



Report on Brent Youth Parliament's Inaugural Session Held on 9 March 2007 at House of Commons



2007-2008 Brent Youth Parliament Members (with staff)

Introduction

In November 2006 Brent Council decided to set up a Youth Parliament so that children and young people living in Brent could have a say in decision making around issues that affect them. Local primary schools, secondary schools, College of North West London, youth clubs and community organizations were asked to submit names of children and young people who were interested in becoming members of Brent Youth Parliament.

By February 2007, 53 children and young people (aged between 10 and 19) from across Brent had been elected as Members of Brent's first Youth Parliament. The first meeting of the Youth Parliament was held on 9 March 2007 at the House of Commons.

This report gives details about the discussions, activities and decisions that were made by Brent Youth Parliament Members at their first meeting. The report also states the three priority issues that Brent Youth Parliament Members have collectively agreed to focus on for the coming year.

Starting their journey and arrival at the House of Commons

Members met at Brent Town Hall at 9.00am where coaches were waiting to take them to the House of Commons.

Upon arrival at the House of Commons members were taken through regular security checks and shown to the Atlee Suite where the meeting took place.

Teas, coffees and cakes were served for refreshments. Some basic rules were outlined at the beginning of the day such as switching off mobile phones and listening to each other.



Members arriving at the steps at Brent Town Hall

Dawn Butler MP welcomed Members of Brent's first Youth Parliament to House of Commons. She expressed her joy at seeing so many of the Youth Parliament Members present at their first meeting (47 out of 53 Members were present at the meeting) and congratulated the young people on becoming Members of Brent's first Youth Parliament.



Dawn Butler MP welcoming young Members to the House of Commons

Cllr Hayley Matthews, who will co chair the Youth Parliament along with a young person also warmly welcomed the Members. She explained the importance of the Youth Parliament in Brent and the key role that Young Members will play in making it a success. Cllr Matthews promised her commitment in supporting the Youth Parliament identify and deliver its aims and objectives in the coming year.



Cllr Hayley Matthews addressing the young Members

Ezras Adams, the outgoing chair of BYM2 (Brent Youth Matters 2) shared with his fellow Members his experience of having been a member and chair of BYM2. Ezras talked about the skills and the confidence he had gained through his involvement in BYM2 and encouraged his fellow young people to enjoy themselves and make the most of their role as Youth Parliament Members.



Ezras Adams addressing the young Members

Ice breakers / getting to know each other

One of the key aims of this first meeting was for Brent Youth Parliament Members to meet and get to know each other. Youth workers organised games such as 'speed networking' and 'human bingo'. These allowed Members the opportunity to get to know each other and begin to acquire the confidence and the skill of networking with others.



Enjoying 'speed networking' and the 'human bingo'

Purpose of Brent Youth Parliament

Members were informed that Brent Youth Parliament is a forum for children and young people

- to have a say in decision making around issues that affect them,
- to have a say in how services are delivered to them,
- to agree their annual programme of activity and debate and
- to get to meet other young people from across the borough.

Responsibilities of Brent Youth Parliament Members

Members were informed that they have a very important role in making sure that they represent the views of as many of Brent's children and young people as they can. Members' responsibilities will include:

- attending 3 full meetings of the Youth Parliament
- attending 4 smaller meetings of the task groups that they choose to be part of
- Members will be responsible for feeding back to their schools / youth clubs any issues that are discussed at the Youth Parliament meetings and
- bring issues from their school/youth club to the attention of Youth Parliament
- two Members from Brent Youth Parliament will attend the UK Youth Parliament meetings to represent the views of Brent Youth Parliament
- one Member will be elected as Co Chair. They will ensure that meetings are focused and conducted on time and with respect. The Co Chair and Cllr Hayley Matthews will also sit on the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board where high level decisions are made

All Members were encouraged to consider putting their names forward for election as Co Chair. Terms of reference and structure of Brent Youth Parliament are attached as appendix 1 and 2 to this report.



Deep in discussion

UK Youth Parliament

Members got the opportunity to hear from a UK Youth Parliament Member Mohammed Iqbal about his experiences and the opportunities he has had to influence decision making and the opportunity to meet influential people like Tony Blair.



In discussion with Cllr Matthews

Issues that affect Brent children and young people

Members were asked to get into small groups and talk about issues that affect children and young people in Brent. Listed below are some of the issues that came up in their discussions.

- Crime
- Safety
- Health
- Sports
- Bullying
- Peer pressure
- Gang culture
- Environment
- Education and careers
- Citizenship and national identity
- Managing money
- Homelessness
- Homophobia
- Obesity / anorexia
- Prejudice
- Young people in hospitals
- Orphans



Role playing about issues that affect children and young people



Voting for their priorities

Priorities for Brent Youth Parliament

After discussion and debate Members voted for the three issues that they want to discuss and work on in the coming year. These are:

- 1) Crime and Safety**
- 2) Health and well being**
- 3) Sports and Leisure**

Youth Parliament meeting arrangements

Members had a discussion on practical arrangements like when they want to hold their Youth Parliament meetings, what time of the day and at what venue. These were all agreed by voting.

- **Full Parliament meetings will take place on Saturdays.**
- **Meetings will take place during term time.**
- **Meetings will take place at Brent Town Hall.**



Voting with their feet

Open forum

There was an open forum where Members had the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarity on anything they were not sure about. The Director of Children and Families department, local Councillors and other senior officers from the Council were asked questions.

The full list of questions (with answers) is attached as appendix 3 to this report.



Question time!

End of the day!

Cllr Bob Wharton, Lead Member for Children and Families and John Christie, Director of Children and Families thanked all the Members for their contribution. They expressed joy at the commitment of so many young people willing to be part of Brent Youth Parliament that will help make Brent a better place for children and young people.

Certificates were given to Members as a thank you for their contribution. Finally Youth Parliament Members were asked to complete an evaluation form telling us what they liked about the day and what they did not like about the day. Listed below are some of the quotes taken directly from the evaluation forms:

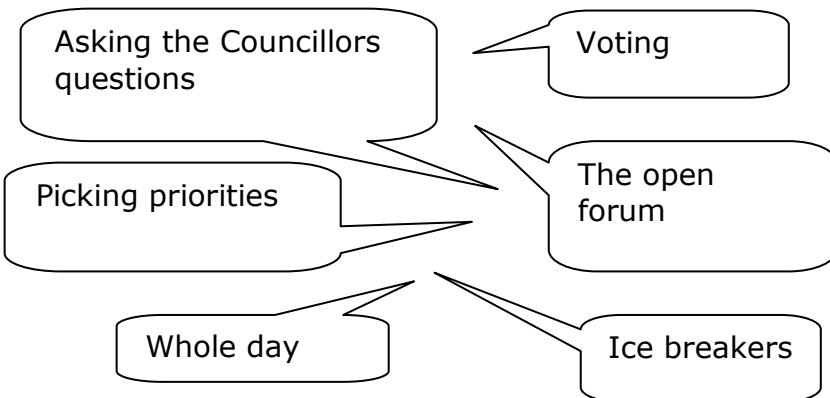


John Christie, Director, Children and Families department

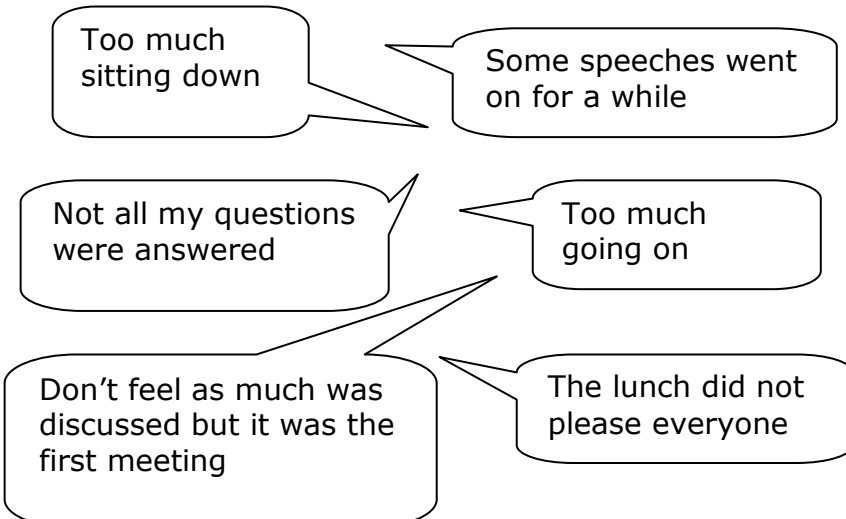


Cllr Bob Wharton, Lead Member for Children and Families

On their favourite part of the day.....



On what they didn't like about the day.....

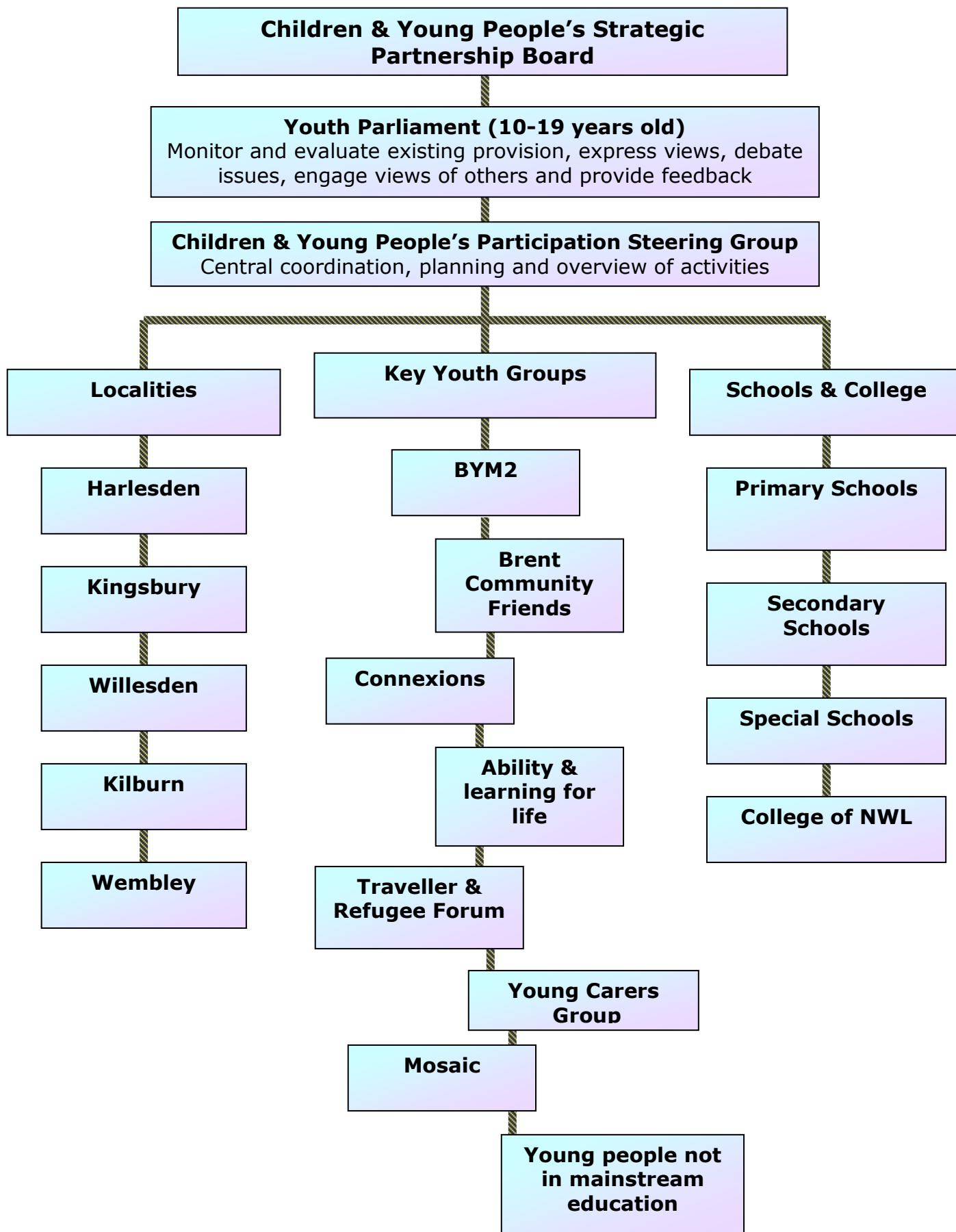


Receiving certificates








Filling in evaluation forms

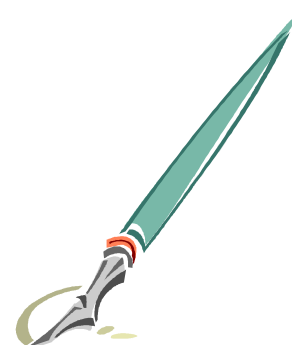
Youth Parliament Structure



Brent Youth Parliament

'Terms of Reference'

-  **To talk about issues that affect children and young people and debate on ways to solve them.**
-  **To present your views to Council Members and look into the responses you get from them.**
-  **To evaluate different services available to children and young people in Brent and suggest ways to improve them.**
-  **To plan at least 2 big events every year to raise awareness on issues that affect children and young people where you live.**
-  **To make sure issues discussed in your meetings are shared with children and young people across Brent, in a variety of different ways. For example, through newsletters, websites or visits.**
-  **Participate in a training programme for Members of the Youth Parliament.**
-  **To make sure all children and young people and all Members of the Council are working by the 'Hear by Rights' standard.**
-  **To look at ways to distribute the Opportunities Fund in a fair and equal manner.**
-  **To meet at least 3 times a year and sub-groups to meet regularly to talk about local issues.**



Appendix 3

Questions & Issues raised at the open forum section on 9 March 2007

Questions	Answers
How long do you stay in the Youth Parliament? Do you get elected again next year?	You have been elected on Brent Youth Parliament for 1 year. If you want, you can stand for elections again next year.
How will the Parliament run?	The Youth Parliament will have 3 full meetings per year that Members will need to attend. There will also be smaller meetings of the task groups that will be held 4 times a year. The task groups will give their feedback to the full meeting every time they meet. At the full meeting Youth Parliament Members will decide on the key issues that they want to take to the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership Board. In addition to attending Parliament meetings, Members of Brent Youth Parliament are required to speak to their School Council/ youth group and ask them if they have any issues that they want Brent Youth Parliament to discuss.
Do you have to be a teenager to become a Co Chair of the Brent Youth Parliament?	Any Member of Brent Youth Parliament can become a co-chair.
What are the functions of the Co Chair?	The Co Chair will chair the Parliament meetings with Cllr Hayley Matthews. The Co Chair will set the agenda for each meeting and ensure that meetings are focused and are conducted in line with the terms of reference. The Co Chair and Cllr Hayley Matthews will also be a Member of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board.
How do you get onto the UK Youth Parliament?	Brent Youth Parliament Members will decide who will represent them on the UK Youth Parliament.
Do we get to plan the events that happen or do the adults decide?	Youth Parliament Members will decide how they want to run their Parliament and how they want to plan the events. Adults will be there to help, support and guide you.
How often will we meet?	Brent Youth Parliament will meet 3 times a year as a full Parliament. This means all the 53 Members will meet. The Parliament will then have 3 task groups for the 3 priorities that you have picked. The task groups will meet 4 times a year.

<p>How do we help others and make sure we don't get hurt ourselves e.g. when people take drugs?</p>	<p>You need to talk to a responsible adult that you feel you can trust. You can speak to your parents, your teacher or your youth worker. If you explain you want to talk in confidence, your teacher or youth worker can make those arrangements. There are also lots of organisations such as ChildLine who can offer free advice on any problems that you may have. You can call them on 0800 1111</p>
<p>How do we help pregnant girls?</p>	<p>Friends and family must talk and support the young person in whatever decisions she makes. It is very important that all teenagers understand the consequences of becoming pregnant. If a girl thinks she is pregnant she needs to see her GP who will confirm whether she is pregnant and talk to her about her options and where she can go for help. In Brent there is a team that can help teenage parents. They are called Brent's Think First Young People's Access Centre. You can call them on 020 8937 3695 / 3696.</p>
<p>Why does it cost so much money for bus rides?</p>	<p>Brent Council do not set the fares for bus rides. But we have spoken to the national transport people and they say that in order to improve the transport service, Transport for London (TfL) need to charge a fair rate. There are however lots of discounts available so check the TfL website or ask at any underground station. But please note that in London under 16s, can travel free on buses and trams but children aged 14-15 must have an Oyster photocard to take advantage of free travel. 16-17 year olds (and some 18 year olds) in full time education or on a work-based learning scheme who live within a London borough can travel for free on buses and trams across the entire London bus network, including sections outside Greater London, providing they have a valid Oyster photocard. Information on how to obtain an Oyster photocard can be found on the Transport for London (TfL) website.</p>
<p>Why can't we ride our bikes/skateboards to schools and why don't we have enough places to skateboard in Brent?</p>	<p>You can ride your bikes and skateboards to school if you wish to, as long as you are safe and aware of others around you. You can ride bikes and skateboards in public parks. If want to find out more about open spaces in Brent contact Park Services on 020 8937 5619.</p>
<p>Why is our transport system so inefficient and expensive compared to other European countries?</p>	<p>The transport system in London is going through major upgrades. New buses, stations and trains are being introduced. Billions of pounds are needed to do this, some of which comes from raising the fare prices.</p>
<p>Why can't I take my wheelchair on the trains?</p>	<p>Unfortunately London underground is very old and was not designed to take into account wheelchair users. However some stations do have wheelchair access. Look out for the wheelchair sign on the tube maps. The good news is that the underground is going through major upgrades which means that new stations and new trains will try and make the stations fully accessible for everyone.</p>

<p>Why are buildings being built in Brent on parks / green spaces?</p>	<p>Parks are protected by law so they can't be built on but there is lots of privately owned land which is being used to build new homes to meet increasing demand.</p>
<p>Why does the Council spend more money on houses than on hospitals?</p>	<p>The Council is not responsible for spending money on hospitals. Hospitals are run by the 'Hospitals Trust'. Good housing is very important and the Council wants all its residents to live in decent homes. Therefore, it spends money on housing.</p>
<p>Why are MPs always arguing?</p>	<p>MPs are there to look after the concerns of the public. They listen to people and try and help. All MPs have different opinions and belong to different parties so they have a lot of discussion (some of which can be seen as arguing.)</p>
<p>Why is so much money spent on Wembley Stadium?</p>	<p>Wembley Stadium is funded by the FA and private investors. Part of the agreement was that they had to develop the area around the stadium to provide services for local people. The FA wanted the stadium to be a world famous icon for sports. To do this a lot of money needed to be spent on the stadium.</p>
<p>Why are there so many dark alleys in Brent?</p>	<p>The Council has been working with the police and other agencies to ensure that neighbourhoods are safe and well lit. If you feel there is an alley or an area that needs to be improved you should contact the Community Safety Team on 020 8937 1058</p>

Brent Youth Parliament Members in attendance on 9 March 2007 inaugural session
at House of Commons

AdeSola Sanusi
Alexander Jewkes
Andrea Lungay
Asia Bharj
Asvine Pakkiyana
Baveshri Varsani
Brandon Witter
Brendon Chivasa
Dipesh Patel
Domonyc Steer
Dwight Okeke
Elese Ayetan
Elorie Palmer
Ezraz Adams
Faraz Sayed
Fatima Kanji
Forhad Islam
Fuhad Ahmed
Gabriyel Hibbert
Hannah Maloney
Hemisha Patel
Henna Kerai
Hiral Varsani
Isatu Haddi
James Abiwan
James Harris

James Thomas
Jefferson Shuttleworth
John Clifford
Jonathan Marcos
Katinka Achrafie
Michael Walsh
Mohammed Eluhidir
Moses Howe
Nouh Abukar
Nour Kassab
Petergaye Palmer
Ryan Smith
Sanjay Vara
Santino Vassell
Sheerena Akoto
Stephan Rodrick
Sylvia Ohemeng
Tahsin Sabur
Tarini Sharda
William Smyth
Zoe Leonard

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