

Lewisham Young Mayor Programme Evaluation Summary - Dr. Kalbir Shukra

1. Dr. Shukra, Senior Lecturer and Head of Community Studies at Goldsmiths University of London, has been evaluating the programme since 2012 and views it as a civic innovation at the heart of the town hall that has successfully broken down barriers in engaging young people in politics since 2003. In evidence submitted to the House of Lords (2017), she points to:
 - 316 young candidates for Young Mayor of Lewisham between 2004-2016
 - 50 formal positions representing young people filled through 13 Young Mayoral elections
 - 42-56% turnout – significantly higher than in local adult elections with candidates reaching out to engage directly with voters
 - Core supporters of each candidate engage and actively campaign
 - 25-30 Young Advisors meet weekly in the town hall
2. The research suggests that barriers are broken down by giving young people in the borough real opportunities to propose the changes they'd like to see and to become voters, campaigners and candidates. The process of standing as a candidate encourages a 'strong civic identity'. Annual surveys show that schools, families, young advisors and friends are key to encouraging young people to stand for elections.
3. The programme pivots on the annual election of a Young Mayor (aged 13-17) who represents the 11-17 year olds who live, work or go to school in Lewisham. The annual elections fill four formal roles: Young Mayor, Deputy Young Mayor and two Youth Parliament Representatives. The Young Mayor has a budget of £25, 000, which Young Mayor and advisors consult the young electorate on before producing proposals that are presented to the Mayor and Cabinet for approval. The Young Advisors meeting is oriented towards deliberation and social action in the form of a team that acts in support of the four elected representatives but also to collaborate with policy makers, service providers and other young people. The election brings young people from across the borough into contact with each other on a range of sites and produces learning through those conversations. Enjoying the process, feeling valued, having an influence and being able to be authentic has kept young people engaged.

Recommendation:

4. An event to allow councillors and other adults to discuss with young advisors how they have experienced or overcome difficulties with their political engagement.

Additional information:

5. Dr Shukra's paper, 'Extending democracy to young people: is it time for youth suffrage?' was first published in issue 116 of Youth & Policy (1st June 2017). The paper can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.youthandpolicy.org/y-and-p-archive/issue-116/>