

BIRMINGHAM POLICY COMMISSION

THE FUTURE OF LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE 'BIG SOCIETY'

Views of young people from the National Youth Reference Group (NYRG)

Contribution 1:

What are the expectations that young people, as citizens, should have of local government and local public services? What are they prepared to contribute and how?

Young people expect local government and local public services to allow them to have a sound impact on society as a whole. This can mean giving them the opportunity to voice their opinions, their reasoning and their ideas, in order to shape services and be their own voice. It goes without saying that young people have a unique perspective in shaping strategies and services and I always believe adults should give the young a chance. Young people are prepared to contribute in many ways, such as their knowledge and experiences of public services and society as a whole. Young people should ALWAYS be included in any aspect of discussion of changes in society, whether it is political, social, economical etc.

What kinds of relationships do young citizens want with local public service professionals and how do these relationships vary?

We need professional and understandable relationships with local public professionals, who understand our needs as young people and who are there to offer us any specific service a young person may need. For example, having a good relationship with the police would be good: it can break down negative attitudes, negative barriers, negative stereotyping, and so forth. Other relationships with the NHS/ dentist etc. would also be beneficial. Professionals should see us as young adults who maturing in our daily lives and yet, may need the same professionalism and respect as a mature adult.

What kinds of organisations do young citizens prefer?

Young people definitely prefer organisations which could help them with their aspirations in life, i.e. organisations offering advice regarding education, employment and training. A good example of this would be Connexions, giving sound advice to young people on different matters. But young people need more than that. Young people need organisations which offer them the pathway to maturity, such as preparing them for anything which may come to them in the near future. An example could be an organisation which offered young people advice on independent living: benefits, work, finance, life skills, accommodation and so forth. Young people would also prefer organisation which offer them a better service in terms of cost. This can be anything from a driving school for young people only (with a discount) or an organisation which gives work placements to young people from different areas, so that they can build on their work experiences.

How can young citizens be involved in service redesign initiatives? Which mechanisms work well in which circumstances?

Young people can be involved in service redesign initiatives by first discussing what services need to be redesigned or what services we would like to be redesigned. There should be regular forums open to all young people out there, at local levels. Young people are highly motivated individuals and are prepared to make changes, if they are passionate about that

change, which is why you need to ask us what WE want. Examples of what a service redesign could be is to shape the services which local libraries give. If young people should feel that local libraries do not offer enough services for their needs, a discussion is needed. After that, action planning is required and so forth. It goes without saying that young people do need to be supported with these redesign initiatives, preferably from professionals.

How can the initiatives which young people are self-organising be shaped and influenced by public sector organisations to increase their outcomes?

Initiatives that are self-organised by young people can be shaped and influenced by public sector organisations through close contact and a lot of support. Funding would always be useful, but is not always necessary when it comes to young people's initiatives. Young people and public organisations should be in regular contact and work alongside each other. That way, young people feel supported throughout their initiative and at the same time, their initiative may be promoted, and from this, outcomes will be increased.

What evidence is there of the likely costs of local public services which embody greater engagement with young people?

Likely costs of local public services which embody engagement with young people may be training offered for the young people or even maybe for the staff, in order to work with the young people. Funding is always needed, whatever the service may be. But the important factor to note is, young people may need more needs/requirements than adults and so, it is inevitable that with local public services which embody a greater engagement with young people, costs may be much higher than usual.

How can public service commissioners and providers (in all sectors) best manage the risks involved in giving greater roles to young people in designing and running their own local public services?

Public service commissioners and providers can best manage the risks involved in engaging young people with their services by first making sure they know the policies and procedures. The second and most important thing is to trust them and to see them as staff, not as young people. Full training is also recommended to any young person being given a greater role within a public service. Close contact and regular contact between commissioners/ providers and young people is also recommended. Supervision should be there throughout.

What kinds of organisations work best in achieving outcomes with young people?

Organisations which work best in achieving outcomes with young people are those which give very good advice in different areas, whether it be education, employment, training, housing, finance, careers etc. Connexions is a good example. Other types of organisations, like charities for example, who help young people to find housing and independence: giving full support in terms of housing, and EET work best at achieving outcomes with young people. From personal experience, organisations which give funding to young individuals to help them achieve their career and aspirations is also good. The Helena Kennedy foundation/ Foyer Federation are good examples of this.

How are young people involved?

Young people are involved in shaping society in many different ways. For example, young people are given the chance when it comes to voicing their opinions on housing policies and procedures and what needs to be changed. I believe young people just simply are not involved enough today. Young people are involved in other ways as well, such as leisure activities and youth groups. However, there needs to be more, especially in terms of the health sector.

How are these services funded? What are the benefits/costs of different kinds of funding?

Some of these services are funded by the government, in fact probably most of them are. Different sources of funding are required as funding can be hard to produce. For this reason, there needs to be different ways of attaining funding, even if it means fundraising. For example, even donations from various organisations who are interested in these services is a good method of gaining funds. The only cost with fundraising is the time and effort.

What are the governance implications – who sets the rules, how is accountability secured?

Governance would have to be discussed between all parties. Close contact and support to make sure things are going fine is required. Contracts/ requirements before funding is issued is a way of securing accountability.

How have professionals had to change their ways of working?

Professionals have had to think outside the box and see different innovative ways to actively engage the younger generation to achieve greater outcomes.

How transferable are these initiatives/services?

These initiatives/ services are transferable to all groups of people and other ideas, but it goes with saying that there should always be services for certain types of people. Quality over quantity. That way, a specialism can be acquired with better support.

Whose needs are not being met and how might they be met?

Young people's needs are especially not being met, as well as the elderly. These two groups of people need many needs and requirements as they outstand from the mid-generation. Their needs can be met by directly asking what they need and thinking of effective ways to achieve those needs. Sometimes, a massive change in service provision has to be put through. Involving them in your services might also enable services to be improved and hence, their needs being met.

Contribution 2:

What are the expectations that young people, as citizens, should have of local government and local public services? What are they prepared to contribute and how?

I expect the government and the public sector to create opportunities for young people to be able to train, work and gain experience within their desired sector to gain experience for them to get a job in other industries. Without the Future Jobs Fund I wouldn't have been able to get a job working for St Basils on a 6 month contract doing something which I really enjoy and gains me more experience working with young people to develop Peer Mentoring skills and which later on in life I'll have trained and got the education to become a Counsellor when I get higher up my career mountain, So in having this opportunity I am able to help and support other young people and need it and can't find the service/help. My knowledge is always expanding and I can learn pretty much anything quite fast and my background history of being homeless, going through a family breakdown, and having my education interrupted helps me help others who have or may be going through similar problems. I have a lot to offer in areas I have excelled in.

What kinds of relationships do young citizens want with local public service professionals and how do these relationships vary?

I personally would like to have such a great relationship with the public services and government, so I would be aware of changes in the services, how I can help the public sector, to have a consistency in communication, have involvement with decision making. I think that if my doctor/dentist/hospital/local police any public service knew the actual needs and wants from young citizens then it would help them improve their own service and industry by being in the loop and having current knowledge of what the word on the street is. Having a great relationship with these people benefit both parties in motion.

How can young citizens be involved in service redesign initiatives? Which mechanisms work well in which circumstances?

With any changes, decisions, updates I would like to have my opinion listened to and took into account that I would be speaking on behalf of many other young citizens not just my own needs. Involvement with the young citizens is a major key to this because they are the new generation, improvement and the impact from working alongside them will easily be shown. Board meetings, phone calls, emails, texts, online survey, letters, and social networking sites to help the communication process. These methods all work because everyone communicates differently through different methods, so to those that have access to a computer and not a phone can be contacted online, where as those with a phone can be contacted through text, phone call, email. Have us involved from the beginning and not half way through when you need our help, when all along we could have been there from the start to help you. Our opinions matter too, if not more so then the older generation, because we are the current youth of today.

How can the initiatives which young people are self-organising be shaped and influenced by public sector organisations to increase their outcomes?

This one is simple, you can help me gain more experience by giving me more training opportunities in sectors that I want to gain experience in so I can expand my skills and experience so I have more of a chance of getting a job in a variety of industries, and not always being unemployed. Helping me achieve my career aspirations by funding for opportunities for me to learn new things. At the end of the day what's going to happen when everybody is unemployed and the currently employed lose their job due to death, the elderly and older generation can not run this country or world forever, the new and younger generations have to grow up, so help us make the world a better place by giving us the chance and opportunity to make sure the world doesn't fall to pieces. We're here to excel in life, not growing up and being proud of nothing, because you have achieved nothing in life. We need this.

What evidence is there of the likely costs of local public services which embody greater engagement with young people?

Anything anyone does costs money, travelling to work, department budgets, it all costs for the service, nothing is free. The NYRG are funded, and because of this fund we as young people who have been homeless or are still currently homeless deliver presentations to organisations, the government and local councils and communities on how to improve their services and how to prevent homelessness from the people who have been homeless and knows what works and what doesn't. The impact from us doing this is astonishing, we excel at everything we do, we all come from different backgrounds and lifestyles but our emotions and goal is the same for the NYRG. We're here to make changes for the benefit of young people. So without this funding we wouldn't be able to make the impact that we currently do. Services without funding can't run and can't be active so our life may be at risk.

The evidence is us; we're still alive and are able to achieve our aspirations thanks to the funding. Everything has its price; it's just looking at the impact/evidence to see if it's worth funding.

How can public service commissioners and providers (in all sectors) best manage the risks involved in giving greater roles to young people in designing and running their own local public services?

If I was left to run local public services, then to help me do this, I would need the commissioners and providers to have supervision meetings once a week or every two weeks, to make sure that the services are being run properly and successfully, the budget is being spent wisely, the funding is spent properly. A consistency in communication is vital with myself and the commissioners and providers so I am aware what I am doing correctly, what I'm doing incorrectly, what I need to change, what I need to improve. Also to add onto this note, if staff need to be aware of changes then this benefits them so we are all in the loop and not left out of anything. This then makes sure that the public services are running perfectly well and efficiently.

What kinds of organisations work best in achieving outcomes with young people?

Organisations such as The Challenge, St Basils, Youth Centres, Job Centre Plus, The Leading Edge; Employability and Skills Training, and Internet Job Vacancy Organisation all help the young people to achieve their goals because without these voluntary and involuntary opportunities we wouldn't be given the chance to gain new experiences and skills to succeed in making life decisions and career decisions later on in life. These also help young people feel motivated and ambitious to reach their career/life goal achievements. They all work on a one-to-one session and help you through whatever needs and support you have. Organisations such as St Basils, have floating support workers and key workers to help each individual progress and develop their life skills to achieve the best outcome for the individuals.

How are young people involved?

The involvement depends on the organisation, but generalising it's usually sessions on a one-to-one basis where both parties discuss the support and training needs of the young person, with this in mind, they then look at their experience in careers and exam grades to find suitable jobs and career opportunities for the young person. Some organisations will put the young people into opportunities where they can be trained in sectors and industries where they want to want to gain experience. Other organisations will on a voluntary basis give them a trial run within their company to let them gain experience to be able to help the young people.

How are these services funded? What are the benefits/costs of different kinds of funding?

There are many ways for an organisation to be funded, providing you qualify and your organisation would benefit from the funding then it's more than possible to run an organisation solely based upon funded such as St Basils, which also get donations and are funded through several other sources.

What is the governance implication – who sets the rules, how is accountability secured?

Well accountability is described as a responsibility of either an individual or department to perform a specific function in accounting. An auditor reviewing a company's financial statement is responsible and legally liable for any misstatements or instances of fraud. Accountability forces an accountant to be careful and knowledgeable in their professional practices, as even negligence can cause them to be legally responsible. So to make sure that

accountability is secure, then evidence needs to be shown to prove that what the organisation or young people is saying/doing is the truth and that all requirements are being met for the organisation or young people. For example in court, someone being convicted of a crime is pleading not guilty however the evidence (the visual proof), which makes the subject the prime suspect and guilty party for the act of the crime. So “who sets the rules?” well the person(s)/board panel at the top of the hierarchy of the organisation. So depending on your job role and responsibilities also depends on how much you’re accountable for.

How have professionals had to change their ways of working?

Professionals have changed their way of working with young people by having actual involvement with them, including them in decision making, updates that may or may not affect them, career/training opportunities within the organisation, they allow young people to work alongside them and listen to their views and opinions because everyone’s opinion counts.

Whose needs are not being met and how might they be met?

If the young people’s needs are not being met, then the staff, need to start to listen and pay attention more and address each need properly by listening, and discussing them, and noting them down in a key working session, so there’s a log of what has been said and what is going to be done about their needs. They would also need to re-evaluate the young people’s support and training requirements to get the best outcome for both the organisation and young people.

If the organisation’s needs are not being met, then staff must have more engagement with one another and share their empathy towards everyone so issue’s can be resolved and the organisation and involvement target can be met.

Contribution 3:

What are the expectations that young people, as citizens, should have of local government and local public services? What are they prepared to contribute and how?

I personally feel that young people have a low expectation of local government and local public services, at this moment in time. This I feel is due to a lack of trust and understanding, the services are supposed to be there for the young people but they are always let down and forgotten as class/ society that isn’t recognised!! They should have a positive view of them as they are they to help young people and support them, often young people walk in to these services with open eyes but are let down so feel they cannot contribute to the services. They would happily get involved in activities that benefit them, and allow them to make changes to the services, but they get to see the impact of the changes that they are making!

What kinds of relationships do young citizens want with local public service professionals and how do these relationships vary?

Young people want relationships with professionals that can both help them but help the service aswell! It’s a 2 way process but depending on how comfortable they feel with the person the relationship varies, however people working in these fields the professionals need to be open minded and approachable, many a time this is what puts people off especially young people, as negative stereotypes hinders peoples vision into seeing someone in a certain way.

What kinds of organisations do young citizens prefer?

Young people prefer organisations that are approachable, open and that don't exclude or have some sort of prejudice attached whether it is seen in front or this attitude is hidden behind closed doors! Ones where their opinion and ideas aren't just tokenistic but they generally want to be heard and listened to and action is taken from hearing those ideas from young people.

How can young citizens be involved in service redesign initiatives? Which mechanisms work well in which circumstances?

Young citizens can get involved when professionals genuinely ask them to and want them to get involved not just appreciating them as tick boxes!! Incentives work well, whether it be money, or vouchers, positive experiences, recognition, certificates or achievements, food at consultation events or events taking place, making the activities more fun and getting them involved, both parties getting involved not just the young person, having a comfortable environment.

How can the initiatives which young people are self-organising be shaped and influenced by public sector organisations to increase their outcomes?

Getting mentors who have been involved in similar initiatives would be very useful, getting influential professional/role models to meet the young people and allow them to progress through meeting their role models in order to further themselves.

What evidence is there of the likely costs of local public services which embody greater engagement with young people?

Young people get involved in activities that they enjoy taking part in and are interesting to them regardless of costs. The facilities do have to be nice and of a quality standard, however this does not necessarily mean that 'stupid' amounts of money on services, just having someone who is good at what they do, for example free running. Doesn't cost a lot but the experience lasts a lifetime.

How can public service commissioners and providers (in all sectors) best manage the risks involved in giving greater roles to young people in designing and running their own local public services?

By having some sort of line management system in place, but by telling those young people what authority they have and having rules that they designed and therefore they have to stick to, therefore they are coming up with the discipline procedures, and the work is getting done and it is young people led initiatives but there is a low level limit on risks.

What kinds of organisations work best in achieving outcomes with young people?

Organisations that are genuinely interested in young people, and furthering them. Many that I have come across have been very tokenistic and only have young people involved for their benefit not for the benefit of those young people.

How are young people involved?

Sitting on boards, involved in decision making, getting rewarded to be involved

How are these services funded? What are the benefits/costs of different kinds of funding?

Many apply for external funding as they genuinely want to work with young people, don't have unlimited funding so apply for funding constantly looking for new ideas and ways of delivery. Benefits of this is that they are working with young people, however the lack of

consistent funding is a problem as you don't know when the next funding will be coming or if you will get it.

What are the governance implications – who sets the rules, how is accountability secured?

Governance implications is that as funding is being cut these organisations aren't sure if they will continue running. Also there are new guidelines in place as to what needs to be achieved when working with young people, this then restricts comfortability with young people as it seems like its just a form being filled out rather than the person genuinely wanting to be there and get involved, more of a procedure!

How have professionals had to change their ways of working?

In accordance to guidelines changing, professionals have had to change the way they are working, however this isn't necessarily for the better.

How transferable are these initiatives/services?

Personally I think if organisations shared information and procedures these initiatives would be transferrable, and if they are wanting to be there for young people then they should be able to transfer these services rather than not doing so and being in cliques making it harder for young people to access their services and repeating information that may be discomfoting.

Whose needs are not being met and how might they be met?

Many young peoples needs are not being met as they are in a hidden category and are being forgotten and swept under carpet as other young people who are fine and are achieving who know how to access these services and are willing and wanting to get involved do so. They need to be met by better signposting, having staff that want to be there, not just on a 9-5 basis, having rewards for young people being involved.

Contribution 4:

What kinds of organisations do young citizens prefer?

Organisations like St Basils to be honest because of their innovative style of involvement for its residents or people receiving floating support. Organisations should start shaping their services to deal with individuals rather than groups of people.

What are the expectations that young people, as citizens, should have of local government and local public services? What are they prepared to contribute and how?

Young people are not that different to older citizens in the sense that they just want to live their lives how they want to do it but unfortunately society discriminates against certain people's lifestyle choices. I guess young people's expectations should be that they can feel fully supported by people working for statutory services. I have identified statutory services as more of a problem area than others because in my experience this is where a great deal of discrimination comes from. Young people are also prepared to put in a lot of work in things they believe in and they can contribute to society as much as anyone but unfortunately there just aren't that many opportunities for young people out there.

What kinds of relationships do young citizens want with local public service professionals and how do these relationships vary?

Young people just want to be treated like everybody else they don't want special treatment or different rules because it's quite insulting when u have somebody treating u differently because your young.

How can young citizens be involved in service redesign initiatives? Which mechanisms work well in which circumstances?

Personally I feel that young people work best in person so focus groups, advisory boards basically something that is highly engaging but saying that everyone is a individual and should be involved a level that suits them so even an online blog or online focus group to take the strain off less confident young people.

How can the initiatives which young people are self-organising be shaped and influenced by public sector organisations to increase their outcomes?

Although I think that giving young people the initiative to be self organising is a brilliant thing I think it should be managed effectively by organisations as after all organisations can effectively network and make the young peoples idea's really happen. Young people should create and shape services that affect them after all they do know what's best for them.

What evidence is there of the likely costs of local public services which embody greater engagement with young people?

Giving young people more responsibility in shaping their services would be an amazing and cost effective way of making sure services do work because if they are designed by the people they are for then they are naturally going to be more successful.

How can public service commissioners and providers (in all sectors) best manage the risks involved in giving greater roles to young people in designing and running their own local public services?

Take the risk in the first place. It shouldn't be viewed as a risk young people are as capable as anyone else.
