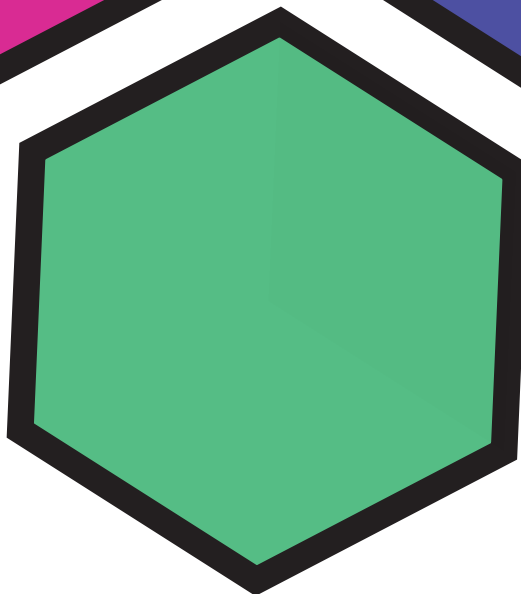
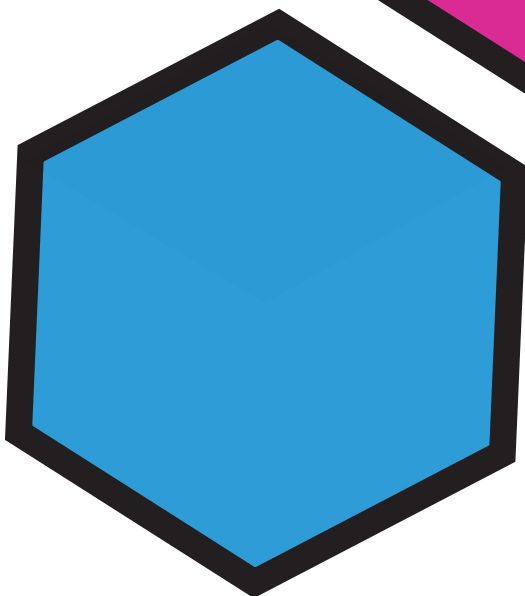
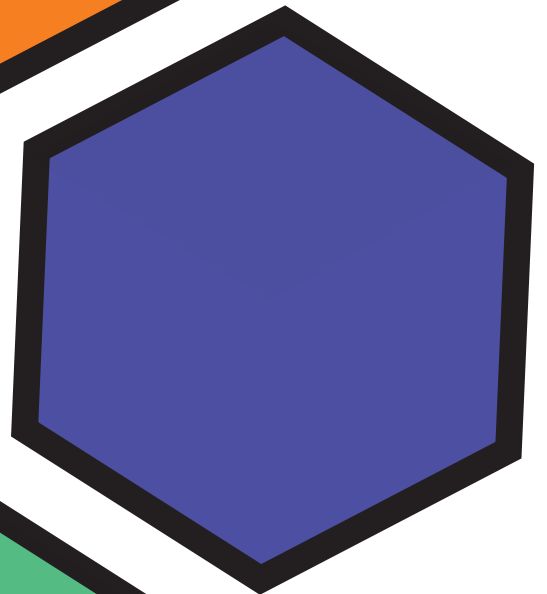
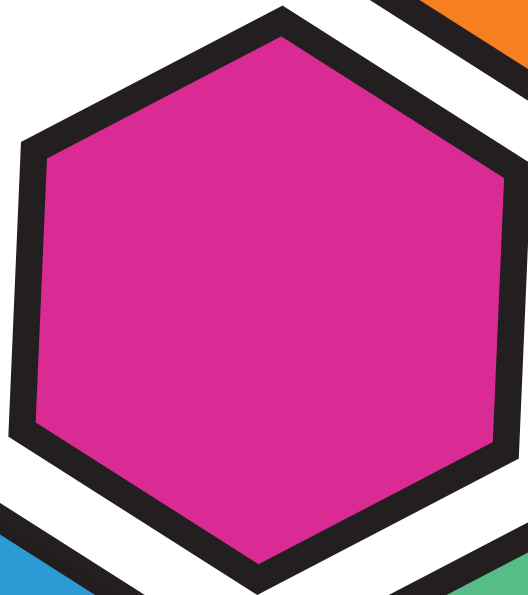


Young People's

Thoughts

on Child Poverty

Policy



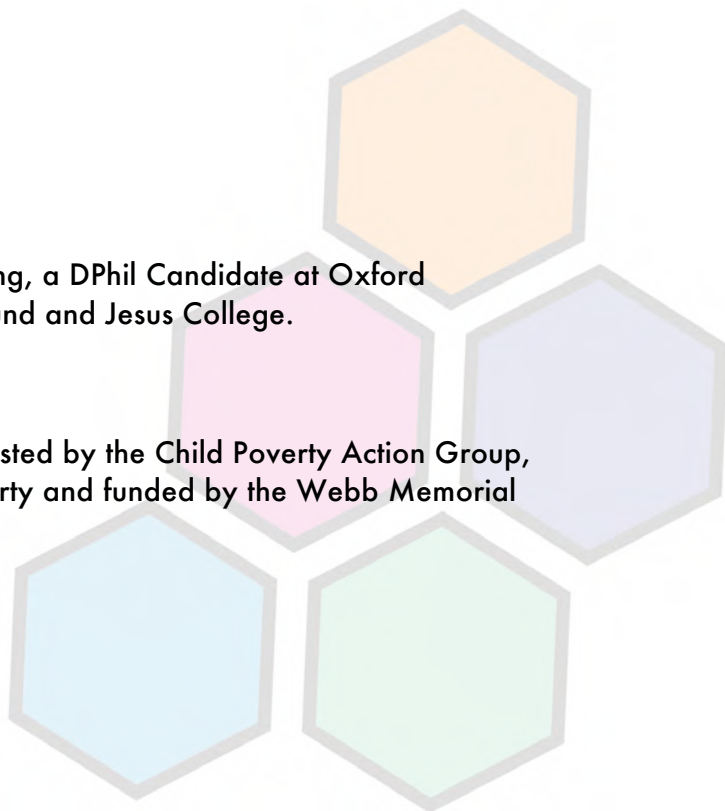
This research was conducted by Rys Farthing, a DPhil Candidate at Oxford University and funded by the Clarendon Fund and Jesus College.

This report and launch was generously assisted by the Child Poverty Action Group, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Poverty and funded by the Webb Memorial Trust.

December 2012

**CHILD
POVERTY
ACTION
GROUP**

in association with
Webb Memorial Trust



Contents

| | |
|---------------|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Gateshead | 3 |
| Liverpool | 7 |
| Manchester | 13 |
| Tower Hamlets | 17 |
| Westminster | 22 |



Introduction

The *Child Poverty Act* committed the Government to ending child poverty by 2020, and producing an evolving child poverty strategy to signpost the way. While such an important strategy has potentially huge consequences for the 2.3 million children currently living in poverty, some children and young people were consulted with, but none participated in its production.

To partly address this, during 2012, five groups of young people from some of the most financially deprived neighbourhoods in England worked to develop their own, youth-led child poverty strategies. Over 150 young people from Tower Hamlets, Liverpool, Manchester, Westminster and Gateshead took part in projects to produce their own strategies, where they identified the problems and developed their own solutions.

During repeated focus groups, each group analysed what was good and what was bad about growing up in their area, and explored policy options to improve the experience of growing up there. They led the way in identifying and prioritising policy issues, as well as determining their ideal policy responses.

What follows is the five child poverty strategies that were developed. While each strategy is distinct and different – responding to different local needs and reflecting the different life experiences and demographics of the participants – together they show that young people successfully can, and crucially want to, actively participate in the policy discussions around child poverty.

They also suggest that involving young people in policy production might lead to quite different approaches. Many issues that were repeatedly identified, such as the problems caused by expensive public transport, are not mentioned at all in the Government's child poverty strategy. Others heavily cited by the Government, such as parenting programmes, did not even rate a mention among young people. Solutions to the problems varied widely, from common sense suggestions like "making the bus free to get to school" to creative suggestions like converting fried chicken shops to family housing, to address both over-crowding and the over abundance of unhealthy fast food joints in neighbourhoods. Where there was some overlap in the problems identified by the Government and young people, most of the solutions identified by the young people were at odds with the official approach. For example, young people wanted benefits for low-income families improved and funding for youth activities protected. There were remarkably few places where both young people and the Government agreed on policy directions.

This research shows that young people have very distinct opinions about child poverty policy, rooted in their lived experiences, and can and want to, take part in designing policy responses. If we're serious about improving the lives and future life chances of young people living in deprived neighbourhoods, we need to understand their perspectives and experiences so we can address what matters to them. A good way of doing this might be to work with young people in developing policy approaches to poverty. This research suggests that this might lead to quite a different approach.

Method and sample

Young people from both voluntary and statutory sector youth clubs took part in this research, which entailed between five to 15 focus groups with each group of young people. They were involved in co-designing the policy problem, by thinking about their lives and their peers' lives to identify the core issues that matter most to young people in their neighbourhoods. After problems were identified, solutions were developed to match their problems that formed the basis of their strategies. Finally, they designed the lay out of their strategy.

Neighbourhoods were selected for high levels of child poverty, and the presence of an accessible youth club.

The groups varied in size, with some groups being as small as 5 young people and others engaging 100 young people in their project. The youngest participant was nine years old and the oldest 24, with the median age of 14. Young people of both genders took part, as did young people with disabilities and young people in care. Many ethnicities took part in the project. In total, 150 young people took part in this research in different ways. However, the sample was not intended to be representative, nor do any of these groups claim to speak on behalf of all young people in their areas.

Many of these fantastic groups have since decided to take local action around some of the issues they identified; from developing plays to showcasing ideas at town halls to running a free lunch scheme over school holidays.



The Gateshead Youth Assembly is a group of young people from across Gateshead who make decisions and plan events as 'a voice for young people'. We are elected by our schools in annual elections. If a candidate is not elected, s/he can still volunteer to become an independent member of the Assembly.

When we elect new members, we then have a three-day training weekend. We meet and greet parents, and the new members get to know the 'old' ones. Then, over the next two days we choose the priorities for the year. All members split into different groups to discuss ideas and views, which are then sorted and become our priorities. A new executive is chosen by a vote, which decides the agenda for the forthcoming meetings and provides information on future opportunities.

This year, the Gateshead Youth Assembly has developed a child poverty strategy. This sets out our ideas, and what we think will change the way child poverty is viewed and handled in the North East. The strategy was developed through group discussions. We are confident that our strategy would make a real difference, as it not only looks at supporting young people living in poverty, but also at educating young people who are more fortunate.

The Assembly also recently ran a weekend workshop on child poverty, in which we looked at all the pros and cons of growing up in the North East. We came up with projects to help young people, including: a scheme to give students secondhand school uniforms; promoting healthy eating in schools; providing free school meals over the Christmas break to eligible children; the Breadline project, promoting child poverty awareness in the North East; holding a conference with other young people to inform others of our ideas and facts/figures; and creating a map to show the parts of the region the Assembly thinks need regenerating.

We hope to carry on our work throughout 2012. We have recently pitched our proposal to Gateshead Council and Durham University, and we plan to share it with others, including Oxford University, the North East Children's Commissioner and two local MPs.

Gateshead Youth Assembly

Gateshead Youth Council's Policy Priorities

We intend that this strategy help all children living in poverty around the UK.

Improve housing

Restore rundown family houses, and neighbourhoods and rebuild where necessary

Tackle the costs of school and improve schools

Ensure schools have second hand uniform shops or fairs, so families can afford the school kit

Provide more grants for low-income young people in schools

Provide breakfast clubs and lunches so people can eat at school

Bring back the Building Schools for the future programme, so that all our schools are better

Improve family incomes

Introduce a living wage

Get rid of the youth wage, people of all ages should earn the same

Increase child benefit, make it for all young people

Ensure child maintenance works

Increase heating allowances over winter

Ensure no young person goes hungry

Subsidise healthy food so everyone can afford it

Provide food grants for low-income families

Protect food banks in case of emergency

Make sure breakfast clubs and free school meals are available to all low income young people, and work to cover provision over the holidays

Look at supporting families to grow their own food with seed banks and allotments etc.

Making childhood better

Provide free leisure activities to young people from low-income families

Provide programmes to raise aspirations

Ban or change alcohol and junk food ads, so young people don't get bombarded with them

Change citizenship curriculum to include money management, raise aspirations and highlight issues with alcohol and junk food

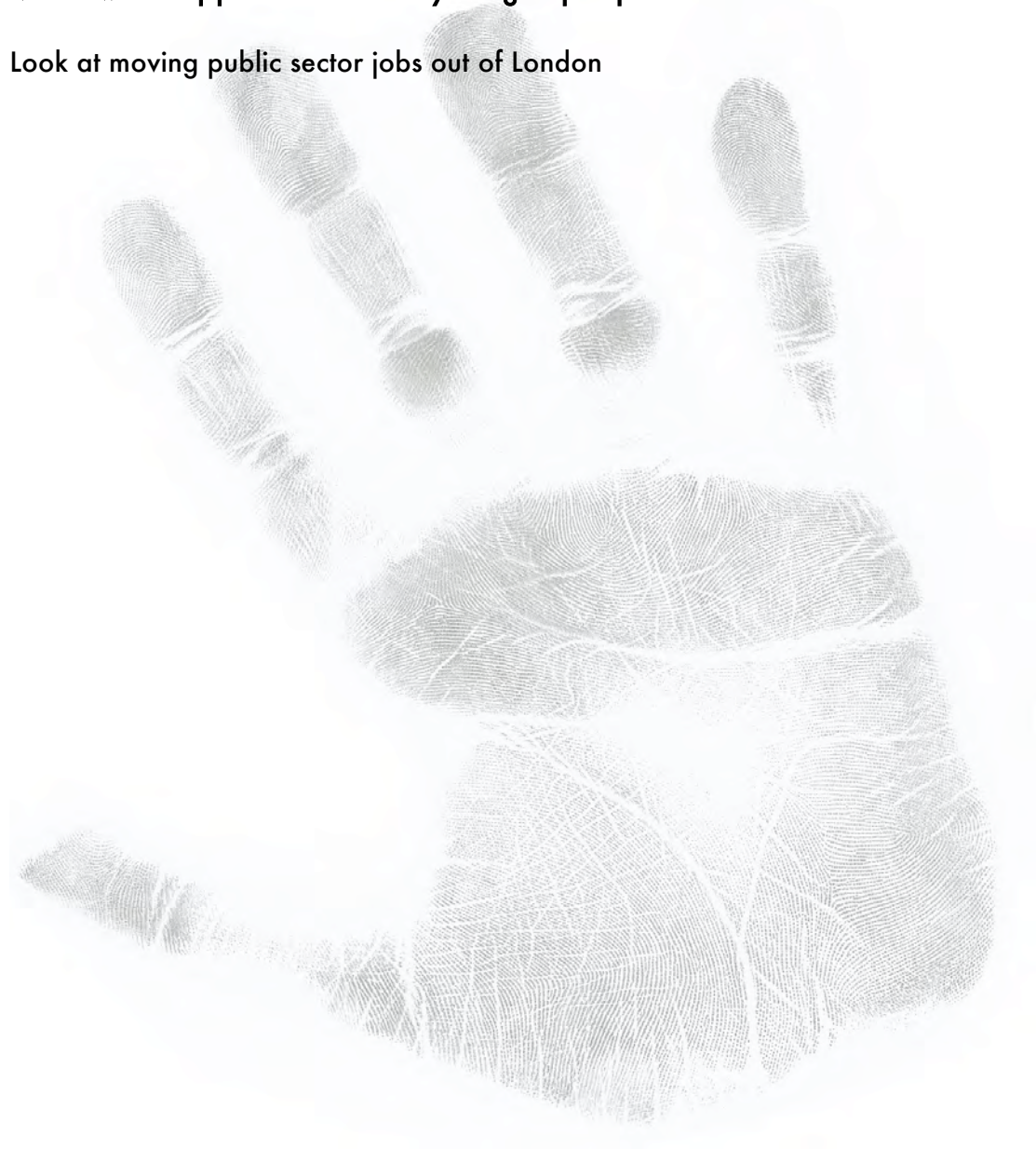
Making things fairer

Cut higher wages – avoid helping people get super wealthy
Harsher penalties and community service for people convicted of crimes

Tackle the stereotypes about young people in the media and wider society

More work opportunities for younger people

Look at moving public sector jobs out of London





young people's plan for the future

make
LIVERPOOL
a better
place to
grow up
in!



Poverty is a main driver of why children come in to care. While to an extent, all children in Liverpool are vulnerable to poverty – 34 per cent of all children in Liverpool live below the poverty line¹ – children and young people in care are especially vulnerable to its effects, because they lack the protection of a stable family.

Because of this, we felt it was important that we produced a child and young person centred Child Poverty Strategy. While we know Liverpool has a really positive Child Poverty Strategy in place, ours complements this and adds a young person's perspective.

We took part in a full day workshop to explore our own experiences of growing up in Liverpool, using the help of "fictional characters" Matt and Vivienne. Using our experience to personalise Matt and Vivienne, we then went out in to the community to capture what their lives would look like using Polaroid cameras. From this, we then developed a list of what was good about growing up in Liverpool, what was not so good, and importantly, what they wanted done about the not so good aspects.

Not content with this, we then decided to consult the School's Parliament – both Juniors and Seniors – to build on our manifesto. This increased the diversity of participants in the project, including young people from ages 10 right through to 21, of many ethnicities, from right across the region and with different levels of abilities. The Season's Playhouse youth drama group then approached us to become involved, participating in the production of the final manifesto and making a film of its key findings. All in all, over 120 young people directly fed in to the production of this comprehensive policy strategy, representing all 950 young people in care in the region as well as all students from the many schools that participate in the Parliament.

The Liverpool Children in Care Council would like to thank everyone who worked with us on this project, including; the young people of the School's Parliament, the Season's Playhouse, Julie Cashin, Rys Farthing, Jeff Dunn, Jane Corbett and the mayor.

**The Liverpool Children in Care Council
Jess, Tony, Terry, Sammy, Danielle, Sophie and Anisa.**

¹ 2011 figures, End Child Poverty 2012 *Child Poverty in Your Area* ECP, London

our manifesto to make liverpool a better place to grow up in!

Regenerate deprived areas

- Smarten up old council homes
- Focus on the areas people live, not the city centre
- Reduce dog poo
 - o More dog poo bins
 - o Free dog poo bags
 - o More anti-dog poo signs up, made by young people
- Reduce litter
 - o More litter pickers in the community, not just the city centre
 - o Maybe community service people can help
 - o Education for young people about litter
 - o Litter picking drive by young people in a fun day, 'A Pan of Scouse'

Improve housing

- Regenerate more social housing, so that more quality housing is available. This will also create jobs and apprenticeships
- Look at the high cost for housing in the region, can the costs be tackled somehow?
- Reduce the waiting time for social housing, so that you can get it when you need it

Improve policing and reduce crime

- Help the police to work more with the community
 - o More conversations between young people and the police, open people's minds both ways to improve relationships
 - o Reduce stereotypes of young people in the force, and vice versa
 - o Less discretion in pursuing offences, as young people often get the hard end of the stick when police can choose what crimes to prioritise
 - o More talking with the police, it would be great if the police spoke to the community more
- Tackle violent crime
 - o Review sentencing so it's more of a deterrent
 - o Review the way the prison service is run so that people don't go back, and don't want to go back
 - o Don't let murders and paedophiles in to the country
- Tackling gangs
 - o Education in primary schools
 - o Celebrity anti-endorsements, especially by footballers
- Money from crime to be diverted in to the community

Tackle cultural 'divisions'

- Share the culture around the city instead of placing people in the same culture in the same area

- Work towards cultural integration so that people of different cultures know and understand each other
 - o Celebrate different cultures at different events, whether it's Eid days at youth clubs or different food days at schools
 - o Have conversations about the language people use, open up and challenge the use of racialised terms like the 'N' word
 - o Get rid of or expand the catchment areas for schools, so that young people go to school with people from different backgrounds

Bullying

- Bring in anti-bullying charter mark
- Introduce a Sharp system in all secondary schools (a type of reporting procedure)
- Bring in a Bully-busters programme where older kids in school to take a protective role for younger people, especially on the way home. This would be a big mentoring programme to help support year 11s to mentor young students in years 7, 8, 9
- Cross schools sports, play as small regions rather than as schools to reduce inter-school bullying

Improving social security

- Fix the 'poverty trap', so that people are better off in work than they are on benefits
- Increase benefit levels so that they're enough to live on
- Make sure you can get benefits when you need them, so there are no months and months of delays

Financial equality

- Rich people need to look at what they 'owe', whether it's to charity or to taxes
- Reduce tax dodging so there's enough money to pay for other things
- Increase taxes to the rich and decrease taxes on the poor

Improve pay

- Make sure the National Minimum wage is enough to live on
 - o It should be no less than £7.24 per hour
- Look at who gets paid what, is it right that footballers earn more than nurses?

Make Transport Affordable

- Free public transport for under 16 year olds
- Cheaper transport if you're in college
- Distance priced travel, so you only pay for the distance you go
- Make it cheaper in general

Improve the way people see children in care

- Tackle stereotypes about young people in care.
 - o Get more positive stories about children in care and care leavers out there

Protecting service in a recession

- In a recession, the first thing to be targeted is publicity, but people need to know what helps is out there even more. Publicise existing services and protect them
- Prioritise spending so that essential 'welfare services' like housing and youth clubs are protected, look at reducing 'arts' budgets first
- Keep one stop shops, or 'co-located services' where things like housing services and health services are provided in the same building
- 'Rationalise' youth centres rather than closing them – is there a way youth clubs can share resources so that the same services can continue to be provided rather than closing youth services? For example, could they share sports clubs?
 - o Protect sports clubs and leisure centre and have different sports
- Make Whitechapel services bigger
- More investment in preventative services, tackle problems people might face early on rather than letting them get really bad
 - o In the long run this will save money, for example, it's cheaper to help a young person find housing and keep them in education when they're on the edge, than it is to help mental health issues and put them in jail later on if you don't

Make education work

- Improve the schools and education to make sure that young people can get good jobs and do not become unemployed
 - o More courses that are career relevant
 - o Make school's curriculum (subjects) better and more work relevant curriculum
 - o Make enough quality work experience for everyone from Liverpool
 - o Bring financial literacy skills into the classroom, so young people know how to budget

Drugs and alcohol

- Higher sentencing for class A dealers
- Education for younger people about drugs
- Harm minimisation approach to teenage drinking
 - o Publicise the DVDs by the Ariel trust about drinking
 - o Focus on getting young people to drink slower, by drinking a glass of water for every alcoholic beverage they have
- See if drink manufacturers can't add something so drinks change colour if they're spiked

Make Liverpool Healthier

- Publicise the great health services available in Liverpool more, so people know what's out there
- Improve access to affordable, healthy food

- Regulate fast food outlets, they always seem to be in the poorer areas and we're not sure that's right
- Provide fruit and veg free in schools and youth clubs, free for young people
- Make healthier food cheaper, or at least cheaper than junk food

Grow Liverpool's economy

- Make more manufacturing in the region
- Nationalise banking, so that we own the banks
- Revive the local economy, try and keep money from Liverpool in Liverpool

What We Want
to Make *Manchester*
a BETTER PLACE
TO GROW UP IN!



The young women who produced this strategy all attend Trinity House Community Centre. They meet twice a week to take part in a range of positive activities, from fashion shows to photography to cooking.

Over the course of working with the group, it became apparent that they are both very proud of Manchester and proud to be Mancunian, *and* aware that there are a lot of issues in their area that could be addressed. They described their neighbourhood as 'looking terrible' and talk about the impact of crime and feeling unsafe in their area.

They wrote this strategy to help try and share their perspectives with decision-makers.

On behalf of Gemma, Sophie, Nadine, Korey, Leah and Uba.

To make it better to grow up around Moss Side, Rusholme and Whalley Range, we – the Trinity House Young Women’s Group – want:

Better schools

- Bigger class rooms
- Smaller class sizes
- More teachers in each class (at least 4 or 5 per class)
- Education around racism to help stop it

More entertainment in our local area

- More safe places to go out and have fun
 - o More parks
 - o A big fun house with a cinema
- Free public toilets

Cheaper public transport

- A free bus pass for school students
 - o Or at least if you’re wearing a school uniform, you should not need your Zip card
- More bus runs and cheaper prices for everyone

Less Crime

- More free policing
 - o No one should be asked to pay to get guns off their streets
- Tackle people selling weed on the streets
- No drugs in our area, stop people selling them
- No gangs and violence
 - o Stop selling guns, not just in Moss Side, but the world
 - o Better rules about where knives are stored so they’re less easy to get
- Put people in prison for being bad
 - o But make sure prison helps them
- Stop rioting
- Stop graffiti around the places we need
 - o Make spray cans harder to buy
- Put gates at the end of alley ways

Bigger, more affordable housing

- More free housing made available to families, without rent
- Build some bigger house sizes, so families aren't crammed in
- Boarded up housing should be fixed up
 - o Make it into large, affordable family homes
 - o People should be able to buy some of these homes, or be given them for free
- The price of housing needs to come down, especially rents
- Homes and shelters made available for the homeless

More employment and better wages

- More local jobs
 - o Especially in shops
- Adult wages improves
 - o Increase the minimum wage to £10 per hour
 - o Decrease taxes for the poor

Our rubbish dealt with

- Better policing of recycling to encourage people to do it
- Less litter "we can make Moss Side nice without litter"

Young people to have more say

- Young people should get the vote

A healthier community

- Make sure healthier food is available in the region

Our Manifesto to...

Make **Tower Hamlets**
a **Better Place** for
Young People

*'If you could see Tower Hamlets through our eyes
Only then would you realise
The conditions of our community
Please take this as a positive opportunity'*

We are four members of the Tower Hamlet's community and we strongly believe that young people should be seen *and* heard. Young people represent a sizeable proportion of the population, and therefore our opinions should be respected. We are the future, and we are also the present, but we have limited say in what shapes it.

We made this strategy from our perspective, and wrote it in our capacity as independent young women. We have overcome many obstacles to develop this strategy, and it has become our motivation. We are able to establish ourselves within our community, and hope that we present a good voice for ethnic minorities.

We hope that our ideas get heard, and that our strategy is taken seriously and you start making actions toward. Please feel free to contact us if you would like to get in touch with us to offer any future advice in your work. Please contact Rys to co-ordinate this.

Truthfully yours,

Sazia, Shazia, Jahanara and Ayesha.

Our Manifesto to Make Tower Hamlets a Better Place for Young People

1. Cuts to benefits and financial supports are affecting families. Families need money to live, especially as there is a lot of unemployment at the moment.

- Supports for single parents families need to be maintained and improved
- Child benefit needs to be protected
- Supports for students, including EMA, need to be restored
- Make things cheaper through student discounts
 - o Student discounts on train travel, food and equipment for school would help

2. We don't feel that politicians represent us. They are too often liars and hypocrites. Some are also racist.

- Introduce a 'young person's politician' in parliament; an MP just to represent young people
- Reduce the voting age to 16
- Introduce new forms of democracy, like open ended, anonymous surveys at schools
- More non-biased education for young people, to enable us to vote on our own
- Voting every two years, to keep politicians honest
- More ethnic minority politicians
 - o Political parties to prioritise minorities
 - o Campaigns to encourage minorities and young people to run
- Politicians do not support all young people, we think they should listen to *all* opinions and should take them seriously.

3. Gangs and crime in the area. There are race gangs, postcode gangs and drug dealing gangs in Tower Hamlets. People join them because of peer pressure. There are too many spaces – like dark alleyways – that allow crime to happen. People need more money to survive, and as the cuts bite, people are turning to crime.

- More CCTV
- Make it harder to buy knives
- Provide information for parents about safely keeping kitchen knives
- Light up dark alleys
- Increase employment in the area
- More stuff for young people to do

4. Racism in the area. The E.D.L and the B.N.P are problems. They discriminate and violate our human rights. Politicians do not take them seriously enough.

- Promote multi-ethnic activities with young people, like sports events and residential trips
- Religious Education class should focus more on diversity, so we understand different cultures and religions more
- End the segregation in housing
- Public sector staff need to represent the diversity of the community

5. More jobs available for students.
 - Flexible employment that fits college hours is needed
 - Tackle age discrimination in employment
 - o Promote positive stories of young people in the media

6. Poor quality housing. The waiting list for houses is too long, there are not enough big family houses, and there are too many temporary houses. As a result, there is also too many homeless people in the area.
 - We need more affordable housing in the area
 - Buy under-occupied houses and share them with families that are too crowded
 - Decrease waiting lists
 - Prioritise people with children and disabilities on the housing list
 - Knock down abandoned houses and build new ones
 - If a house is empty for a year, let the council rent it out
 - Look at using brown spaces for building homes
 - Convert Fried Chicken shops to houses, there's too many of them and not enough houses

7. A lack of quality work in the area. There are only low skilled jobs.
 - More education in the area for new immigrants
 - Literacy classes, that are incentivised, for the illiterate
 - Build more businesses in the area, and the council should encourage this

8. We want a cleaner environment.
 - We need to take litter more seriously
 - Every house needs recycling facilities
 - More public bins with recycling facilities
 - Fine people who throw gum on the floor
 - Be more 'green':
 - o More and bigger buses
 - o Make bus fares cheaper
 - o More walk to school / work days
 - o More 'green days'
 - o Funding and fundraising for solar panels
 - o Make schools switch off lights and computers

9. Improve and provide more services for young people.
 - Advertise the services that are available, so that every young person can take advantage of them
 - o Talks in school assemblies are needed
 - Provide training around financial literacy
 - Provide 'show walls' so young people have somewhere to graffiti legally

10. Excessive drug and alcohol consumption.

- More help for people who are addicted
- Limit the amount of drinks that people that can be served
- CCTV in shops to prove that shopkeepers check ID
- More inspections, drop-ins and under cover checks to make sure that shopkeepers check IDs
- Toughen up border security so that drugs don't get imported
- Work on developing a 'weed spotter' that can scan for weed
- Police patrols, and under cover patrols, looking for drugs
- Review 'hard' prescription medications:
 - o Hide prescription medication
 - o Make it harder to prescribe some medication
 - o Unless it's life threatening, avoid giving them to under 18s
 - More talk based therapy for depression

11. Unhealthy lifestyles in the area.

- More healthy food provided with unhealthy food, work with shops to make menus healthier
- More education about how to maintain your body in schools and youth centres
- Make anti-smoking kits more anonymous, so they don't have to be posted to your house. Let people pick them up without prescriptions, from pharmacies

12. Increase funding for schools, universities and students.

- Increase the per pupil funding that schools get by 10%
- Provide extra funding for after schools clubs
- Make tuitions fees the same as they were in 2011
- School uniforms should be cheaper
- Provide a means-tested uniform grant of £100-200 every year
- Introduce a means-tested book grant as well
- Get rid of the 'hidden curriculum' that promotes social injustice

Mornings Westminster

NEEDS TO MAKE BETTER



Yo yo! We are the Caxton Crew We got a strategy here just for you.

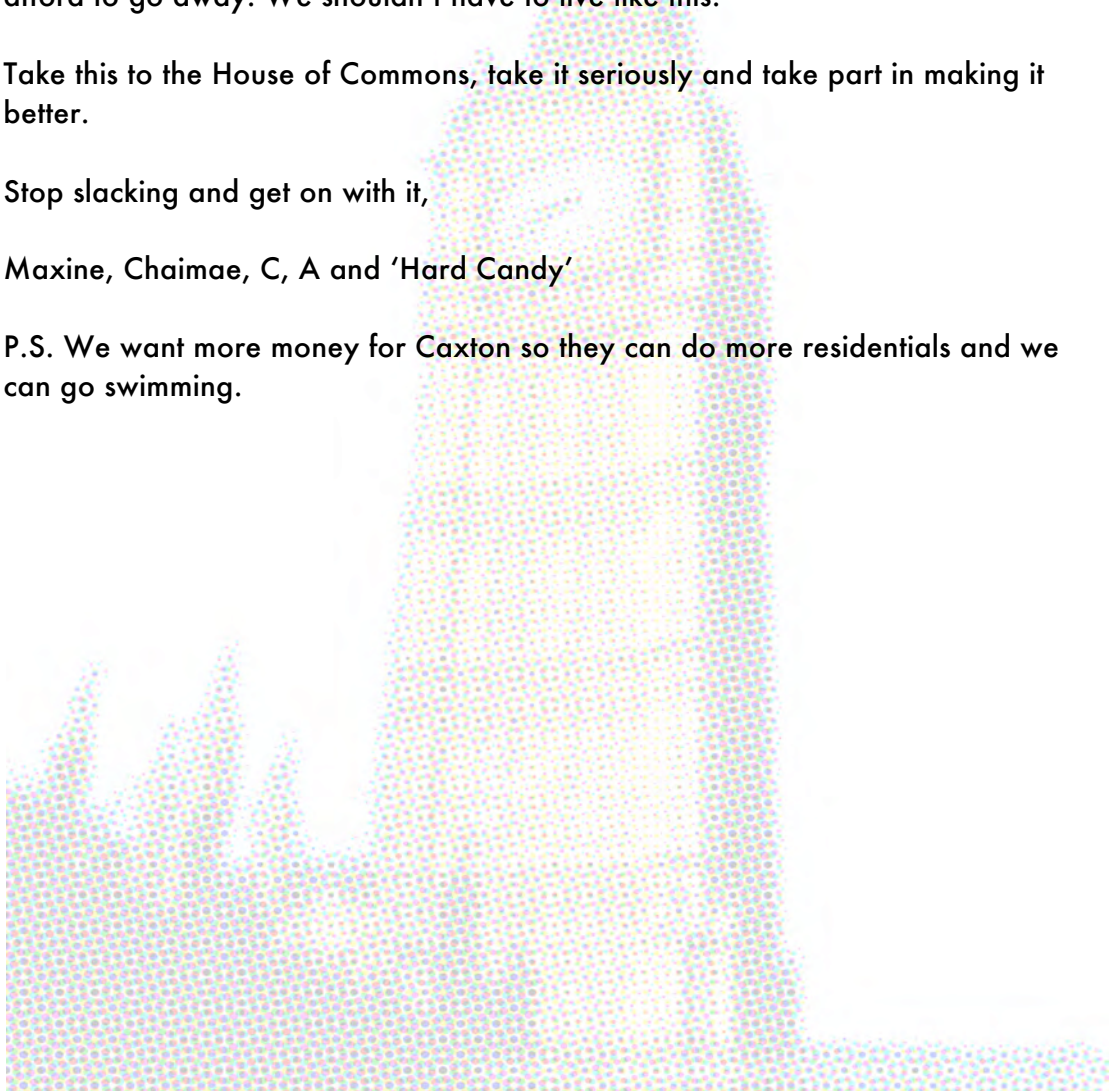
We wrote this because we want you to listen to us, and make things better in Westminster. We are affected by what you are making, and you should fix it before things get worse. We could have riots again, and this time we'll be in them. We've lost care support, individual budgets, our houses are cold and we can't afford to go away. We shouldn't have to live like this.

Take this to the House of Commons, take it seriously and take part in making it better.

Stop slacking and get on with it,

Maxine, Chaimae, C, A and 'Hard Candy'

P.S. We want more money for Caxton so they can do more residentials and we can go swimming.



To make it better to grow up in Westminster, we – the Caxton Youth Club – would like to see:

Less cars and traffic in the area

- Encouraging people to use buses and bikes so there are less cars, and therefore less noise and traffic
 - o Maybe you could increase the congestion charge for bigger cars so people use smaller ones
- More bike racks, and not the Boris bike racks, but racks for us to chain our own bikes up to
- Make buses and the tube cheaper so we can afford to use them

More fun things to do in the area

- While Westminster has some fantastic parks that we love, we'd like more safe places to play and have fun
- We'd like new youth clubs with outdoor space
- More free activities to do in the area, like ice skating
- More affordable restaurants

Better housing

- A lot of families live in small, cramped housing. If we could build bigger houses that would be great
- Some of the houses are also cold, if we could improve insulation that would make them nicer to grow up in

Less crime

- Reducing crime through CCTV and alarms
- Tackling gangs by helping young people from different areas to get along (through, say sports events)
- There's a big divide between rich people and poorer people in Westminster, and the two groups are really separate. We think this makes people jealous of other people's stuff and leads to crime and rioting. If we could try make richer people and poorer people meet and get along, there'd be less crime.

Less noise

- Make rules about people beeping horns so often
- Stop helicopters unless they're the police or for some emergency

More fairness

- Making Westminster less divided, so that richer residents and poorer residents get along and both get a fair deal
- End racism, schools can play a part here
- More bursaries to good schools
- Make clothes, food and drinks more affordable because we all need them.

Fewer cutbacks

- A lot of us get help to pay for support workers and stuff, and this is getting smaller. We'd like to have the same help as we did before.

