



# A City within a City

Understanding the needs of young people in Westminster



Young  
Westminster  
Foundation



## Contents

- 3 Foreword by YWF
- 4 Executive Summary
- 7 Working with Young People
- 9 Borough Profile
- 16 Myself
- 20 My community
- 26 My future
- 30 How can the YWF play a role?

# Foreword by YWF

Young people in Westminster are growing up faced with a wealth of opportunities.

They are generally proud and happy growing up in the diversity of Westminster, but they are aware of disparities around them. Real anxieties exist about housing, the cost of university, the threat of terrorist attacks, pollution, gangs and crime. We need to support the next generation to be resilient. Our vision is for young people to grow up healthy, safe and happy with the best opportunities of securing brighter futures.

Undertaking this Needs Analysis has been our first significant piece of work. Through the process we worked with friends and partners at over 30 organisations, from small grassroots charities to major corporates; all of which share a commitment to make a difference for young people in the borough.

We also met a group of fantastic young people who formed our core team of peer researchers; their commitment and passion for making a difference for their peers ensured that we gained a true insight into the needs of young people.

The report and recommendations now provide an important basis for a call to action to partners, and a business case both to seek and focus investment. Working in partnership is crucial to everything we do as a foundation.

We represent a diverse membership of charities and youth organisations. Acting as a leader of the sector, we support our members with information sharing, advice, networking opportunities, training and grants. Most importantly, as with this study, we give a voice to Westminster's young people. We will continue to work with our young ambassadors to reflect on the findings in this report and undertake further research and consultation with our members on how activities and services can be adapted. This will include the exciting plan to implement a campaign to promote youth clubs.

We would like to thank Westminster City Council and the Westminster Foundation for funding the project; John Lyon's Charity for their vision in establishing and funding the YWF with co-funding from the Council; Rocket Science for undertaking and presenting the research, and our team of peer researchers for their professionalism and enthusiasm in keeping the work real.



**Philip Barron**  
CEO



**Shane Ryan**  
Chair

# Executive Summary

In 2017, London Youth published ‘Young People’s Capital of the World?’, examining the experiences of young Londoners (aged 11-25) growing up in five East/North East London boroughs<sup>1</sup>.

This observed how:

- London’s youth population is changing and growing at an almost unprecedented rate, putting increased demands on the providers of services for young people.
- London is the most expensive city to live and work in<sup>2</sup>, and this is especially true for young people trying to make their way with the lack of affordable housing pricing more and more out of the communities in which their parents grew up.
- There are growing concerns about young people’s personal safety, and their mental and physical wellbeing, evident, for example, in increasing levels of childhood obesity;
- The barriers to certain groups of young people achieving their aspirations remain high, particularly in BAME communities, exacerbated by the rising costs of further and higher education.

The Young Westminster Foundation (YWF) commissioned this needs analysis to add to London Youth’s evidence base, but also to understand whether the experiences of young people, in this case those aged 8-25 and growing up at the heart of the capital, are noticeably different? Westminster proudly proclaims in its strategy that it is a “City for All”, an economic powerhouse and the UK’s cultural and entertainment centre<sup>3</sup>.

To what extent do its 71,000 plus young people, the “City within a City” of this report, perceive they share in Westminster’s success, or see it as a place where they can genuinely realise their potential?

Like the London Youth Report, the Young Westminster Foundation’s ‘A City within a City’ focuses on young people’s experiences outside of school. A variety of consultation methods gathered the views of more than 250 young people and 30 stakeholders over the Summer 2017 on the services, support and opportunities available to young people living in Westminster. The findings are presented here from three perspectives – Myself, My Community and My Future.



Despite the increasing challenges facing young people living in central London, the majority of those who contributed to the research seem highly resilient and largely positive about growing up in Westminster. They are complimentary about local services, including youth clubs and leisure facilities; they value the access to Westminster's unrivalled cultural amenities and appreciate the strong sense of community and social integration in the borough. Yet, young people do have some widely held concerns; it is these which will comprise the four themes of the Foundation's initial work plans (see How can the YWF play a role?):

- **Crime and personal safety:** Over 40% reported that they have been, or know personally, a victim of crime, with more than 2 in 3 young people saying that drugs and alcohol are a social problem in Westminster.
- **The Local Environment:** Growing numbers of young people are aware of the damaging nature of pollution and poor air quality in Westminster.
- **Health and wellbeing:** Youth practitioners in both schools and community settings identify a need around increasing mental health issues, as well as relatively poor physical health of young children, and comparatively high levels of obesity in children leaving junior school.
- **Accessing opportunities:** Despite the apparent wealth of opportunities in Westminster, almost a quarter of those surveyed said that they were anxious about their future – their job prospects, the unaffordability of housing in the borough and the perceived unfairness of the growing divide between rich and poor.

<sup>1</sup> London Youth 2017, 'Young People's Capital of the World?', London

<sup>2</sup> Savills 2016, 'Where are the world's most expensive cities to live and work?', UK

<sup>3</sup> Westminster City Council 2017, 'A City for All 2017/18', London



Many of the issues identified in the needs analysis do not lend themselves to quick fixes. This situation is compounded by recent cuts to local youth provision. As community-based services are more likely than after-school clubs to support more vulnerable young people, any reduction in youth club's programmes and services could end up widening the gap between the haves and the have nots.

Drawing on the specific needs identified by young people and youth practitioners, the Young Westminster Foundation has an opportunity to coordinate and support the work of the borough's various youth organisations and youth-related services. It will be important not to attempt to do too much, but to focus on where the Foundation can add most value:

- 1 Maintain and regularly update an assessment of young people's needs in the borough.
- 2 Retain a cadre of fully-trained young peer researchers who can act as ambassadors for the Foundation.
- 3 Support the youth sector by developing appropriate and cost-effective forums and media for information and skills sharing between front-line organisations.
- 4 Act as a bridge between youth services, schools and local strategic partners including the NHS and the police.
- 5 Implement a campaign to promote the importance and value of youth clubs and extra-curricular activities.
- 6 Broker applications to external funders (trusts, foundations, corporates, philanthropists) to support partnerships to deliver services locally.
- 7 Provide Westminster's business community with a menu of opportunities to help resource, support and engage with local youth organisations and young people across the borough.

# Working with Young People

Research methods: survey, interviews and workshops.

The Young Westminster Foundation commissioned this needs analysis on the basis that the research was designed and undertaken by young people themselves. Drawing on examples of similar youth engagement, an online survey captured the views of young people<sup>4</sup>.

The survey fulfilled two roles:

- An online questionnaire for young people to complete remotely
- A topic guide for a group of young researchers to use in face-to-face interviews with their peers.

Seventeen young Westminster residents were trained and employed as peer researchers over the summer months of 2017. Their role was to undertake much of the engagement with young people. Co-designing the survey with them ensured that the peer researchers were confident in using it<sup>5</sup>, and questions were phrased in a way that resonated with young people.



<sup>4</sup> London Youth 2017, 'Young People's Capital of the World?', London; Essex County Council & Organisational Intelligence 2016, 'Health and wellbeing of pupils 2016 survey', Essex

<sup>5</sup> Gillison, F & Cooney, G 2016, 'Peer Interviewer Training Pack', Bath

The survey, disseminated in ten locations across the borough, received 234 responses. Peer-to-peer interviews succeeded in gaining additional insights and nuances which would have been missed relying solely on the survey<sup>6</sup>. Peer researchers also carried out focus groups and consultation events with young people in different settings. These used visual prompts, encouraging discussion on the here and now ('Myself' and 'My community') before looking to 'My future', exploring what currently works well for them and what could be improved.

- Ages: 0-10 (25%); 11-15 (35%); 16-19 (34%); 20+ (7%)
- Male (57%): Female (43%)
- 'White' was the predominant ethnicity (22%). That means 78% of respondents were BAME
- 10 % respondents identified as having a disability

## Stakeholders: one-to-one interviews and focus groups

Engagement of young people has been at the heart of the research. However, to get a fuller picture of the context of youth service provision in Westminster, we also conducted focus groups and one-to-one interviews with key practitioners and stakeholders. These included youth clubs, schools, youth workers and businesses located in the City of Westminster. We also spoke to school nurses, the Virtual School for Looked After Children, the Youth Offending Team and the Integrated Gangs Unit to capture as many of the different needs of the youth population as possible.

Our understanding of the most challenged young people is based on 'key informant interviews' with social workers and youth professionals. Such interviews are an accepted way of learning about "hard to reach groups"<sup>7</sup>, and they provided insights that would otherwise have been missed. Based on what case workers told us, we have created the several profiles in this report to illustrate the circumstances which some young people in Westminster are facing.

<sup>6</sup> National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement & Institute for Voluntary Research 2010, 'Bursting the Bubble: Peer-led Research', England

<sup>7</sup> Bernard, B 2004, Research methods in anthropology: qualitative and quantitative approaches, 4th edn, AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek: California; Pauwels, L & Hardyns, W 2009, 'Measuring Community (Dis)Organizational Processes through Key Informant Analysis', European Journal of Criminology, vol. 6, no. 5 or Public Engagement & Institute for Voluntary Research 2010, 'Bursting the Bubble: Peer-led Research', England





# Borough Profile

# Vibrant and diverse



It is important to set the needs of young people in the context of Westminster as a borough. For the purposes of this research, the youth population has been defined as those aged under 25. This reflects the remit of the Young Westminster Foundation, but it is also based on the belief that a cutoff point of 18 for youth services is somewhat arbitrary and can be unhelpful<sup>8</sup>.

The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is over 20% higher than the London average.

The youth population of Westminster has increased by over 10,000 since 2000. As of 2016 there are over 71,000 young people in Westminster; 28.7% of the population<sup>9</sup>. Since 2011 the ratio of male to female has shifted, with the male population taking a slight lead in numbers<sup>10</sup>. Thinking ahead for the future youth population of Westminster, local infrastructure should anticipate a small but stable increase in its size.

In terms of diversity, 57% of children under 18 are from BAME groups<sup>11</sup> and the proportion of 18-25 year olds that are BAME is higher than the UK population as a whole<sup>12</sup>. More than 2 in 3 pupils in Westminster have a first language other than English<sup>13</sup>. This is much higher than both the London and national averages. The predominant religion is Christianity, but there is also a significant proportion of Muslims as well as Jews, Hindus and Buddhists<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Westminster City Council and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea 2017, 'Health and wellbeing needs of young adults age 18-25 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment', London

<sup>9</sup> Office for National Statistics 2017, 'Mid-year population estimates (MYE) covering each year between 1999 and 2016', England and Wales

<sup>10</sup> Greater London Authority 2016, '2016 based demographic projections', London

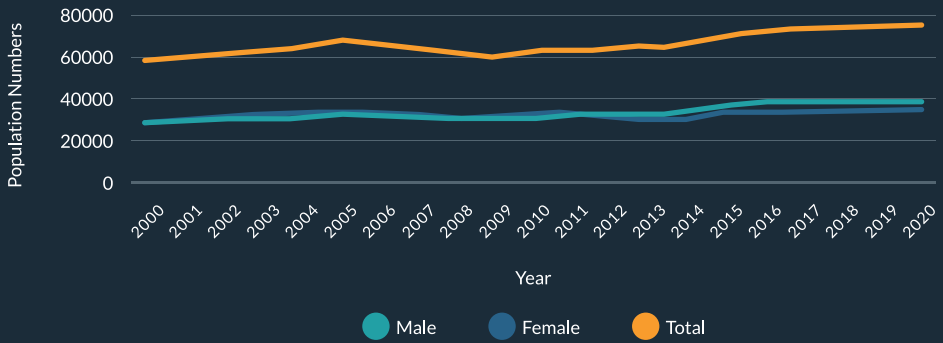
<sup>11</sup> Westminster City Council & Ofsted 2016, 'Inspection of services for children in need of help', London

<sup>12</sup> WCC and RBKC 2017, 'Health and wellbeing needs of young adults 18-25', London

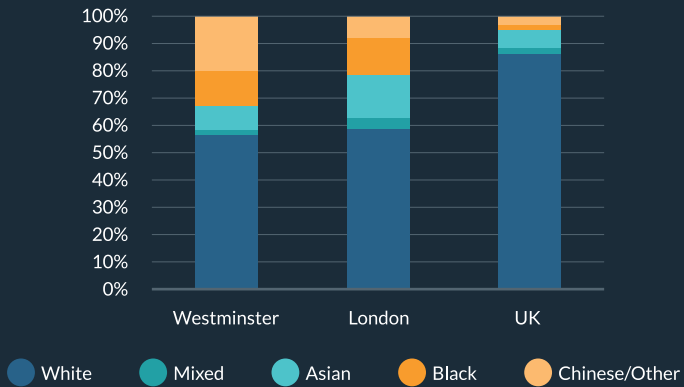
<sup>13</sup> London Datastore 2017, Westminster Borough Atlas

<sup>14</sup> Office for National Statistics 2016, 'Population by religion', England

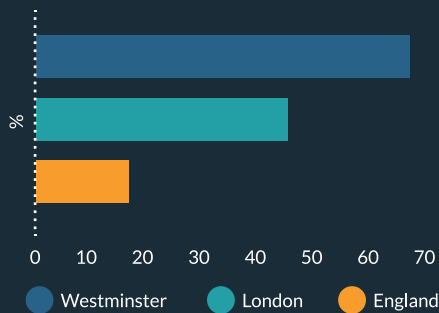
The number of people aged 0-25 is expected to continue rising.



Proportion of different ethnicities.



% of pupils with English as a second language.



# Growing Disparities

Although Westminster is a diverse borough with a growing youth population, it is a borough of two halves.

Westminster contains some of the largest income, wealth and health disparities in a capital city where for every £1 owned by the bottom 10% of households, the top 10% own £172<sup>15</sup>.

Westminster has the 3rd highest level of child poverty in the capital, with 33.7% of children living in poverty<sup>16</sup>. The borough is also home to the wards with highest and lowest rates of child poverty in London. These are **Church Street (50% rate of child poverty)** and Knightsbridge and Belgravia (<5% rate of child poverty)<sup>17</sup>. Westminster has one of the highest rates of Free School Meal eligibility in London; 26.8% compared to the London average of 17%<sup>18</sup>.

Over half of the population claiming benefits in Westminster lives in just one quarter of the borough<sup>19</sup>. Disparities such as these can be found across the capital, where child poverty levels are a third higher than England overall<sup>20</sup>. The housing crisis in the capital is the clearest manifestation of the disparities in wealth<sup>21</sup> and the lack of affordable housing is pricing more and more young people out of the communities their parents grew up in<sup>22</sup>.

1 in 3 children live in poverty.



<sup>15</sup> New Policy Institute 2017, 'London's Poverty Profile', London

<sup>16</sup> London Datastore 2017, Westminster Borough Atlas

<sup>17</sup> HM Revenue and Customs 2016, 'Children in Poverty for Boroughs and wards in London', London

<sup>18</sup> London Datastore 2017, Westminster Borough Atlas

<sup>19</sup> New Policy Institute 2017, 'London's Poverty Profile', London

<sup>20</sup> London Youth 2017, 'Young People's Capital of the World?', London

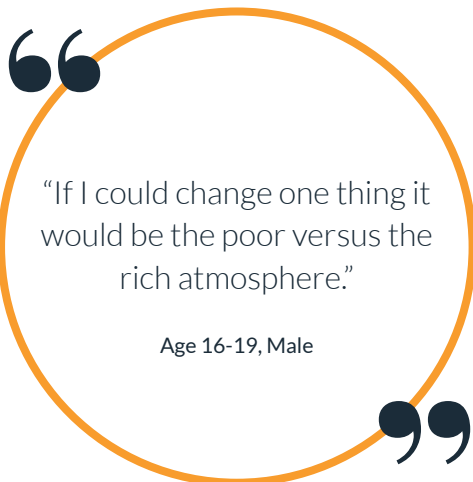
<sup>21</sup> New Policy Institute 2017, 'London's Poverty Profile', London

<sup>22</sup> London Youth 2017, 'Young People's Capital of the World?', London

Almost 1 in 4 (24.9%) children are obese in Westminster.



Although health indicators in Westminster generally depict a healthy population, when it comes to young people there are some acute issues. The proportion of obese children (24.9%) is higher than both London (23.2%) and national (19.8%) averages<sup>23</sup>. The proportion of obese children (24.9%) is higher than both London (23.2%) and national (19.8%) averages<sup>24</sup>. There are signs that this is improving as Westminster has gone from having the 4th highest level of Year 6 obesity in London to the 9th highest of the 32 boroughs.<sup>25</sup>



“If I could change one thing it would be the poor versus the rich atmosphere.”

Age 16-19, Male

Westminster also has higher instances of mental health problems amongst its youth population than its surrounding North London boroughs.

## Shrinking Capacity

These disparities are potentially exacerbated by recent cuts to youth services, which are often key support systems for groups of vulnerable people in low income households. Funding for universal youth club provision across Westminster was withdrawn as of September 2016. This has left a number of youth clubs in a position where they are without council funding, and have had to diversify their income accordingly<sup>26</sup>. These cuts to youth spending were part of the wider council requirement of saving £100 million over 5 years<sup>27</sup>. Cuts to youth provision are not unique to Westminster, and are affecting youth services across London. The London Youth report illustrates that increasing demands on the providers of services for young people to respond to the growing youth population at a time of reduced funding is forcing youth workers to adapt by changing the content and structure of their services<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> London Datastore 2017, Westminster Borough Atlas

<sup>24</sup> Perera, G & Triborough Public Health Intelligence 2015, 'Health Needs of Children in the Three boroughs', London

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> OneWestminster 2017, 'Hanging on for dear life', London

<sup>27</sup> Westminster City Council 2017, 'Review of youth provision', London

<sup>28</sup> London Youth 2017, 'Young People's Capital of the World?', London

# Map

“

## What I like about living in Westminster.

“My favourite thing is meeting and knowing the community.

People are respectful, warmhearted and welcoming.”

Age 16-19, Male

“[The best thing about Westminster] are the youth clubs and fun activities you can do such as treasure hunts”

Age <10, Male

“My favourite thing is the amount of places we are able to visit”

Age 16-19, Male

“There’s quite a bit to do, there are quite a few youth clubs and parks”

Age 11-15, Female

“[My favourite thing about Westminster] is the atmosphere, it is full of life.”

Age 16-19, Female

“Some families are new to the country and obviously their children don’t have friends at the start. The youth club is a good place to make friends”

Age 16-19, Male

“[Westminster is] very central and there is easy access to transport and retail services”

Age 16-19, Female

“There is lots of variety in shops, food and culture”

Age 11-15, Female

”

## What I **dislike** about living in Westminster.

“There’s easy access to drugs and alcohol”

Age 16-19, Female

“[I would change] the police, I feel like I am victimised because I am black”

Age 11-15, Male

“The worst thing about Westminster is crowded housing”

Age 17-18, Male

“You think that having youth clubs help but actually people don’t even walk into them. They’d literally rather stay out.”

Age 16-19, Female

“[My least favourite thing] is the clear divide between the rich and poor, with segregated council flats near rich areas”

Age 16-19, Female

“I worry about pressure from friends to take part in gang activity”

Age 11-15, Male

“I don’t like the teenagers in parks, they can be dangerous”

Primary school student

“[If I could change one thing], it would be to have more places young people can go”

Age 11-15, Female

“Most parks are old, and it’s time they get re-done. It’s a bit dull”

Secondary school student

“If you want to live comfortably, you have to move out of Westminster [it’s too expensive]”

Secondary school student

# Myself:

## Mental health and wellbeing

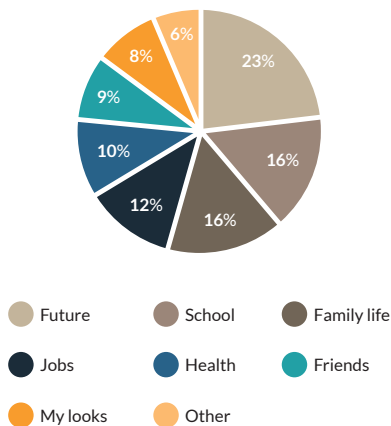
Young people we spoke to were relatively positive about their wellbeing, scoring an average of 4.1 on a level of happiness scale of 1-5

Young people we spoke to were relatively positive about their wellbeing, scoring an average of 4.1 on a level of happiness scale of 1-5. Whilst the average for each ethnic group did not drop below 3.5, there was a 1-point difference between the highest and lowest average scores. **'Black Caribbean' and 'Other Black' young people are more likely to score their happiness lower than other ethnic groups.** Young people worry about a range of issues; most commonly their future (23%), school (16%) and family life (16%).

Although schools have long seen the importance of focusing on pupils' health, there has been a shift in recent years from their physical health needs to their emotional and mental wellbeing. Schools in Westminster are seeing the growing prevalence of mental health issues, particularly anxiety and depression. *"This is not only an issue in Westminster: as 1 in 10 young people in the UK experience mental health problems"<sup>29</sup>.*

Practitioners suggested that these issues have increased in recent years caused by factors such as increased exam stress, online bullying and the growing influence of social media more generally. School counsellors and youth workers believe that increasing the resilience of young people is key to responding to these issues, giving young people the tools to deal with their mental health impacts on other aspects of their life and can help them transition into adulthood more confidently.

What do you worry about?



<sup>29</sup> Westminster Information and Advice Service, 2017  
<http://www.westminsteriass.co.uk/pages/information-and-advice/health-care/mental-health>





Young women in Westminster are three times more likely to suffer from a common mental health disorder than young men<sup>30</sup>.

## Molly: overcrowding, family breakdown, poor health and learning disabilities.

The profile below has been drawn from an interview with a youth worker and is based on a young person whom they work with. Molly is not her real name. Molly is 14 years old and lives in Lisson Grove in a high-rise block. She is one of 6 children who range in age from 7 to 16. She lives in a social rented flat which has 3 bedrooms and shares her bedroom with 2 of her siblings. Her parents have separated and there is a history of domestic violence which has affected her understanding of relationships. The 6 children live with their mother and their only household income is from welfare benefits. Molly has dyslexia and a special educational needs (SEN) statement but is still not receiving the support she needs in school. Molly is also asthmatic and has a high BMI. Molly's anxiety is exacerbated by the risk of the family being moved out of Westminster to Stoke-on-Trent as a consequence of the impact of the introduction of the benefit cap.

<sup>30</sup> WCC and RBKC 2017, 'Health and wellbeing needs of young adults 18-25', London

# Myself: Feeling safe in Westminster

Personal safety is a big issue among young people in Westminster. Almost 1 in 3 young people say they experience occasions when they do not feel safe in the borough.

This is a reflection of Westminster's having the highest crime rate in London, with 193 crimes per 1000 people<sup>31</sup>. "In part, this can be explained by the high crime rates in Westminster's retail and night time economy districts of Oxford Street, Soho and the Strand, which account for a third of all crimes in the borough<sup>32</sup>." The most commonly held fear among young people is gangs (30%) and the threat of being attacked (26%). "These fears reflect the spike in violent crime in London, which has seen a 42% rise in firearms crimes between 2015/16"<sup>33</sup>.

In terms of experiencing crime young people in Westminster are most likely to be victims of mugging (30% of respondents) and knife crime (27%).

When asked where they felt unsafe, many young people specified certain areas in North West Westminster, particularly around Queen's Park and Kilburn. Pimlico in the south of the borough was also perceived by many to be unsafe.

Many commented that an increased police presence did make them feel safer. In an interview with a staff member from the Youth Offending Team, it was stressed that increased points of intervention would have a significant impact on reducing young people's involvement in crime.

In workshops with young people, many of the participants talked about the recent Grenfell fire and the fear that they might experience something similar in their own high-rise block. Another commonly expressed fear was the threat of terrorist attacks, with many young people worrying about their safety when travelling around the borough. As one young person told us, "I feel really unsafe with all the stuff that's going on like the bomb in the tube the other week."

“Everyone in my block is really scared after Grenfell. We don't even have fire extinguishers, we feel really unsafe.”

Secondary School Student

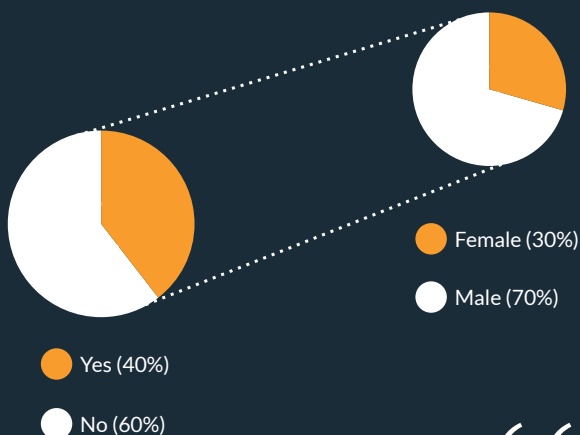
<sup>31</sup> London Datastore 2017, Westminster Borough Atlas

<sup>32</sup> Westminster Police Department 2017, 'Figures for total notifiable crime across Westminster by Ward for 2017'

<sup>33</sup> BBC 12 April 2017, 'Gun crime in London increases by 42%', UK

40% of young people have been the victim of a crime in Westminster or know someone who has.

Have you been a victim of crime, or know someone who has?



“I don't like walking through parks in Westminster, there are lots of teenagers who are drinking. They make me feel unsafe.”

Primary school student

“Crime is a big issue in Westminster. My friend is scared of leaving his house because he's scared of being stabbed”

Secondary School Student

# My community: Drugs and alcohol

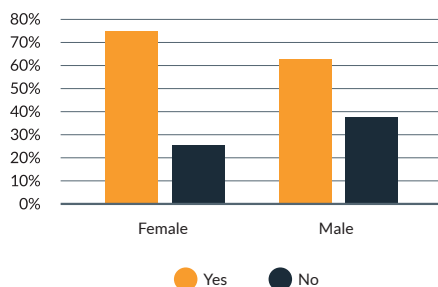
Drugs and alcohol emerged as another key issue for young people in Westminster.

Over two thirds of those surveyed consider drugs and alcohol to be a problem in their community, with young women noticeably more likely to voice this concern. This issue is perceived to be more prevalent in particular areas of the borough such as the Harrow Road and Church Street. The most common reason for taking drugs or alcohol is fun (24%), but this is closely followed by stress (20%) and peer pressure (15%).

One practitioner who supports young people with substance misuse issues emphasised that although drug use is declining among all age groups, there is growing use among certain young people who often have complex needs. Skunk is quite prevalent locally compared to other drugs. Drugs can have a cultural as well as health impact on young people, encouraging drug dealing and associated behaviour, which can affect their emotional wellbeing and progress in school. Youth workers identified drug dealing, particularly cannabis, as central to understanding much of the gang activity and crime in Westminster.

Practitioners also point to different groups in Westminster who have complex, and sometimes hidden need. This includes difficulty in accessing wealthier young people who misuse drugs or alcohol in the borough. As they tend not to be in contact with social services, these young people often do not receive the support they need until it is too late. Young women were noted to be vulnerable to the use of stimulant drugs, such as cocaine, and its link to sex work. This need is often hidden owing to the stigma surrounding sex work and the shame that these vulnerable young women are likely to feel in coming forward for help.

Are drugs and alcohol an issue in your community?



## My community: Local services

Young people are fairly satisfied with the quality of their local services, with a high satisfaction score out of 4. Parks and sports centres are the most popular, with most young people surveyed using them every week.

However, there are several barriers which prevent young people from accessing the local services they need. The biggest barrier they face is a lack of availability. Price is the second biggest barrier, with 17% stating they couldn't do something because it was too expensive.

When asked where they go to for advice about issues that worry them, **over 90% of young people said they do access some form of support**. However, almost **40% of young people go to their family for advice** as opposed to using independent advice, or professional support services.

Youth practitioners identified these three issues as the main barriers for young people accessing services in Westminster. This echoes young people's own experiences. Cuts to funding and the shift from grants to commissioning has led to closures and weakened the capacity of local youth service providers<sup>34</sup>. In spite of the Summer in the City provision funded by WCC, there is particularly a lack of provision for younger children in primary schools and for all age groups during summer holidays. As one stakeholder said, *"this is a big issue in the borough as young people have a lot of free time over the summer"*.

"[Youth clubs] bring children together, create something fun for them to do, learn life skills, create aspirations and out of home support."

Age 16-19, Female

Young people rated their local services 2.9 out of 4 for satisfaction.

<sup>34</sup> OneWestminster 2017, 'Hanging on for dear life', London

1 out of 3 young people wanted to access a service but couldn't due to the service not being available.

Lack of knowledge or awareness is another barrier to accessing local services. Many young people and their parents do not know what is happening in the borough in terms of extra-curricular youth provision and services. Moreover, parents feeling the societal pressure to ensure their children's educational attainment, may not understand the value that extra-curricular activities can add to their children's lives (or their attractiveness to employers).

Stakeholders identified a range of personal barriers which can also prevent young people from accessing youth services. These range from a lack of confidence to the perceived embarrassment and stigma associated with asking for help and support. Youth practitioners also referred to some young people's low cognitive ability which can affect their ability to find out about services in Westminster. This is particularly the case for young people who have Special Educational Needs (SEN), such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.



“With the loss of grant funding a lot of the youth centres in the borough have been struggling.”

Youth practitioner



Nourhan Meddah:

Nourhan, aged 16, was one of the peer researchers employed over the summer, and interviewed young people across Westminster. She is currently a student in Westminster, and someday hopes to work at a newspaper or a charity. Wanting to learn about the different experiences of young people in Westminster, the problems some of her peers faced, as well as the things they love about the borough, is what drew her to becoming a peer researcher. *“I felt we were being listened to this time and I honestly believe that this research and the YWF will make a massive difference to the lives of young people”.* Before becoming a peer researcher Nourhan worked at the Iranian Association, which gave her an insight into community work and the value it can have. She has learnt that although young people are generally happy in Westminster, some feel there is not much to do in the borough and not all young people feel safe. *“I hope this research will be used to enhance the experiences of young people in Westminster and help young people from all walks of life reach their full potential”.*

Key barriers to services:

- Lack of provision
- Lack of knowledge/understanding
- Personal issues

“

“We need to communicate with parents so that they can see the value of youth services – what can this service do for their child?”

Youth practitioner

”

“

“Youth clubs are for naughty kids, my parents won't let me go”

Secondary school student

”

## Susan: caring responsibilities, behavioural issues and isolation

The profile below has been drawn from an interview with a youth worker and is based on a young person whom they work with. Susan is not her real name. Susan is an 11 year old girl who lives in a 2 bedroom social rented flat. She lives with both of her parents and her three siblings, all of whom are younger brothers. Susan has caring responsibilities for her siblings as her parents both work part-time. Susan has behavioural issues and struggles with a lack of sleep because of having to share with her three brothers. Her behavioural issues have not yet been diagnosed so she is not receiving the support she needs in school. Her caring responsibilities mean that Susan is not allowed out after school to any clubs or activities. She feels isolated and suffers from mental health issues exacerbated by her lack of personal space. She is about to start secondary school and feels very worried about this transition

## My community: Environment

Asked what they would change about Westminster if they could, over 20% of young people said they would tackle the problem of “pollution/litter” in the borough.

This was the most popular answer from young people, with a typical comment observing “pollution and the general appearance [of the borough] looks quite depressing”.

This level of environmental awareness may reflect the fact that **Westminster is home to 6 out of the 10 most polluted primary schools** and 3 out of the 10 most polluted secondary schools in the capital<sup>35</sup>. Additionally, Westminster has 22% green space coverage, which is 9% less than the London average<sup>36</sup>.

“[Air pollution] I think it’s because we’re in London, we are used to the air. We only notice when we’re outside of London that the air is actually very bad”

Secondary school student

<sup>35</sup> The Guardian 1st July 2016, ‘Children at nearly 90 London secondary schools exposed to dangerous air pollution’

<sup>36</sup> Greater London Authority 2013, ‘Better environment, better health’, London





## George: hidden needs, pressure at school and mental health issues

The profile below has been drawn from an interview with a youth worker and is based on a young person whom they work with. George is not his real name. George is a 17 year old boy who is of Albanian origin and lives with both of his parents and two siblings in a privately-owned house. The family live close to Millbank and both of his parents are in full-time employment. Although on the surface George seems to be coping well with school, as his A-levels approach he is feeling increasingly stressed and anxious. The academic expectations on him from his school and parents are very high. George's needs are not very obvious which means that he is not receiving the support he needs. Another barrier for George is the stigma he associates with asking for and accessing support.

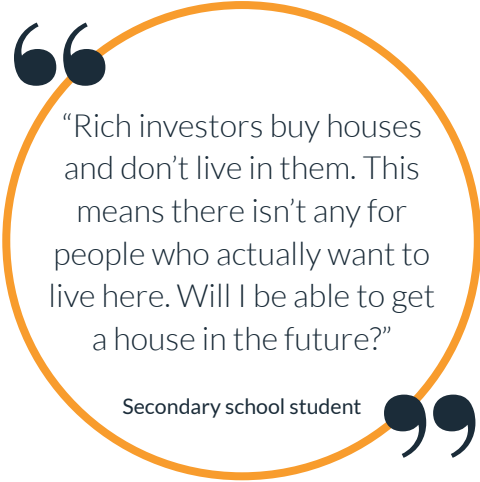
## My future: Housing

Housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable across London, and the housing crisis is particularly acute in Westminster.

It is the 2nd most unaffordable borough in London for renting, with lower quartile rent for a 2-bed property costing more than the lower quartile earnings. Additionally, the number of social or affordable housing completed in the borough since 2013 is the 5th lowest in London<sup>37</sup>.

Many young people recognise that they are lucky to be living in central London with their parents. However, there is a widespread fear that they will not be able to afford to live independently in the capital. As one secondary school student told us, *“We won’t be able to buy our own house. We will have to move out of London.”*

One Headteacher confirmed that several families with young children in her school live under constant anxiety of losing their homes owing to the benefit cap. Primary school children whose families have already moved out to Essex to find cheaper housing are now spending up to 3 hours every day travelling to school and back which is having a detrimental effect on their health and wellbeing.



“Rich investors buy houses and don’t live in them. This means there isn’t any for people who actually want to live here. Will I be able to get a house in the future?”

Secondary school student

<sup>37</sup> New Policy Institute 2017, 'London's Poverty Profile', London



“

“More and more people are getting evicted because they can't afford to live in Westminster anymore.”

Secondary school student

”

“

“The biggest problem with housing is the overcrowding, some of us live with too many people in one small house.”

Secondary school student

”

# My future: Jobs, further education and aspirations

Westminster has low levels of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET): only 1.7%, compared to the London (3.1%) and national (4.2%) averages<sup>36</sup>.

The gap in educational attainment between Free School Meals (FSM) and non-FSM pupils is also less than 10%; almost half the London average of 19%<sup>37</sup>. Westminster's young people are highly aspirational when they were asked where they wanted to be in five years, with many expressing plans to go to university and start a career.

In spite of Westminster having the highest rates of social mobility in the country<sup>38</sup>, a significant number of young people are acutely worried about their future (23% of those surveyed), with job prospects being a key concern. This echoes recent national findings, that young people feel increasingly out of control of their future<sup>39</sup>.

In terms of future opportunities available to them, 49% of young people are only 'slightly aware' of opportunities in Westminster, whilst many were 'not at all aware'. Similarly, 20% of the young people we surveyed do not get any careers advice; most of those who do (60%) receive their careers advice from school.

Apprenticeship uptake in Westminster has decreased by 28% since 2011. This decrease is almost five times higher than the decrease in London (6%) and higher than the neighboring boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea (18%) and Hammersmith and Fulham (18%)<sup>40</sup>.

Youth practitioners emphasised that although NEET rates are low, the needs of the population that is NEET are growing more complex and are exacerbated by growing issues around mental health and exclusion from school.



<sup>36</sup> London Datastore 2017, Westminster Borough Atlas

<sup>37</sup> New Policy Institute 2017, 'London's Poverty Profile', London

<sup>38</sup> Social Mobility Commission 2017, 'State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain'

<sup>39</sup> Prince's Trust and Macquarie 2017, 'Prince's Trust and Macquarie Youth Index 2017', UK

<sup>40</sup> Department for Education 2017, 'Data on the uptake of Apprenticeships by LAA', England

Over 1 in 3 young people said they were 'not at all likely' to apply for an apprenticeship. 45% of them believe that it is not as good as going to university.



Hamza Taouzzale:

Hamza, 18, was employed as an intern by the YWF over the summer of 2017. He supported the coordination and management of the peer researchers, and carried out interviews with young people across Westminster. He is now studying politics at Goldsmiths University, and plans to run for election to Westminster City Council in May 2018. The opportunity to make a difference in Westminster, the community where he grew up, was his main motivation for getting involved in the YWF's Needs Analysis. *"The chance of continuing to help young people was too appealing, and I knew I was helping a good cause".*

Hamza previously served as the Youth MP for Westminster, giving him an insight into the issues young people face day to day, as well as access to Council leaders. He was most surprised about the level of anxiety about crime that young people expressed. *"I hope this research will justify investments made to the Foundation which can directly help young people. I really believe the Foundation can help change lives and make a positive difference to everyone".*

## Talal: learning difficulties, NEET and gang affiliation

The profile below has been drawn from an interview with a youth worker and is based on a young person whom they work with. Talal is not his real name.

Talal is an 18 year old boy of Kurdish origin who lives in a 2 bedroom flat on Church Street. He lives with both his parents and 5 siblings, one of whom has severe SEN. Talal is a young carer with caring responsibilities for his younger siblings. Talal himself has learning difficulties which have affected his education. He has no formal qualifications and is currently not in education, employment or training (NEET). He receives Job Seekers' Allowance, but this will be affected by benefit changes. He doesn't understand the impact that these will have on him owing to difficulties understanding technical language. Talal is very isolated and seeks belonging by affiliating with gangs. Talal is experiencing mental health issues and emotional distress, in part because of the relationship breakdown between his parents.



1 in 5 young people said they are 'not at all aware' of the opportunities in the borough.

# How can the YWF play a role?

This research into the needs of young people in the City of Westminster will provide the Young Westminster Foundation with the basis of its first action plan. The Foundation intends to use the findings to determine how and where it focuses and prioritises its own project work, and where it can best engage and join partners in the design and delivery of services for young people across Westminster.

## The priority issues

### 1. **Crime and safety**

A significant issue for young people, especially personal safety and gang activity. The YWF has a role to play in raising awareness and enabling diversionary activities, delivered in partnership with local schools and youth clubs. The Safer Westminster Partnership already exists to tackle four key aspects of crime in Westminster: reducing violence against women and girls; tackling youth crime; combatting Anti-Social Behaviour, and countering terrorism and radicalization. The YWF can work with the Safer Westminster Partnership on youth-related crime in Westminster, building on the Foundation's work on the 'Together Tackling Knife Crime' partnership board, led by the Met Police and the Integrated Gangs Unit. There are also opportunities to promote the London Needs You Alive Campaign (led by the Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime). The more intervention points there are for young people at risk of being involved in crime, the more their propensity to engage in criminal activity will reduce.

### 2. **The Local Environment**

Young people are increasingly concerned about poor air quality in Westminster and the impact this has on their long-term health. Working with local partners, such as the Cross River Partnership which coordinates a range of local environmental measures delivered by Westminster's Business Improvement Districts, the Foundation can promote and encourage young people-led initiatives to contribute to the further 'greening' of the borough. The Foundation can provide a link between local actions and city-wide programmes and investment, such as the GLA's £9 million Greener City Fund for improving green spaces in London.

### 3. Health and Wellbeing

The Foundation can support efforts locally, in schools and youth clubs, to raise awareness of the health and wellbeing of Westminster's young people. Obesity rates are particularly high among Westminster's pre-teens, as are the case loads of young people with poor mental health.

There are opportunities for the YWF to collaborate with the Public Health Department on the transformation of the local Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Drug and alcohol misuse is a problem for stakeholders and young people themselves, but can be hidden among certain groups, or is symptomatic of those with multiple, complex needs. The Foundation can promote greater awareness of local services, as a lack of knowledge of what support is available is a clear message emerging from this report. The YWF is already contributing to the work of partnerships such as the Active Westminster Partnership and the Early Help Board which provide opportunities to collaborate with partners on preventative measures around healthier living and, for example, tackling the consequences for young people of their living with domestic violence.



### 4. Accessing Opportunities

Westminster can claim to have the best cultural and recreational offer in London; it also has over four times the number of jobs per resident population of working age than the London average. However, for one of the wealthiest areas of the capital genuinely to be a "City for All," such opportunities need to be affordable and within reach. Young people locally should be better informed about routes into the many industries on their doorstep, including via work placements and apprenticeships. Too many of Westminster's young people are either unaware of or unable to access the opportunities it has to offer and have negative perceptions of vocational education. YWF has a role to play in raising awareness of what the borough can offer its young people, increasing their use of its assets and enabling their contribution to the richness and diversity of life in Westminster.

# How can the YWF play a role?

## Ways of working

### i. **Maintain and regularly update an assessment of young Westminster's needs**

There is a need to reach out more to the most disadvantaged and socially-detached young people. So-called harder-to-reach groups include young offenders, looked after children, care leavers, Muslim girls, people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Part of the YWF's remit is to ensure there is provision for all groups of young people in Westminster. Maintaining an up-to-date profile of need across the borough will enable local youth services to prioritise and target their services where they are most required.

### ii. **Retain a cadre of fully-trained young peer researchers**

Young ambassadors can grow and sustain the work of the Foundation through research, awareness raising and fundraising support. They will give the Foundation insights into the lives of the very young people it is committed to supporting. The YWF will develop connections with the members of other Young People's Foundations, the Greater London Authority's youth ambassadors, as well as the local Youth Parliament to nurture and develop a future generation of London's civic leaders.

### iii. **Support the youth sector to come together**

Youth workers consulted during this research noted that it was the first time in a long time they had an opportunity to meet and network. There are several smaller networks within the borough, but none that is representative of the wider children's and young people's sector, including youth clubs. The YWF can help overcome this fragmentation, supporting practitioners by hosting social events, making introductions between people in the sector and enabling the pooling and sharing of resources between member organisations.

### iv. **Act as a bridge between different organisations and sectors**

The need for the YWF to act as a voice of its members and work with youth organisations to collaborate with strategic partners, including Children's Centres, Family Hubs, the NHS, colleges, universities, the police and key local authority teams is key to supporting all aspects of young people's lives in Westminster. The YWF can represent its membership base with regional partners, including London Youth, the Greater London Authority and the Partnership for Young London.



By working with other local initiatives such as One EBP, a tri-borough education and business partnership, YWF can help promote a programme of structured work experience for young people to gain skills and experience in their transition from education into work. The YWF's brokering of relationships between primary and secondary schools and local services can help to address young people's anxiety regarding their lives and futures both outside and beyond education.

v. **Develop and implement a campaign to promote the importance and value of youth clubs and extra-curricular activities**

This can act to counter the perception, expressed in our business and youth professional focus groups, of the increasingly narrow focus on in-school attainment, and exam-based learning. There is a need for youth clubs to reinvent themselves and join forces to promote themselves to schools, young people and families. The YWF can be instrumental in facilitating this by acting as a voice and representative of the sector to local stakeholders and potential funders.

vi. **Broker applications to external funders**

This is a key role for the YWF, and one of the main recommendations to emerge from engagement with youth clubs across the borough. The YWF could follow the example of the Young Brent Foundation, which helped form an 18-strong consortium to broker funding from the National Citizenship Service Trust for youth provision in Brent. There is potential for the YWF to act as a facilitator for partnership funding applications from statutory sources, including the Mayor's Office for

Policing and Crime (MOPAC), The Home Office and local Clinical Commissioning Groups. The YWF can support local youth organisations, which face reductions in statutory funding at a time of spiraling and increasingly complex needs, to fundraise from non-statutory sources including major funders such as Big Lottery Fund and Comic Relief, as well as exploring leveraging funds from High Net Worth Individuals. There is also opportunity for sub-regional collaboration with the other YPFs to establish a network of support, enable more integrated provision and access funding across London.

vii. **Provide a conduit for Westminster's business community**

Representatives from the local business community, both large PLCs and local SMEs, have shown a keen interest in social mobility, diversity and vocational pathways into employment. The YWF offers a structure to broker relationships between the business community and other children's and young people's services. This can build on the impetus provided by the Council's new corporate social responsibility strategy, Westminster Lions, focused on helping small to medium-sized businesses develop their CSR, as well as maximizing the social value commitments from Council and other statutory sector contractors in Westminster. Focus groups with local employers identified that they increasingly look beyond exam grades to seek out well-rounded individuals who participate in extra-curricular activities. The YWF can facilitate the collaboration of youth clubs and businesses, to provide opportunities for young people to pursue wider interests which at the same time enhance their employability.

# Thank you.

The Young Westminster Foundation is grateful to the following organisations and individuals who contributed to the findings of the *City within a City* report.

## Organisations

Amberley Youth Club  
Avenues Youth Project  
Berwin Leighton Paisner  
Cardinal Hume Centre  
Caxton Youth  
Churchill Gardens  
City West Homes  
DreamArts  
Fourth Feathers Youth Club  
Gateway Academy  
Health Education Partnership  
Heart of the City  
Integrated Gangs Unit  
John Lewis Partnership  
King Solomon Academy  
LandSec  
London Sports Trust  
Marylebone Bangladeshi Society

North Paddington Youth Club  
Octavia Foundation  
One Westminster  
Capital Arches Group/ McDonald's  
Paddington Development Trust  
Peabody Housing  
Pimlico Academy  
PWC Foundation  
Rocket Science  
St Andrew's Youth Club  
Street Games  
Turning Point  
Westbourne Park Family Centre  
Westminster Academy  
Westminster City Council  
Westminster Kingsway College  
Westminster Libraries  
Working With Men  
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Thank  
you



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