

# Enhancing Young People's Involvement in Regeneration: New Deal for Communities and the Young Advisors Initiative

New Deal for Communities National Evaluation

This research was commissioned by the previous government and is not necessarily a reflection of the current government's policies and priorities.

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- Particular thanks must go to the Lead Coordinators ('Leads') of the Initiative in each of the case study areas for arranging contact with the Young Advisors and providing additional information and of course, the Young Advisors themselves – both those taking part directly in the research and also attendees at the 'Young Advisor Carnival' for their interest.

# Executive summary

## Introduction

### Purpose of the report

1. The well-being and political engagement of young people is viewed as a critical issue for both national and local government. This reflects not only the statutory requirement to implement Article 12 of the United Nations Convention, but also from recognition that sustainable regeneration is more likely if the marginalisation or exclusion of 'hard to reach' groups – which often include young people – is reduced.
2. Previous research in the National Evaluation research had underlined the relatively marginal involvement of young people in New Deal for Communities activities. What involvement there had been had tended to be linked to youth-specific issues. Young people had had relatively little influence on wider regeneration strategies and projects.
3. This report explores youth engagement and empowerment through a focus on the implementation of the DCLG devised 'Young Advisors' initiative which began with a pilot hosted by four New Deal for Communities and now consists of 43 projects hosted by a variety of organisations. The initiative seeks to provide opportunities for young people to become involved in, and influence, regeneration in their community, services and local decision-making.
4. The key objectives of this case study are:
  - To explore the effectiveness of the youth engagement strategies employed by New Deal for Communities in attracting a range of young people.
  - To explore how the role of Young Advisors is communicated to, and perceived by, other youth, the wider community and key players.
  - To gauge what types of key activities Young Advisors are involved in and the policy themes influenced, so as to increase understanding of how the Young Advisor programme is adding value to area-based regeneration initiatives.
  - To assess the sustainability of Young Advisor projects and cultural change within regeneration.

## The role of young advisors in New Deal for Communities

5. The Young Advisor role is more complicated and diverse than many Young Advisors initially understood it to be with a key misunderstanding being that the role is 'youth work' rather than (in the case of the New Deal for Communities) regeneration-based consultancy work. The unique nature of the Young Advisor role needs careful explanation to both Young Advisors and those with whom they work.
6. The Lead Coordinators in the local initiatives (the 'Leads') and national co-ordinating body both have a role to play in explaining the role, marketing the work of Young Advisors and engaging partners. There is a continuing need to challenge partners on their understanding of engagement and the benefits of working with young people to avoid Young Advisors being used simply as a fast track to engagement and for ticking 'consultation boxes'.
7. The Young Advisors in the four case-study New Deal for Communities have participated in a range of activities at different strategic and operational levels. These activities have included: participation in community conferences, tension resolution between community groups, consulting with other young people, consulting with professionals, advising local youth fora, youth proofing strategic documents, getting involved in the design and consultation surrounding new youth facilities, promoting the initiative and participating in regeneration conferences and workshops.
8. Factors which have contributed to good working relationships between Partners and Young Advisors are:
  - employing an informal approach to participation
  - partner understanding of the Young Advisors' role and affinity with them
  - honest and realistic communication between partners and Young Advisors
  - partner awareness of the barriers Young Advisors need to overcome and understanding that their engagement is influenced by the social and economic exclusion most had experienced
  - recognition that Young Advisors need to be seen as individuals not just a uniform team.
9. There was evidence that although organisations could be very supportive of Young Advisors and see the benefits of engaging with them, they found it difficult to envisage engagement in the future without the support of the Leads with whom they had had contact.

# Recruitment, retention and transition

## Recruitment of Young Advisors

10. The New Deal for Communities-based schemes were challenged by a relatively short lead time for setting up the project and as a result recruitment of young people to take on the role of Young Advisors was not undertaken as effectively as the projects would have wished. In many cases it has been accepted that, at least initially, representation will involve having a 'robust', if not entirely representative, group of young people.
11. Most recruitment was done by holding consultation events where young people were invited to apply for Young Advisor status. In some cases informal recruitment based on prior contact with young people has been used. In others it was felt that more formal, transparent recruitment processes were doubly important for minimising potential resentment from other young people and for empowering young people by allowing them to be involved in the interview and appointment process.
12. The natural tendency for high turnover amongst Young Advisors (as they move onto employment or training) emphasises the need to make early plans for recruiting further cohorts. This would ensure continuity of activities and provide opportunities for existing Young Advisors to develop skills at mentoring the new cohort.

## Motivations to become a Young Advisor

13. All co-ordinators and Young Advisors in the case study areas acknowledged that the level of pay was an important part of taking on the role. The 'brand' of a Young Advisor combined with the pay level gave young people greater confidence in their own abilities and influenced how other people viewed them. The payments made to Young Advisors have, however, sometimes given rise to some tensions from local authorities about the level of pay the Young Advisors receive with some stakeholders being reluctant to pay the Young Advisors for their work. There have also been reports of tensions with mainstream Youth Workers, related to the Youth Service wage structure.
14. Despite the important role of payment, other factors are important in motivating young people to become Young Advisors. These include:
  - the initiative offers a natural progression route from previous involvement in youth forums and youth groups
  - an opportunity to help change local communities for the better
  - the initiative offers 'something different' to traditional youth involvement
  - the lack of alternative activities

- the status afforded by being a Young Advisor (important for keeping young people involved); and
- the new skills and opportunities that the initiative offers.

### **Meeting the Young Advisors' support needs**

15. The support structure is crucial for developing the Young Advisor role. And this support needs to be sensitively adapted to different local contexts. Young Advisors need a great deal of individual support to develop within their roles but the level and nature of the support and training needed will vary from individual to individual, often to reflect the prior experience of the Young Advisors in participative fora. For example, young people engaged in New Deal for Communities fora were felt to be better able to cope with informal and/or 'lively' settings whilst those with a more formal Schools Council background might not have the skills to deal with 'hard' issues.
16. In all four case studies project Leads have provided a crucial level of support for the individual Young Advisors based on knowing the young people well, having a good appreciation of individuals' abilities, attitudes and personal issues. Leads also provide an important role in linking Young Advisors with local organisations, based upon the Leads' existing contacts, lessening the time needed by Young Advisors to identify contacts and build relations. Preparation for the transition from being a Young Advisor to other employment and/or training remains an important goal role for those supporting Young Advisors.
17. In addition to support from the Leads, the four case study New Deal for Communities had all advocated mentors for the Young Advisors, although putting this approach into practice was not always easy with issues surrounding relationship building between the mentors and Young Advisors proving problematic and problems of staff capacity and turnover all arising. It was generally felt, however, that mentoring can be an important part of the training programme.

## **Young Advisors: Impacts**

### **Community cohesion**

18. Young Advisors themselves felt that the role, particularly as it was paid, had helped them to be taken seriously within the wider community as a 'formal' representative of young people. Bridges are being built not just between children/young people and adults but across generations with Young Advisors themselves reporting instances where they felt that their participation had turned the views of adults around and contributed to a positive change in the stereotypical view of young people held by local residents.



## **Empowering young people**

19. The Young Advisors viewed their role as empowering – providing them with an opportunity to have a voice and meet new people, as well as having a demonstrable effect on other young people. The training and support clearly builds the skills and confidence of Young Advisors to empower them to take the lead and make decisions, bringing other young people in their wake.
20. From the point of view of the New Deal for Communities, the Young Advisors are particularly valued as a way of looking at decisions from a young person's point of view and being able to identify consequences of actions on young people. Young Advisors are also clearly valued in terms of their role in wider engagement with young people. There is evidence that empowering Young Advisors has been a key mechanism in generating more active involvement from other young people. Principally they are seen as being a positive role model for young people, with the trickle-down effect of the payment, skills and experience that Young Advisors benefit from, increasing involvement by raising aspirations.

## **Influence on regeneration**

21. The extent to which Young Advisors had genuine influence over regeneration was related to two key issues:
  - How partners/service users perceived the role of Young Advisors and the way in which they worked with them.
  - The organisation/body in which the Lead sits.
22. In the case studies, Young Advisors have tended to exert most influence on youth-specific issues. This is a natural result of such issues having direct relevance and interest to Young Advisors and also the links through Leads into mainstream youth services.
23. Barriers preventing participation in and genuine influence on regeneration were often related to misunderstandings of the role of Young Advisors. Some Young Advisors and staff felt that some local authorities, and councillors in particular, felt uncomfortable working with Young Advisors and had a more traditional approach towards youth engagement.

## **Sustainability**

### **Support capacity**

24. The main challenge to sustainability and programme expansion is support capacity, both nationally by the national coordinating body, the Young Advisors Charity, and at the local level. But the levels of energy generated by key people in getting the initiative up and running and developing it to the

stage it is at, cannot be seen as infinitely sustainable. Structures need to be put in place to ensure 'burnout' does not threaten future development.

25. One of the factors that determines the success of the programme, which was also recognised in the pilot evaluation, is the need to have a Lead with the right skills to challenge and encourage the Young Advisors and have access to networks to raise their profile and attract work. However, sustainability plans can be affected by staff transitions. Even when the initiative is continuing, a change of Lead is often a point of disjuncture both in terms of handover between staff and in the support given to Young Advisors. As the New Deal for Communities programme nears an end this will become a bigger problem. As a young initiative there is still often the sense of losing crucial individuals who were pulling it all together.

### **Sustainability models**

26. Finding a suitable sustainability model is an especially pertinent issue due to New Deal for Communities programmes nearing an end. Two types of model have been identified in the case study research – one with roots in regeneration (the Social Enterprise model) and one with a more youth policy framework (the networking model).
27. The Social Enterprise model (as being followed in Bristol) is likely to be a challenging route to go down and initiatives may need some other form of financial support in the short-term, even where Third Sector support can be tapped into. The need for the Young Advisors to develop business skills, coupled with the natural time-limit to young people's involvement in the initiative could be a major barrier to sustainability.
28. There is also the issue of market competition with sustainability depending on competitiveness within the market place, which is likely to require a broader market focus to include the sub-region and region. This could be difficult in the absence of institutional support from New Deal for Communities and the council.
29. The networking model is one where Young Advisors become an integral part of existing youth participation structures within a city as has been developed in Hull. While offering potentially good prospects for sustainability, it is important that in integrating Young Advisors into the existing youth work infrastructure the Young Advisors' role complements rather than replicates existing orthodox youth participation roles.
30. There is also a recognition that the profile of Young Advisors needs to be raised and their services marketed so that they become a legitimate and recognised on-cost for agencies submitting funding applications. This recognition underlines the need to market Young Advisors as providing consultancy services rather than as a youth programme.

31. Operating at local authority level, the networking model also offers the potential for broadening the experience and widening the horizons of the Young Advisors involved.

## Conclusions and recommendations

32. Several factors appear to have been behind the success of the initiative to date:
  - It chimes with current policy priorities in engaging and empowering young people.
  - The dedication and commitment of key players in the roll-out of the initiative.
  - Young Advisors have filled a gap in the market, offering a valuable role for communities and other partners.
  - It is a fresh and novel approach to regeneration.
33. However, the development and the roll-out of the initiative have occurred at a very fast pace. To ensure the sustainability of both the concept and practice on the ground it is imperative to take stock.
34. While the general thrust of policy appears favourable for the Young Advisors initiative, there remains a source of potential confusion over its future direction from the juxtaposition of some of the New Deal for Communities-based initiatives within mainstream youth services – usually due to the Lead being employed by the youth service. It is essential to emphasise that the Young Advisor initiative is not a youth development policy or a youth project but a scheme in which young people act as consultants to contribute a young person's view on regeneration and service delivery issues.
35. If local schemes are to be sustained and reach their potential they cannot rely on the enthusiasm, commitment and championship of a few individuals. Rather this should be a combined effort from the New Deal for Communities, host body and the Young Advisors with the support of the national co-ordinating body
36. Key issues which need to be considered are the need for:
  - the post of Leads to be full-time if further mentoring support for the Young Advisors is not readily available
  - establishing support and networking opportunities to encourage interaction between the Leads.

# 1 Introduction

## Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of a practitioner-focused review of the experiences of four case study New Deal for Communities Partnerships who have taken part in the Young Advisors initiative promoted by Communities and Local Government.<sup>1</sup> The research for this report was undertaken in the second phase of the national evaluation of the New Deal for Communities programme.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.2 The Young Advisors initiative began with a pilot hosted by four New Deal for Communities and now consists of 43 projects hosted by a variety of organisations. The initiative initially sought to provide opportunities for young people aged between 15 and 21 to become involved in, and influence, regeneration in their community, services and local decision-making. A key part of their role was to show community leaders and decision makers how to engage young people in regeneration and renewal.
- 1.3 The scope of the initiative has now widened with Young Advisors hosted by a wider range of organisations and getting involved in issues beyond those associated with regeneration and renewal.

## Policy background

- 1.4 The well-being and political engagement of young people is viewed as a critical issue by both national and local government. This reflects not only the statutory requirement to implement Article 12 of the United Nations Convention,<sup>3</sup> but also recognition that relevant and sustainable regeneration is more likely if the marginalisation or exclusion of particular groups is reduced. Broadly defined as 'hard to reach', these groups often include young people.
- 1.5 A plethora of policy documents, actions and tools reflect this emphasis:
  - The '*Hear By Right*' framework, a tool setting standards for the active involvement of young people in all services that affect them either directly or indirectly, was developed in 2001 by the Local Government Association in partnership with the National Youth Agency and has been revised to take into account more recent policy developments and initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> An overview of the four case study areas and an outline of the different delivery Mechanisms for the schemes in each of these areas are provided in Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> The National evaluation of the New Deal for Communities programme is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government and runs from 2006 to 2009.

<sup>3</sup> The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, adopted by the United Nations in November 1989, places a statutory requirement to implement Article 12 regarding the rights of children and young people to express their opinions and have these taken into account in any matter affecting them.

- The *Youth Matters* Green Paper (Department for Education and Skills, 2005) identifies significant elements in supporting young people, including information, advice and guidance delivered in a manner that is congruent with their attitudes and lifestyle. The paper also suggests that young people should be encouraged to contribute to their local community through voluntary work.
- The Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities* (2006) also considers the role of youth in citizenship, local democracy and customer-focused services.
- Linked to these latter Papers was the introduction of the *Youth Opportunity and Capital Funds* programme which, between 2006 and 2009, gave young people the power to determine the spending of £115m on youth services, and facilities in their local communities.
- Similarly, the *Every Child Matters* framework seeks to ensure there is suitable support for children to be 'healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being'.
- A key aim of the government's ten year strategy for young people, *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities* (HM Treasury, 2007), which elaborates the policies set out in *Youth Matters*, is to give young people genuine influence over the design and delivery of local services.
- And the emphasis on youth engagement clearly chimes in with the philosophy of the recently published *Action Plan for Community Empowerment: Building on Success* (DCLG/Local Government Association, 2007) and the 2008 Empowerment White Paper, *Communities in Control: real people, real power*.

## The New Deal for Communities Programme's experience of engaging young people in regeneration

- 1.6 A key element of the New Deal for Communities programme is the centrality of community involvement and influence. With this policy perspective is an understanding that all communities of interest and identity have a role. However, earlier National Evaluation research has found that engaging a range of groups, including young people, can be a problematic task, requiring targeted activities and specially tailored mechanisms.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.7 New Deal for Communities recognise the need to engage with young people for three key reasons:

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<sup>4</sup> *New Deal for Communities National Evaluation: Community Engagement: Some lessons from the NDC Experience* (May 2007)

- In the context of the investment being made locally in regeneration and renewal, the need to ensure that all sections of the local community were able to have a say in the priorities for the area.
- to ensure that services and initiatives provided are relevant to the residents (young people) they are aimed at, and so sustainable; and
- to aid community cohesion (i.e. breach the generation gap whereby young people were frequently perceived as *the* problem not part of the solution).

1.8 Moreover, the 2002 New Deal for Communities Household Survey showed that young people aged 16-24 were disproportionately represented in the population (an average of 14% in New Deal for Communities areas with a range from 11% to 42% compared to an average of 11% in England). Not engaging with young people effectively meant not engaging with a large proportion of stakeholders in the community.

1.9 As part of the National Evaluation of New Deal for Communities, in-depth research on young people in six New Deal for Communities areas was undertaken in 2003.<sup>5</sup> The study focused on young people's issues and views related to their community, and the extent and means by which they were engaged in their New Deal for Communities Partnerships. The interest and involvement of young people in the New Deal for Communities was found to be extremely varied. Issues affecting participation were related to:

- **Engagement:** the effort made, and strategies used by Partnerships to recognise, and relate to young people's particular and differentiated needs; the interest of young people in prominent issues and willingness to take part in formal engagement structures.
- **Consultation:** the flexibility of engagement strategies to reach sub-groups; the willingness and ability to tap into existing networks of trust between service providers/organisations and young people.
- **Projects/support:** the extent to which initiatives reflect young people's needs and aspirations.

1.10 The research also suggested that engagement and the activities and support offered tended to be based around diversionary activities. Hence, it is no surprise that youth involvement was also found to have insufficient influence on regeneration strategies and projects, as it was limited to youth-specific issues.

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<sup>5</sup> *New Deal for Communities: The National Evaluation. Research Report 20: Young People in NDC Areas: Findings from Six Case Studies.* The case study areas were: Bristol, Coventry, Haringey, Liverpool, Nottingham and Middlesbrough.

## The Young Advisors pilot scheme

- 1.11 The Young Advisors initiative was developed within the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in (what is now) the Department for Communities and Local Government to address concerns emerging from the New Deal for Communities Evaluation, from the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders scheme and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in general that young people were not being engaged fully in their communities. The initiative was piloted in four New Deal for Communities areas – Hull, Middlesbrough, Brighton and East Manchester – and ran from January to June 2006.
- 1.12 The initiative's original objective was to 'push' youth participation and raise it up the agenda. It sought to move away from pure engagement (typical of youth work projects) to empowerment and participation, where young people could be included in decisions about, and have responsibility for, actions and resources (Box 1.1).

### **Box 1.1 Young Advisors**

Young Advisors are trained and employed consultants who guide local authorities, housing associations and other local partners about what it is like for a young person to live, work, learn and play in their neighbourhood.

Young Advisors are young people aged between 15 and 21, who show community leaders and decision makers how to engage young people in community life, regeneration and renewal.

- They will help organisations 'youth proof' their practices, policies, strategies and commissioning.
- They will help you understand how to attract and maintain the interests of young people.
- They will speak out for young people, making sure their thoughts and feelings are considered in decisions that affect them.
- They will work both locally and nationally to share good practice and learn from others.
- They will engage directly with other young people to get them involved in neighbourhood improvements.

(Source: Young Advisors Charity Briefing)

- 1.13 Ultimately, the aim is to give young people a voice and allow them to influence decisions, improve the skills of practitioners and reconfigure the cultures of organisations towards greater young people's engagement.<sup>6</sup> As one stakeholder summarises:

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<sup>6</sup> *Summary of Approach Document* (2005) ODPM

*'The main point was to change the system so that the perspective and voice of young people became an integral part of the process, so that regeneration could function better and deliver better services for young people.'* (Trustee of the Young Advisors Charity)

- 1.14 An evaluation of the Young Advisor pilot initiative was undertaken by Social Development Direct (2006). This focused on the process of establishing a pilot programme. It included a baseline investigation assessing the development and implementation of each of the four pilot schemes, and a final report which considered how the pilots had developed throughout their lifetime, good practice and sustainability issues<sup>7</sup>.
- 1.15 The evaluation highlighted that it was not feasible at such an early stage in the development of the initiative to fully assess impacts as embedding a new approach was a long-term process not fully achievable within a six month pilot. However, the report did make several recommendations relating to the practicalities of establishing and running local schemes, training, partnership working, future practice and further roll out and sustainability. It also identified barriers to the future development and sustainability of the local schemes including:
- the lack of response by some agencies to working with Young Advisors
  - under-estimating the time involved in developing and supporting the pilots
  - Young Advisors reporting a misunderstanding of their role
  - lack of mentors.
- 1.16 The initiative's pioneering approach to young people's involvement in regeneration led to other New Deal for Communities Partnerships wanting to establish Young Advisors. Several of these areas were not funded centrally: Later stages of the initiative's roll-out also included establishing Young Advisors in different contexts, for example, a Wardens Regional Resource Centre, a Housing Association and a Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder. This experimentation helped in testing the concept.
- 1.17 The programme's success placed demands on the original supporting capacity in terms of both start-up and carrying the programme forward. It was recognised that in order to maintain the development of the programme a new enabling mechanism had to be put in place to prevent the fragmentation of the concept and this led to the establishment of the Young Advisors Charity, which took on the role of national co-ordinating body.

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<sup>7</sup> *Young Advisors Evaluation: Baseline Report* (March 2006) and *Evaluation of Young Advisors Pilot Programme: Final Report* (July 2006), Social Development Direct.



- 1.18 As the national co-ordinating body, the Charity has worked towards making the Young Advisor movement sustainable. Its achievements include establishing accreditation pathways running alongside the training which all Young Advisors undertake, sharing good practice through the website (including a members only area and media centre to which Young Advisors contribute with photos and pod casts) and several events for Young Advisors to meet each other to celebrate their achievements, including a Northern Regions Conference in October 2007, and annual conferences.
- 1.19 The initiative continues to expand rapidly: by 2007 seven New Deal for Communities areas had Young Advisors, whilst another 16 had successful bids in October 2007, with the then Communities Minister pledging funding of over £150,000 to set up new schemes and train these Young Advisors. To date the initiative has involved over 450 young people, aged between 15 and 21. As well as local consultancy work, Young Advisors have contributed to a range of national-level projects and initiatives (see Box 1.2).

#### **Box 1.2 Young Advisor's national profile**

Young Advisors:

- Were consulted by the Councillors Commission for the report 'Representing the Future' and sat on a panel with Hazel Blears MP (then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) to implement the findings of the research.
- Are represented on the following panels with the Department for Children, Schools and Families; Empowerment Stakeholder Group (Young Advisors are the only young people to sit on this group); the Implementation of Aiming High and the focus group for the National Youth Facilities Fund.
- Are involved in the REACH project, which seeks to raise the aspirations and attainment of black boys and young men (six Young Advisors are involved, two of whom are on the main panel and the others in working groups looking at setting up a national role model project).
- Work with Jigsaw Research for Environmental Campaigns identifying young people's views and response to graffiti.
- Undertook research to inform the Government's 10 year Drug Strategy.
- Provided two Youth Advisors who met monthly with the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to give advice on aspects of the Department's work that affect young people. The Advisors also convened a small, regionally-representative panel of young advisors, which met quarterly, chaired by the Secretary of State.

## **Evaluating the Young Advisor initiative**

- 1.20 This case study research is not an evaluation of the Young Advisor initiative per se. Rather the aim is to produce a guide to 'what works and why' in getting young people to participate in decision-making through a review of the experience to date of Young Advisors in four New Deal for Communities (see Appendix 1).

1.21 The key objectives of this case study are:

- To explore the effectiveness of the youth engagement strategies employed by New Deal for Communities in attracting a range of young people.
- To explore how the role of Young Advisors is communicated and perceived by other young people, the wider community and key players.
- To identify the types of key activities Young Advisors in the case study areas have been involved in and the policy themes influenced, so as to increase understanding of how the Young Advisor programme is adding value to area-based regeneration initiatives.
- To assess the sustainability of Young Advisor projects and cultural change within regeneration.

1.22 The research was carried out between November 2007 and February 2008 and comprised four elements:

- A review of New Deal for Communities delivery plans, community engagement strategies and the strategies of other organisations in the New Deal for Communities area (e.g. Children Services).
- Interviews with various stakeholders, including New Deal for Communities Board Members and officers, community and youth workers, and public sector service providers. Also, interviews at a national level with the Young Advisors Charity and DCLG staff.
- Focus groups in all the case study areas involving Young Advisors.
- Attendance at three Young Advisor Charity events.

1.23 Interviews were structured around topic guides and focus groups around key questions (see Appendix 2). Twenty-nine stakeholders were interviewed and focus groups and/or interviews were held with 18 Young Advisors across the four case study New Deal for Communities.

1.24 The research questions covered such issues as:

- **Engaging young people to become Young Advisors:** project delivery mechanisms; representation of young people; why young people became Young Advisors, and how the role was developed.
- **Understanding the Young Advisor role:** how the role is perceived by Young Advisors themselves and others.

- **Young Advisors' participation:** key activities Young Advisors were involved in and partnership working.
- **Young Advisors' impacts:** community cohesion; empowering young people; influence on regeneration and wider impacts.
- **Sustaining Young Advisors:** sustainability plans developed for the Young Advisors; effect of staffing on sustainability; embedding the Young Advisors in their community and wider regeneration arena, and what Young Advisors move on to do.

1.25 The research underlined the uniqueness of the local experience of the initiative in terms of delivery mechanism, activities, partnership working and sustainability plans. Nonetheless, common issues and pointers to good practice could be drawn and key issues for the future identified.

## Structure of report

1.26 The remainder of the report has five sections:

- Section Two considers the role of Young Advisors in the New Deal for Communities context.
- Section Three looks at issues of recruitment and retention.
- Section Four examines the impact Young Advisors have had on community cohesion, young people's empowerment in general and regeneration in their area. This section also considers the impact Young Advisors have had on the work of partner organisations.
- Section Five looks at sustainability issues.
- Section Six draws out a number of lessons and key messages to inform the on-going roll out of the Young Advisors initiative to other New Deal for Communities and nationally.

Key points are summarised at the end of each of these sections.

## 2 Developing the role of Young Advisors in New Deal for Communities areas

### Introduction

- 2.1 There are a range of different organisational arrangements associated with the schemes initiated by the case study New Deal for Communities (see Appendix 1). These reflect the different local histories and contexts for the development and delivery of youth engagement strategies in these areas. The availability of the right kind of support for the Young Advisors, whether within the New Deal for Communities itself or with partner organisations, has also played a role in shaping how the schemes were set up and how they have developed.
- 2.2 Despite these differences in organisational arrangements the local schemes have faced some common problems around establishing and communicating the role and 'unique selling point' of Young Advisors. These are described below.

### Clarifying the Young Advisor role

- 2.3 Experience from the case study New Deal for Communities has consistently pointed to the fact that the unique nature of the Young Advisor role needs careful explanation to both potential Young Advisors and those with whom they work. The Lead Co-ordinators in the local initiatives (the 'Leads') and national co-ordinating body both have a role to play in this.
- 2.4 Young Advisors unanimously stated that their role was much more complicated and varied than they first thought. The Young Advisor training was very much a first step towards a more realistic understanding of what the work could entail. The 'learning curve' that Young Advisors go through reflects how difficult it can be to explain their role. First, because of its diverse nature and, second, because it is extremely unlikely that Young Advisors will have had contact with any young person undertaking a consultancy role in their area (although in some areas where Young Advisors are now well-established young people are beginning to see becoming a Young Advisor as something to which they could aspire).
- 2.5 Some Young Advisors expected the role to be more akin to that of a youth worker, reflecting perhaps the typical practitioner aspirations of young people involved in youth forums:

*'We're meant to be Young Advisors but we don't actually work with young people.'* (Young Advisor, Knowsley)

2.6 On reflection, one Young Advisor summed up the role as:

*'...where, like youth workers are more acting like young people, we're young people acting like adults.'* (Young Advisor, Knowsley)

## How is the role perceived by New Deal for Communities and partner organisations?

2.7 Young Advisors did not report the misunderstandings and tensions around their role that were highlighted by Leads and the Charity, underlining the key role the latter play in marketing the work of Young Advisors and engaging partners. The Charity and Leads emphasise the continuous need to challenge partners on their understanding of engagement and the benefits of working with young people.

2.8 In some of the case study areas the role of a Young Advisor has been under particular scrutiny by services such as Connexions and the Youth Service, a perhaps understandable 'professional territory' issue. A member of the Charity's Board explained this tension:

*'They believe that they are doing the same kind of work as Young Advisors, though this is not the case...most people and organisations do not expect young people to be paid for this sort of work; Saturday jobs at Tesco, yes, but regeneration about the areas they know better than anybody is an unbelievably novel idea! The unique nature of Young Advisors is not immediately easy. The idea of young people as advisors/consultants in their own right, developing communities, neighbourhoods, partnerships, strategies and action plans, is not easy to grasp for professional and public organisations that understandably see young people primarily as still engaged in learning rather than making outputs and contributing to wider community outcomes. Once people have grasped this they are like Saul on the road to Damascus, and become very keen to tell their Local Strategic Partnership, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, Residents Association or business group about this startling innovation...'* (Trustee, Young Advisors Charity)

2.9 The Knowsley Lead talked of the danger of Young Advisors becoming a 'MacDonald's drive-in of consultation' with partners and organisations using Young Advisors as a fast track to engagement – the "good old tick box" of "can we consult some young people?" and "we've got to talk to young people, so contact Young Advisors". An example of this was given by a Lead who received a request from a local authority for the Young Advisors to be involved in a launch conference for a particular Young People's Strategy but refused once it became clear that they would be there as a tokenistic gesture

– handing out brochures – rather than fully involved in the launch as representatives of young people in the community.

2.10 Even when organisations do have an understanding of what the role involves each inevitably has a slightly different take on it. Young Advisors were variously understood to:

- **Help organisations impact positively on various local and national aims and targets.** In Nottingham, for example, Young Advisors had been positively welcomed by a young people's/community service which is required to work with harder-to-reach young people. The Young Advisors have helped them to meet their targets related to contacting these young people.
- **Provide a structure that encourages true engagement with young people rather than tokenistic gestures.** Whilst some stakeholders saw the initiative as providing an easier way to engage with young people than developing their own mechanisms, New Deal for Communities were usually clear that for them Young Advisors were engaging with young people that they had found hard to engage. There was a clear indication that New Deal for Communities saw Young Advisors as the beginning of wider youth engagement<sup>8</sup> which is important for future community well-being, rather than simply as a means of hitting targets related to engaging with young people:

*'You've got to involve the youth...there's more hope now, there's a buzz around and it does boil down to the kids. They'll educate the parents too.'*

(New Deal for Communities Board Member, Hull)

- **Be mentors for young people and children.** Several New Deal for Communities interviewees saw Young Advisors as being a mentor for young people, and helping to steer other young people away from anti-social behaviour, encouraging them to think of the consequences of their actions – a challenge which many felt would not be tolerated from adults in the community.

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<sup>8</sup> A potential danger of an acceptance that engaging with their peers is the main part of a Young Advisor's role is that community and resident groups may not themselves pursue youth engagement and participation. This is illustrated by a Residents Association who saw Young Advisors as a key link to engaging other young people to such an extent that there was a sense that it didn't need to try to engage with young people itself, relying on the Young Advisors to undertake this role: "*Young Advisors do that themselves and do it quite well*". (New Deal for Communities employee, Hull)

- **Be ambassadors for young people.** A key role was seen as the effective promotion of young people's issues, engagement in decision-making and finding solutions. Part of this aspect of the role is setting up links with agencies working with children and young people.

*'[Making a] link between this is what you think we want and this is actually what we want.'* (Youth worker, Knowsley)

*'Young Advisors are a bit like glue, pulling the different services together.'* (New Deal for Communities employee, Hull)

*'They [the Young Advisors] did a fantastic job...to see them being ambassadors for themselves almost.'* (New Deal for Communities employee, Knowsley, commenting on a successful Young Advisor-led consultation on a proposed youth facility)

- **Act in a professional capacity.** Private sector organisations stressed the professional attributes of the role, viewing a Young Advisor as a young person who has undergone training and support to give them confidence to sit in an adult-dominated environment and work as part of a team to benefit themselves and other young people.

## What is the reality of the role?

- 2.11 The Young Advisors have participated in a range of activities at different strategic and operational levels as indicated in Boxes 2.1 to 2.4. These activities have typically included: community conferences, tension resolution between community groups, consulting with other young people, consulting with professionals, advising local youth fora, 'youth-proofing' strategic documents, getting involved in the design and consultation surrounding new youth facilities, promoting the initiative, and participating in regeneration conferences and workshops.
- 2.12 Various means are in place for engaging with a variety of organisations working through New Deal for Communities areas, both formal and informal. In the case of Bristol, a reference group brings partnership working and business contacts, and is considered a two way process of sharing skills. Stakeholders note that it is a potential mechanism for young people to influence decision making, with representation from the city council and local bodies.
- 2.13 There is evidence that there are financial factors governing the type of activities Young Advisors undertake. At the Nottingham New Deal for Communities it was noted that the cost of involving Young Advisors was a major factor in whether partners wished to utilise their services. Some organisations had expressed interest in using Young Advisors but had

ultimately been deterred by the costs involved. Similar processes are evident in Bristol where a social enterprise is being established.

### **Box 2.1 Key activities: Bristol Young Advisors**

Young Advisors have been involved in:

- A community conference workshop on intergenerational issues.
- Tension resolution involving Somali residents on a local estate.
- Acting as a conduit to young people for urban park development proposals by the city council.
- The council's play strategy, and associated funding, involved Young Advisors talking with the 5-8 age group to find out what they would like see happen.
- Consultation with architects around new housing issues.
- An anti-bullying day. The value of the Young Advisor initiative is considered in terms of providing confidence to young people.
- The gang awareness hotline.
- Advising a local youth forum.

### **Box 2.2 Key activities: Hull Young Advisors**

- Young Advisors youth-proofed the Hull Local Strategic Partnership's community strategy document and developed a DVD to accompany the launch.
- Young Advisors youth-proofed the 'resident information' booklet for neighbourhood management; strategy for approaching people, Criminal Justice Board; youth engagement strategy, New Deal for Communities and the sports agenda, Department of Health.
- Young Advisors participated in designing and consulting around the new youth facility for the New Deal for Communities.
- Young Advisors had a role in challenging anti-social behaviour around the Freedom Centre. Establishing diversionary activities.
- The New Deal for Communities is also in the process of establishing a 'Health Enterprise Centre' for youth which they have automatically used Young Advisors as consultants on. One element of this project is for young people to be the employer for the health personnel.
- Young Advisors promoted Young Advisors through presentations at local and national level and writing articles.



### **Box 2.3 Key activities: Knowsley Young Advisors**

- New Deal for Communities Youth Extension: The New Deal for Communities Youth Forum, led by the Young Advisors applied for a grant of £75,000 to equip the New Deal for Communities funded build of a youth extension to an existing community facility, the River Alt Resource Centre (RARC). The Forum, led by the Young Advisors devised a list of requirements that the New Deal for Communities had to meet, almost as a way of asserting their authority over the funding: wanted to see financial auditors; be taken down to the build as it progressed; represented in any decision-making and be an integral part of the Management Board. Undertook two weeks of consultations with young people in the area to determine what type of activities were required at the facility and also led on a consultation at the RARC attended by local residents.
- Participation Standards Training: Young Advisors received training from the participation team in Knowsley Youth Service to become assessors of the Knowsley version of 'Hear By Right' (a standards framework for organisations across the statutory and voluntary sectors to assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people).
- Youth Opportunities Fund: evaluating beneficiaries of the initiative.

### **Box 2.4 Key activities: Nottingham Young Advisors**

- Young Advisors have undertaken work on a drug and alcohol action plan.
- Young Advisors youth-proofed Nottingham City Council's 2030 strategic document.
- Two Young Advisors are involved in mentoring of young black men.
- Young Advisors are involved in organising a football game between the local community and the police, as part of a programme to improve community relations.
- One Young Advisor sat on the interview panel for a drug support worker.
- Young Advisors have contributed articles to the New Deal for Communities magazine – front page on issues such as healthy eating, gun crime, employment and litter.
- A new local radio station (KEMET) requested Young Advisors provide input into the setting up a Youth Forum on a media project.
- The shadow board black and minority ethnic children and young people (ISIS) sought input from Young Advisors to open out the children and young people's strategy to local young people.
- Young Advisors have assisted the partnership council in setting-up a Children and Young People's Forum for engaging on environmental education.
- Young Advisors have been involved in a workshop on engaging young people and in setting up a youth forum for Walsall Neighbourhood Wardens Resource Centre.
- Young Advisors have contributed to a number of conferences, including the Young Advisors conference (Essex) and a Home Office 'Not in our neighbourhood' conference.

## Barriers encountered and lessons learned

- 2.14 Although Young Advisors worked in both informal and formal environments, informal contact was the preferred choice. Partners who encouraged this type of participation appeared to have both a greater understanding of the Young Advisors' role and more affinity with them. Contact needs to be honest and realistic: "*Need to level with them, no point in sugar-coating it.*" (Neighbourhood Management Director, Hull)
- 2.15 Young Advisors were generally very confident in engaging with partners and even those who admitted to being quiet and fairly shy stated that they were comfortable because they had support from their colleagues or Lead.
- 2.16 A good working relationship developed when partners were aware of the barriers Young Advisors needed to overcome. An inherent understanding that Young Advisors had most likely suffered from social and economic exclusion and the effect that this had on successful engagement was vital. Some partners emphasised that during the work, they had to make a conscious effort to look at the Young Advisors as individuals, not just as a uniform team. They felt this was the only way to pull out each individual's strengths and determine what each wanted to achieve. Others stressed the importance of bringing young people out of their home area to gain an understanding of what is happening both in their wider community and beyond.
- 2.17 Some partners felt that involving Young Advisors helped them develop ideas as the Young Advisors said what they thought and asked pertinent questions that sometimes adults would hesitate (from social conventions) from asking. (Equally some partners felt that Young Advisors understood why they might be asked difficult questions and why their ideas might be met positively or negatively. This was seen as an important outcome of the Young Advisor training).
- 2.18 Some interviewees reported that local authorities in particular have expected Young Advisors to be exactly like adults because they are involved in 'adults' work', showing a lack of understanding of the experience Young Advisors may have.
- 2.19 There was evidence that, while organisations could be very supportive of Young Advisors and see the benefits of engaging with them, they nevertheless found it difficult to outline how they would engage with them in the future without the support of the Leads with whom they had had contact. Arguably, maintaining links should be an integral aspect of the Young Advisors' role which could in turn generate independence from their Leads. A further point to consider is that most organisations had not heard of the Young Advisor Charity website. This also highlights the benefits of marketing the Charity as a supporting framework and source of further information to partners.

## Key points for practitioners

### **The role of Young Advisors in New Deal for Communities: key points**

- The unique nature of the Young Advisor role needs careful explanation to both potential Young Advisors and those with whom they work. The Leads and the national co-ordinating body both have a role to play in this.
- The Young Advisor role is more complicated and diverse than many Young Advisors initially understood it to be.
- A key misunderstanding is that the role is 'youth work' based.
- When the consultancy role of Young Advisors is understood they are seen as professionals who can act as ambassadors and mentors for young people and can instigate wider youth engagement.
- Crucially, the Young Advisor initiative provides a structure that encourages true youth engagement rather than tokenistic gestures. Project Leads play an important role in ensuring that partners do not use Young Advisors for tokenistic consultation.
- Young Advisors have participated in a range of activities at different strategic and operational levels.
- A good working relationship developed with partners when they had an understanding of the barriers young people from New Deal for Communities were likely to have faced.

### 3 Recruitment, retention and transition

#### How are Young Advisors recruited?

- 3.1 Echoing the findings of the pilot evaluation, this review also found that New Deal for Communities had found it difficult to attract a diverse range of young people as potential Young Advisors. This was due to both the nature of the Young Advisor role and short lead-in times for setting up projects. Acquiring a full complement of young people, or critical mass, does not necessarily mean that such a group is fully representative of all young people in the area. With constrained resources, representation might involve having a 'robust', if not entirely representative, group of young people.
- 3.2 A common method of recruiting Young Advisors has been to hold consultation events although participation at these was often uneven. An open day was run in Bristol but this had a low turn out. Although disappointing in terms of attendance, what was felt to be important by the Lead was that young people are given the opportunity to get involved, and that the New Deal for Communities facilitates such involvement.
- 3.3 It is clear from the case studies that more in-depth selection mechanisms may be required to complement recruitment methods that focus on breadth (e.g. consultation events). In the case of Nottingham the co-ordinator has sought to target recruitment by using a database of young people who have been involved in various New Deal for Communities initiatives and word of mouth recruitment in-conjunction with flyers and posters. This approach permits cost-effective engagement with young people who are known by the New Deal for Communities and have a track record of involvement in other New Deal for Communities activities.
- 3.4 In the case of Knowsley the team of Young Advisors comprises ten young people, of whom five are from the New Deal for Communities area. It is recognised, however, that the team is not fully representative of the area and the Lead is keen to involve young people from under-represented groups such as those with an in-care background or with a disability. The lack of diversity is attributable to the tight timescale of the scheme's implementation. The process of recruiting Young Advisors had to happen very quickly once the bid was successful so it was agreed to pilot the scheme with young people who had a track record of interest and activity around issues affecting their community (a view also held in Hull), and so were known to the youth service. This approach was favoured due to the amount of capacity building that was needed to develop the role:

*[You can't] just get them out of a box, shake them off and say there you go you're empowered.'* (Lead, Knowsley)

- 3.5 In Knowsley, young people in the Youth Forum played a key role in recruitment. Information was given about the role and then interested young people were asked to write a letter of application. The Youth Forum formed the interview panel and applicants answered four questions that it devised. On reflection, both young people and Youth Service workers felt that the application and interview process helped to imbue a sense of professionalism in the process befitting the Young Advisor role.
- 3.6 In Hull, in contrast, the use of interviews at this stage of recruitment was rejected. It was felt that a formal interview process may have deterred young people from applying as they would have felt under pressure to perform well in an unfamiliar situation.
- 3.7 Transparent formal recruitment processes appear to serve two key purposes. First, they ensure equal opportunities for all young people to show interest and apply for the posts even if not all young people take up these opportunities. In Knowsley, for example, all members of the Youth Forum were offered the opportunity to apply. Some chose not to because of other commitments and some because they did not feel comfortable with the level of responsibility attached to the role. Secondly, they provide an opportunity for young people to be fully involved in a democratic process and through setting the interview questions and assessing responses become empowered through decision-making.
- 3.8 An additional positive impact also derives from the message given out when young people who already have a track record of community/voluntary work which is known to their peers become Young Advisors. This establishes the role as a progression from their current participation. The value of this perception was supported by Young Advisors themselves.

## What motivates young people to become Young Advisors?

- 3.9 A wide variety of reasons were evident for why individual young people became Young Advisors. However, relevant stakeholders (i.e. Leads and Young Advisors) in each of the case studies acknowledged that the level of pay was an important part of taking on the role:

*'Definitely a good incentive, I think it's amazing that you're getting eight pounds an hour!'* (Young Advisor, Knowsley)

- 3.10 Most Young Advisors simply liked the idea of being paid for a similar role to their previous voluntary and community work. Older Young Advisors who had left formal or education training and were doing sessional or part-time work where they received minimum levels of pay, relished the opportunity to earn more with a higher level of job satisfaction. It was recognised however, that the sessional nature of the work where the Young Advisors experienced peaks and troughs in workload could potentially cause problems in terms of irregular pay. Indeed, one Young Advisor had resigned from the role as she

had been offered more hours on a permanent basis at the part-time job she already had – at a lower wage.

- 3.11 The level of pay was seen as important by both Young Advisors and those working with them in terms of work experience and what this demonstrated about their ability to undertake the work. The ‘brand’ of a Young Advisor combined with the pay level gave young people greater confidence in their own abilities and influenced how other people viewed them:

*‘Wouldn’t be paid for nothing so must be doing things [of value].’* (Young Advisor, Hull)

- 3.12 Some stakeholders have been reluctant to pay the Young Advisors for their work but the charity, which has fielded tensions from local authorities about the level of pay the Young Advisors receive, emphasises the consultancy role of Young Advisors, as do the Leads. There were also reports of tensions with mainstream youth workers, related to the Youth Service wage structure.

- 3.13 Interestingly, and perhaps due to the way young people view Young Advisors as a progression from other forms of voluntary and community activity, there were no reported cases of envy about pay amongst Young Advisors’ peers. There is indeed a sizeable group of young people who have become Young Advisors as part of a progression from their previous roles in youth forums and youth groups.

- 3.14 In the case of Nottingham there was a very strong altruistic commitment from the Young Advisors. Such statements would not be surprising given an evaluation environment such as a focus group, but observation showed that the young people involved clearly had a real commitment to changing their environment. This is an environment where children and young people are exposed to particularly detrimental consequences of deprivation – crime and gun crime – on a regular basis. The sentiments of one Young Advisor are particularly pertinent in reflecting the attitudes of Young Advisors in Nottingham:

*‘This is an area with lots of problems... [such as a] lack of facilities for young people. [Young people] would rather stand outside shops with the threat of getting shot than going to some of the youth buildings... we feel that we can make a difference to the lives young people, make it a more fun and safer place than it is at the moment’* (Young Advisor, Nottingham)

- 3.15 3.15 In this context, it was made clear that ‘time-wasters’ had left because they did not have the level of commitment expected of them and that this standard for the level of commitment required was one formed within the group, rather than being imposed by the New Deal for Communities or other organisations. Observation of the Nottingham group and interviews with key stakeholders suggests the development of such a group dynamic is a powerful force for empowerment.

- 3.16 A further group also stressed that the Young Advisor approach was particularly attractive to the young people because it offered 'something different' to traditional youth involvement (in, for example, youth forums and youth groups):

*'Dead interesting and it's like the things that we were doing weren't like a normal job.'* (Young Advisor, Knowsley)

- 3.17 In other instances interest had arisen because of the lack of activities within the area:

*'It's something to do at night as well because there's nothing to do, even the park gets locked.'* (Young Advisor, Knowsley)

- 3.18 These factors are typically primary drivers for young people's involvement. Additional factors play a role in sustaining young people's motivation to remain involved with the initiative. The status that came with being a Young Advisor was emphasised by a number of groups, with Young Advisors in Nottingham reporting that it enhanced their interaction with, and ability to influence other young people:

*'All the local gangsters asking me yesterday 'how did it go in London' [Young Advisor event with Government] then the small talk comes after. It's good because I know that its only small talk but its obviously registered that in their head they've registered that I'm doing good things, they're acknowledging it and saying how did it go. These are obviously people that are concerned about the community but don't feel strong enough to put their foot down and do something about it'* (Young Advisor, Nottingham).

- 3.19 The Nottingham co-ordinator also notes the growing recognition from young people that a Young Advisor position gave individuals new skills and opportunities. This has been a strong impetus for getting Young Advisors involved in an area where perceived cultural and individual barriers had previously prevented young people from taking up opportunities available to them. The Young Advisors were providing new opportunities that seemed to circumvent these issues.

## What support do Young Advisors need to fulfil and develop their role?

### Training and mentors

- 3.20 An unequivocal finding from the research is that the support structure is paramount in developing the Young Advisor role. And this support needs to be sensitively adapted to different local contexts. Even after initial training it was stressed that Young Advisors need a great deal of support and development before their full potential could be realised. As Young Advisors

are from very different backgrounds, training has to be flexible in recognising that some Young Advisors require considerably more support than others. The 'participation' background of a Young Advisor often led to varying abilities to cope with different contexts. For example, young people engaged in New Deal for Communities and similar forums might be better at informal and/or 'lively' settings whilst those with a more formal schools council background may not have the skills to deal with 'hard' issues. Approaches to training area described in more detail in Box 3.1.

### **Box 3.1 Developing the Young Advisor role: training**

- Young Advisors benefit from both national and local support and training:
 

The national Young Advisor training was important for the Young Advisors to enable them to build an understanding of their role and a sense of working within a 'movement'. But local support and training were also vital for instilling a sense of working as a team, building confidence and having an impact on the community and beyond.
- Training can reduce turnover:
 

In the case of Bristol it was noted that training led to a low drop out rate and positive ownership with 80 per cent of the Young Advisors still involved in the initiative.
- Leads can play an important role in making the young people aware of the types of skills they need to develop both to carry out the role of Young Advisor and more generic 'employment' skills
 

The need for additional training, once settled into their role, was viewed differently between the case studies. Some Young Advisors felt that they needed more training on 'employment skills' rather than young advisor specific issues, for example, presentations and health and safety. Often this was with the aim of adding further to their CV but they also felt it was useful to continue such training when they were no longer in formal education or training.

Others found it difficult to identify the training they needed – again, highlighting the extent to which the Leads needed to know the young people well and support them intensively. In the case of Nottingham, the Lead ensured that individuals were made aware of the types of skills they require, but that it was the responsibility of the Young Advisor to take control and take advantage of training opportunities available to them. This does highlight the critical role of the co-ordinator in recognising need but at the same time ensuring that Young Advisors take responsibility for their own development.
- The extent and pace at which the Leads develop the role varies, dependent on assessment of individuals and the team as a whole and also the available support capacity:
 

In Knowsley for example, there has been a careful approach to the work load:

*'It's not like, as young advisors, we're not getting the work, because people say "ooh Young Advisors that sounds wonderful", and they're all like trying to hire us in. But [the Lead] is like, this is a pilot scheme youse don't do that, that's not what your role is, or she's keeping us at a steady pace kind of thing.'* (Young Advisor, Knowsley)



- 3.21 A key element across all case studies is that the project Leads ‘knew’ the young people well, having an appreciation of their abilities, attitudes and personal issues - a benefit of Young Advisors coming from mainstream or New Deal for Communities engagement activities. Young Advisors themselves felt this was very important and helped them immensely in their role. In both Hull and Knowsley, the fact that the Leads had themselves grown up in the area not only consolidated this understanding but also served as a source of inspiration for the Young Advisors. In the case of Nottingham it was noted that certain Young Advisors had parents involved in community activities, while other Young Advisors had contacts with community activists, and that they were inspired and supported by these individuals.
- 3.22 It was also clear that the Leads provided an important role in linking Young Advisors with local organisations, based upon the Leads’ existing contacts. Without such knowledge and access it was generally felt that Young Advisors would have required more time to identify key contacts and build relations. In the case of Nottingham there was a management system geared towards the Lead developing contacts based on existing relations with organisations, with Young Advisors pursuing these contacts for potential work. The Lead would then provide support and mentoring through the work generated this way.
- 3.23 In addition to support from the Leads, the four case study New Deal for Communities had all advocated mentors for the Young Advisors. Putting this approach into practice, however, was not always easy, with in one case, relationship building between the mentors and Young Advisors proving problematic. There were also issues, in other cases, of problems relating to staff capacity and turnover. It was generally felt, however, that mentoring can be an important part of the training programme. Box 3.2 summarises key lessons from the schemes which tried to develop the role of mentors for the young advisors.

**Box 3.2 Developing the Young Advisor role – mentors**

- Mentors need an understanding of the aspiration of the young people as well as a professional judgement on the skills required and knowledge of training available.
- Mentors should, as far as possible, have an appreciation of the lived experiences and ways of thinking of the young people.

In one initiative, for example, the relationship building between mentors and the Young Advisors had proved difficult with the former adopting what the latter felt was an unnecessarily “challenging approach”.

- Relationships between mentors and the young people need to be carefully built up.
- Continuity of personnel is important for relationships to be built up.
- Mentors need to be integrated into the overall training programme.

In one initiative, for example, stakeholders felt that mentors had been “*left too much to their own devices without ever, for example, being offered a base in which to meet*”. The mentoring system was consequently felt to be at risk of being “*intangible*” and “*lacking a context*”.

## Transition

- 3.24 As yet there has been no formal analysis of what Young Advisors move on to when they cease to be Young Advisors. The charity has received feedback, however, related to aspirations both before and after becoming a Young Advisor and the type of work and training Advisors would like to move on to. A key lesson with regards to transition is that any analysis of the progression of Young Advisors should include an assessment of the distance travelled – which would provide a clearer evaluation of benefits than job or training outcomes alone.
- 3.25 Through youth-work experience the charity found that it is common for young people in deprived neighbourhoods to have aspirations towards practitioner jobs. As Young Advisors, young people came into contact with a wider variety of posts and levels of seniority and this appears to have had led to a change in their aspirations in either level of entry in a career they wanted to aim for or a different type of role. Several Young Advisors move on to university but also to jobs centred around democracy, politics, youth work and teaching. For those that move on to retail/commercial low level jobs the skills they have gained as a Young Advisor were valuable for future career progression and employability. Where Young Advisors are well-known across their communities, local people were aware of what they have moved on to doing and a sense of pride in what they had achieved was felt by some interviewees, reflecting the impact on community bonding that Young Advisors can have.
- 3.26 The charity, Young Advisors and other interviewees all drew attention to the importance of Young Advisors being given employment status, which developed among the Young Advisors:
- a work ethic (timekeeping, discipline and responsibility)
  - transferable skills; and
  - confidence and self-esteem.
- 3.27 Most saw the role of Young Advisor as a stepping stone to full employment, with young people gaining a realistic view of employment. Support workers mentioned the ‘reminders’ that many young people need about the responsibility of work and general work ethic, and that the young people involved do learn this very quickly.
- 3.28 Without exception, Young Advisors themselves saw the role as helping them secure better jobs in the future and gain more respect for the work they do in the community (they often felt that because they are employed people look at them more seriously and professionally). The view expressed by the charity that taking part in the initiative raises aspiration levels was reinforced in focus groups with Young Advisors. Some of the older Advisors compared their experience of enjoyment, job satisfaction, and the level of support within the initiative with less favourable conditions in other jobs they had had, such as shop assistants. The charity also had evidence that academically achieving pupils from such areas may not have high aspirations because the role

models are not present in their family/community. It becomes important for them to work with professionals to see opportunities that do exist and the achievements of people who also went to schools just like them. Other interviews highlighted the cascade effect not only on peer group aspirations but also that the '*community's for them*'.

## Barriers encountered and lessons learned

- 3.29 The common theme in recruitment and retention of Young Advisors is one of strong commitment from the recruited Leads (who were either already New Deal for Communities Officers or worked for youth service programmes closely aligned to the New Deal for Communities work) rather than the existence of an explicit New Deal for Communities policy for youth empowerment. This is not to suggest that New Deal for Communities were not already involved in community *engagement* and *involvement*, but that more in-depth processes of *empowerment* require considerable commitment from key individuals.
- 3.30 One issue raised in some case study areas was that recruitment of a second wave of Young Advisors should have happened at an early stage within the initiatives. As well as ensuring continuity in Young Advisor's activities, 'cascading' the Young Advisors maximised the support and training available from learning mentors for current Young Advisors.
- 3.31 Interviewees were very clearly aware that turnover was always going to be high amongst the Young Advisors. Young people moving on to employment or training is what New Deal for Communities hope to achieve. However, there was no evidence in the case study New Deal for Communities of any formal programmes of support (e.g. individual advisors being given 'Action Plans' for the transition period, detailing training and support needs). This is an important part of the support structure to develop and may include, for example, referring Young Advisors to employment and development agencies which have the required expertise.
- 3.32 New Deal for Communities were aware of the need to recruit a second cohort of Young Advisors - '*Just got to breed another lot now*' (New Deal for Communities Board Member, Hull) but there is little evidence of New Deal for Communities driving forward the sustainability of the initiative:
- 'We are too busy at the New Deal for Communities to think about the sustainability of the programme, we have two meetings every day at times.'* (New Deal for Communities Board Member, Hull)
- 3.33 In part this is a reflection of the movement of Young Advisors from New Deal for Communities to become more embedded in mainstream Youth Services. Nonetheless, given the acknowledged value of the initiative for community cohesion, empowerment and regeneration, this does seem short-sighted.

## Key points for practitioners

### **Recruitment, retention and transition: key points**

- The way a Young Advisor scheme is organised can vary and will reflect the different organisational contexts in which the initiatives have developed.
- Processes of empowerment require considerable commitment from key individuals – the shape of local initiatives is more dependent on the Lead (both their personality and networks) than on any explicit steer from the New Deal for Communities as a corporate body.
- Young Advisors need not necessarily be fully representative of young people in their area at the beginning of new Young Advisor schemes – the need to ensure a critical mass for local initiatives, the nature of the Young Advisor role and short lead-in times for projects may mean that it is more appropriate to build in diversity as schemes develop.
- The majority of Young Advisors recruited were already known to Leads through their involvement in other New Deal for Communities or mainstream youth service activities.
- One strength of this approach is that the role of Young Advisor is seen by young people and Leads/support team as a progression for the young people after their previous roles in youth forums and youth groups.
- The level of pay was a clear incentive in attracting young people to the role and the pay combined with the 'brand' of the Young Advisors also gave some young people greater confidence in their own abilities and in working with external partners.
- Young Advisors felt that the role also offered them an opportunity to undertake 'different' activities and gave them something to do in the evenings.
- Leads and the National Co-ordinating body play an important role in developing the Young Advisor role. Leads were especially important in linking Young Advisors into their local and national networks; providing frequent support and encouragement and guiding the Young Advisors towards taking responsibility for their own development.
- The Young Advisor role is often a stepping stone to full employment. Without exception Young Advisors saw the role as helping them secure better jobs in the future and more respect for the work they do in their community. Good practice guides need to be developed for the transition period.

## 4 Young Advisors: Impact

### Community cohesion

- 4.1 Young Advisors in some of the case study areas have contributed to a definite change in the stereotypical view of young people held by some local residents and in doing so have helped overcome some of the tensions between different parts of the community. One New Deal for Communities chair stated that Young Advisors were being seen as a ‘force for good’, rather than a problem, and that young people being seen to be doing positive things is a very powerful message. Another New Deal for Communities interviewee communicated a strong sense of pride in talking about the achievements of the Young Advisors, recalling when they were small children and portraying a real sense of a community growing together.
- 4.2 Young Advisors themselves felt that the role, particularly as it was paid, had helped them to be taken seriously within the wider community as a ‘formal’ representative of young people. For them, bridges are being built not just between children/young people and adults but across generations (see Boxes 4.1 and 4.2 for examples of good practice in this context).

#### **Box 4.1 Good practice: consulting the wider community**

Knowsley and Hull Young Advisors consulted the local community over a youth facility to be built as part of the New Deal for Communities programmes. Although the Young Advisors in Knowsley did not see an explicit part of their role as bringing communities closer together, they did take pride in how successful their consultation had been and felt strongly that they had turned views around:

*‘When we done like the consultation about the youth extension like, we were trying to get the older members of the community type thing and they were like ‘oh well, they’re all just in the fields taking drugs and having sex on mattresses’...and I said, you know they didn’t want the youth extension to be built, and I said, ‘well if you’ve got a youth extension then its not gonna happen is it?’ And they were like, ‘That’s a good point’, and we were like ‘just think about it from a young persons point of view’ and they were like ‘aahh ok,’ and we turned their views around.’ (Young Advisor, Knowsley)*

Board members in Hull New Deal for Communities viewed the involvement in Young Advisors in the proposed youth centre as helping to break down generational barriers. The Young Advisors had taken the lead in consulting young people and also residents close to the centre. Indeed no complaints about the proposed building were raised by local residents at an information session run by the Board. The Hull Young Advisors also tried to get older people’s points of view through a joint activity where the young people using the youth facility and pensioners came together and talked about problems and issues in the community. Interestingly, both came up with similar issues (such as youth gangs and anti-social behaviour) which surprised both generations and is often quoted within the New Deal for Communities as an example of the community coming together to support each other in making their neighbourhood a better place to live.

#### **Box 4.2 Good practice: increasing levels of interest in community activities**

Some interviewees felt that Young Advisors have been instrumental in starting to tackle the deficit of community activists or even simply lack of interest in their community amongst 25 to 40 year olds. New Deal for Communities reported that sometimes it was difficult to get children involved in activities as their parents do not want them to be involved unless there was a direct benefit to their family and friends - *'something in it for them'* (New Deal for Communities employee, Hull). Young Advisors circumvent this problem by going straight to the children and asking them to join in activities. It was argued that this approach appeared to have the additional benefit of getting the parents themselves involved as a result of the enthusiasm and actions of their children.

## Empowering young people

- 4.3 The impacts relating to community cohesion outlined above have been an integral part of creating an environment which is conducive to youth empowerment. Previous strategies of relying on attendance at Board meetings as a form of empowerment for young people had proved difficult to sustain – it is an adult-dominated environment which often fails to have any tangible effects on youth issues and participation. For example, Knowsley New Deal for Communities, like all New Deal for Communities, had initially made provision in the structure for two young people to attend board meetings as resident board directors. But historically attendance was sporadic, which reinforced the perception by some older residents and organisations that young people did not want to participate. The Young Advisor initiative however, gives scope for a variety of participation strategies, and has given the training and support for the Young Advisors to take part effectively.
- 4.4 At an individual level, the Young Advisors viewed the role of a Young Advisor as empowering - an opportunity to have a voice and meet new people, as well as having a demonstrative effect on other young people:

*'The role has given me more confidence in myself and to respect myself and show to other young people that it is important to respect yourself'* (Young Advisor, Nottingham)

- 4.5 Several felt that an important part of the Young Advisor training was reflecting on participation and what it meant and that it was through this that they have come to realise how in the past they were often taken advantage of as a 'tick-box exercise' rather than participating effectively.
- 4.6 The training and support clearly build the skills and confidence of Young Advisors to empower them to take the lead and make decisions, bringing other young people in their wake. One youth worker commented:

*'You can see who the Young Advisors are in the group because they automatically slip into a leading role and the*

*other young people respect that and follow it.* (Youth worker, Knowsley)

- 4.7 The ability of Young Advisors to take part in formal meetings with key partners in discussions over regeneration issues was seen by the partners as directly empowering the young people involved:

*'It's put young people back into the light, so instead of them being marginalised and being seen at a distance, they've actually moved to centre stage'* (Director New Deal for Communities, Hull)

- 4.8 Interviews showed that Young Advisors are clearly valued in terms of their role in wider engagement with young people (Box 4.3). There is evidence that engaging and involving Young Advisors has been a key mechanism in generating more active involvement from other young people - *'they show to other young people what can be achieved'* (Director, New Deal for Communities, Hull). Young Advisors encourage young people to participate in their communities by promoting what can be achieved with hard work and commitment at the community-level, by stressing that *'this is our place and we've got to look after it'* (New Deal for Communities board member, Hull). Ultimately, *'it's a challenge to the prevailing youth culture'* (Director, New Deal for Communities, Hull).

**Box 4.3 Good practice: wider engagement with young people**

- In Hull there have been issues with anti-social behaviour when children have transferred to secondary school. The New Deal for Communities believes that the Young Advisors, by talking to children at risk of anti-social behaviour, have shown that there is an alternative to putting up with problems or responding to these in a socially irresponsible way by demonstrating that young people can themselves help to change things.
- Although fundamentally a social enterprise, in Bristol Young Advisors have to undertake two hours a week of varied voluntary work. Through such activity they are considered to have been role models for other young people.
- One Nottingham Young Advisor suggests that Young Advisors have an important role in that they can see children and young people that have the potential "to go off the rails" and are able to identify and help these from an early stage, based upon their own life experience. This was a level of identification and engagement that they felt youth services could not have.

- 4.9 The trickle-down effect of the payment, skills and experience that Young Advisors benefit from has increased involvement by raising aspirations. Reaction from peers and younger children has often been *'wow, why can't I do that?'* (outlining the potential for a long-term impact on motivation). Indicative of this is that the Young Advisors charity has received reports of young people volunteering more to position themselves to be a Young Advisor when the post becomes free. Youth workers involved in a Youth Forum feel

that the presence of Young Advisors amongst the Forum's members has 'added value' to the Forum, and young people see the role as a form of progression for them to follow.

- 4.10 One interviewee stressed that participation gives the young people involved a real sense of attachment to place:

*'The youth have watched this place grow; with new buildings...they can see the changes happening from the work of the New Deal for Communities and what happens when people get involved'.* (New Deal for Communities Board Member, Hull)

## Influence on regeneration

- 4.11 The extent to which Young Advisors had genuine influence over regeneration was related to two key issues: how partners/service users perceived the role of Young Advisors and the way in which they worked with them; and the organisation/body in which the Lead sits.
- 4.12 Barriers preventing participation in, and genuine influence on regeneration were often related to misunderstandings of the role of Young Advisors. Generally, partners and organisations with an ethos of working with others to achieve sustainable regeneration have facilitated the influence of Young Advisors (Box 4.4). However, a number of Young Advisors and staff felt that some local authorities and councillors in particular, felt uncomfortable working with Young Advisors and had a more traditional approach towards youth engagement. DCLG has attempted to overcome such tensions by holding events for councillors, explaining what Young Advisors do and how they can help regeneration and participation in communities. In addition a key role of the national co-ordinating body is to have an up-to-date understanding of policy related to youth empowerment, which Young Advisors can use to stress the need for changing working practices around youth engagement.
- 4.13 The Pilot evaluation highlighted that Young Advisors were tending to exert greatest influence on youth-specific issues. This has also been a finding in the case study research but there are several elements leading to this. First, such issues have direct relevance and interest to Young Advisors and young people within New Deal for Communities areas so it is natural that when first established Young Advisors lean towards this work. This is also linked to the youth strategies within New Deal for Communities, which strive to ensure the participation of young people in developing activities, services and facilities for them. But an additional factor which exerts much more influence is the body to which the Lead is attached. The natural movement of Young Advisor initiatives towards mainstream Youth Services has principally been due to the Leads in the case study areas (Hull and Knowsley at least) having a background in youth work. The natural affinity that Leads therefore have towards youth-specific regeneration rather than regeneration per se, clearly steers Young Advisor activity to participate more in the former.



- 4.14 Knowsley Young Advisors are a clear example of this process. The three key areas of their activity are related to youth specific issues – an evaluation of Youth Opportunities Fund activity, assessing youth participation standards and consulting with the community over a youth facility (see Box 2.3). The youth facility is an example of relevant regeneration to the Young Advisors themselves whilst the other two activities stem from the Lead’s responsibility for the Youth Opportunities Fund in Knowsley and links to the Youth Participation team, which was able to train the Young Advisors to undertake the assessor work. It is important to note however, that the alignment of this activity with the Lead’s other roles is a way of minimising extra work for the Lead and taps into existing mainstream teams to provide support for the Young Advisors.

**Box 4.4 Good practice: Hull - genuine influence with partner support**

Architects, Gowers–Bell, who had been involved in designing the award-winning Village Centre for Preston Road New Deal for Communities was asked to design a new youth facility. The architects felt it essential that young people were involved and through the Youth Development Officer directly engaged the New Deal for Communities Young Advisors in the project. This involvement stretched from overall design to the planning of interior fixtures. Arc, an independent organisation that works with communities to ensure effective engagement in designing the built environment, acted as a critical friend/mentor to the Young Advisors throughout the process.

Design meetings were held with the Young Advisors, other interested young people (who had taken part in a Visioning Process in the standard youth sessions) the architect and the contractor. Sufficient technical guidance and information, including costings, were given by the architect and contractor, which, combined with thought provoking questions, enabled the young people to make decisions. The quality of the decisions has been highlighted through the viability of the project - a building designed on budget and meeting a specific need.

The architects also stressed that directly engaging and mentoring the young people meant that they, as an organisation, were willing to *‘go the extra mile or two to make it something that meant something to them.’* The young people in the New Deal for Communities area now have a youth facility which was designed by them, for their use. Ownership of the building is proven by the lack of anti-social behaviour within and around the facility, in marked contrast to the experience of other facilities.

## Impacts on partners

- 4.15 Evidence from the case study research highlighted the impact of Young Advisors on partners. There was evidence of partners drawing on their experience of empowering young people through contact with Young Advisors to develop service delivery. An example in this context is of a proposed Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder project – Young Caretakers – which is designed to involve local Young Advisors reporting on environmental issues.

#### **Box 4.5 Good practice: partnership working**

The work of the Local Strategic Partnership based in Hull (ONE Hull) and the PRNDC Young Advisors is an example of good practice in partnership working which has achieved a variety of impacts at a range of scales.

##### ***Background***

In 2005 One Hull launched a 'Have Your Say' campaign to develop a new community strategy for Hull. The final document was massive and unwieldy. Young Advisors youth-proofed the strategy. The Local Strategic Partnership then asked them to devise a DVD to play at the conference launching the strategy and to be used as an accessible form of the strategy to young people and children across the city.

##### ***Marketing the Young Advisors***

- The Lead acquired the Local Strategic Partnership draft strategy and the Young Advisors youth proofed it. They then invited the Local Strategic Partnership to listen to the results.

##### ***Understanding barriers to effective engagement***

- To enable the Young Advisors to produce a DVD to promote the strategy the Local Strategic Partnership realised that the Young Advisors needed to widen their experience so that they could understand what was happening across the City not just their own community. The project started with a 'sight-seeing tour' – Young Advisors were very surprised at what was going on in the city - showing how isolated they were on their estate.
- This process emphasises the stepping stones needed to overcome exclusion – the tour took them out of their home environment to a new one, but with a support structure so they felt safe.

##### ***Empowering Individual Young Advisors***

- The Young Advisors developed social and practical skills.
- It raised aspirations – the tour led to Young Advisors asking questions such as 'How do I get to work in that building?'

##### ***Empowering the Young Advisors as a team***

- Involving Young Advisors in the whole of the process rather than just the final part can lead to better results. Young Advisors were able to work in informal and formal situations. It enabled the Young Advisors to see how everything worked in their community and across the city.
- The type of work involved in making the DVD was emotive – really getting the young people to think what was important to them.
- Giving the Young Advisors ownership (with appropriate guidance) of the project led to a great pride in what they had achieved: *'They were walking around like puffed up pigeons.'* (Hull Local Strategic Partnership)

##### ***Empowering young people***

- A DVD reaches more young people than a document can and has the potential to provide role models/raise aspirations for the city's young people/children as a whole.

- The perception of young people by the community and stakeholders has changed through the DVD as it presents young people in a positive light. This counteracts the prevalent view in the media of young people as a problem: *'That kid that's kicking that ball may actually be ok.'* (Hull LSP)

### **Genuine influence**

*'This was their opportunity to say "this is who we are and we can contribute to the regeneration of the community"'* (Hull Local Strategic Partnership)

- The DVD was an integral part of the brand of One Hull and a key tool in breaking down the general perception of Hull as 'the end of the road', not just breaking down the stereotypical image of young people but also that of their city.
- *'In one fell swoop at the conference they got a stepping stone between agencies, young people and adults.'*
- The DVD was highly valued as it gave a young person's perspective on two key questions: 'What do you want from the community strategy?' and 'What do you want by 2020?'
- The feedback regarding the DVD was excellent and it was used in schools and for stakeholder events (including the business community): *'The DVD encapsulated what the Community Strategy was about better than the Community Strategy document itself did.'* (Hull Local Strategic Partnership)

## Key points for practitioners

### **Young Advisors Impacts: key points**

- Community cohesion is being developed through Young Advisor work in New Deal for Communities. Bridges are being built not just between young people themselves but across the generations.
- Young Advisors are valued for their role in wider engagement with young people and there is evidence that empowering Young Advisors has been a key mechanism in generating more active involvement from other young people.
- Aspirations have been raised amongst the Young Advisors and other young people about what they can achieve individually and how they can improve their community.
- Young Advisors unanimously see their role as empowering – an opportunity to have a voice in their community and beyond.
- The extent to which Young Advisors have had genuine influence over regeneration has been related to how partners/service users perceived their role and the way in which they worked with Young Advisors and also, the organisation/body in which the Lead sits.

- Some New Deal for Communities reported that by getting other children and young people involved in activities Young Advisors are also generating interest from parents in what is going on in the community.
- Young Advisors tend to exert the greatest influence on youth-specific issues. This is a natural result of such issues having direct relevance and interest to Young Advisors and also links through Leads into mainstream youth services.
- Young Advisors have also had an impact on how partners work and how they approach engaging young people.

## 5 Sustainability

- 5.1 Understandably at a time when the Young Advisor initiative is expanding nationally much of the current focus within the initiative is about 'how do we start up?' However, there is also a tangible shift in thinking about 'what now?' Support capacity and marketing strategies are key determinants of sustainability at a national and local level and are important components in the sustainability models currently being developed across the case study areas.

### Support capacity

- 5.2 The main challenge to sustainability and programme expansion is support capacity, both nationally by the co-ordinating body and at the local level. As the findings have shown the support at both local and national level is intense and passionate:

*'[The success of the initiative is due to]...the commitment, personalities, and skills of the Programme's initiators and Leads. In the research for multipliable lessons, the social and emotional intelligence of the professionals involved at the outset is usually understated or even overlooked. Yet, without their working beyond their normal professional boundaries, including taking some risks with traditional procedures, this Programme would never have been initiated or developed'. (Trustee, Young Advisors Charity)*

- 5.3 However, the levels of energy generated by key people in getting the initiative up and running and developing it to its current stage cannot be seen as infinitely sustainable. Structures need to be put in place to ensure 'burnout' does not threaten future development. Some evidence of this is happening as officers move on to new positions, while other officers are voicing concerns at lack of New Deal for Communities support and flexibility in dealing with Young Advisor issues, and raising concerns over the sustainability of their own level of commitment to the initiative.
- 5.4 One of the factors that determines the success of the programme, which also came out in the pilot evaluation, is the need to have a Lead with the right skills to challenge and encourage the Young Advisors and have access to networks to raise their profile and attract work. Leads have found this a full-time job in itself and the younger the Advisors then the more support is required. However, taking the lead on Young Advisors is only one element of the Leads' workload which reduces the time that can be spent developing and sustaining the role.
- 5.5 Staff turnover has, at times, had a negative impact on the sustainability of the case study initiatives and the lack of involvement of the Young Advisors in Hull and Knowsley in discussions over sustainability seems to be directly related to difficulties of staff capacity. Even where the initiative is continuing,

the replacement of the Lead is often a point of disjuncture both in terms of natural handover between staff but also from the viewpoint of the Young Advisors themselves. One group of Young Advisors knew that their Lead was taking on a new role within youth services and that she would be replaced. They expressed a concern, however, that the level of understanding between the Lead and the young people would be lost:

*'...because it's somebody new, they don't know where we're coming from.'* (Young Advisor, Knowsley)

- 5.6 As the New Deal for Communities programme nears an end this will become a bigger problem. As a young initiative there is still often the sense of losing crucial individuals who were pulling it all together. This serves to emphasise that if local schemes are to be sustained and reach their potential they cannot rely on the enthusiasm, commitment and championship of a few individuals.

## Marketing the Young Advisor role

- 5.7 A clear marketing strategy is essential for sustainability. The symbolism of the training programme, reinforced by accreditation, is very important. It serves a 'quality control' purpose as it sets a benchmark for Young Advisors' skills and understanding. It is also a powerful tool in marketing Young Advisors and embedding the initiative in regeneration. Furthermore, it gives a shared national identity to Young Advisors.

- 5.8 The charity is marketing Young Advisors as critical friends, especially to Local Authorities:

*'The unique selling point of the Young Advisors is that they know it, suss it quicker, so save Local Authorities money.'*  
(Chief Executive, Young Advisors Charity)

- 5.9 Private and public sector organisations interviewed emphasised the need for raising the profile of Young Advisors to ensure sustainability. Many felt that more marketing was needed so that people knew what type of work Young Advisors undertook and that it would be most productive if marketing strategies moved towards engaging with a greater variety of organisations/structures. Ideally, each Young Advisor scheme should be required to develop a portfolio of what they have done and what they can do and market it to local organisations. Another idea was for Young Advisors to have greater representation at networking events to get their message across - a DVD was seen as a valuable tool in marketing Young Advisors across a variety of organisations (see Box 4.5).
- 5.10 A national marketing and launch event was seen as useful in raising the profile of Young Advisors.
- 5.11 Branded clothing seems a way that Young Advisors have picked up on as establishing their identity, which could be used as a marketing tool. 'Uniforms' could be especially useful when many Young Advisors are involved in youth

forums and other youth activities and want to differentiate their roles. Young Advisors also felt that uniforms look and made them feel more of a team and more professional.

## Sustainability models

- 5.12 Finding a suitable sustainability model is an especially pertinent issue due to the New Deal for Communities programme nearing an end. It is clearly ideal that Young Advisors themselves are involved in developing sustainability models, but factors may mitigate against this. Such empowerment is an integral part of the Young Advisor concept and gives ownership to the Young Advisors.
- 5.13 Two types of model have been identified from the case study schemes reviewed for this research – one with roots in the regeneration arena (the social enterprise model) and one with a more youth policy framework (networking model). The charity reports that several Young Advisor initiatives have expressed an interest in moving towards the Social Enterprise model and this is presently taking place in Bristol (Box 5.1). The networking model, where Young Advisors become an integral part of existing youth participation structures within a city, is being developed in Hull (Box 5.2).

### **Box 5.1 Sustainability: Bristol's social enterprise approach**

Within Bristol there is a significant drive for sustainability through a social enterprise model, which partly resulted from the realisation that Young Advisors cost more than first thought, and that such a model is essential for future sustainability. The social enterprise is to be totally self-financing, requiring it to go city-wide to ensure suitable funding levels. The Young Advisors are supportive:

*“Young Advisors are really committed to it and they see themselves as starting a business.”*  
(Stakeholder, Bristol)

However, stakeholders note that not all Young Advisors see the implications yet, in the sense of a broadening out of the focus and requirements placed upon them. The biggest challenge is seen to be them taking control and having to focus on “getting business”:

*“Not only do they need to do the job, but they need to market themselves, like any small business. Many of the tasks they will have to fulfil they wouldn't necessarily be aware of.”*  
(Stakeholder, Bristol)

#### **(i) The main business objectives**

*Advice and information:* giving advice to agencies regarding young people's participation; developing a toolkit as a saleable resource and facilitating workshops related to the resources; and offering best practice and financial benefit to the agency.

*Consultation:* consulting on behalf of agencies by completing questionnaires and/or developing consultation processes.

*Evaluation:* evaluating conferences and events that are young people targeted, on behalf of agencies and businesses offering these services using the Hear by Right Framework as a tool for evaluation.

*Facilitation:* running a series of workshops around young people participation and involvement; specialising in workshops that improve agency knowledge around how to develop young people's skills in decision making processes – involvement of young people. This objective also includes running workshops for young people who will be trained to understand their rights to participate and develop ways in which they can participate if they want to.

*Youth Proofing:* working for businesses and agencies on the development of policies, practice, procedures, development plans and strategies to ensure that all this work is accessible to youth and the general public.

*Conferences:* designing and developing conferences on subjects related to young people and working with youth groups and young people to run their own conferences.

## **(ii) Training and support**

In setting up the social enterprise, there is a balance between time spent getting the work and doing it. This is recognised as a process that will need to be carefully managed.

Business skills training has been undertaken for the social enterprise, but certain stakeholders note that perhaps more support should have been sought from Business Link, since New Deal for Communities and mentor support is not geared towards business support. Another aspect is to ensure on-going support from a 'parent' or host organisation which has experience of being a business, or providing business support, providing an "entrepreneurial context."

One stakeholder argued that the Young Advisors involved also need more training in appropriate marketing skills and need to understand their market niche. There is also the perception that the social enterprise will need city council support in marketing the services available in an open market. This is an important point in that it highlights the relationship between future sustainability and working through market forces, raising further issues around the need for suitable skills to ensure Young Advisors are prepared for this kind of environment.

Stakeholders note that the social enterprise could have a big stake in the commissioning of services, but that Young Advisors must learn to fit their approaches to what is needed. In essence this means expanding beyond working on youth issues and taking on more of a community role. Examples that are cited include influence over city development, regeneration, parks and transport.

There is also a perceived need to broaden-out the potential directors of the social enterprise to ensure that business representation is there to offer support. As one stakeholder notes: "*They need a business partner to champion and to bring private sector businesses understanding to the process.*" (Bristol stakeholder)



### **Box 5.2 Sustainability: Hull's networking approach**

Development of a networking model in Hull was initiated by the Lead and is now being continued by a colleague within the mainstream youth service.

#### **(i) Model structure**

The structure is linked to the Local Area Networks used by Hull's Youth Service in which the 'Area Leads' will have responsibility identifying and integrating Young Advisors from their areas into services and provisions within their own communities and across the city. Not only will the Young Advisors have the support of their own Lead, but they, and importantly their Leads, will have support from the other Leads, their agencies and Young Advisors from across the city. Recruiting of Young Advisors will take place within each area's Youth Networks providing a development route for young people who show an interest and potential aptitude for Young Advisor work.

By integrating the Young Advisors into the existing youth work infrastructure it is hoped that this does not put them in competition with existing youth initiatives from both a strategic and practical perspective.

#### **(ii) Role of Young Advisors within the model**

Rather than replicating existing youth participation roles, the Young Advisor role in the networking model is seen to:

- Support the facilitation, development and promotion of local area Youth Forums within local communities
- Act as an advisory body to the seven area Youth Networks that can include attending Youth Network meetings
- Undertake consultation within local communities on specific issues that are linked to Hull's Young People's Parliaments
- Undertake the monitoring and evaluation of short-term projects established through agencies attending Youth Networks
- Act as an advisory body to other multi-agency networks operating in local communities
- Undertake consultation on an as and when basis through organisations commissioning Young Advisors
- Support the facilitation of research/outreach work in local communities
- Support other Young People led initiatives operating in the city, e.g. Coalition of Hull's Young People.<sup>9</sup>

Operating at local authority level, the networking model also offers the potential for broadening the experience and widening the horizons of the Young Advisors involved.

#### **(iii) Sustainability**

In terms of financial sustainability, the Hull plan for city-wide rollout includes changes

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<sup>9</sup> Taken from a 'Presentation to Youth Networks in Hull', given by David Shepherdson who is developing the city-wide roll-out.

to the pay scale to ensure sustainability. In future the pay scale is likely to be tiered – any work that is generic (youth forum, parliament etc.) will get a £20 a day gift voucher similar to that given to other young people involved in the work; £5.40 minimum wage for adults for all Young Advisor specific work and £8 an hour for all national work, DCLG work and private-sector evaluations.

The aim of the tiered system is to reduce any additional and potentially competitive pressure on the funding infrastructure.

Of crucial importance is the recognition that there is a need to raise the profile of Young Advisors and market their services so that they become a legitimate and recognised 'on-cost' for agencies submitting funding applications, e.g. related to evaluation and monitoring of a project. This underlines the fact that Young Advisors deliver a service and goods for the purpose of community development and regeneration. The initiative needs to be marketed as such rather than as a youth programme.

- 5.14 The Social Enterprise model can be a difficult route to go down and initiatives may need some other form of financial support in the short-term, even when like Bristol they may have an established Third Sector support network to tap into. Nevertheless actual financial sustainability will be difficult, and the natural time-limit to young people's involvement in the initiative could be a major barrier to sustainability.
- 5.15 Furthermore, evidence from Bristol suggests concern at the ability of Young Advisors to actually develop business skills, particularly in terms of seeking work. This concern stretches to the actual support structures in place, in that the broader New Deal for Communities itself does not possess such skills, resulting in a need to seek assistance from private sector and business support bodies, which is not guaranteed. Additionally, there is the important issue of market competition. Stakeholders note that sustainability depends on competitiveness within a market place, and requiring a broader market focus to include the sub-region and region. Concern is expressed over the ability of Young Advisors and the Lead to fulfil such a role in the absence of institutional support from the New Deal for Communities and council.
- 5.16 There is a broader issue arising from the social enterprise model that in seeking customers for the Young Advisors' work, Young Advisors will inevitably end up taking on commissions from a much wider geographical area than their original regeneration work with the New Deal for Communities and local partners. In these circumstances there may be a trade-off – influenced by this wider geographical commissioning – between working in the New Deal for Communities area and outside it.
- 5.17 A potential difficulty with the networking model lies in the integration of Young Advisors into existing youth participation structures at local authority level. This needs to be managed in a way that firstly does not bring Young Advisors into competition with existing youth initiatives and, secondly, ensures that the Young Advisor role is seen as complementing rather than replicating existing youth participation roles. It is important to distinguish the 'Youth Advisor-regeneration role' from orthodox youth development and engagement activity.

- 5.18 The networking model offers the potential for broadening the experience and widening the horizons of the Young Advisors involved. The private sector view on the city-wide programme was that it was a positive move and offered an additional point of access to young people to the traditional route of youth clubs or schools.

## Key points for practitioners

### **Sustainability: key points**

- During the early stage of roll-out, it is inevitable that much of the focus has been on getting local schemes up and running but there also needs to be a recognition of the point at which there needs to be a shift to thinking about sustainability and that such planning would ideally start early in the roll-out of local initiatives.
- The extent to which an initiative is embedded within its host organisation or is being driven forward by its Lead needs to be taken into consideration. If local schemes are to be sustained and reach their full potential they cannot solely rely on the enthusiasm, commitment and championship of a few individuals.
- A national co-ordinating body – the role currently being carried out by the Young Advisors Charity – is essential for the continued development of the initiative, particularly as sustainability plans can be affected by staff turnover. Even when the initiative is continuing, a change of Lead is often a point of disjuncture both in terms of handover between staff and in the support given to Young Advisors.
- A sustained marketing campaign is essential to raise the profile of Young Advisors both in the local community and with external (local, regional and national) organisations.
- Two broad sustainability models were being pursued in the case study New Deal for Communities – one with roots in regeneration (the Social Enterprise model) and one with a more youth policy framework (the networking model).
- The Social Enterprise model can be difficult, requiring financial support in the short-term and could be vulnerable to the natural time-limit to young people's involvement and the ability of Young Advisors to develop business skills without adequate support structures.
- A Young Advisor social enterprise may have to trade-off impact on the local neighbourhood with the need to exploit business opportunities outside it. Set against this, is the benefit of widening the horizons and experience of the Young Advisors.

- The networking model is one where Young Advisors are integrated into existing youth participation structures within a city. Operating at local authority level, it offers the potential for broadening the experience and widening the horizons of the Young Advisors involved but depends on a clear understanding of the uniqueness of the Young Advisor role rather than an understanding of the initiative purely as a youth participation strategy.

## 6 Conclusions and recommendations

### The need to take stock

- 6.1 As an innovative programme there are undoubtedly challenges to face in the future development and sustainability of Young Advisors. The initiative is challenging and changing, not simply how young people are engaged in regeneration, but more fundamentally the ways young people participate and become empowered. As the case studies have demonstrated, young people have been successfully recruited and trained to act as Young Advisors in the regeneration of their neighbourhoods. This engagement has not been tokenistic. Several factors appear to help explain the programme's considerable progress to date:
- It chimes in with current policy priorities in engaging and empowering young people.
  - The dedication and commitment of key players in the roll-out of the initiative.
  - Young Advisors have filled a gap in the market, offering a valuable role for communities and other partners.
  - It is a fresh and novel approach to regeneration, some of the existing practice of which has already been reported as slow, under-performing, or stalled.
- 6.2 The development of the Young Advisors' Charity in its role as the current national co-ordinating body and the roll-out of the initiative have occurred at a very fast pace. To ensure the sustainability of both the concept and practice on the ground it is imperative to take stock of the key messages coming out of the case study research to give structure and direction to the future.

### Policy

- 6.3 Section 1.2 outlined the raft of policy documents currently relating to young people's political engagement and empowerment. This political context has been further enhanced by DCLG's Empowerment White Paper, *Communities in Control: real people, real power*, in summer 2008. As one key player states:

*'The policy environment is incredibly favourable to it all at the moment, so if we can't make it [the Young Advisor initiative] work now, will it ever work?'* (Trustee, Young Advisors Charity)

- 6.4 Not only does the White Paper underline Government's support for the Young Advisor initiative but also outlines steps to be put in place to ensure the influence of the Young Advisors on regeneration is real rather than tokenistic. The White Paper noted that DCLG will establish a system for Young Advisors

to have direct access to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to give a young person's perspective as policy is being formulated and implemented. The panel of Young Advisors, announced by the then Secretary of State in October 2008, provided advice to the then Secretary of State and Government Ministers on a range of topics including: the impact on community cohesion in the current economic downturn, the Government's Race Equality Strategy and what young people see as the key opportunities from the London 2012 Olympic Games on which to capitalise.

- 6.5 It is essential to emphasise, as many of the key interviewees did, that the Young Advisor initiative is not a youth development policy or a youth project. Rather, it is a means for young people to contribute fresh ideas and solutions to regeneration problems, to raise young people's awareness of civic roles in the community, help tailor service provision for young people and the wider community and create opportunities for Young Advisors and young people as a whole to tell adults what they need and want. And the 'mainstreaming' of this advisory role – to the extent that consulting young people becomes a genuine mainstream activity and not an ad hoc 'add-on' - is crucial to the development of the initiative; particularly as New Deal for Communities are adopting new organisational forms in preparation for the end of the New Deal for Communities Programme.

**Policy: key point**

- At both national and local levels there is a need clearly to distinguish the Young Advisors' consultancy role from orthodox youth development and engagement initiatives.
- DCLG and the national coordinating body can each help in getting this message across but there is also a need for the message to be reinforced 'from the ground up' by the Young Advisor Leads and, indeed, the Young Advisors themselves.

## Embedding Young Advisors

- 6.6 All four case study areas had different delivery mechanisms for the Young Advisor initiative, reflecting their individual organisational and environmental contexts.
- 6.7 What is often lost in highlighting the achievements of Young Advisors is:
- the level of support that has been required to get Young Advisors to this stage; and
  - the continued support that is necessary for future development and sustainability.

- 6.8 Clearly, if local schemes are to be sustained and reach their potential they cannot rely on the enthusiasm, commitment and championship of a few individuals. Rather this should be a combined effort from the New Deal for Communities, host body and the Young Advisors with the support of the national co-ordinating body.
- 6.9 A combined effort may lessen the adverse effects of staffing issues on the degree to which Young Advisors can become embedded in the New Deal for Communities area and the wider regeneration arena.
- 6.10 Key issues which need to be considered are the need for:
- the post of Leads to be full-time if further mentoring support for the Young Advisors is not readily available
  - establishing support and networking opportunities to encourage interaction between the Leads, which may require a development post within the national co-ordinating body with the explicit remit of supporting Leads.

#### **Embedding Young Advisors: key points**

- A national co-ordinating body is essential for the continued development of the initiative.
- A local supporting framework which acknowledges and assists the considerable commitment from key individuals is vital for local sustainability.
- Developing stand-alone networking opportunities/events for Leads, is advised. Ideally, a development post within the national co-ordinating body with the explicit remit of supporting Leads needs to be established.

## **Developing the role of the private sector**

- 6.11 As discussed earlier, bringing young people out of their own environment was felt to be aspiration-raising. This is an area where the role of private sector/key partners could be developed. For example, one private sector interviewee felt that on reflection, the business sector could play a role in career development such as if a Young Advisor came to his organisation and asked for help with a career their client list could be used to identify a suitable place to help the young person with work experience.
- 6.12 There is no evidence from the case studies that this has been put into practice, but encouraging local schemes to develop strong links with local bodies would

not only be beneficial work-wise but also have additional effects such as opening doors for employment progression.

#### **Developing the role of the private sector: key point**

- Develop the role of the private sector and other partners, both in sourcing work, marketing Young Advisors and helping in the transition period.

## Evaluation

- 6.13 At this stage, evaluating initiatives such as Young Advisors in terms of impacts and outputs is difficult. Many of the impacts may not be seen for several years – in particular cultural change in regeneration. It is essential, however, that evidence is systematically gathered on the impact and value added of Young Advisor interventions. Demonstrating this impact and value for money is crucial for the sustainability of the initiative.
- 6.14 To match the programme's ethos it would make sense to combine evidence from the Young Advisors themselves with that of their clients to build up a broad picture of what works, why and sustained impacts. The need is to identify and recount the 'good news stories' that are unfolding. It can be argued that given the innovation of the initiative all achievements and work undertaken are newsworthy. The charity's website encourages sharing stories of good practice together with details of key achievements of Young Advisors projects across the country. As the number of Young Advisor interventions increases, there should also be a growing body of evidence on impact from programme and project evaluations undertaken by regeneration agencies. This evidence base needs to be consolidated.
- 6.15 Finally, the establishment of an alumni section on the charity's website to record what young people have moved onto after being a Young Advisor could also be beneficial not only to measure impact and progression but to help sustain recruitment and secure sustainability.



# Appendix 1: The New Deal for Communities case study areas

## The case study New Deal for Communities

The research was carried out in four New Deal for Communities case study areas between December 2007 and March 2008: Bristol, Hull, Knowsley and Nottingham. These New Deal for Communities were felt to possess good and innovative practice, and have experience of the challenges of youth engagement and empowerment activities in deprived areas. They are also from four different regions and, more importantly they experience different contextual factors such as delivery mechanisms.

## Overview of the four New Deal for Communities areas

### **Bristol: Community @ Heart Partnership**

The Bristol New Deal for Communities – Community at Heart – covers the areas of Barton Hill, the Dings and parts of Redfield and Lawrence Hill. The area comprises approximately 5,500 people in 3,200 households (2001 Census). This is an area that has suffered depopulation with continuing population churn. There is a diverse local population with the area experiencing a recent influx of Somalis. The population in 2001 comprises 14 per cent black and minority ethnic – a figure higher than the city average and representing an upward trend. Housing tenure in the area is mixed, with 42.1 per cent of households owner-occupiers and 36.1 per cent in local authority housing. Based upon the 2001 census, the age structure is one in which the population aged under 15 years has increased in the area faster than the national rate.

The New Deal for Communities has a strong commitment to engaging young people seeking to secure: 'Improved opportunities for young people to access appropriate services, which meet their needs and aspirations'; and 'Improved opportunities for young people to participate in and influence decision making within the New Deal for Communities Bristol NDC area' (Community At Heart, Revised Strategic Plan 2005-10:56).

### **Hull: Preston Road New Deal for Communities**

Preston Road New Deal for Communities is regenerating the East Hull Estate and is one of the smaller New Deal for Communities in terms of population (6,000). The population is distinctive in that only 1 per cent is classed as non-white. The 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation identified Hull as ranking amongst the nine most deprived New Deal for Communities areas and it falls within the top 1,000 most deprived Super Output Areas (524). The housing clearance programme is important as 78 per cent of the population are living in social sector renting. New Deal for

Communities pupils at both primary and secondary are performing below average within the local schools, across the city and nationally (for example, in 2006 37 per cent of New Deal for Communities pupils at the three local schools gained 5 GCSEs graded A\* to C compared to 45 per cent of pupils in the schools, 44 per cent of pupils across Hull and 57 per cent of pupils nationally).

The New Deal for Communities initially developed a strong youth team around involvement in a **Youth Justice Board Scheme**. The Head of the New Deal for Communities Youth Programme ultimately became the Young Advisor Lead. Initiatives aimed at directly engaging with young people have been:

- **Youth Facility:** Young people designing a youth centre to re-house Preston Road youth club with the aim of the young people then running and managing the building. This is a dedicated new build for youth in the area.
- **Health Enterprise Centre:** Bids have been made to the Community Assets Fund and the Department for Children, Schools and Families for a Health Enterprise Centre. One part of this project is for young people to be the health personnel employers with dedicated youth health services. The other part aims to capitalise on enterprise interest amongst young people in the area by providing business support.

#### **Knowsley: North Huyton New Deal for Communities New Deal New Future Partnership**

North Huyton is a predominantly residential, working class neighbourhood made up of a collection of inter-war municipal housing estates that were developed as 'overspill' from the City of Liverpool. Nearly four-fifths of the housing stock was social rented when the New Deal for Communities was set up.

Its population remains predominately white, relatively young and with a relatively high proportion of single person and lone parent households.

Like other 'outer estates' on Merseyside, it was seriously affected by the economic restructuring of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which saw local manufacturing jobs disappear and bequeathed significant disadvantage. The latest Index of Multiple Deprivation (2004) puts the New Deal for Communities area well within the 1 per cent most deprived areas in England.

The New Deal for Communities' strategy for engaging with young people has had four key elements:

- A **youth engagement/work support** programme steered by a Youth Engagement Officer (including the development of a youth forum that has provided representation – albeit rather perfunctory - to the Partnership Board and support for groups working with young people). The Young Advisors from part of this strand of activity.
- A **small grants scheme** (with the establishment of a 'New Deal Big Deal' grant scheme for, and managed by, young people from the Youth Forum (a young person's version of the New Deal for Communities' 'Small Change Big Difference' Grant Scheme).
- Support for **projects** that work directly with local young people, including the Hillside Initiative for Youth Activities, the L14 Community House, the Way

youth group (led by members of the Youth Forum) and Knowsley Council's Youth Improvement Project.

- The building of a centrally-located **youth facility**, referred to initially as the 'Youth Powerhouse' (designed in consultation with young people and young people – including the Young Advisors - are still involved through the youth forum in its development).

The first two of these elements have subsequently been mainstreamed by Knowsley Council, which now employs the New Deal for Communities' former Youth Engagement Officer (who acts as the 'Lead' for the Young Advisors) and administers the 'New Deal, Big Deal' Grant Scheme across the Borough as a whole.

### **Nottingham: Radford and Hyson Green**

The Radford and Hyson Green New Deal for Communities cover some of the most problematic areas within the city and the East Midlands. There is a population of 9,000, approximately 5,000 households (2001 census). Around one-third of the population are from the black and minority ethnic community, while 39 per cent of the population is between 16 and 24 years old, although there is a large student population. Crime and the fear of crime are particularly endemic with gang culture and shootings a perceived feature of the area, with one young person noting that the city was now termed 'Shoot-ingham'. While this may be a distortion of the truth it is important in being a perception of local citizens.

## **Delivery mechanism in each case study area**

### **Design and implementation: Bristol**

From the start the Bristol initiative focused on developing a structure that would be sustainable rather than one that relied on short-term funding. This approach grew out of the New Deal for Communities' Youth Participation programme. Many local young people had volunteered hours within previous arrangements, but needed to move into work. The Young Advisor initiative was seen as a way to retain their engagement, as well as developing the infrastructure for young people to influence decision making.

The initial approach involved four pilot areas, building upon the already intensive working taking place with young people in the area. Funding support for training originally came from New Deal for Communities under spend, supported further when funding was acquired from DCLG through the Young Advisor programme. Support for the Young Advisor bid came from the New Deal for Communities, with the extended schools programme providing some further support.

An open day was run to recruit Young Advisors, with translation of the literature for Somalis and other ethnic minorities, and involving many New Deal for Communities personnel. Through this mechanism it was possible to recruit seven Young Advisors, followed by two more through other means such as advertising. At this early stage young men constituted the majority of recruits with young women becoming involved after additional engagement strategies. The city

council was involved in this process but mainly around advertising. Generally, however, it was a case of the Young Advisor initiative being “left to get on with it”.

#### **Design and implementation: Hull**

The New Deal for Communities is committed to engaging with and encouraging the participation of young people in its activities. This follows on from one of the first community consultation events where elderly residents stressed that one of their priorities was young people on the estate who they felt had poor prospects for their future– at that time young people didn’t have a platform for participation.

The New Deal for Communities was offered funding from Youth Justice Board to get involved in an early Youth scheme and during this time set up a strong youth team called Building a Future for Young People. ‘[We were] *very fortunate in recruiting a youth worker who grew up on the estate*’ and through this Head of Youth Development, put in the pilot bid (so the Lead agency is the New Deal for Communities).

There was no formal interview process for potential Young Advisors. Prior to start-up training was provided for a group of potential mentors but problems with retention led to mentoring being provided by the Lead officer.

#### **Design and implementation: Knowsley**

The New Deal for Communities Young Advisors originated from the New Deal for Communities Youth Forum which had merged with another local forum to become the North Huyton Youth Forum, meeting weekly and facilitated by Knowsley Youth Service. The New Deal for Communities approached the youth forum and the young people there were invited to apply. The members of the forum who were not interested in becoming a Young Advisor devised questions to ask those who did apply. The members then scored the answers.

The pilot is funded 60 per cent by the New Deal for Communities and 40 per cent from the Borough. The Lead role was taken over by the New Deal for Communities’ former Youth Development Worker who had been mainstreamed into Knowsley Council’s Youth Service. A key contact with the New Deal for Communities initially was the Education Officer who has since left the organisation. The contact is now the New Deal for Communities’ Community Engagement Manager.

#### **Design and implementation: Nottingham**

The Nottingham initiative stems largely from the commitment of the Young Advisor Lead who developed this area of work with support from the broader community engagement team. While the New Deal for Communities had a variety of youth projects there was a perceived gap in terms of mechanisms for involving young people in decision making processes.

Twenty young people initially applied for Young Advisor status, following a campaign of flyers, posters, leaflets and word of mouth. Ten young people were subsequently selected, but with nine attending the first session, and, following some turnover and new appointments, eight were trained in the second session. At the time of the research, a further 23 young people had shown an interest in being Young Advisors, and 10 had been taken on as trainee Young Advisors.

The model utilised in Nottingham has involved the New Deal for Communities' Programme Support Department developing the Young Advisor initiative. This had the advantage of putting young people within existing New Deal for Communities structures and systems. The Lead took on the role of both co-ordinator and programme developer. Difficulties were encountered with recruiting mentors to the programme, resulting in the Lead having to take on this responsibility.

# Appendix 2: Topic guide and focus group key questions

## (i) Final Topic Guide for NDC contacts

**To explore the effectiveness of the youth engagement strategies employed by NDCs in attracting a range of young people**

*What recruitment techniques were used by the NDC to attract Young Advisors?*

Prompts:

- How successful were these?
- Any difficulties?
- Good practice?
- What role of any did external agencies play in selection process?
- How much thought went into considering the diversity and representativeness of the group of young people involved?
- How did you prepare for this?

*What has hindered and/or facilitated developing the role of the Young Advisors?*

- Ongoing training needs?
- What type of support structure is in place? (Role of lead/mentors?)
- Is the support structure responsive to young people's needs?
- As individuals or as a group? i.e. customised to suit particular attributes such as ethnicity, age, skills.
- Funding

*Have you maintained/developed links with mainstream youth service providers through the Young Advisors?*

**To explore how the role of Young Advisors is communicated to, and perceived by, other young people, the wider-community and key players**

*What is your understanding of the role of the Young Advisors?*

- Explore if Young Advisors are seen as a mechanism in achieving targets? Has perception changed during the programme?
- Did engagement come after implementation of youth diversionary activities (or health)? If so, how have these framed attitudes of NDC/key partners to youth?
- Did you attend any induction prior to meeting and working with the Young Advisor's to develop your understanding of what role a Young Advisor could play in your community and how you might develop them accordingly.

*What mechanisms have you employed to ensure key partners and the community engage in Young Advisor programme?*

- Explore to determine whether the existing relationship between NDC and each key partner/community interests in turn shapes that between the Young Advisors and the *partner/community*.
- Did you highlight positive outcomes for the community when actively seeking to engage with and empower young people?
- Did you use funding incentives as a level to ensuring sustained engagement?
- How did you develop the wider communities' understanding of Young Advisors.

*Has the Young Advisor's work changed the stereotypical view of young people?*

- Examples?

*What impact have Young Advisors had on developing young people's involvement in general in the NDC area?*

*How do young people not involved in the Young Advisor programme view the Young Advisors?*

*How do you target the young people not involved in the Young Advisor programme to get their views?*

**To gauge what types of key activities Young Advisors are involved in and the policy themes influenced so as to increase our understanding of how the young advisor programme is adding value to area-based regeneration initiatives**

*How are Young Advisors integrated into the NDC decision-making structures?*

*What other decision-making structures have they been involved in?*

*What ways of working have proved best?*

- Informal, face-to-face, formal?
- Individual, team-work?
- Why might it be easier in some circumstances for Young Advisors to get their views heard?
- What is the role of the NDC in overcoming any difficulties? Do you act as a liaison point between the organisation and Lead?

*Are any policy areas more conducive to contribution by Young Advisors than others?*

*What accounts for the differences?*

*What proportion of the Young Advisor's contributions are to already developed/ conceptualised regeneration initiatives? Have they initiated any new actions or projects?*

*Over time, have the Young Advisor's decisions improved in quality?*

*How is this measured?*

*Overall, what outcomes have been achieved by Young Advisors in regeneration of the NDC area?*

- How have the outcomes been achieved
- Are the outcomes dependent on the local design and implementation of the Young Advisor programme?
- Or dependent more on local context?
- Have more 'harder to help' groups been approached through the Young Advisors- Has the NDC helped?
- To what extent has running the Young Advisor programme contributed to your group or others in the community applying for and/or receiving extra funding?

*Who is measuring the outcomes?*

- Adults or young people? (Link to NM/LAA being less prescriptive in terms of monitoring and targets)

### **To assess the sustainability of young advisor projects and cultural change**

*How embedded are the Young Advisors in community structures?*

*How have the attitudes and cultures of local organisations to engagement with young people changed through participation of Young Advisors?*

*How much has the Young Advisor role extended beyond NDC boundaries?*

*Can you identify any good practice/ innovative techniques?*

*Have you taken part or initiated any dissemination of good practice relating to Young Advisors?*

*Have any plans been developed for the future sustainability of the Young Advisor programme?*

- Funding?
- Staffing?
- Young Advisors?

*Is there a champion for young people's participation or to take the Young Advisor work forward - Do they regularly meet with the Young Advisors?*

*Is there a defined exit strategy for individual Young Advisors? What have previous Young Advisors moved onto doing?*



*Have young people as a whole become more empowered?*

*Do the Young Advisors make much contribution to broader youth participation issues?*

*How do you ensure local youth- based services/organisations are made aware of the Young Advisor's and how the Young Advisor's in turn may be able to work with them on specific policy areas?*

**(ii) Final Topic Guide for Key Partners**

**To explore the effectiveness of the youth engagement strategies employed by NDCs in attracting a range of young people**

*Was your organisation involved in the recruitment and/or training of the Young Advisors in any way?*

*What prompted you to involve Young Advisor's in your organisation?*

*How representative do you perceive the Young Advisors to be of young people from the NDC area?*

**To explore how the role of Young Advisors is communicated to, and perceived by, other youth, the wider-community and key players**

*What is your understanding of the role of the Young Advisors?*

Where did the information come from?

- NDC staff?
- Young Advisors themselves?
- Other source?
- Schools/college?

*Have they taken part in any information events (locally/nationally)?*  
e.g. Young Advisors Charity.

Explore if they see Young Advisors as a mechanism in achieving targets? Has perception changed during the programme?

Does the existing relationship between NDC and each key partner in turn shape that between the Young Advisors and the partner?

**To gauge what types of key activities Young Advisors are involved in and the policy themes influenced so as to increase our understanding of how the young advisor programme is adding value to area-based regeneration initiatives**

*What ways of working with Young Advisors have proved best?*

- Informal, face-to-face, formal?
- Individual, team-work?

- Why might it be easier in some circumstances for Young Advisors to get their views heard?

*What is your understanding of Young Advisor's barriers and needs related to effective participation?*

- How are these manifested?
- How are the barriers/needs addressed by the key partner, if at all?

*Have Young Advisors been incorporated into any of your organisation's decision-making structures?*

*In what way and how was this done?*

*What proportion of the Young Advisor's contributions are to already developed/ conceptualised regeneration initiatives? Have they initiated any new actions or projects?*

*To what extent have Young Advisors informed and influenced key partners?*

*In what ways is the participation of Young Advisors valued?*

- Over time have Young Advisors decisions improved in quality?
- How is this measured
- How do you structure the Young Advisor engagement to ensure they are speaking to the correct people

*Are any policy areas more conducive to contribution by Young Advisors than others?*

- What accounts for the differences?

*Overall, what outcomes have been achieved by Young Advisors in regeneration of the NDC area?*

- How have the outcomes been achieved?
- Are the outcomes dependent on the local design and implementation of the Young Advisor programme? Or dependent more on local context?
- Have more harder to help groups been approached through the Young Advisors?
- To what extent has running the Young Advisor programme contributed to your organisation or others in the community applying for and/or receiving extra funding?

*Who is measuring the outcomes?*

- Adults or young people? (Link to NM/LAA being less prescriptive in terms of monitoring and targets)
- If adults are measuring the outcomes, are young people given/informed of the results?

**To assess the sustainability of young advisor projects and cultural change**

*Has the Young Advisor's work changed your view of youth engagement and empowerment?*

- Change in attitude?
- Change in culture?
- Have young people as a whole become more empowered/More confident in conveying their suggestions?

*Are you involved in planning for the sustainability of the Young Advisor programme?*

**(iii) Young Advisor discussion Groups – key questions**

Thanks for agreeing to help with our research on Young Advisors. We are doing this research for the government – four New Deal for Communities areas have been chosen as case studies.

Just to give you a general idea of the types of issues we would like to talk to you about...maybe you could have a think about the questions before we meet:

*What is the role of young advisor all about? How and why did you become a young advisor?*

*What do other people think your role involves? (E.g. other young people; the wider community, organisations in your area).*

*What training did you do for the role? What type of support do you have – what's most useful and why?*

*Do you feel people value your work and/or views?*

*What sort of work have you been doing? What results have you got from your work?*

*What do you hope to do when you leave the Young Advisor programme?*

*Have your plans changed since you have become a Young Advisor? If they have, why?*