

Young Advisors, Big Society

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Young Advisors; New Communities



How to achieve, civic engagement, entrepreneurial spirit, reformed public services, localised decision-making, real opportunities for young people and the beginnings of a big society? Young Advisors, that's how! Young people aged 15-21 from the top 10% most deprived communities working through a social enterprise model to make their communities a better place to live!

Over the next few weeks, voluntary sector organisations across the country will be following the news with great interest as difficult decisions to address the public deficit are made. In real terms, the public debt is £776 Billion or £30,000 per household. If you include PFI commitments, public sector pensions and bank bailouts, our debt would come to £90k per household¹. Quite a sum I'm sure you'd agree... So, as the beginnings of Big Society take form, Young Advisors asks; How do we fit into this new agenda?



Big Society has five main themes; giving communities more power, encouraging people to take an active role, transferring power from central to local government, supporting co-ops, social enterprises, mutuals and charities and finally publishing government data.

In 2007, we decided there was a new way to do things. We recognised that in order to reach people who haven't been engaged before, we'd need to do something daring. Pay young people for their expertise on how communities could be made better.

Since 2007, we have trained over 500 young people to join us, all across the country, in every government office region and in the neighbourhoods where communities have felt the most improvements are needed. So, in this time where money becomes tighter, we need to confidently shout why we're different, unique and an important part of the mix in how communities can be renewed.

As Young Advisors, we would like to assert our contribution to a bigger society.

Civic Engagement is possibly the most important ingredient to all of the proposals linked to Big Society. We know that public authorities will often find it hard to reach the most under-represented young people. The people we hang out with every day. This is why we became Young Advisors. We have our own networks and we can help workers in all sectors hear the voices of our peers. We also know that when we help design and deliver services, they respond to the needs of young people and are therefore more likely to be used, making better use of what public resources there are. Driving decision making down from central government and putting power into the hands of communities will help us all influence and shape how things could be on our street.

Renewing Communities is our bread and butter. All of our work is about helping our communities come together to make things better. We all start our journey as a Young Advisor by mapping our community, highlighting what works well and what needs to change. Knowing and sharing this information helps public services respond to

¹ BBC's More or Less Election Watch

community needs. It helps other young people like us feel their views are important and listed to. The first steps to engaging everyone.

Social Enterprise and entrepreneurial spirit are two things that drive our movement. We develop products, sell consultancy and deliver on research commissions to sustain our projects. Not only does this help us always keep one foot in the labour market when youth unemployment is at an all time high, but it gives us a taste of setting up our own enterprise and knowing what it's like to win business and deliver to a professional standard.



Employability is an often-understated product of being a Young Advisor. Our 30 hour accredited training gives us a strong foundation of transferable skills that makes us more employable. Our continuous professional development programme helps us tailor which skills we grow and perfect. We meet with people from a range of organisations to broaden our networks. We are always doing things that look great on our CVs and help us stand out from others and above all, we recognise the importance of basic business skills, hitting deadlines, being punctual and being respectful of others. All things that will help us take our next career steps.

So, as a national team of Community Organisers, lets step up to the challenge and help make sure that as times get tough, we know our worth, continue to be entrepreneurial, reach people who get left behind and

most of all, make our communities a better place to live, work, learn and play.

Together, we'll put the young citizen in the big society.



Sean O'Halaran (17, Chair of Young Advisors Charity and Waltham Forest Young Advisor)

Gary Buxton (Young Advisors CEO)

