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# Evaluation of the GLA's Peer Outreach Workers Team

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## The Team

The Peer Outreach Workers (POW) team is a group of 30 young people aged 15 to 25. They deliver work on behalf of the Greater London Authority (GLA) for the benefit of young Londoners. The team was set up in winter 2006. Following discussions with the young volunteers and finance and legal teams at City Hall, it was decided to employ them on a casual basis. This flexibility suits the sometimes hectic and difficult lives many of the team lead, and members earn £8.50 per hour. A paid role in the POW team represents a significant step for some young people who have not worked before.

The POW team recruits members in a variety of ways. Some are referred through organisations, others by word of mouth, via contact with young people on external projects, or through colleges or friends. If successful at interview, new members do their first month as a volunteer to

give them a chance to see if the team is something they want to commit to more formally.

Peer Outreach team members come from across London and reflect the city's diversity with a variety of cultural, religious and racial backgrounds; young people with disabilities; young offenders; and young people in care. Some team members are NEET (not in education, employment or training), while the rest are in part-time work or education. Many also have additional pressures in terms of finances, family responsibilities, housing and other issues.

All members have Criminal Records Bureau checks as a matter of course. Line managers provide supervision, while monthly group meetings help evaluate their work and give an opportunity to raise any issues. An internal mentoring scheme within the

'I've learned that young people listen to other young people instead of adults.'

*Loula*

'We can make a difference in decision making and meeting with other young people with the same aims.'

*Anon*

team itself provides extra support to the more vulnerable members.

All POWs attend training courses including youth work, child protection, participation accreditation, life skills and facilitation, conflict resolution, research and CV-writing workshops. They must also produce personal development plans.

The group's size means the GLA can make the most of the flexible nature of the team's employment. It also allows as many young people as possible the chance to be involved and to develop skills. As a result, eight team members have now moved on to full time employment in the

youth/participation field, working for organisations such as V (the volunteering organisation) and 11 Million (the Office of the Children's Commissioner).

The Strategic Development Officer for Children and Young People's Participation manages the Peer Outreach Team, and members sit within the Children and Young People's Unit at City Hall.

The POWs share and take pride in a common goal: to represent the views and ensure decision makers hear the voices of all London's young people. Their view of participation is highlighted below:

'Through the actions of young Londoners comes real change'  
(Peer Outreach Team, 2007)

### **The Personal Development of POW Team Members**

Two POW team members have taken part in a case study analysis of their development to support this evaluation. They were asked to write

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'I can bridge the gap between young people and adults/ people in authority. I represent the future - whatever decisions I am involved in affects the future.'

*Natalie*

### Jade's Case Study

'Since being a member of the Peer Outreach Team I have developed in many different ways. For example, my relationship with my mother has improved because of the conflict resolution training, and as a result I was able to bring my work home.

Also, my organisational skills have improved. I always used to be late for appointments but now I make sure I leave home with enough time for my journey, and make sure I get support with writing all my appointments in my diary. This shows my timekeeping has also improved.

To work for the GLA is a privilege and to be part of the team is excellent. Whenever I tell people

where I work they say 'Oh My God, that's amazing!'

As a disabled young Londoner, I feel proud to represent the views of other disabled young Londoners, as a majority of the time our voice is ignored.

From being a member of the Peer Outreach Team I have learnt a lot especially about minority groups within London. Also, I feel my communication skills have developed and because of this I feel a lot more confident when speaking to others and to larger groups of people. I have also learnt much more about my rights as a young person and also my entitlements.'

### Ethan's Personal Statement

'Since being a member of the Peer Outreach Team I feel I have improved on a lot of things. For example my communication skills are much better. I am also able to work within a team and speak out in a group situation. Along with this I can now produce and give presentations to large numbers of people, on a variety of things, from what the team is about, to aspects of participation and even presentations about the UN Convention.

I have also learned to work with a variety of people from different backgrounds and ethnic groups.

My timekeeping has improved considerably too, as have my admin skills.

Most importantly, being part of the team has helped me develop a better outlook on the future and makes me want to help with the issues concerning young Londoners today.

I have also taken part in various training sessions, for example Youth Participation and Conflict Resolution. The Conflict Resolution training has also helped improve my relationships with friends etc.

The POW team has definitely given me valuable experience and broadened my outlook for the future, opening new paths in the process.'

a personal statement related to their experience and progress as part of the team.

### Skills, Needs and Training

Peer Outreach team members receive a range of ongoing training to ensure that they are able to do their jobs effectively. Team members need to:

- develop effective participation
- deliver projects and training
- facilitate workshops
- take part in consultations
- prepare presentations for a variety of audiences.

To ensure they can do this, their training includes:

- GLA Staff induction
- Conflict resolution
- Child protection
- Accredited participation course
- Accredited 'Essentials in Youth Work' course
- Life skills and coaching courses
- Accredited Inspectors training by Youth Mark
- Research skills
- Presentation skills.

The team are currently using their skills by leading on and/or significantly contributing to numerous pan-London projects. These include:

**SN4P (Safer Neighbourhoods for Young People) Project:** The POW team work with children to map the places between home and school where they do not feel safe. The young people take photographs to show the school and local authority that will then work to improve the 'unsafe' areas. The POW team have so far had a 98 per cent success rate in getting these problems addressed. The team is now working in partnership with the Safer London Foundation, Police Community Support Officers and local Safer Neighbourhood panels to create a youth engagement strategy. More information about this work can be found on the Metropolitan Police website: [www.met.police.uk/youngpeople/sn4p.htm](http://www.met.police.uk/youngpeople/sn4p.htm).

**Dare London:** This is a youth board made up of Summer University, London Youth and the POW team. The board works as an advisory group for these three organisations and runs training on issues related to young people's governance for the voluntary and public sectors. The POW team are participating in Dare London's youth advisory group with the aim of ensuring all partner

organisations (London Youth and Summer University) are accountable to young people and provide a formal platform for young Londoners' needs and concerns.

**Gangs Guns and Knife crime:** The POW team consulted with groups of young people to gain a greater understanding of why young people become involved with gangs, guns and knife crime. They have used their findings to guide service providers and policymakers to offer better services and policies that support the needs of the young people involved.

**Kickz Project:** Supported by the Football Foundation and the Met Police, this project aims to get disadvantaged young people involved in sport. The project's purpose is to break down barriers between police and young people, reduce crime and antisocial behaviour in the targeted neighbourhoods, and link with education, training and employment opportunities. The team also advise partners on setting up a regional youth board.

The POW team has also been involved in the **You're Welcome Project** and the **Young Inspector's Project**. This work will be discussed in detail later.

'I have learned not to underestimate children and young people. I feel that I am accountable to all children and young people pan-London.'

Cara

'I have made friends and gained commitment, experience, employment and fun.'

Badria

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### **Rationale for a GLA Peer Outreach Workers Team**

This section will provide the context in which the team was established and demonstrate its importance to young people and to London.

The POW team was set up to work with the GLA and local authority policymakers to influence decisions that directly affect young Londoners.

The group's establishment made sure information that is real and current relating to young people living in London can be directly communicated to those responsible for influencing how young people live in London - hence such projects as SN4P and You're Welcome.

However, Peer Outreach team members believe they do not just act as a consultative body but rather a group who feel the daily experiences of young Londoners and can express whether policies intended to affect them have actually improved their lives - and if not, why not?

The team can pick up on changes across time and area in the environment for young Londoners (in their communities, neighbourhoods, colleges, etc), and can measure the impact of policies and decisions on their lives. This means identifying experiences and trends that may have a negative as well as positive affect on individual young people and in their communities.

Crucially, the team is able to model and share good practice - i.e. what works across the GLA group - by ensuring that only first-class participatory practices are developed, while ongoing, reflective working improves outcomes. Furthermore, through their engagement in projects across the capital, the POW team are able to identify good practice models that can be rolled out across the capital for the benefit of young Londoners.

The POW team greatly enhances the lives of the young people within it. The combination of 'soft' and 'hard'

skills young people acquire through the team, support those required for further and higher education, training and employment. Skills development such as adult and peer mentoring, research skills, training in child protection, working in an office environment, completing and submitting timesheets, attending meetings, working within budgets and team work, demonstrably improve the individual young person's skills and prepare them for their future roles in life.

It is also important to acknowledge that team membership provides a stepping-stone to paid employment – particularly for those young people who before joining had NEET status. Recently eight POWs have left for full time employment, beginning careers

in policy and participation work with children and young people. Others have become reengaged with their studies.

### **Understanding the importance to evaluate the POW team's work**

Two major projects POW team members have led on will be examined next, to show how effective are the group's skills and abilities. In this section, the processes carried out by the young people involved will be discussed and the insights of the team members, gathered over several workshop sessions, will be used to reinforce and offer additional evidence of their contributions.

During the POW team workshops in preparation for this evaluation, the group's views were sought on why they thought it important to evaluate the POW team and its work. The team set out the following methods and outputs. This shows clearly they not only understand the processes and roles of evaluation, but also see them positively and central to improving the quality of their work to:

- review and improve
- know what worked and what did not work
- make changes where needed
- see results
- be accountable

*'I've learned how to create mechanisms to access services, and have a better understanding of the problems that lie within the services that cater for young people.'*  
*Chris Hilleard*

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- improve reliability and validity
- see what was done well
- set guidance for the future
- contextualise work.

The team went on to identify what 'success' in a project was and how it could be measured:

- achievements
- meeting project aims and objectives
- effective, measurable change
- progression
- winning
- recognition
- avoiding failure
- maximise profits
- longevity/sustainability
- ensuring a fair assessment.

### **How do you measure success?**

- feedback
- step-by-step plan
- constant reflection
- growth expansion
- arrange meetings
- rankings/levels
- evaluation
- audience testing
- look at what competitors have achieved and what you have not
- timeline chart
- examine what happened in relation to initial aims and objectives
- questionnaires
- take everything into consideration
- gold focus groups
- reflect on one's personal achievement.

When asked 'why should young people lead on this work?' the team responded with the following:

- young people have a voice
- young people count
- because young people matter
- so that young people don't get lost in society
- they know what they want
- the projects greatly affect young people so involving young people means their problems/issues are the target focus as they know what their problems are
- young people need things to do; mind stimulation
- it's an Every Child Matters outcome

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- to make young people feel engaged in decisions made concerning them
- young people are aware of the issues other young people face.

### **The team's impact on London's strategic participation work.**

The work that the GLA's POW team has carried out since it was set up has clearly impacted positively on young people's participation across London.

This impact can be felt strongly within the GLA group - the GLA, London Development Agency, London Fire Brigade, Metropolitan Police Service and Metropolitan Police Authority and Transport for London.

Over the last two years, POWs and lead officers within the GLA's Children and Young People's Unit have worked hard to establish a relationship with the rest of the GLA group. This has been done by:

- attending professional boards as the voice of young people
  - presenting to conferences and steering groups
  - leading and supporting projects on community safety, inspections of boroughs' focusing on Children and Young People Plans, helping to drive participation strategies from top to bottom.
- carrying out research on the issue of gangs, guns and knives including building relationships with groups from Brazil, South Africa, Los Angeles and Paris.
  - working with the Mayor and his Ambassador for Youth on various tasks and projects.

Transport for London and the British Transport Police have since decided to set up their own youth boards. POW members also sit on the Young Londoners Fund board. The team has built a strong reputation in delivering best practice models and creating good working relationships with other young Londoners and key policymakers and practitioners. This has resulted in the group being cited by senior officials at London wide events.

Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, recently commented on the significance of the team's work and how he would like more direct involvement. Furthermore Jennifer Izekor, Director of Children and Learners for the Government Office for London said at a meeting for London's funders and investors that 'London is lucky to have the Peer Outreach Team'.

'I am representative of every single young person in London today. I am a voice for young black women with a troubled background. I fight for the rights of all who are misjudged and discriminated against.'

*Anon*

### **The You're Welcome and Young Inspectors Projects**

These are two significant projects led on by the POW team between November 2007 and March 2009. The GLA Strategic Development Officer supported this work along with a specifically recruited project manager.

### **The You're Welcome Pilot Project**

Funded by the Department of Health (DH), this was a London pilot of a children's strand within the national You're Welcome project. Government Office for London (GOL) commissioned the team to improve health services for, and their accessibility to, all young Londoners. At the start of the team's involvement, health services taking part in the pilot including London had completed questionnaires assessing themselves on how well they met standards identified by the DH in a number of service provision areas.

The POW team were commissioned to:

- develop a tool that would enable young people from boroughs involved in the pilot to mystery shop and inspect a range of services. This tool had to reflect questions in the self-assessment toolkit already circulated and completed by the identified health services within the boroughs.
- train local young people identified to carry out these mystery and known inspections in how to use the tool.
- carry out their own mystery and known inspections of some of the same services to act as a control.
- gather feedback on a return visit to the pilot boroughs with the young people on their experiences of mystery and known shopping
- collate the local young people's findings and report these back to GOL (which would be compared to the ratings of the self assessments completed by the health services themselves using the self assessment toolkits).
- deliver a presentation of the findings at the You're Welcome London launch.

### **POW team process that identified the significance of young people in the team leading on each**

The group took the self-assessment toolkit developed by DH officials for adults and went through each question in it. Their aim was to develop questions for a 'young people's data capturing tool' for local young people to use when mystery and known shopping at the identified health services within their borough.

Team members then decided if each question could appear in the young

people's data capturing tool. This was based on whether the question was relevant to young people's experience of visiting a health service. If the group decided a question should be included in the tool, it was then reworded to ensure that young people could understand it.

The group not only reworded questions they agreed were relevant to young people, they also turned questions intended for senior managers within the services into questions young people could answer when visiting the sites.

As a diverse group of young people, the team was able to discuss and develop these questions from a young Londoner's perspective.

The wording was accessible to young people as it was developed by their peers and therefore easily understood and used by the target group.

The worth of the data-capturing tool and its simplicity was further reinforced by feedback from local young people, all of whom said it was easy to use. There was also positive feedback from DH who has since used many of the questions in the national version of this toolkit for young people.

The group developed a training session for the local young people

using the data capturing tool and how to mystery and known shop the identified services within their boroughs. The POWs ensured this training was accessible and consulted all team members to ensure it was of a high standard and that as many young people were involved as possible.

Through their training in presentation skills and workshop facilitation, the POWs were well versed on what to include in such training sessions. Furthermore, the language, expressions, tone and level of interaction that went into the training were accessible to young people.

In effect, peer training took place, which has been well documented in encouraging learning that translates into positive working practices – in this case, knowledgeable mystery and overt shoppers.

- the POWs involved in the project did their own mystery and known shops in a selection of the identified services. The team added this dimension to the project to improve its robustness, though it had not been required by GOL
- the group later turned to the pilot boroughs and facilitated a focus group session with the local young people involved in the project to gain some additional comments that could be communicated to GOL.

'I've learned to interact with people of different ages; to trust people, to work with people more and to get involved.'

*Nasra*

'What have I got out of it? I've raised my expectations, made new friends and gained a purpose.'

*Anon*

Many of the POWs have been trained in and have experience of facilitating discussions. They related well to the local young people and this meant they were able to elicit relaxed and insightful comments from them.

- the group collated the data capturing tools returned from the pilot boroughs. They then assisted GOL in rating the findings from these tools in comparison to the self-assessment tools the services had completed themselves.

The findings in all but five of the health services piloted by the local young Londoners correlated with those of the services themselves through their own self-assessment toolkits. This shows that the POWs were able to work at a high level sensitive to the needs of the young people involved, and were able to match the validity of standards developed by experienced officers

leading on other aspects of the DH project.

### **The Young Inspectors' Project**

Funded and commissioned by GOL, the Young Inspectors Project (YIP) was started to pilot a youth-led process to look at how six identified London boroughs undertake consultation work with young people. The Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs) in each of the boroughs was identified as the starting point for questions posed to investigate the participation processes.

The POW team were commissioned to carry out the work and undertook the following processes:

- Reading each borough's Children and Young People's Plan (70 pages).

The POWs chose to read through full-length versions of the CYPPs. They chose to do this rather than read the children and young people's version as they felt it important to know everything they could about the plans.

From the beginning of the project, team members recognised they knew little of the information needed to do this work to a high standard. Their awareness of this motivated them to become experts in the areas of CYPPs. Many officers said that

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the POWs knew more about their borough's plans than they did!

- Developing questions to ask officers and young people within each of the boroughs to gain an insight into the participation processes and activities taking place within them.

After reading the CYPPs for each borough POW team members were able to develop questions they believed would elicit insightful responses both from the officers and young people within the boroughs. Few young people will have had training and hands on experience of participation work at this level.

- Visiting the boroughs and putting questions to officers and young people and recording their responses.

The POWs could pull out from responses what was most significant to young people in terms of good examples of participatory activities and processes.

- ongoing reflection to improve skills, gain confidence, make the project run smoothly and provide insightful and constructive criticism to the group members both individually and as a whole.

Team members were honest about their need for support in certain areas and were able to identify additional training needs. Their experiences of effective team working meant open and frank discussions took place meaning speedy and deliberate changes took place where necessary. There was a high degree of support within the group itself, testament to its management and organisation.

- Obtaining feedback from boroughs on their own performance and on the project processes.

The feedback collated on the POW team's performance was mostly positive, reflecting borough officers' perceptions that the young people acted professionally and were willing to improve their practice through constructive criticism.

- Contributing directly to the content of the final report outlining their findings.

The POWs were able to recognise material they felt was significant to young people across London. They identified nine general themes and six recommendations based on the interview responses.

'I can do more than I give myself credit for.'  
Vanessa

'I can pass on education to my peers, my family and people in similar situations who lack knowledge.'  
Anon

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Along with the GOL report which has now been published (see: <http://www.younglondonmatters.org/hottopics/news/view/120/theyounginspectorspilotprojectinterimfindingsreport/>), POW team members gave a presentation to borough representatives at a meeting that made public their findings. Throughout the project self-critical group discussions took place, where ideas, suggestions and solutions to issues were developed.

The project was received positively. Based on its success, GOL has commissioned the POW team to deliver on some of the recommendations identified during a feedback meeting with each of the boroughs involved. This work will disseminate the findings of the report to local young people. There will also be consultation with disabled young people in each borough to identify

how they could be better engaged with local decision-making.

The project's extension is a direct result of the POW team's effectiveness in delivering it.

### Conclusion

The POW team was set up to give young Londoners a chance to represent their peers alongside decision makers, gain valuable training and experience, act as positive role models and engage with their peers. The group functions at a high level, informing decision makers how they can improve the lives and safety of young people across London.

Furthermore, the POW team, beyond their initial purpose of acting as a consultative body, have worked hard to successfully deliver many high profile projects benefiting all young Londoners and the communities they live in.

The POW team are really proud of the work they do and appreciative of the support given to them by the GLA group and external partners from the voluntary and statutory sectors. This acknowledgement from these high profile agencies means a lot to the POW team and translates into a source of motivation and is a contributing factor to the ongoing success of their work.

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### Chinese

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### Vietnamese

Nếu bạn muốn có văn bản tài liệu này bằng ngôn ngữ của mình, hãy liên hệ theo số điện thoại hoặc địa chỉ dưới đây.

### Greek

Αν θέλετε να αποκτήσετε αντίγραφο του παρόντος εγγράφου στη δική σας γλώσσα, παρακαλείστε να επικοινωνήσετε τηλεφωνικά στον αριθμό αυτό ή ταχυδρομικά στην παρακάτω διεύθυνση.

### Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinizde hazırlanmış bir nüshasını edinmek için, lütfen aşağıdaki telefon numarasını arayınız veya adrese başvurunuz.

### Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੀ ਕਾਪੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਰਾਬਤਾ ਕਰੋ:

### Hindi

यदि आप इस दस्तावेज़ की प्रति अपनी भाषा में चाहते हैं, तो कृपया निम्नलिखित नंबर पर फोन करें अथवा नीचे दिये गये पते पर संपर्क करें

### Bengali

আপনি যদি আপনার ভাষায় এই দলিলের প্রতিলিপি (কপি) চান, তা হলে নীচের ফোন নম্বরে বা ঠিকানায় অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন।

### Urdu

اگر آپ اس دستاویز کی نقل اپنی زبان میں چاہتے ہیں، تو براہ کرم نیچے دئے گئے نمبر پر فون کریں یا دئے گئے پتے پر رابطہ کریں

### Arabic

إذا أردت نسخة من هذه الوثيقة بلغتك، يرجى الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو مراسلة العنوان أدناه

### Gujarati

જો તમને આ દસ્તાવેજની નકલ તમારી ભાષામાં જોઈતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરી આપેલ નંબર ઉપર ફોન કરો અથવા નીચેના સરનામે સંપર્ક સાધો.

