

## **New *Our City, Our Future* report finds that despite a challenging year, young people in Westminster are optimistic for their future**

- 96% of young people interviewed took part in a form of social action in the past six months. However, fewer than 1 in 10 feel they can greatly influence change in relation to the social and political issues they care about
- Findings indicates huge worries for young people around their mental health, body image, exam pressure and future employability
- Youth workers have provided a life line for young people during Covid-19, with 95% of young people reported feeling supported by their youth club during the pandemic
- Young Westminster Foundation urges the Westminster community to involve young people in decision making as London emerges from lockdown

**City of Westminster, London, March 16<sup>th</sup> 2021:** Young Westminster Foundation (YWF) today launches a new report into the experiences of young people growing up in Westminster over the past year. *Our City, Our Future* trained a group of 10 local young people as peer researchers to conduct the study, in addition to hearing from youth workers and practitioners through a series of online focus groups.

Working in partnership with research specialists Rocket Science, Partnership for Young London and King's College London, YWF hopes the findings serve as a tool for the wider Westminster community to collaborate, act together and to open up conversations about the needs of young people. This work brings together YWF's 100+ member organisations, business partners, Westminster City Council, the Metropolitan Police and NHS. The Foundation believes that youth voice should be at the centre of decision making. Their goal is to identify and address the challenges faced by young people today, all the while ensuring that they are truly at the heart of the conversation.

“Coming out of this pandemic the world will be a different place and our future lies with young people” said CEO Phil Barron. “The need for YWF and the youth sector to adapt is more important than ever. It is incumbent upon us all to continue to provide spaces to listen and respond to the needs of young people. The need for youth services has never been so acute”.

The emerging data reveals several major areas of concern for young people – particularly around employment, mental health and wellbeing and access to information on local services. There is a hidden need in Westminster, with 1 in 3 young people growing up in poverty in the borough. The report found that Covid-19 has further exacerbated social and economic inequalities in Westminster; in terms of poverty, access to food, poor living conditions, isolation, physical and mental health and access to education.

There are several practical responses to this emergency outlined in the ‘calls to action’ including greater collaboration between schools, youth organisations, Early Help and businesses.



YWF has been able to respond in real time to some of the initial findings of the research, for example through the Digital Futures Project, providing over 1800 laptops for disadvantaged families facing digital exclusion.

Despite the challenges faced by young people over the past year, the report highlights an optimism and enthusiasm to fight for a better future. Interviewees commented, "I hope that more people will be willing to help each other out and show compassion to each other" and "I'd like to see our community coming together by finding new ways of collaborating and working together".

As part of the recommendations, the Foundation has committed to conduct a peer researched needs analysis every 3 years in order to regularly understand the changing needs of young Londoners.

Young Westminister Foundation would like to thank all those who contributed to the research and the funders who have invested in this important piece of work for the Westminister community, in particular the Westminister Foundation and the Kusuma Trust.

The Duke of Westminister, Chair of the Westminister Foundation which co-funded this research said: "We must properly understand young people's needs if communities are to thrive again after the pandemic. That requires listening, learning and in some instances changing the approach to youth services. This excellent report by the Young Westminister Foundation not only highlights the topics where support is most needed but proves that young people actively want to be part of the decision-making and solutions. They have powerful opinions formed through personal experiences. It's important we listen to them."

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**ABOUT YOUNG WESTMINSTER FOUNDATION**

Young Westminister Foundation brings together youth organisations, young people, businesses, Westminister City Council, schools and the wider community to shape opportunities and create the best services for young people in Westminister, London. Together, the YWF community shares a vision for all young people in Westminister to grow up healthy, safe, and happy with the best opportunities for brighter futures. YWF's 100+ members range from large youth clubs to smaller grass roots organisations; all driven by their passion to provide the best services,



Young  
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Foundation



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London



opportunities and support for local young people. YWF is part of the growing network of Young People's Foundations (YPFs), established & funded by [John Lyon's Charity](#). YPFs bring together the public, private and voluntary sectors to effect positive change for young people within local communities.

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