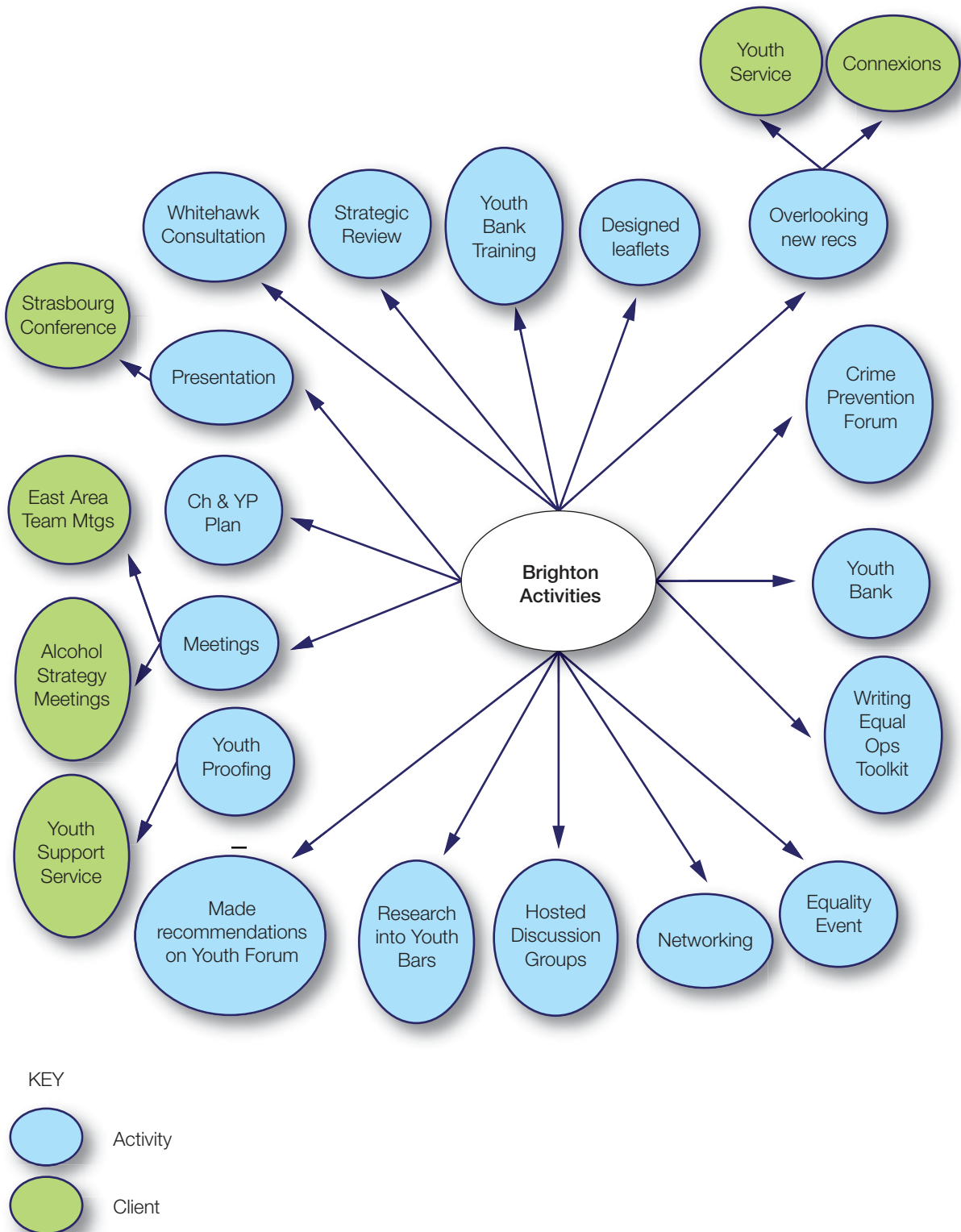
Nicole High  
Danni Houseby  
Andy Vickers  
Calum Kirby  
Michael Robson  
Samantha Paine

# Annex 3

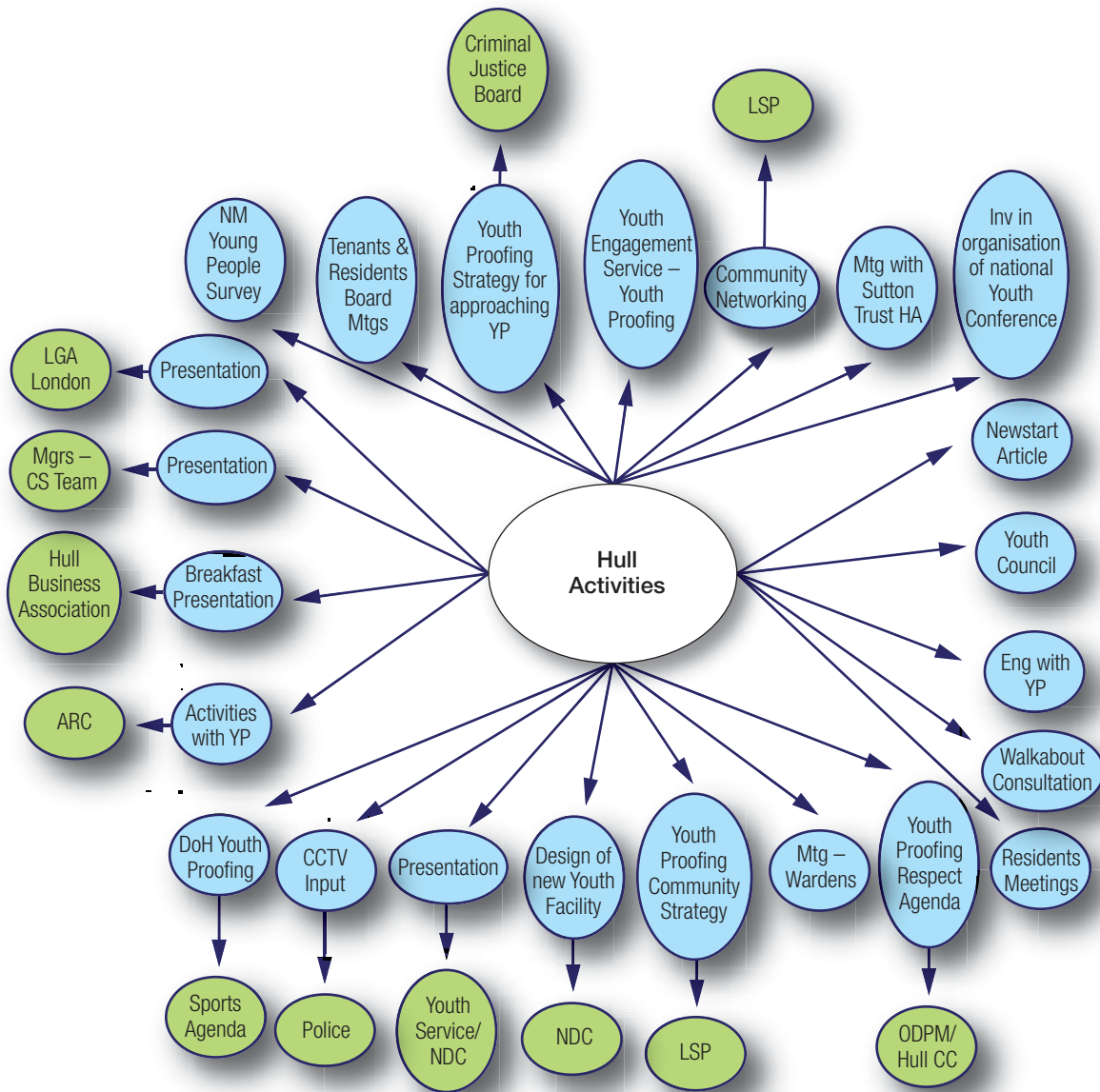
## Baseline Activities

Baseline activities identified by young advisors and lead officers within each of the pilot projects

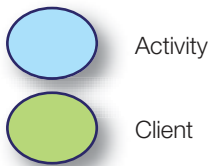
### Brighton



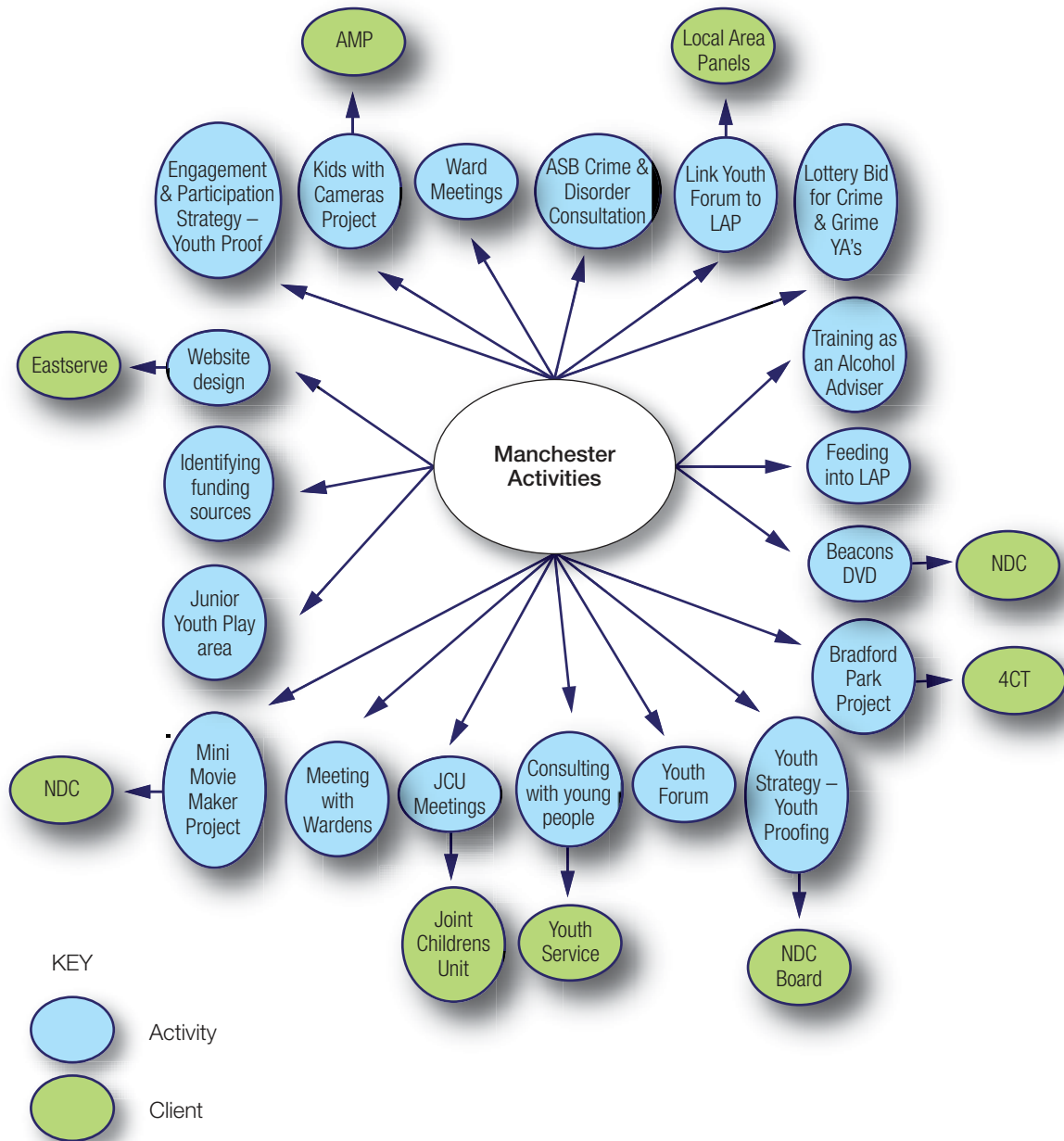
**Hull**



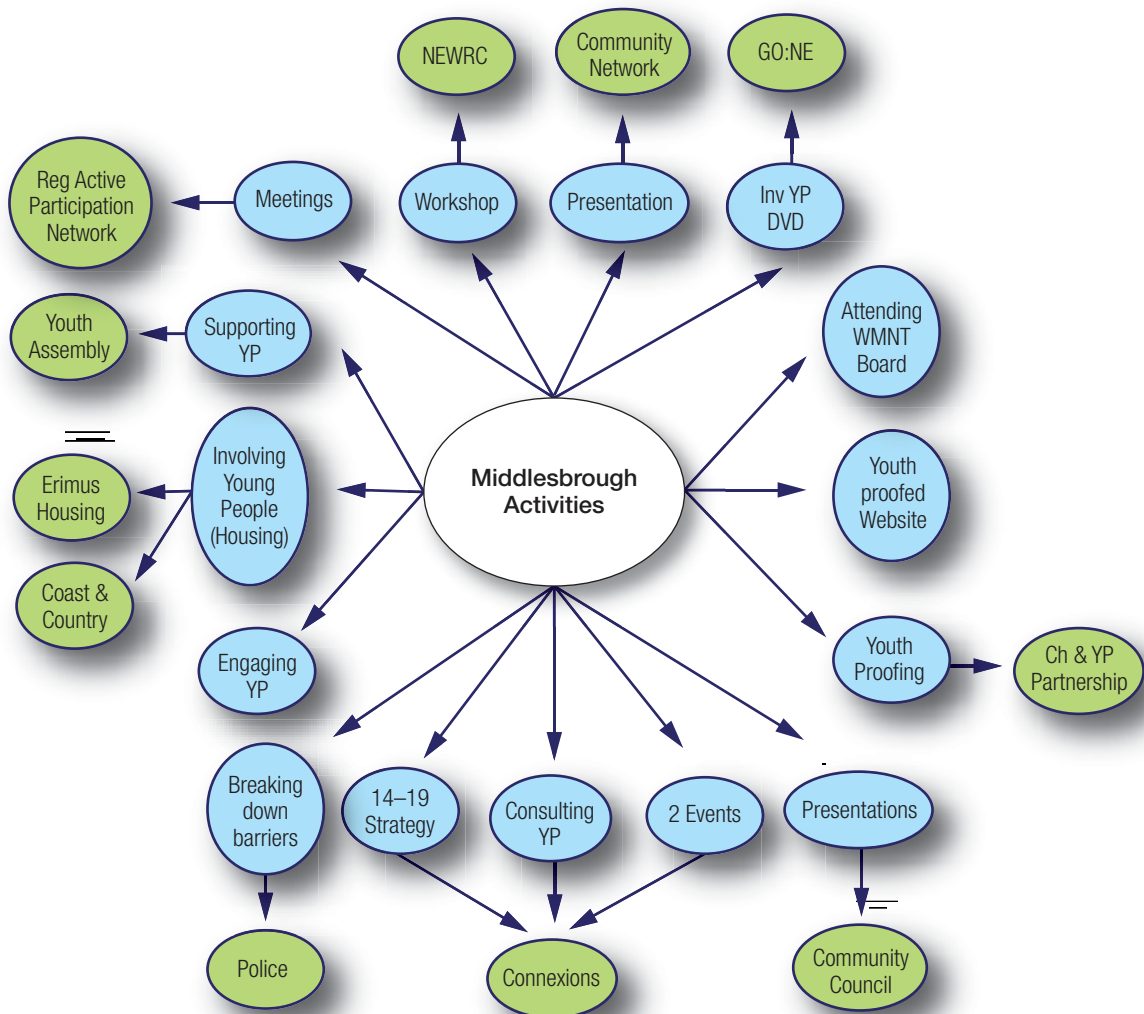
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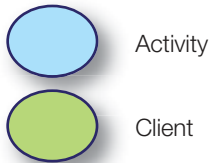
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# Middlesbrough



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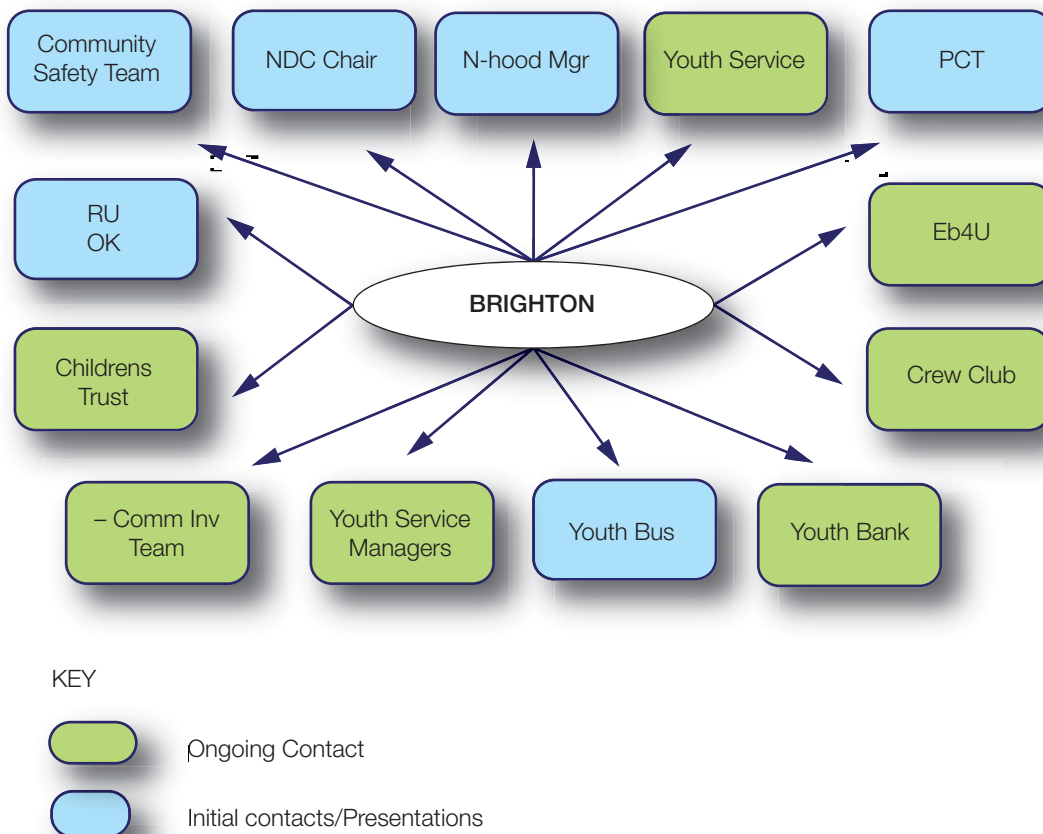


# Annex 4

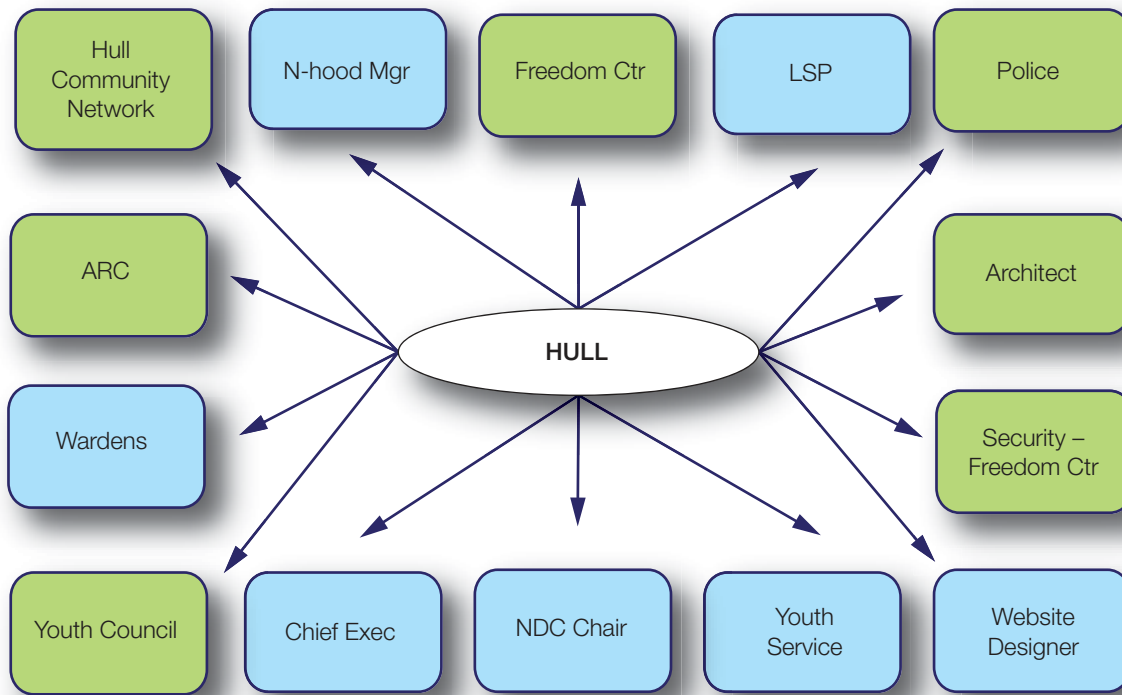
## Baseline Stakeholders

Initial key stakeholders and partners involved in the Young Advisor pilot schemes as identified in the Baseline Report



### Brighton



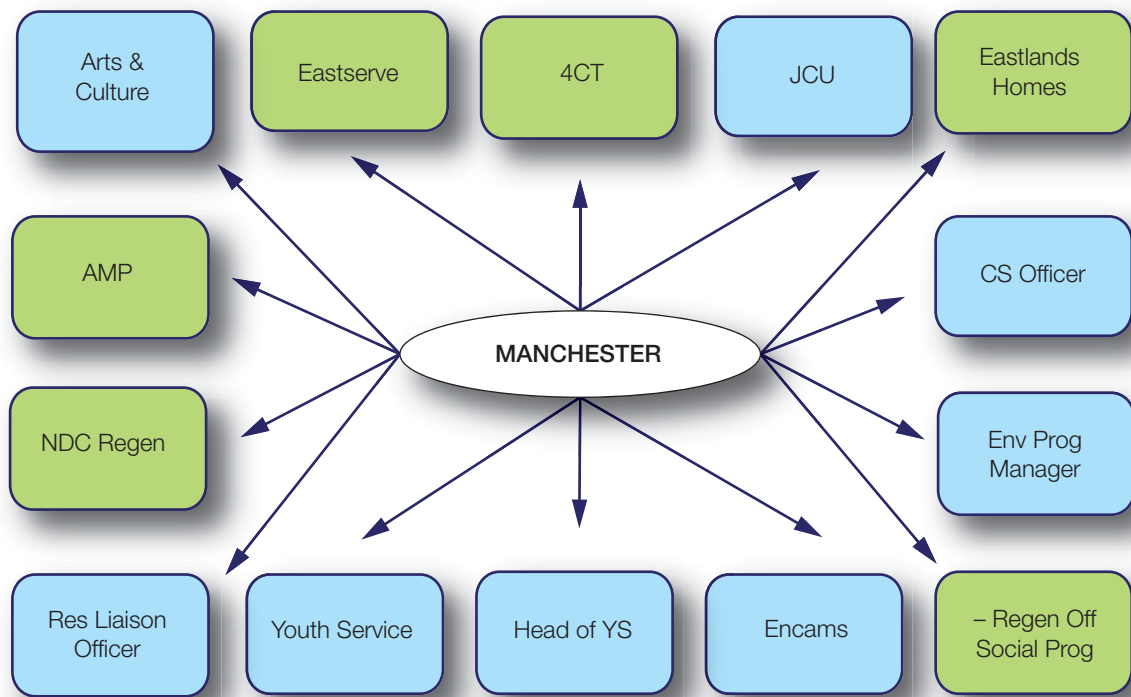
# Hull





## KEY

-  Ongoing Contacts
-  Initial/intermittent contacts

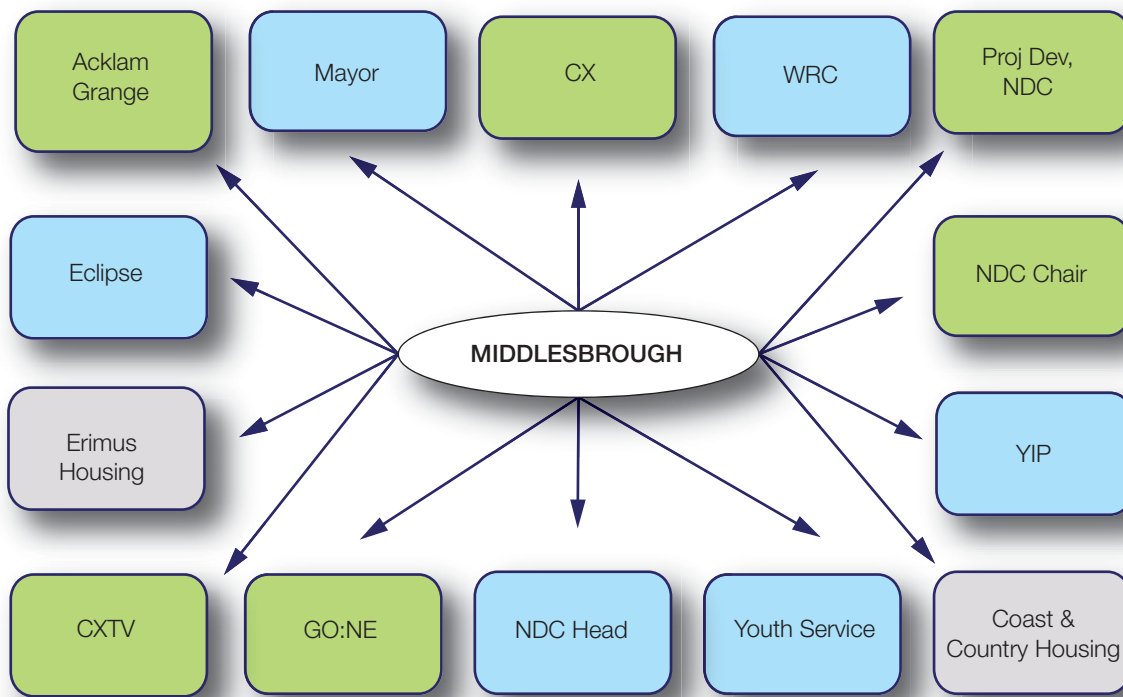
**Manchester**



KEY

-  Ongoing Contacts
-  Initial Contacts

# Middlesbrough



## KEY

- Ongoing Contact
- Initial contacts/Presentations
- Acted as consultants on engaging with young people

# Annex 5

## Quick Fire

A participatory tool used with Young Advisors to provide a visual illustration of how Young Advisors viewed their experiences.

