Young People’s Capital of the World?

Understanding and responding to young Londoners’ changing needs

In partnership with
London has one of the most diverse populations of children and young people in the world, and almost a quarter of all Londoners are under 25. If our capital city is to meet some of the big challenges we all face—a population that is rapidly growing and changing, increased pressure on housing, infrastructure, and public services; and the uncertainties of the post-Brexit economy—then these young people must be seen as a vital asset to the capital now and into the future.

Young people see and feel the challenges, sometimes even more so than other parts of London’s population. Yet at the same time, many remain positive about the opportunities that exist within a city that is characterised by its openness, dynamism, enterprise and integration. If we are to collectively make the most of these opportunities, we need to harness their talents and support them to take advantage of what this truly global city has to offer them.

We want this report to be an important step in giving young voices a place, and offering solutions to help the Mayor, local authorities, funders and providers of services to engage them and respond to their needs so they can truly shape London’s future. The report takes an in-depth look at the needs of young people in five London boroughs: Barking & Dagenham, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Waltham Forest. These are all boroughs which themselves have had to adapt to many of the challenges and changes London is feeling most acutely—and our report considers how the support and opportunities offered to young people have evolved in this context.

We have explicitly focused on what is available to young people, aged 11-25, outside of school and as they start out in their careers. For the majority of young Londoners, schools have improved markedly in recent years and results in London outstrip the rest of the country. But young people spend much of their lives outside of school, and there is a growing recognition that access to opportunities, support and opportunities to learn and have fun outside the classroom—including opportunities to participate in sport, the arts, and community projects, as well as more specialised services for young people with specific needs—is just as important to their development and their ability to make a successful transition to adulthood.

The findings of this research provide rich insights into London’s young people and we have drawn together their different viewpoints and experiences to make a series of recommendations for strengthening and developing provision for young Londoners. Throughout the report, there are quotes and comments from young people. These are drawn direct from our research, and also from conversations with professionals who work with those young people. These combine to add specific insights to the local experience of the emerging trends. From all of this analysis, we make a series of recommendations for the future.

A young person taking part in our research told us that London is the capital of the world—we’ve borrowed these words for the report’s title. But for this to be true we need to make sure that the opportunities that we offer young people are world class. This is within our gift and what the young people of London deserve. And I believe that despite the challenges London faces, we have a huge opportunity, and a Mayor whose own vision for London feels very much in line with what the young people we have spoken to have told us.

So whether you are reading this as a representative of a local authority, a funder, an employer, an infrastructure body like London Youth, or as an engaged citizen, we hope that the challenges facing those in disadvantage should be interested in reading this report. For London feels very much in line with what the young people of London deserve. And I believe that despite the challenges London faces, we have a huge opportunity, and a Mayor whose own vision for London feels very much in line with what the young people we have spoken to have told us.

So whether you are reading this as a representative of a local authority, a funder, an employer, an infrastructure body like London Youth, or as an engaged citizen, we hope that the learning and recommendations from this report go some way to showing how we can be the best city in the world for young people to grow up in.

We would like to thank UBS for generously supporting this research project, to Centre for London for carrying out the research that underpins the report, and to our team of Peer Researchers who brought to life what it means to be a young person in London today.

Rosemary Watt-Wyness
Chief Executive, London Youth

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Foreword

This is an important and significant report. London is changing fast and many of its young people face challenging futures. As the report itself makes clear, the range of challenges is significant, the magnitude great and the likelihood they will continue for some time, high. When the present and likely future constraints upon the public finances are also put into the mix, the urgency and relevance of this report is only further enhanced.

UBS has a long history of investing in its communities, particularly so as to help equalise opportunities and develop skills for those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. The geographical focus of our work and partnerships for the last 30+ years has been overwhelmingly on the London Borough of Hackney, one of the areas of focus and research for this report. Given our own priorities and experience, it is no accident that we partner London Youth or take an especial interest in this report. Everyone who works towards the betterment of opportunities for London’s talented young population, who seeks to create an environment that genuinely provides joined-up resources and solutions for the challenges facing those in disadvantage should be interested in reading this report.

Nick Wright
Managing Director, Global & EMEA Community Affairs, UBS

To make progress we need to understand the need; base our work in evidence and take account of the voice of London’s youth itself. This report and what lies behind it gives assistance to all these endeavours.

Finally, perhaps as never before, we need to harness the creativity, the energy, the thinking of all sectors of London’s dynamic society if we are to build a city worthy of London’s youth. To mangle Churchill: give them the tools, and opportunities and they will surely do the job. But it will require the public, voluntary, social enterprise and private sectors to work together and help organisations navigate the broader ecosystem in order to do so. This report is one step in making this happen.

At UBS and London Youth we hope this report helps many on this shared journey and look forward to receiving feedback on the report and its recommendations as to how we build a brighter future for London’s young people.
London has one of the most vibrant, diverse and exciting populations of children and young people in the world. More than 300 languages are spoken within Greater London and it is also a cultural capital and the world’s most visited city. London is an economic powerhouse too, as one of the world’s leading financial centres with one of the largest metropolitan GDPs of any city, dwarfing others in Britain.

During its pre-eminence as a leading global city, London’s young people face significant challenges. Poverty and inequality are worse here than anywhere else in the UK. Obesity, wellbeing and mental health concerns are significant challenges for young Londoners. Housing costs have rocketed in the capital, leaving many living in poor, overcrowded conditions. And local authority funding for young people’s services has been massively reduced. But despite all this, there are many positives and significant opportunities: London’s economy continues to grow; schools have improved hugely, including for young people from the poorest families; the breadth and range of the capital’s cultural offer and its growing prominence as a hub for new technology will all mean there are new chances for young people. Politically, despite the huge uncertainty post-Brexit, the new Mayor has declared that ‘London is Open’; that social integration – and the community infrastructure to support it – are key policy aims; despite funding pressures, local authorities are working imaginatively to regenerate and improve communities; grant makers and other funders are exploring new ways to collaborate and empower communities; and civil society and technology are creating new openings for young people to exploit.

London Youth, as a network of almost 300 community-based organisations working with young people across London, wanted to understand how these significant changes and pressures were affecting young people; and specifically how particular areas and communities within the capital could best respond, so that all young Londoners can take advantage of what this great city has to offer.

**OUR REPORT**

This report takes an in-depth look at the needs of young people in five London boroughs – Barking & Dagenham, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Waltham Forest – and considers how young people's needs have changed, and are continuing to change, in these areas. These boroughs face all of the challenges – in some cases acutely – that other parts of London face; but each offers a slightly different perspective from which to try and understand how young people's needs have changed, and be supported to succeed. The aim was not to critique or ‘judge’ the quality of provision for young people in these boroughs. Rather, London Youth wanted to understand the different responses to these changes and offer some recommendations for all London stakeholders to help them better support young people.

Crucially, this report has been driven and informed by interviews with young people to understand their experiences and aspirations. We also conducted in-depth focus groups with practitioners, local authority leads and other stakeholders to get an insight into the sector and the needs of young people they support. The report has an explicit focus on what is available to young people outside of school and considers the services, support and opportunities that are available to young people to learn and have fun beyond the classroom. Its findings have relevance within each of the five boroughs but, more significantly, gives us learning that will shape how young people experience the whole of what London has to offer.

**WHAT WE FOUND**

Our research identified a number of key trends and issues affecting young Londoners.

- **London’s youth population is changing:** London’s youth population is growing at an almost unprecedented rate and the geography of households with children is changing. There is increased ethnic diversity amongst the youth population. Young Londoners recognise the impact of these changes within their own communities, and see the need for providers of services and opportunities for young people to respond effectively.

- **A need to ensure that London works for all:** London is an extraordinary but expensive city. Child poverty levels are a third higher than in England overall. Young people and practitioners are hugely concerned about the lack of affordable housing. Even in areas which may be perceived as relatively “more affordable” such as Enfield or Barking & Dagenham, this was felt just as strongly.

- **The changing face of London communities:** Young people are acutely aware of disparities in wealth across their boroughs and the impact of regeneration on the areas in which they live, including what this might mean for their ability to continue to live in the communities where they have grown up. They want their communities to offer new opportunities, but are anxious about whether they can afford to take them. In parts of outer London, young people feel disconnected from other parts of the capital by geography; in other areas, safety is a concern, making even local travel a challenge.

- **The health concerns of young Londoners and youth professionals:** The health outcomes of children growing up in London reflect the high levels of poverty and health inequalities that exist here. Youth professionals told us of their concerns around young people’s mental health and obesity levels. Even though the focus boroughs contain many areas of parkland, young people nevertheless raised concerns about pollution, air quality and access to open spaces.

- **Barriers to young people achieving their aspirations:** Although London schools have shown remarkable improvement over the last 15 years, rates of young people not in education, employment or training have remained persistently high. Young people in all the boroughs had high aspirations; and could see opportunities, but in too many places they felt that existing support was aimed only at those with specific needs. Practitioners reported difficulties with supporting young people to transition to work and expressed concerns about young people developing a sense of identity, thought to be exacerbated by the pressures of social media.
Adapting to local authority cuts
Throughout our research there was a clear narrative that significant reductions in local authority funding and state-led provision for youth services have left the youth sector radically altered, and this picture is true for each of the five focus boroughs.

Despite significant cuts in youth service budgets in each area, the focus boroughs we looked at have taken different approaches – with a strong direct role for the local authority maintained in Hackney, versus an overtly more facilitative role in other boroughs. The youth voluntary sector is facing challenges to adapt – but in many cases continues to innovate and develop new and high quality opportunities. There is a passionate and determined workforce that has responded to the changes by taking on new roles, developing new models, and there has been a renewed emphasis on partnership-working – although links with businesses and the private sector are variable.

New provision is being planned in some boroughs and infrastructure organisations, such as the Young People’s Foundations, are also emerging to coordinate efforts within particular geographical areas. In some cases there is new investment and bringing with it state of the art facilities like the forthcoming OnSide Youth Zone in Barking & Dagenham.

There has been a shift from universal to more targeted provision, focusing on the young people who are perceived to have the highest needs. This has led to a lack of early help for young people and fewer opportunities for young people to engage in positive activities with peers. Funding is typically short-term and project specific, affecting the consistency of service provision. Fundraising remains a challenge for many organisations.

In this confusing and changing landscape, it is no surprise that young people, in some instances, reported a lack of awareness of what was available in their local area and negative connotations associated with youth centres due to their focus on targeted work.

Some specific differences across the focus boroughs
Many of these trends identified through the research were consistent across the five focus boroughs. However, specific differences arose in relation to:

- The extent to which demographic changes have, and are continuing to affect, the five boroughs: this has implications for the demand on services, and the type and range of services that youth organisations need to provide within the community.

- The employment opportunities that exist within each borough, and the relative strength of the local business and private sector, were found to differ: young people and practitioners spoke in quite different terms about the extent to which they felt there were meaningful opportunities for them in their local area, and the ease with which they could access them, depending on which borough they were from.

- The strength and breadth of the local voluntary sector, and the overall mix of local authority provided or commissioned services for young people: local authorities in all our focus boroughs have had to adopt new strategies to support young people in light of reduced funding. Some have continued to provide a fairly comprehensive youth offer whilst others have taken on a more facilitative role.

- The extent to which young people felt connected to and able to access other parts of London: young people did not always see themselves as living in London and practitioners reported that young people in some areas tended to stay within their ward or borough, affecting their ability to engage in all that London has to offer.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
Many of the issues highlighted through the research do not have simple solutions. However, we believe that we can do better for young Londoners in how we fund, plan, and deliver services for young people. We have deliberately not offered specific recommendations for any of the individual boroughs and many of the findings are applicable elsewhere in London. We believe there is a clear willingness across each borough to look for creative and sustainable ways of supporting young people, and hope they will use our findings and conclusions to engage local young people and the voluntary sector to create the solutions that are right for each local area.

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1 By infrastructure organisations, we are referring to youth organisations that aim to support and build capacity within the youth sector rather than provide services to young people directly.

2 Throughout the report, we use the terms “universal” and “targeted provision”. We consider “universal” (or open access) provision to be services that are open to all young people, regardless of their circumstances or perceived vulnerability. Such provision would include a range of leisure, cultural, sporting and enrichment activities. In contrast, “targeted provision” are services providing support for young people with specific needs, including but not limited to those at risk of teenage pregnancy, substance misuse, youth offending and unemployment.
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:
London local authorities should coordinate and guarantee a clear local offer for young people in their borough. This should be informed by young people; include provision for young people up to 18 years of age and 18+; and be marketed effectively, including via social media, to ensure young people know what support, services and opportunities are available in their local area.

Recommendation 2:
London Councils, the Greater London Authority and the voluntary sector should collectively develop a young people’s workforce development plan aimed at equipping youth professionals, including volunteers, with the skills and leadership qualities required to deliver high quality opportunities and services for young people in an evolving youth sector.

Recommendation 3:
The Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority should put mechanisms in place to ensure that young people have a clear voice, brokered through community youth organisations, in the development of London strategies and in key local decisions around service provision, housing and regeneration, and skills and employability.

Recommendation 4:
The Mayor of London should make explicit the role of youth organisations in facilitating positive outcomes for young people in his plans for education, skills, culture and the arts, clean air and open space and community regeneration, as well as in crime prevention.

Recommendation 5:
The forthcoming Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Youth Policy Statement should be focused on supporting the potential of young people and their capabilities, and recognise the value of, and set out a clear role for, universal provision within this.

Recommendation 6:
Funders should seek to understand where gaps exist in open access provision; and where required, provide funding for universal services, alongside targeted funding for specific groups, to enable all young people to access and engage in positive activities with their peers.

Recommendation 7:
Employers should work with youth organisations and infrastructure organisations, where appropriate, to create varied work experience placements and to support young people to be ready to take up formal employment opportunities, including apprenticeships.

Recommendation 8:
Infrastructure organisations should support the sector by brokering relationships between funders, businesses and smaller community youth organisations; and by building the sector’s fundraising capacity through supporting them to explore new models of funding, including social enterprise and social investment, as well as through training and formal peer support networks.
These interviews were supplemented by further research and focus groups with practitioners, local authority leads and other key stakeholders in each borough. The research was carried out in partnership with Centre for London.

**Methodology**

The report examines the five London boroughs of Barking & Dagenham, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Waltham Forest.

The study has been guided by a specialist advisory group made up of a diverse mix of experts in young people and youth provision, spanning local government, funders, education and the private sector.

**PEER RESEARCHER**

Malachi Butt-Mukete, 23, was one of our peer researchers and interviewed young people in Waltham Forest and Hackney about their local area, their experience of living in London and their involvement with youth organisations. Alongside working as a peer researcher, Malachi also works as a teaching assistant in a school for autistic children and as a youth worker on a youth leadership project.

Having worked with young people for much of his life, Malachi wanted to get involved in the project as a way of enabling young people to have a voice and a “seat at the table.”

Throughout the research, Malachi was shocked by how often young people spoke about the impact of gentrification on their lives. “Young people are seeing change in their local area which isolates them.” He hopes that projects such as this will lead to a better understanding of what it is like to be a young person in London today by those who plan and deliver services for young people.

“**Young people know the direction they want their lives to go in. With the right support they can become an influential group. They will be leaders themselves eventually.**

3 We were unable to arrange a telephone interview with a local authority lead in one of the five boroughs.
PART 1: How London’s youth population is changing

This section explores how London’s youth population is changing: the demographic shifts affecting young people and their communities, their health needs, and their skills and aspirations for the future.

London’s youth population is changing at an almost unprecedented rate. This has significant implications for the type and range of services that organisations and institutions responsible for supporting young Londoners need to provide.

The capital’s youth population is growing almost as fast as the working age population (see Table 1), with nearly one in four Londoners now under 18 years of age. The geography of households with children has shifted since 2000 and as such children and teenagers are now the fastest-growing population groups in Barking & Dagenham and Enfield. In contrast, Hackney, Haringey and Waltham Forest have become proportionally more working age, although their youth population has also increased (see Table 1).

Table 1: Age profiles and population change 2001-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>London</th>
<th>Barking &amp; Dagenham</th>
<th>Enfield</th>
<th>Hackney</th>
<th>Haringey</th>
<th>Waltham Forest</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% pop 2016</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>% pop change</td>
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<td>Young people</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>35.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-17</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25-64</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>18.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>-17.6</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Older people</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>23.7</td>
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London’s population is projected to increase by 10% between 2014 and 2024, with all case study boroughs expected to grow faster than this. Barking & Dagenham is expected to see the most growth, gaining an additional 20% of its 2014 population by 2024, whilst Haringey is expected to see the least, gaining 12%. Figure 1 shows how the demographic profile of London is set to change as the relatively large population of children, compared to England and Wales as a whole, begins to move up to meet the existing – and relatively stable – large population of young adults.

Figure 1: Percentage of population by age – England and Wales as a whole and London

Ethnic diversity is also increasing rapidly in London, particularly among the youth population, which has a more diverse ethnic make-up than the adult population. The increase is fastest in outer London boroughs, which are now catching up with the levels of youth ethnic diversity in inner London boroughs. Indeed, recent changes have been particularly fast in Barking & Dagenham and Enfield. This diversity is valued and celebrated by young Londoners, but poses a challenge for youth organisations to ensure that they are able to signpost new communities to services and tailor the services that they provide to fast-changing cultural and language needs.

There’s nowhere else with the diversity and open-mindedness of people.” Young person, Enfield

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**A LONDON THAT WORKS FOR ALL**

London is an extraordinary, but expensive city. Young people in London are the poorest in the country, with child poverty levels a third higher than in England overall. All five case study boroughs have high rates of child poverty, with an average 28.1% of children living in low income families. The five boroughs also rank in the most deprived 25 local authorities in England (see Map 1), despite ward-level inequalities.

Map 1: Income deprivation affecting children Index, Average Rank, 2015

The London Fairness Commission identified that the three largest additional costs faced by Londoners, compared with other areas of the country, are housing, transport and childcare. The high cost of living in London and lack of affordable housing were areas of particular concern for the young people interviewed for this research. Both the young people and practitioners that we spoke to highlighted the difficulties faced in finding housing that is affordable and in the communities where the young people grew up. Many young people were concerned that they would not be able to afford to live in the capital once they leave home.

"Why can't I be a videographer, make enough money to support [my girlfriend], two kids and live in a house? Why is that impossible? That should be possible." **Young person, Enfield**

Young people also highlighted the prohibitively high cost of transport, which prevented them from accessing opportunities in other areas of London. This was a particular issue for those aged 18+ who are not eligible for discounted travel through Zip Oyster cards.
I want Enfield to be invested in, as places are becoming nicer to live, but the downside is that people who are already living there can’t afford to rent their houses anymore […] I want Enfield to be invested in, just without the social cleansing.”

Young person, Enfield

Young people were acutely aware of disparities in wealth across their boroughs, and spoke about the changes that were taking place as areas became more ‘gentrified’. While young people liked the improvements to their boroughs, they felt excluded from the process and were concerned that people currently living there may get priced out. Young people also raised concerns that their ‘diverse’ and ‘vibrant’ communities were being affected by changes to the area.

Although welcomed for increasing housing stock in the boroughs, there was widespread concern from practitioners about the impact of regeneration in terms of affordability. Both practitioners and young people believed local young people should be consulted more widely by developers and local authorities on the changes occurring in their neighbourhoods, and that the regeneration should be used as an opportunity to support and develop young people and their aspirations. Safety also emerged as a concern both for practitioners and young people. Largely as a result of gang violence, young people aged 16-24 are more likely to be the victim of a violent crime than any other age group.14 Public concerns about gangs are high in many parts of London: in the year to June 2016, Hackney had the highest perceptions of problems with gangs, knife and gun crime of all London boroughs.15

Practitioners identified that in some instances, gang-related ‘postcode’ problems affected young people’s ability to travel within their borough and access services. Young people felt that gang culture resulted from a lack of opportunities and some expressed concerns for their safety in local communities.

With the regeneration of the area, there could be a lot of opportunities for our young people […] It is about incorporating them into that change.”

Practitioner, Barking & Dagenham
The proportion of young people taking A-levels has increased, and this has been accompanied by an improvement in academic attainment. Rapidly changing demographics have influenced the results, but the achievement gap has reduced both between children receiving free school meals and their peers, and between London boroughs. Young people from less wealthy families in London perform better at 16 than those anywhere else in the country. In 2014, almost 50% more young people from families with a low income in inner London achieved 5 A*-C GCSEs than in other regions of England.

Young people at schools in less wealthy communities in London are also more likely to go on to further study post-16 than in other parts of the country; and whilst a gap remains compared with the London average. These improvements can be attributed to a number of initiatives, including the London Challenge, a school improvement programme which ran from 2003-2011; Teach First which places graduates in schools in disadvantaged areas; and the Mayor’s Schools Gold Club, which celebrates and shares good practice in London's schools.

Despite these improvements, practitioners highlighted that educational disparities continue to exist within boroughs, with some groups (such as white, working-class young people in Barking & Dagenham) still underachieving. Furthermore, whilst schools are considered the ‘engines’ of social mobility, rates of young people who are not in education, employment or training, or whose status is unknown, have remained persistently high. This is despite successive national policies aimed at supporting young people into education, training or employment since the early 2000s, as well as the aforementioned improvements in academic attainment.

Over 12% of Londoners aged 16-24 were classified as NEET over the four quarters to September 2016, a rise on the previous four quarters. Using Jobseekers Allowance claimant figures as a proxy for youth unemployment (which is likely to under-estimate the number of young people not in work), all five boroughs studied have an 18-24 claimant rate higher than the London average.

Furthermore, when young people are in work, they are much more likely to be paid below the London Living Wage, with 77% of jobs done by 16-20 year old Londoners, and 41% of jobs done by 21-24 year olds paying below the London Living Wage. This younger age group are also subject to a lower minimum wage than older adults. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that so many of the young people we interviewed mentioned the difficulties of coping with the high cost of living in London.
Both young people and practitioners felt that young people aged 16 and over needed to be much better supported in the transition into further education, training or work. This further undermines the need for efforts to improve social mobility to look beyond academic attainment. Practitioners spoke of the difficulty that young people, especially when underqualified, have in being able to positively engage with employment, further education or training. They were concerned that services were often disjointed and inadequate, and many felt that young people did not have sufficient opportunities to find something that suited their aspirations and skill sets. The issues that practitioners identified as holding young people back from developing aspirations were complex: in some areas, intergenerational poverty had created a perceived atmosphere of low aspirations; and many simply did not know what opportunities were available to them or how to access and grasp them. Given the curtailment of careers advice provision, practitioners called for a greater range of opportunities for young people and for support to help young people navigate the options and access apprenticeships, vocational training, work experience and employment. These concerns were raised despite the large number of programmes and initiatives that already exist to provide employment support for young people. The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy and accompanying standards, effective from April 2017, will help drive improvements in both the quality and availability of apprenticeships for young people. However, many young people – particularly those who have been unemployed and disengaged for a period of time – often lack the basic building blocks of confidence, networks and resilience to be ready for such opportunities.

Our own learning from London Youth’s Talent Match London programme has highlighted the importance of allowing young people to identify their interests, skills and strengths, and explore a range of careers, before taking steps towards pursuing their chosen career, including involving employers in this process. Giving young people the opportunity to explore their interests reinforces a concern raised by practitioners across all boroughs around the need to support young people to develop a sense of identity, and positive aspirations for the future. However, it is not the case that young people themselves have low aspirations. Our peer researchers and the young people they interviewed were ambitious to succeed, aware of the chances that London might offer them and wanted support to achieve their goals; for example, through having spaces where they could work on creative projects or collaborate together. They identified a specific gap in provision for older young people who may not fit the criteria for programmes aimed at young people with few qualifications, but who would benefit from support in getting started in their careers. This is consistent with other research, which has highlighted that young people typically have high aspirations, but may face a number of barriers in realising them.

“[It’s about] creating opportunities for young people to define and re-define who they are.”

Practitioner, Hackney

Pressures that young people experience through social media were felt to exacerbate difficulties in establishing a sense of identity. However, this was an area where there was a clear disconnect between the views of practitioners and young people. Young people themselves spoke very positively about the opportunities that social media presents for networking (both socially and professionally) and as a way to learn new skills, for example, through YouTube or through finding out about events and opportunities. Practitioners, on the other hand, thought social media was putting unique pressure on young people to present a perfect image of themselves online, and limited their exposure to more formal interactions.
PART 2: How are services for young people adapting to this context?

This section examines how recent changes within the youth sector are affecting services for young people, the impact on young people and youth professionals, and the voluntary sector response.

In one sense, there are many reasons to be optimistic. People recognise the value of support and opportunities for young people outside of school, and Mayor Sadiq Khan has emphasised ‘prioritising places and spaces where people can come together in communities’ and has publicly referenced the role of youth work in tackling youth violence. Similarly, Louise Casey’s recent wide-ranging review of opportunity and integration recognised this, drawing particular endorsement of the role of youth organisations and youth work in those communities.

These sentiments, feel like a welcome endorsement of the role of youth organisations and youth work in those communities. Yet alongside this positivity, report after report shows how funding cuts have reduced services for young people outside of school hugely over recent years. Most recently, a briefing prepared by London Assembly Member Sian Berry highlighted the extent of reductions in youth service funding in London. Across the capital, at least £22 million has been cut from council youth service budgets since 2011/12 and the average council has cut its youth service budget by nearly £1 million – an average of 36%, in the focus boroughs, funding reductions have been even more substantial, with budgets cuts of between 50-68%.

Table 2: Council youth service budgets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2016/17</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>% change 2011/12 to 2016/17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barking &amp; Dagenham</td>
<td>£2,286,200</td>
<td>£2,738,200</td>
<td>£-452,000</td>
<td>-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enfield</td>
<td>£3,148,353</td>
<td>£2,143,489</td>
<td>£-904,864</td>
<td>-29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haringey</td>
<td>£1,520,900</td>
<td>£756,900</td>
<td>£-764,000</td>
<td>-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waltham Forest</td>
<td>£4,757,854</td>
<td>£1,574,000</td>
<td>£-3,183,854</td>
<td>-67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackney</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Data not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The effect of this has been two-fold: a lack of early help for young people whose needs may not be immediately obvious or who may not meet intervention criteria; and fewer opportunities for young people, particularly from less wealthy backgrounds, to engage in positive activities with their peers. The benefits of early action are well documented: saving money in the longer-term and promoting wellbeing of individuals and communities. However, to achieve these benefits there is a need to take a longer-term, more coordinated approach in the planning and delivery of services. Fewer opportunities for young people from less wealthy backgrounds will also hinder progress towards achieving a level playing field for all young Londoners.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY YOUTH WORKERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Whilst practitioners participating in the research recognised the benefit of targeted provision, they were concerned that young people are “slipping through the net”. Reductions in staffing have also led to reduced outreach, and limited the amount of time that workers can spend working on a one-to-one basis with young people. This was widely felt to have had an impact on the ability to reach young people, with parts of the boroughs having no outreach presence at all, and exacerbating the numbers of vulnerable young people falling through the gaps, especially those unlikely to access services of their own volition.

“There is no street-based youth work. [The young people] don’t come into the centres without someone going out and getting them in. You need people to meet them and engage them where they are.” Practitioner, Hackney
Youth organisations have, in some cases, limited their opening times and the amount of open access sessions available. Practitioners told us of their concerns that, as a result, young people would have nowhere to socialise safely with people of their own age, nor would they have access to a trusted adult, or positive activities to engage in to help them develop relationships and skills.

The shift towards more targeted, project-specific funding has also an impact on the continuity of provision for young people. Practitioners highlighted that it has led to more rapid turnover of projects as funding is typically shorter-term. As a result, it is now more difficult to sustain projects that young people may already be engaged in.

“We have had a lot of programmes which have been effective, but because we have to go after a lot of funding, we have to stop that programme, and think of a new programme and a new line of funding.”

Practitioner, Waltham Forest

Interestingly, the young people interviewed often had limited awareness of the opportunities that were available to them in the local area. Whilst this may in part be due to reduced availability, it was also clear that there is more that could be done to promote opportunities to young people, particularly through social media. As one practitioner reflected, young people are able to ‘organise themselves’ through social media and in order to remain relevant, it is essential that organisations engage with young people using the same methods.

The shift towards more targeted work also appears to have coloured young people’s views on youth centres in their local area. Young people felt that ‘good kids’ were marginalised and that youth clubs “attracted the wrong crowd”.

In recognition of some of these challenges and in response to the reduction in open access youth services, the Big Lottery Fund and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) recently launched a £40 million Youth Investment Fund aimed at enabling voluntary and community youth organisations in specific communities (including three of our case study boroughs: Barking & Dagenham, Hackney and Waltham Forest) to deliver and create high quality local youth provision.46 This is hugely welcome, but one of the few examples of funding for this type of provision. The Mayor’s own commitment to youth work focuses on young people involved in gangs, or at risk of becoming so, and therefore does little to address young people’s concerns – the majority of whom have no involvement in violent crime – that youth centres are not the place for them.45

Beyond the Mayor’s policing and crime strategy, the role of youth organisations in supporting young people to achieve their goals and develop into healthy young adults is unclear.

Both the forthcoming London Plan and the DCMS Youth Policy Statement (which is currently in consultation phase and due for publication in July 2017) therefore present a significant opportunity to clarify the role of youth organisations, and specifically open access youth provision, in achieving positive outcomes for young people – a role that is under-exploited in many areas.47

### What do we mean by high quality youth provision?

At London Youth, we believe that high quality youth provision has the following characteristics:

- **Services are needed, wanted by, and are effective in delivering positive outcomes for young people within their local community**
- **Essential policies and procedures are in place that keep young people safe, premises and resources are fit for purpose, and the organisation meets its legal requirements as set out by the Charity Commission**
- **There is meaningful involvement of young people in decision-making at a range of levels within the organisation, with young people co-producing projects and influencing decisions at a more strategic level**
- **There is a commitment to continuous improvement and partnership working, including making referrals and signposting young people to other agencies and organisations**

London Youth supports youth organisations across the capital to meet these standards through its Quality Mark, which is accredited by City & Guilds. This takes organisations through three progressive stages – Bronze, Silver and Gold – with Gold acting as a badge of excellence for those organisations committed to continuous improvement and involving young people at all levels.

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THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR RESPONSE

On the face of it, the changing funding environment presents a huge challenge for the sector, and it is not at all easy to see how provision can be funded or sustained.

However, the figures on local authority spend on youth services – shocking as they are – only tell part of the story. Over the past 10 years, the voluntary sector has begun to adapt. As statutory sources of funding have disappeared, new models, innovation and a much more active voluntary sector funding community have supported provision for young people.

London Youth’s network of community youth organisations across the capital continues to provide services and to respond to need. New partnerships have also emerged, with local authorities now playing a different role in many areas.

While some direct commissioning by local authorities continues, the voluntary youth sector has had to substantially diversify its sources of funding. Practitioners have approached this challenge with determination and are exploring a range of options for funding and service delivery, so that they can continue to make as much difference as possible to the young people they work with. Organisations are now looking at other ways of generating income, for example letting venues to other organisations or providing advice on a consultancy basis.

“We are thinking of anything and everything we can do to bring money in.” Practitioner, Haringey

Typical funding sources include grants from charitable trusts, foundations, and large businesses with well-established and funded corporate responsibility programmes. Whilst independent trusts and foundations are not able to replace the amount of funding being cut from the public sector, they are increasingly seeking to understand how their investment complements existing provision, and aligning their work with other funders and investors in a given area. However, this shift has not been without its challenges. Practitioners, particularly from smaller voluntary organisations, struggled to dedicate the necessary time and resources to fundraising and with the youth sector as a whole reducing in size, many organisations no longer have a member of staff specifically designated for fundraising, meaning that practitioners often felt ill-equipped for the role. Developing links with local businesses was also seen as time-consuming and often dependent on personal links or location, with organisations in outer London boroughs further removed from large business bases. Yet practitioners identified key areas where they could benefit from private sector expertise – for example, in areas such as marketing, finance, HR, fundraising, and strategy and digital development. Despite these challenges, practitioners’ continued desire to make a difference to local young people was apparent throughout the research. Many of the professionals we spoke to have years of experience, are deeply embedded in the communities they serve and have an in-depth knowledge of the issues affecting young people in their areas. They were also strongly committed to, and passionate about, involving young people in service design and delivery, although often worried about their ability to deliver on what young people were asking for in light of reduced budgets.

“Young people’s voices are not being heard. For many years, they were helping shape youth centres, [We] used to have young people running activities on their own. In this day, without cash, what young people are asking for is not being provided for them.” Practitioner, Haringey

As staff teams have reduced, there has also been an increased reliance on volunteers – bringing many benefits, but also a need for organisations to have the skills and time to recruit, train and manage their volunteers.

One of the positives to emerge from the changing funding environment has been a renewed emphasis on inter-organisational partnership and multiagency working to improving efficiencies and effectiveness. Practitioners in all five boroughs were working to develop networks with similar organisations in their borough, but felt they needed help to better coordinate local services.

“One of the changes has been going from a youth worker, to a fundraiser within my role, which has been really hard. If we don’t take responsibility for that, we don’t get the money, the services won’t be there for young people.”

Practitioner, Waltham Forest

In some places, this has resulted in the emergence of place-based partnerships such as the West London Zone, which seeks to introduce better co-ordination and move towards collective impact. Elsewhere, Young People’s Foundations have been set up to act as a coordinating body for the youth sector within particular boroughs. These are borough-based membership organisations that seek to ensure that organisations supporting children and young people are strong, sustainable and fit for purpose. Youth services are also now being delivered in some areas through mutuals and cooperatives. An example of this is the Young Lambeth Cooperative, which acts as an independent ‘youth mutual’ organisation to manage and commission youth work services across the borough.

In an increasingly fragmented youth sector, collaborative efforts such as these and the supporting bodies that provide advice and support to smaller youth organisations, have an important role to play in coordinating services. They are also brokering relationships and signposting smaller organisations to support that can help address some of the challenges that they are facing. This can take a number of forms and there are many good examples already in existence. For example, the East London Business Alliance and Business in the Community both connect businesses and community organisations, whilst initiatives like Islington Giving and Hackney Giving provide a means of directing funding to smaller, community-based organisations. These examples should be built upon to help strengthen youth organisations and ensure their longer-term sustainability.

48 For more information, see https://westlondonzone.org

49 Young People’s Foundations have been set up in Brent, Barnet and Harrow with the support of the John Lyon’s Charity, and are also in development in Camden, Hammersmith & Fulham, and Westminster.
### In this section, we explore some of the specific characteristics of each of the focus boroughs. We begin by presenting a summary of publicly available data for each borough, before sharing the opportunities and challenges that young people and youth professionals identified in the borough, contextualised by further research and analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Barking &amp; Dagenham</th>
<th>Enfield</th>
<th>Hackney</th>
<th>Haringey</th>
<th>Waltham Forest</th>
<th>London</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-17 (2016)</td>
<td>60,200</td>
<td>82,400</td>
<td>60,200</td>
<td>58,500</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>1,969,400</td>
<td>11,761,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% change since 2012</td>
<td>+8.3</td>
<td>+3.1</td>
<td>+4.2</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>+2.7</td>
<td>+6.3</td>
<td>+3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25 (2016)</td>
<td>20,800</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>22,800</td>
<td>27,300</td>
<td>28,500</td>
<td>918,600</td>
<td>5,710,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% change since 2012</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>-9.6</td>
<td>+4.2</td>
<td>-6.5</td>
<td>-7.5</td>
<td>-3.5</td>
<td>+0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of pupils with English as an additional language (2016) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in proportion since 2007</td>
<td>+26.4</td>
<td>+7.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>+2.5</td>
<td>+8.4</td>
<td>+8.4</td>
<td>+6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in proportion since 2007</td>
<td>+22.4</td>
<td>+8.4</td>
<td>-3.7</td>
<td>+2.2</td>
<td>+9.0</td>
<td>+5.9</td>
<td>+5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Multiple Deprivation (2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank of average rank (of 326 LAs)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child obesity rate (2015-16) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 10-11 (year 6)</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in rate since 2006-7</td>
<td>+7.7</td>
<td>+3.8</td>
<td>+2.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>+3.0</td>
<td>+2.4</td>
<td>+2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE attainment (2015-16) (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ A*-C grades (including English and Maths)</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in proportion since 2009/10</td>
<td>+1.9</td>
<td>+1.5</td>
<td>+8.2</td>
<td>+5.1</td>
<td>+5.5</td>
<td>+1.7</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**BARKING & DAGENHAM**

**At a glance**

- Barking & Dagenham has experienced significant population changes over the last decade. Shifting demographics have made the borough younger and more diverse in recent times, with young people more likely to come from ethnic minority backgrounds.

- Practitioners saw integrating new communities as a big challenge for the borough, particularly in relation to the rapidly rising rate of school children with English as a second language.

- Young people were very aware of their communities changing, but viewed this positively. However, practitioners felt that population changes were having a significant impact on young people's sense of identity and their ability to construct a space for themselves within their community and within society.

- Practitioners identified a need to support young people to develop high aspirations – often undermined by a lack of travel outside their ward or borough. Other borough-specific issues include high obesity, and concerns over crime and sexual violence.

- Poverty and disadvantage were overarching issues for young people in Barking & Dagenham. Indeed, ward-level data highlights just one area of relative wealth in the borough, contrasting to the other study boroughs which have more uneven wealth distribution.

- Young people's views on the area were very mixed, reflecting the large geographical spread of the borough. Many did not see themselves as living in London and tended to remain within outer-East London when travelling outside of their immediate area.

- The borough's youth services spend fell nearly 70% between 2010/11 and 2016/17. According to an interviewee, there has been a reduction in council-led open access programmes from 35 to five, and the reach of its summer programmes has declined from 8,000 young people four years ago to only 1,000 last year.

- Despite this, the local authority remains committed to providing opportunities for local young people and sees its role as a catalyst for this. It has provided capital funding and explicit support for the development of a new Youth Zone in Dagenham, which will provide a range of programmes and activities for young people aged 8-19 (up to 25 for young people with a disability) in a purpose-built venue (due for completion in 2018).

- There is a small but committed voluntary sector within the borough, with particular strength in the arts, and supporting young people with caring responsibilities and with disabilities. There are active partnerships around culture and employment and skills, in which the voluntary sector plays a major part.

- StreetBase Connect is an example of how one local authority has tried to join up and promote services for young people, as well as encourage them to lead a healthy life.

  StreetBase Connect is a reward-based system that allows young people aged 11-19 who are living and studying in Barking & Dagenham to collect and build up points by taking part in positive healthy activities across the borough, which can then be exchanged for rewards. It encourages young people to try out new activities, as well as make healthy food choices whilst at school, and allows young people to search for opportunities that are coming up in their local area through a dedicated website.

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50 Centre for London analysis of Education Funding Agency (2016). Section 251 documents. Retrieved 21 February 2017 from https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/section-251-materials. These figures are not a reliable way to compare between boroughs, due to differences in reporting, classification and other issues, but still provide useful analytical value, and broadly correspond with the data collected by Sian Berry AM via Freedom of Information requests.

"I like the sense of pride and community because it shows that people still care."  
Young person, Barking & Dagenham
Youth organisations in Enfield have responded to the changing funding environment by establishing Enfield Youth Action, a new charitable vehicle that includes Oasis, Enfield Island Village, Trinity at Bowes, and St. Andrew’s. This aims to work as a consortium to fundraise, share resources and deliver sector and location-specific capacity building.

**PRACTICE EXAMPLE: PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

Youth organisations in Enfield have responded to the changing funding environment by establishing Enfield Youth Action, a new charitable vehicle that includes Oasis, Enfield Island Village, Trinity at Bowes, and St. Andrew’s. This aims to work as a consortium to fundraise, share resources and deliver sector and location-specific capacity building.

**ENFIELD At a glance**

- Demographic changes are occurring relatively rapidly within Enfield, with a growing Eastern European community, alongside movers from elsewhere in London. Many of these communities are transient, often only staying for months or a few years, requiring flexible and adaptable service provision.

- The borough exhibits a significant geographic split, almost down the middle, between two contrasting areas. Practitioners identified that gang violence, mental health and low engagement in school, were particular issues in the east of the borough.

- Enfield was considered to be relatively isolated and disconnected from the rest of London, exacerbated by poor transport links to some parts of the borough. Practitioners spoke of young people not travelling far or frequently. However, young people themselves were very positive about the transport links and the opportunities that these provided for them to experience other areas of London.

- Young people perceived Enfield as an area of little opportunity and reflected that young people tended to leave the area to live and work elsewhere as a result.

- Enfield had previously had a relatively comprehensive council-run youth offer, comprising of five youth centres; detached projects and neighbourhood work; a youth advice and information service and many other positive activities and opportunities for young people. However, in October 2016 council-run youth services underwent a significant period of change, with the budget for youth services cut from £2.2 million to £120,000 and only two members of staff remaining, according to an interviewee. Government data indicated budgeted spend per head had fallen by over a third between 2015/16 and 2016/17.  

- The local authority youth service is now largely working through its role as a facilitator and commissioner of voluntary sector organisations.

- The voluntary sector in Enfield is smaller and less developed than in other boroughs, in part because the local authority had been providing an extensive youth offering until recently. However, there is clear appetite for collaboration between the different youth providers and community organisations that exist.

- There is some arts provision and many open spaces and parkland within the borough, including the Lee Valley, which has significant facilities and a range of opportunities for young people.

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There are pockets of areas where community cohesion is working really well...Before people would walk past each other, not know anyone, but now there is this proper community feel. If that goes out everywhere it would be wonderful to see.”

Practitioner, Enfield
There are significant disparities in poverty and wealth across the borough – contrasts that the young people interviewed for the research were acutely aware of.

Hackney has the highest job density of all five of the focus boroughs, but also the highest levels of economic inactivity.

Housing was a key issue identified by young people and practitioners, who saw the limited supply of suitable and affordable housing as a significant concern.

Practitioners highlighted the vulnerability of younger teenagers to gang pressures, and the role of gangs in facilitating child sexual exploitation. Disengagement from formal education was another key issue for young people, with limited options for further education that was not academic.

Hackney Council has maintained a reasonably comprehensive youth offering, despite cuts to its budget. Government data indicates a much higher spend than the other boroughs, despite a 33% cut per young person between 2010/11 and 2016/17, and a relatively balanced mix between universal and targeted services provision.52 The new Mayor of Hackney, Philip Glanville, has made a specific commitment to youth provision.

The local authority continues to have a strong role both in delivering and commissioning services through Young Hackney, the council's children and young people's service. Young Hackney also works closely with Hackney CVS, the local council for voluntary services, and the local voluntary sector, which is significantly more developed than in some of the other focus boroughs.

Young people in Hackney reported that there were a lot of opportunities and activities available to them. However, as elsewhere, it was felt that some opportunities were not accessed enough by young people and often youth clubs had to target their work at young people who are at risk of offending.

Young people from other boroughs saw Hackney as a borough full of opportunities and some expressed a desire for their own boroughs to be more like Hackney in terms of its vibrancy and creativity.

There are a lot of talented young people in Hackney… If they had more chances, had more free services, there might be a door that would open for them.”

Practitioner, Hackney

[B-Hackney] is a very international part of London. People come from all over the world to experience it.”

Young person, Hackney

Laburnum Boat Club is an example of a youth organisation that has built strong links both within its local community and with other organisations working with young people in the local area. It is based by Regent’s Canal in Hackney and aims to provide opportunities for personal development of children, young people and their families through participation in water-based activities. In 2016, it worked with over 350 young people through its open access youth club and provided opportunities for over 2,000 pupils from 23 schools to develop skills and confidence outside of a classroom environment.

PRACTICE EXAMPLE: EMBEDDING SUPPORT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

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PRACTICE EXAMPLE: EMBEDDING SUPPORT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

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The Haringey Youth Festival is an example of how youth organisations in one local authority have joined forces to showcase and celebrate the talent that exists within the borough, whilst also providing development opportunities for young people. The arts festival began in 2013 and is held annually. It is organised and led by young people and involves organisations from right across the borough, uniting to showcase the creativity of young people in Haringey.

The benefits of young people being involved is that they carry on the legacy of whatever they’ve asked for. They bring other young people into the fold.”

Practitioner, Haringey
WALTHAM FOREST

At a glance

- Young people living in Waltham Forest are some of the poorest in the capital, and there are large discrepancies in wealth and poverty at the ward level.
- Waltham Forest is experiencing some of the fastest demographic change of all London boroughs, with increases in Eastern Europe and Middle Eastern communities.
- Young people were very aware of the differences between areas in the borough, both in terms of wealth and increasing gentrification, and the changing demographics.
- Practitioners identified four key issues affecting young people in the borough: low aspirations; an increase in the number of young people with mental health issues; housing (and in particular overcrowding and households of multiple occupation); and the number of young people going missing. This latter issue was appeared to be distinctive to Waltham Forest, and is potentially caused by a range of factors, including gang-related issues and domestic abuse.
- While data collected by the Government indicates Waltham Forest Council’s spend per head falling by 27% from its peak, figures provided by the council in response to a freedom of information request by Sian Berry AM showed that the youth services budget reduced by 67% between 2011/12 and 2015/17.

Since 2010, council provision has been based exclusively around targeted services. As a result, there are fewer opportunities for young people outside of school, and the spaces are often used for services not specifically targeted at young people.

There is little direct local authority youth service provision in the borough, with more of a focus on supporting a growing suite of voluntary sector providers. Some of these have strong and well established community partnerships and have developed innovative responses to complex needs and issues such as radicalisation. There is a relatively well developed employability offer delivered by voluntary sector organisations in partnership with the local college and across the borough there are some schools partnerships. The borough is supporting the development of the Waltham Forest United community partnership (see Practice Example below right).

Older young people in the borough recognised some of the changes that had taken place over the past five years or so, and that there are now more limited opportunities available for their younger peers.

It feels like Waltham Forest is catching up with the rest of London in terms of regeneration. Other places have seen improvements before we have.”

Young person, Waltham Forest

PRACTICE EXAMPLE: COORDINATION OF SERVICES

Waltham Forest United is a collaboration between community and youth organisations across Waltham Forest. It aims to bring together the expertise of organisations working with children and young people to coordinate and plan events and activities, and act as a consortium to be able to secure funding to support the delivery of services for young people in the borough. Members of Waltham Forest United include Our Parks, Essex County Cricket, Salaam Peace, Worth Unlimited and SAS Martial Arts.

It is our responsibility to create ways where [young people] can get involved in important decision-making processes… and have a voice in things.” Practitioner, Waltham Forest

54 Ibid.
Many of the issues highlighted through the research are not new and do not have simple solutions. London is, and will continue to be, an expensive city to live in. Cuts to youth services have had an impact on out-of-school provision for young people and created new challenges for the smaller youth organisations that we spoke to as part of the research. The needs of young people are often complex and their aspirations multi-faceted.

However, we believe that we can do better for young Londoners in how we fund, plan, and involve them in shaping services, and that we can build on the assets and strengths that exist within the youth sector and beyond in order to create a city that celebrates its youth population and supports each young person to be the best they can be.

We believe that a key part of this is improving the consistency of a basic youth offer for young people, and equipping the workforce with the skills and knowledge to lead the sector forward. We want all young people to be supported to identify and develop their strengths, lead active and healthy lives, and pursue fulfilling careers; and that youth organisations are in a strong position to enable this to happen.

We want to ensure that as areas of London change and evolve over time, that young people are a part of that process and have the opportunity both to influence these changes, and continue to have a place in their communities. We want employment opportunities to provide a platform from which young people can go on and achieve great things.

With the huge changes that are happening right now in London, this is a vitally important time – but we believe there are great opportunities for all these things to become a reality. The Mayor has set out a vision for our capital to be truly a City for All Londoners – to be open; dynamic; embrace opportunity; and have stronger communities. Today’s young people are the future of the city, and must be a huge part of that vision. Through the research that they have led for this report, they have made their own aspirations clear. It won’t be without its challenges; but by the partnerships that can develop, the opportunities that together we can bring to fruition, and crucially, by giving young people the chance to shape and succeed in building their own futures, we hope London can truly become their capital – and feel to all of us like the young people’s capital of the world.

In this section, we draw together our findings to make a series of recommendations for the future, identifying ways that London stakeholders can collectively build on the strengths and assets that we identified through the research and ensure that London is a city that works for all young people.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: London local authorities should coordinate and guarantee a clear local offer for young people. This should be informed by young people; include provision for young people up to 18 years of age and 18+; and be marketed effectively to ensure young people know what support, services and opportunities are available in their local area.

Recommendation 2: London Councils, the Greater London Authority and the voluntary sector should collectively develop a young people’s workforce development plan aimed at equipping youth professionals, including volunteers, with the skills and leadership qualities required to deliver high quality opportunities and services for young people in an evolving youth sector.

Recommendation 3: The Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority should put mechanisms in place to ensure that young people have a clear voice, brokered through community youth organisations, in the development of London strategies and in key local decisions around service provision, housing and regeneration and skills and employability.

Recommendation 4: The Mayor of London should make explicit the role of youth organisations in facilitating positive outcomes for young people in his plans for education, skills, culture and the arts, clean air and open space and community regeneration, as well as in crime prevention.

Recommendation 5: The forthcoming Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Youth Policy Statement should be focused on supporting the potential of young people and their capabilities; and recognise the value of, and set out a clear role for, universal provision within this.

Recommendation 6: Funders should seek to understand where gaps exist in open access provision; and where required, provide funding for universal services, alongside targeted funding for specific groups, to enable all young people to access and engage in positive activities with their peers.

Recommendation 7: Employers should work with youth organisations and infrastructure organisations, where appropriate, to create varied work experience placements and to support young people to be ready to take up formal employment opportunities, including apprenticeships.

Recommendation 8: Infrastructure organisations should support the sector by brokering relationships between funders, businesses and smaller community youth organisations; and by building the sector’s fundraising capacity through supporting them to explore new models of funding, including social enterprise and social investment, as well as through training and formal peer support networks.

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This report was prepared by Laura Blazey at London Youth and Siliya Barrett, Claire Sands and Tom Colthorpe at Centre for London.