

“The Big Listen - we said” *Young peoples’ views on the Big Society*

Foreword

This briefing describes what children, teenagers and young adults told the British Youth Council (BYC) about speaking up, being heard and participating in the new Big Society, as proposed by the Coalition Government. It is based on BYC’s survey, ‘*The Big Listen*’. 1007 young people aged 7 to 25 across the UK took part and detailed their views and experiences between 10th September and 17th October 2010. As a youth-led organisation, BYC wanted to tell the Government how we, as young people, feel about the vision of a Big Society, and what we perceive our role to be in this society.

BYC asked young people how they currently felt about speaking up on decisions made in our local areas – whether it was important to us, do we think anyone listens, do we think we will make a difference. We said, as young people, that we do care a lot about having a say. Not only does it help us make friends and influence people, but we feel that we are making a difference in our communities through our volunteering. Three quarters of us want to have more of a say on decisions affecting our local area and just over half of us feel that we can influence decisions being made at a neighbourhood and local level.

BYC also asked young people how they felt about the Big Society – what we know about it, what engages us about it, whether we would want to get more involved in our local communities through it. We said, as young people, that we are interested in the idea of being empowered through the Big Society, but we need more information and support to really gain ownership of the idea. From the Prime Minister’s description of the Big Society, the idea that we believe would most engage young people is that of ‘empowerment’. Half of the young people taking part in the survey proposed ideas on how to put the Big Society in to practice.

Finally, BYC asked young people about the proposal for the National Citizen Service for 16 year olds – whether we thought it was a good idea, whether it would achieve its goals and whether we would join in. We said, as young people, that most of us think it is a good idea and that we see it benefiting 16 year olds. However, we foresee certain barriers to participation, such as having or wanting to get a summer job. We also had ideas on how to improve the programme and will share these ideas with the Government and organisers of the scheme so that it can be improved.

Young people across the UK gave their views through this survey because we believe it’s important for the Government and politicians to listen to young people. We need to be involved in plans to improve our communities. Four out of ten young people taking part in this survey can be classed as “community activists” or “champions” through their voluntary work in local youth forums such as youth

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councils and youth parliaments. These young people both want and need to be engaged in the debate around how to shape our 'Big Society' and are involved in the development of proposals to create it. Their expertise and experience should not be ignored.



Liam Preston
Chair of the British Youth Council



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Executive Summary

Through the 'Big Listen' we said...

On our communities

- 1) More of us (74%) feel like we belong to the UK as a place, rather than to our local area (63%) or neighbourhood (61%).
- 2) Six out of ten of us (61%) felt that there are still widespread negative perceptions of young people within their communities.
- 3) We have lots of ideas on how to improve our local area for the better. Half of us, 505 young people, gave our suggestions.

On speaking up about our local area

- 4) 82% believe it's important, and three quarters of us (75%) want, to have a greater influence in decisions made in our local area, on topics such as how the local community is run, and what happens to local services.
- 5) Just over half of us feel that we can influence decisions being made at a neighbourhood and local level (54%); whereas only three in ten of us think we can influence decisions affecting the UK as a whole (30%).
- 6) 61% feel our views are taken less seriously because of our age, yet 65% believe that when 'people like me' have a say we can make a difference.
- 7) We feel we can make friends and influence people by getting involved in local decision-making:
 - a) 72% of us said we felt we'd had a say.
 - b) 67% of us said it helped us meet new people and make friends.
 - c) 61% of us said it gave us a personal sense of achievement from being involved.
- 8) Four out of ten of us (42%) told BYC that we are involved in youth participation through youth representation structures, such as local youth councils, youth parliaments or Young Mayor schemes.
- 9) If young people are involved in youth participation we are more likely to:
 - a) Believe it's important for us personally to influence decisions being made in our local areas.
 - b) Feel that 'when people like me get involved they can make a difference'.
- 10) Whether we are engaged in youth participation or not, most of us (six out of ten of us) agree that our views are taken less seriously in local decision-making because of our age.

On the Big Society

- 11) We like the idea of being empowered through the Big Society. When we were told that the Prime Minister had said of the Big Society idea -“*You can call it liberalism. You can call it empowerment. You can call it freedom. You can call it responsibility*” – 37% of us felt that the idea of empowerment would engage young people in the Big Society. A third thought the idea of freedom would appeal (34%) then responsibility (22%) and liberalism (7%).
- 12) We feel that if young people want to get involved in the Big Society then we should be both able to and supported to do so. Indeed half of us would volunteer our own time to keep open local services threatened with closure.
- 13) Nearly half of us (48%) have suggestions of how to get young people to engage with the Big Society.

On the National Citizen Service

- 14) Over half of us (53%) think the National Citizen Service, a voluntary summer programme for 16 year olds, is a good idea. 20% do not and 27% are not yet sure.
- 15) Two thirds of us (66%) think a key barrier to young people becoming part of the National Citizen Service would be having a summer job or wanting to get one. More than half of us (55%) also think young people might lack the confidence to volunteer and get involved.

Part 1: Our communities

When the British Youth Council, BYC, asked ‘*How strongly do you feel that you belong to each of the following places?*’ nearly three quarters of us (74%) said we feel like we belong to the UK, whereas six out of ten felt that we belonged to our local area (63%) or neighbourhood (61%).

We feel that as young people we are not really involved in our local area outside of our school life and then we tend to move away from our local area when we go to study for a degree. In contrast many of us have lived in the UK all our lives:

- *“I like to see myself as a citizen of the UK, as I have friends in many different places. Locally, I do not feel that much is done to include young people in the community outside of school”. Female, 17.*
- *“I have a strong sense of national pride although I have no qualms about moving around within the UK so long as I like the area”. Male, 17.*
- *“I don't like my neighbourhood, I mean it's friendly and everything but there is nothing to do. I commute to work every day. I'm rarely home, I don't feel I belong there. I feel like I belong somewhere else. I put 'very strongly' to the UK because this is the only country I've ever lived in, and the only culture I've experienced living in”. Female, 18.*

Six out of ten of us (61%) also felt that ‘*there are widespread negative perceptions of young people within your community*’. Young people said to BYC that:

- *“People think we are causing trouble when we just hang out”. Female, 15.*
- *“People everywhere look down on young people, tarring us all with the same brush”. Female, 22.*
- *“I think that a lot of the older generations feel that young people are up to no good and do not contribute to society and see them as law breakers and trouble makers”. Male, 23.*

However, we have lots of ideas on how to improve things for young people in our local areas. Half of us, 505 young people, detailed how we would change things for the better.

A lot of our ideas (58%) focused on the need for more positive activities available for young people and the promotion and continued funding of existing youth projects. We said that we need safe and accessible spaces where we can just hang out with our friends without it costing us money:

- *“There should be more things to do and places to go which don't cost a lot of money”. Female, 15.*

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- *“Stop telling people they can't play there, can't hang around, can't do this, can't do that and start giving them somewhere they can go...”* Female, 21.
- *“Provide things for young people to do, so many things have been cut”.* Female, 18.

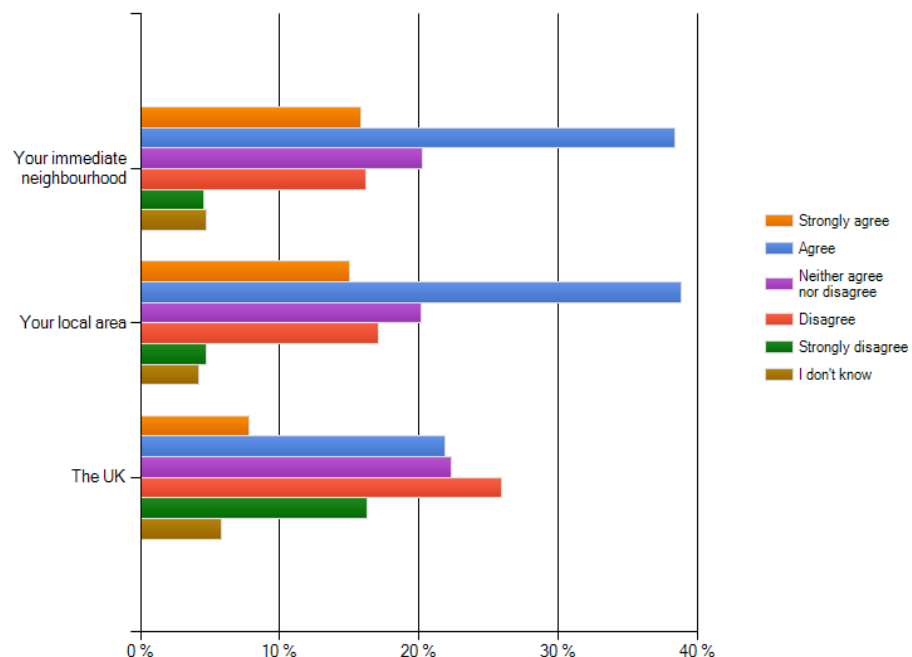
Part 2: Speaking up about our local area

Three quarters of us (75%) want to have a greater say in decisions made about our local area, on topics such as what happens to our local services such as health services and schools. We told the BYC how we think that as service users and the 'next generation' we can bring a lot to the table in decision-making:

- *"I use a lot of public services as a young person and know what would make the services better for young people". Female, 16.*
- *"Young people are rarely listened to, as people assume we don't have life experience. However when taken seriously we can bring a new perspective that helps development greatly, after all, we are members of the community also and have our own needs and interests". Male, 21.*
- *"Because I come from a different walk of life, my experience as a young person from a traveller background could help". Female, 16.*
- *"We're the future, so we should be able to build the future because were going to take over from the adults and to be honest; you guys have left us a hell of a mess to clear up..." Male, 14.*

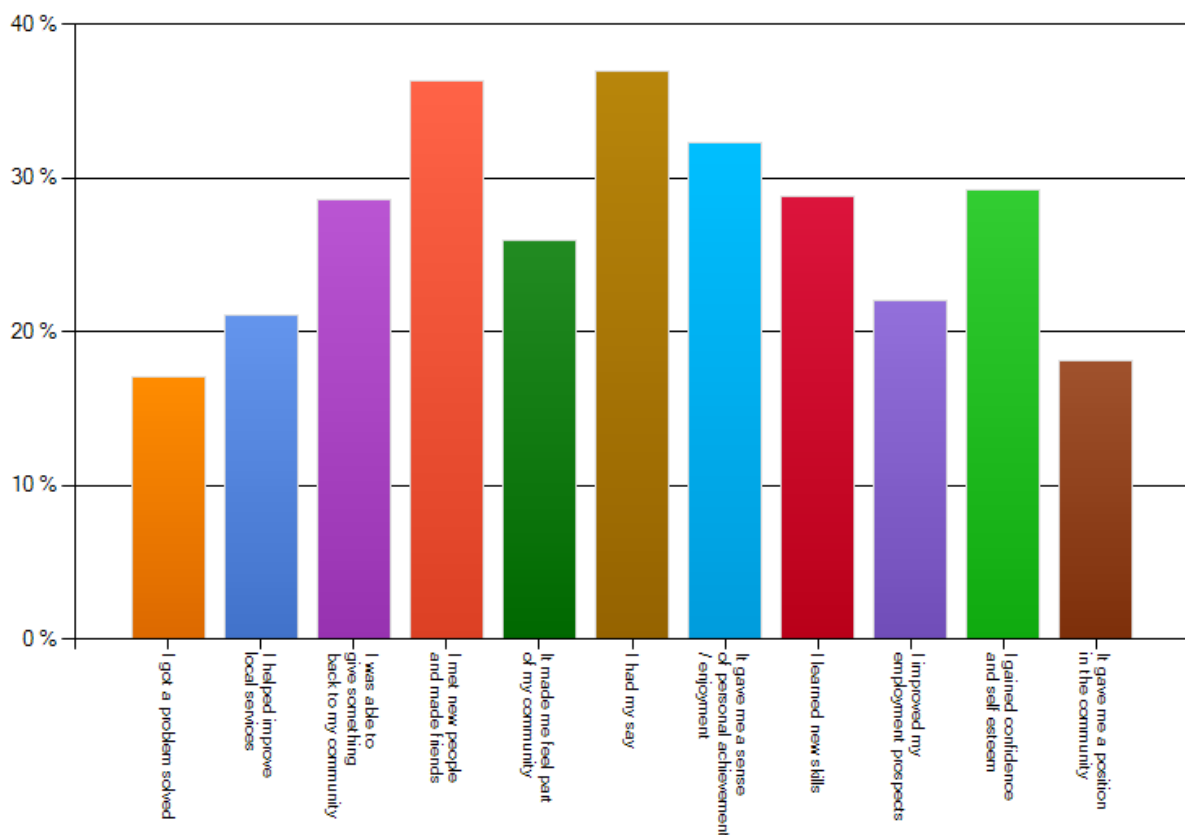
Yet only half of us (54%) feel we can actually influence decisions being made at a local or neighbourhood level. We are also less likely to feel that we can influence decisions being made on a national level. Only three out of ten of us (30%) think we can influence decisions affecting the UK as a whole.

Whether young people can influence decisions being made in their neighbourhood, local level or at a national level



We told BYC that we felt we had really benefited when we have had the opportunity to speak up on decisions being made in our local areas that affect us or issues we care about. In particular most of us felt it helped us make friends and influence people. 72% of us said we felt we'd had a say. 67% of us said it helped us meet new people and make friends. 61% of us said it gave us a personal sense of achievement from being involved.

Benefits of speaking up about our local area



42% of us told BYC that we are already involved in opportunities to have our say through youth participation structures, such as local youth councils, youth parliaments and Young Mayor schemes. Young people told BYC that through their involvement in these structures they are making a difference to their community:

- *“I am painting young people in a positive light also making a stand and showing young people want to get involved in decision making”. Female, 15, who volunteers as a youth councillor.*
- *“We have made people aware of volunteering, how to get involved, encouraged music skills at a battle of the bands and introduced new talents to the area. We have raised awareness of underage drinking by making a film and will be holding a disco to raise awareness of sexually transmitted infections/diseases”. Female 15, who volunteers as a youth councillor.*

- *“I have helped write the Children's and Young People's Plan for Leeds, this will make a difference to the services which affect us”*. Female, 17, who volunteers as a youth councillor.
- *“Even though it is only me speaking, I am speaking for all the young people I come into contact with and hear ideas from - I feel that everyone is a valuable member of my youth council and everyone makes a difference in their own ways”*. Female, 18, who volunteers as a youth councillor.
- *“Raising awareness. Also Broadband services [in our area] are being looked into and trialled after a meeting in which I was a speaker”*. Male, 17, who volunteers as a youth councillor and is a Member of the UK Youth Parliament.
- *“By putting across the views of my constituents as well as helping groups of young people”*. Male, 18, who is a Member of the UK Youth Parliament.

Recent research by BYC estimated that there are up to 19,800 young people, mostly aged between 11 and 17, who are active as volunteer ‘youth councillors’, informing and influencing local decision-making. Just over half of youth councillors are elected and they were voted for by an estimated 1 million children and young people in 2009/10.¹ Those of us involved in youth participation are more likely to feel that it’s personally important for us to be involved in local decision-making and that young people can make a difference.

93% of young people involved in youth forums agreed that it is important or very important for them to ‘personally to feel that you can influence decisions being made in your local area’, compared to 73% of young people not involved in youth forums. In addition, youth representatives in forums were more likely to have a sense of their own political efficacy. 78% of youth representatives feel that ‘when people like me get involved they can make a difference’, compared to 54% of those not involved. Please see Appendix I for more information on the sample of young people who took part in ‘The Big Listen’, including the experiences of these more engaged young people.

Whether we are engaged in youth participation or not, we agree that our views are taken less seriously in local decision-making because of our age. Six out of ten of us (60%) told BYC that ‘My views are taken less seriously because of my age’.

- *“I would like to raise my voice to others but I do feel I’m less likely to be listened to due to my age”*. Female, 17.
- *“Because of my age, I think people just ignore what I say because they think that I am a teenager and I go out every weekend and get drunk & I don’t know anything!”* Male, 18.
- *“I think my age makes my views less important because young people aren’t especially likely to vote and I probably don’t have a lot of money for campaign donations so there is little reason to listen to me”*. Male, 23.

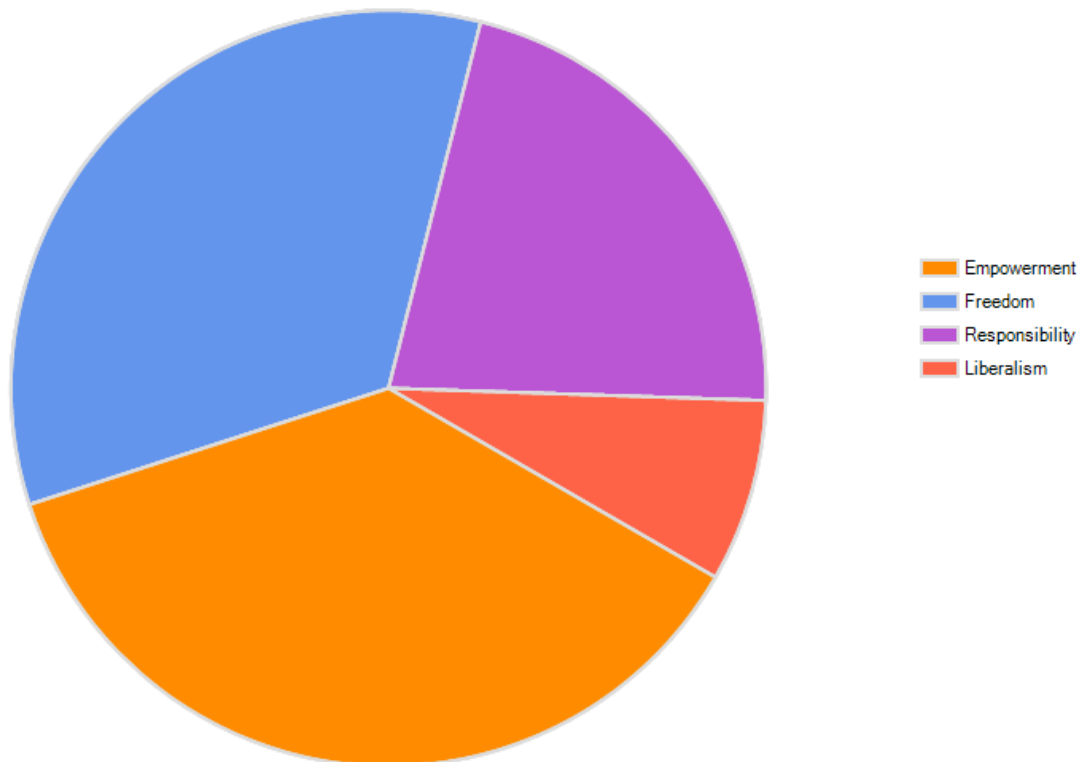
¹ British Youth Council, 2010, *Young Voices Stronger Together: A report on the local youth council network*.

Part 3: The Big Society

We told BYC that we think young people will engage more with the idea of being empowered through the Big Society but that we need more information about what the concept entails for us and how we can get involved.

When we were told that the Prime Minister had said of the Big Society idea - “You can call it liberalism. You can call it empowerment. You can call it freedom. You can call it responsibility” – 37% of us felt that the idea of empowerment would engage young people in the Big Society. A third thought the idea of freedom would appeal (34%) then responsibility (22%) and liberalism (7%).

The Prime Minister has said of the Big Society idea that “You can call it liberalism. You can call it empowerment. You can call it freedom. You can call it responsibility”. Out of these four ideas, young people chose what idea they thought would engage young people in the Big Society.



Nearly half of us (48%) felt that we had a good idea of what the Big Society is about, but four out of ten of us (40%) were less confident about our knowledge of the topic; out of the latter group 16% told BYC that they felt they had no knowledge of it at all.²

² BYC asked young people to rate their knowledge on the idea of a ‘Big Society’, where 10 means you have ‘A great deal of knowledge’ and 0 means you have ‘No knowledge’? 40% of young people rated their knowledge as 10-6 on

Six out of ten of us, 601 young people, could tell BYC what the idea of the 'Big Society' meant to them; although a few said that the survey was the first time they had come across the concept. The majority of comments focused on the idea that it was about community involvement:

- *"People being part of a community, helping each other". Female, 23.*
- *"Where more members of the community take greater control over decisions regarding their local community. Also where volunteers of that community run or help to run certain public services". Female, 23.*
- *"Being involved in our local communities more often". Female 18*

Within our explanations of what the Big Society means to us, young people both celebrated and criticised the idea. Those who supported the idea of the Big Society felt it was a proposal that would devolve power to people so they could take responsibility for local services, reduce the influence of the Government, and ensure their ideas on how to improve their communities happened:

- *"People all helping to get things done in their community". Male, 17.*
- *"The Big Society is about volunteering, it's about charity, about local people taking control of local services and about not relying on the Government for everything". Male, 16.*
- *"People being more involved in what matters to them and taking responsibility for their local area". Female, 19.*
- *"Devolving power to the people using services in order to allow them more influence and flexibility in delivering a service more personal and suitable to them". Male, 23.*
- *"A stronger feeling of unity in communities; the prospect of making a big difference in your local community with the support of the government". Female, 16.*

Those who did not support the idea of the Big Society expressed their worries that it was a pretext for deep cuts to the public sector, including funding to youth services, and that it would lead to an overreliance on volunteers:

- *"The government palming off their responsibilities onto local people who are not sufficiently skilled or experienced to deal with it. and the people who shout the loudest will get all the power, and young people, the*

the scale whereas 48% rated their knowledge as 0-4. 16% rated their knowledge as '0'. This can be compared to a YouGov poll, 30th June – 2nd July 2010, which found that 41% of 18-24 year olds said they had no knowledge '0' on the scale of the Big Society; 27% had a knowledge of 10-6 on the scale, 68% had a knowledge of 5-0 on the scale and 5% were unsure of how to rate their knowledge of the Big Society. YouGov poll data available from: <http://today.yougov.co.uk/sites/today.yougov.co.uk/files/YG-Archives-Pol-BigSociety-020710.pdf>

elderly, the disabled, etc, i.e. people who are marginalised by society, will become even more marginalised". Female, 24.

- *"Get people to do things for free". Male, 17.*
- *"It means making thousands of workers unemployed and replacing them with volunteers, cutting funding to youth groups". Female, 18.*
- *"Replacing professional paid public services by calls for volunteers in an effort to cut costs". Male, 21.*
- *"People being forced to do things in their community so the council wouldn't have to pay people to do it". Female, 16.*

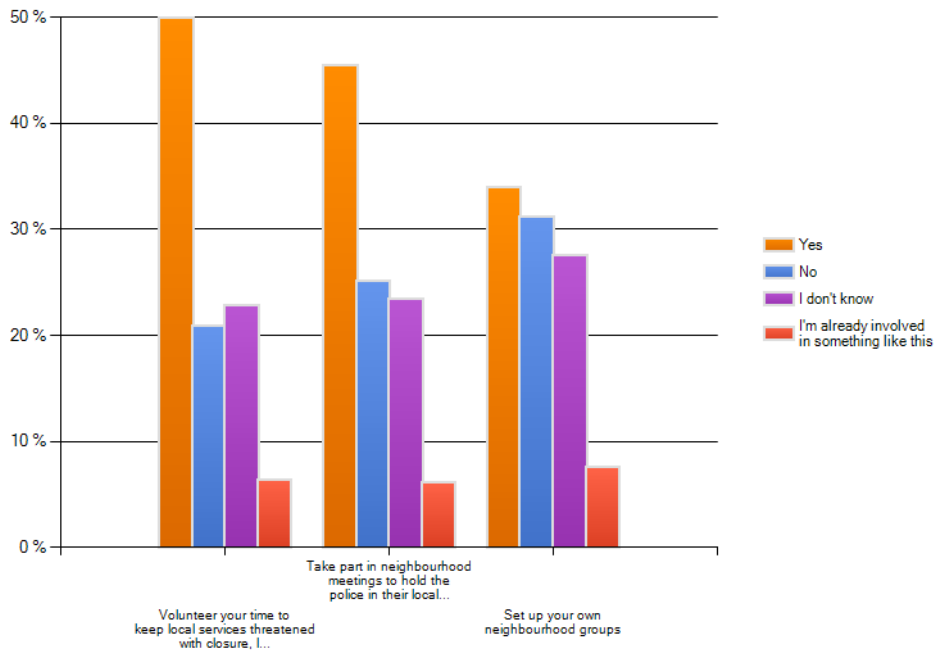
Despite holding a variety of views about the concept, a large majority of us felt that if young people want to get involved in creating the Big Society then we should be able to. 83% of us thought young people should be supported to set up neighbourhood groups, especially in the most deprived areas. 81% thought young people should be able to volunteer their time to keep local services threatened with closure, like libraries, parks or post offices, running. 78% thought young people should be able to take part in neighbourhood meetings to hold the police in their local area to account.

Young people felt that if young people want to get involved in the Big Society they should both be able to, and supported through youth work to overcome any barriers to them doing so.

- *"If people want to help they should be able to". Female, 15.*
- *"They should be supported in taking the steps to be involved in this community". Female, 19.*
- *"With support from professional youth workers it could happen" Female, 15.*
- *"Young people should be given resources and support to set up their own groups, this would encourage ownership, thus increasing attendance rates, as per the ladder of participation. Asking young people to help run existing groups is not successful engagement". Male, 17.*

Indeed half of us, 50%, would volunteer our own time to keep local services threatened with closure open. 45% of us would take part in neighbourhood meetings to hold the police in their local area to account. A third of us, 34%, would set up our own neighbourhood groups.

Whether young people would take part in the 'Big Society' initiatives



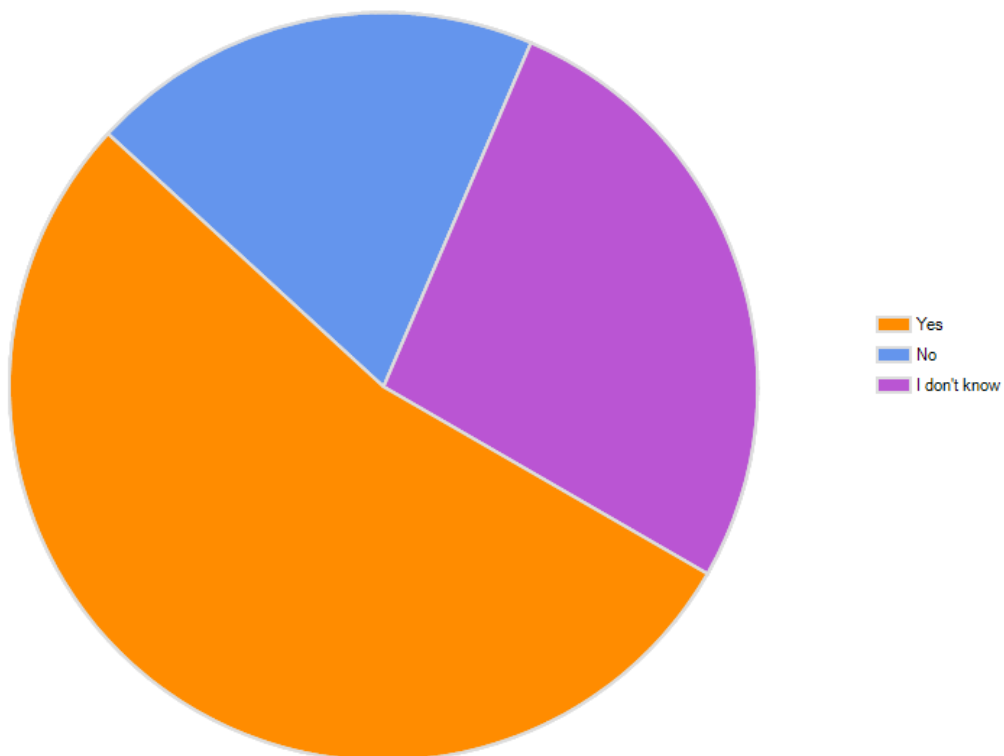
Nearly half of us, 48%, also have suggestions on how to get young people to engage with the Big Society. The majority of our suggestions focused on the need to promote the concept to young people and how involvement in its initiatives could benefit them. We felt that schools and colleges, youth groups, and social networking sites would be the best place to start:

- “Get more young people involved through education in schools and get more youth groups set up to support big society” Male, 17.
- “By informing young people about it and talking to them about what it is about and the importance of it”. Female, 16.
- “Work alongside youth groups creating programmes they can run. Send out resources explaining the big idea and how they can get involved. Many youth groups run awards (e.g. DofE) which require 'service' such as volunteering. Ensure they are knowledgeable about the Big Society and know they can volunteer within it. Advertise in colleges/universities etc”. Female, 23.
- “I would link it as closely as possible to existing provision, and advertise it through a national campaign. Direct people to a website where they can go on and see their local forum etc”. Female, 25.

Part 4: The National Citizen Service

Over half of us, 53%, think the National Citizen Service, a voluntary summer programme for 16 year olds, is a good idea. 20% do not and 27% are not sure.

Young people on whether the National Citizen Service is a good idea



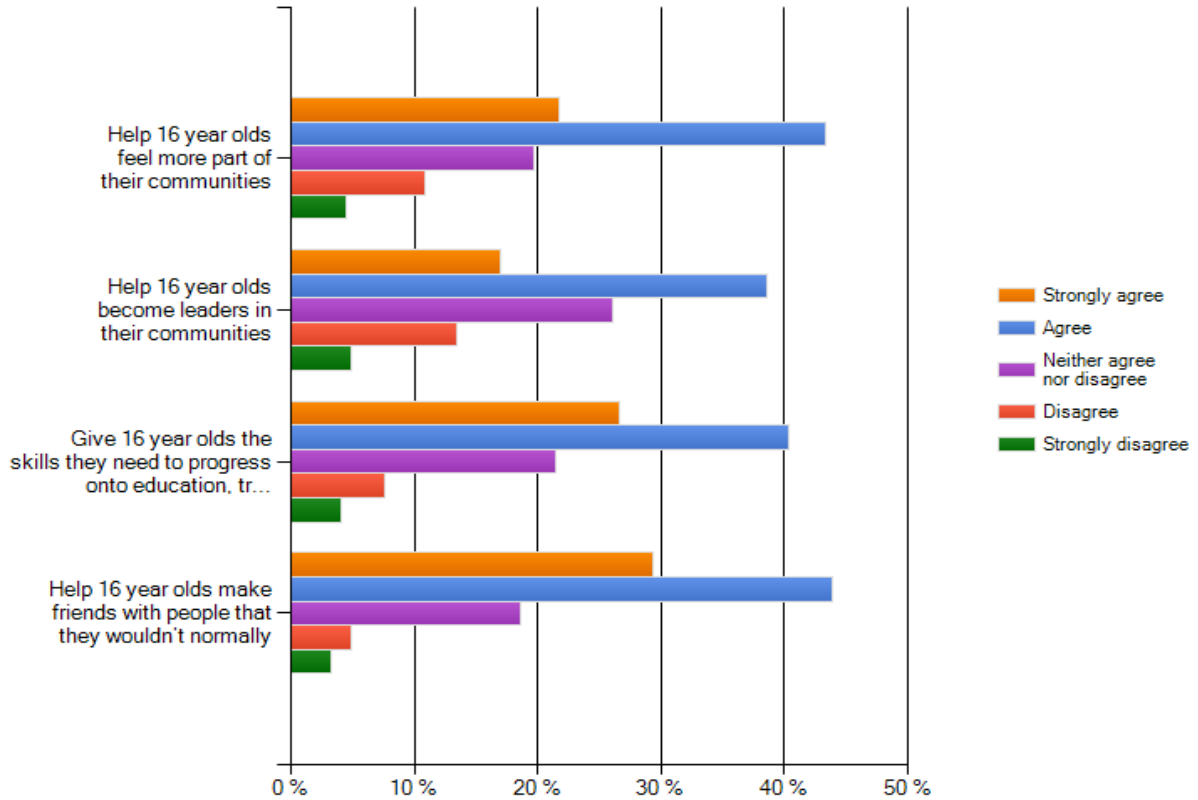
The majority of young people think that the National Citizen Service will result in certain benefits to 16 year olds (benefits previously identified by the Government as goals for the programme). We feel it will:

- Help 16 year olds make friends with people that they wouldn't normally (73%)
- Give 16 year olds the skills they need to progress onto education, training or work (67%)
- Help 16 year olds feel more that they are part of their communities (65%)
- Help 16 year olds become leaders in their communities (56%).

We feel that the National Citizen Service will be a new type of experience for a lot of 16 year olds where they can meet new people and learn new skills. However, we were a little less convinced that it would help 16 year olds become leaders because we felt that a longer period of volunteering, in a role such as a Youth Councillor, was needed to develop those skills. Our views on the National Citizen Service included:

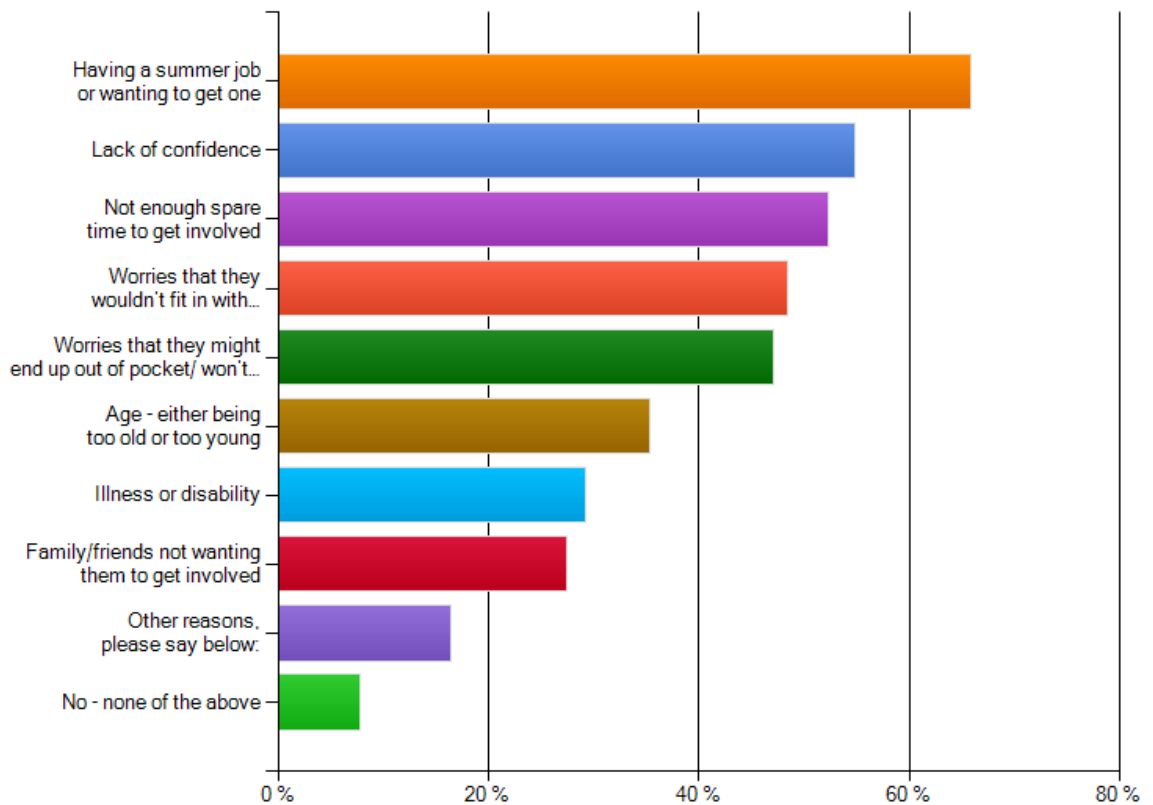
- *“It’s a great opportunity many people wouldn’t normally get and would help 16 year olds discover who they are, what they’re passionate about and how to put change into action- all things that will be helpful to both them and society as a whole”. Female, 17.*
- *“I think it would be a great experience for 16 year olds, I think it would challenge them and encourage them to try something new and meet new people in a fun way. I think it would give them more experience and potentially increase their chances of getting a job in later life”. Female, 15.*
- *“I think that it would help them to make friends with people they normally wouldn’t also they would gain experience with talking to people and solving problems in the work environment”. Male, 16.*
- *“They could improve their skills and become more confident, but I’m not sure if it will lead to being leaders in their local community afterwards”. Female, 16.*
- *“I don’t think that a 7 or 8 week programme will instil a greater feel of community in a young person, it would need to be more of a long term thing that occurs over several years, not just a couple of months. Taking part in a youth council for several terms of office, for example, will improve a young person’s skills, confidence, and ability to communicate with different people. This has been the case with myself, and many other young people I have met through the Kent Youth County Council”. Female, 18.*
- *“I think it is good, but if the course is only 8 weeks, I doubt it will have a large impact on young people’s lives once they have completed it. Whilst they might develop new skills the biggest selling point is that it will be a new experience. But will it make a difference in the long term??? I don’t know...” Female, 25.*

Benefits of the National Citizen Service



Two thirds of us, 66%, think a key barrier to young people becoming part of the National Citizen Service would be having a summer job or wanting to get one. More than half of us, 55% also thought a lack of confidence would be a barrier. Only 8% of survey participants thought there would be no barriers to young people taking part.

Barriers to getting involved in the National Citizen Service



When BYC asked 16 year olds if they would take part in the National Citizen Service (132 sixteen year olds took part in the 'Big Listen' survey) they were split on whether they would like to take part. 40% said that they would take part in the scheme, 40% said that they would not and 20% were not sure. 16 year olds felt that not having enough time to get involved (58%) and having a summer job or wanting to get one (40%) would be the main barriers. However, a quarter of participants felt there wouldn't be any barriers to them getting involved.

Appendix I. About the young people who took part in the 'Big Listen'

Demographics.

1007 young people took part in BYC's 'Big Listen' survey between 10th September and 17th October 2010.

The average (mode) age of someone who took part in the 'Big Listen' was 17 years old. 30% of survey participants were aged 16 and under. 67% of survey participants were aged 17 to 25. 3% preferred not to say.

58% of participants are female, 40% are male, 1% prefer not to say and 1% said other. 90% of participants live in England, 4% in Scotland, 3% in Wales, and 2% in Northern Ireland; 1% prefer not to say. 68% of participants identify as White British, 4% prefer not to say and 32% identified as an ethnic minority with 4% being Indian, 4% other White background, 3% Pakistani, and 2% African.

Eight out of ten young people, 80%, who took part in Big Listen, identify their sexuality as heterosexual/straight. 8% prefer not to say. 5% as bisexual, 4% identify as a gay man, 2% as gay woman/lesbian and 1% as another sexuality.

7% of participants consider themselves to have a disability. 91% said they did not have a disability and 2% prefer not to say.

45% of participants say they have no religious belief. 32% identify as Christian, 7% as Muslim and 3% as Hindu

Young people who are community activists.

Many of us taking part in the Big Listen were already active in our communities. 42% told BYC that they were involved in a structure that represents young people at local or national level - for example a local youth council, youth parliament, or young advisors. A third, 33%, of us are involved in BYC membership organisations.

We found that the young people who are already active in local decision-making are more likely than those who are not involved to feel that it is important to them that they are personally involved in local decision-making and feel that they as an individual can make a difference. We also found that young people involved in youth participation are:

- More likely to know more about the Big Society
- More likely to want to take part in a Big Society initiative
- More likely to think the National Citizen Service is a good idea

43% of young people in youth representation structures felt that they had a good amount of knowledge about the Big Society (rated 6-10 on knowledge scale with 10 being a great deal of knowledge), compared to 37% of those not involved.

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85% of young people in youth representation structures said that they would volunteer their time to keep open local services threatened with closure, compared to 79% of those not involved. 85% of young people in youth representation structures would take part in neighbourhood meetings to hold the police in their local area to account compared to 72% of those not involved. Nearly nine out of ten, 89%, youth activists would set up their own neighbourhood groups, compared to eight out of ten, 79%, of those not involved. 57% of young people in representation structures also think the National Citizen Service for 16 year olds is a good idea, in comparison to 51% of young people not involved in youth participation.

It appears that young people who are already community activists, through their time volunteered as youth councillors, Young Mayors, or Members of the Youth Parliament, are already talking about the Big Society and how it will impact on them, and are keen to both add to the debate and get involved if they can and make a difference.

Appendix II. Key questions and findings of the ‘*The Big Listen*’

About you

Are you currently a member of a structure that represents young people at a local or national level, for example a local youth council, youth parliament, or young advisors?

No	58%
Yes	42%

You and your local area.

How strongly do you feel that you belong to each of the following places?

	Very strongly	Fairly strongly	Not very strongly	Not at all strongly	Don't know
Your immediate neighbourhood	24%	37%	24%	13%	2%
Your local area (by this we mean the area within a 15-20 minute walk from your home)	22%	41%	25%	10%	2%
The UK	33%	41%	16%	8%	2%

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?

Very satisfied	22%
Fairly satisfied	52%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	16%
Fairly dissatisfied	8%
Very dissatisfied	2%

To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?

Strongly agree	15%
Agree	39%
Neither agree nor disagree	30%
Disagree	12%
Strongly disagree	4%

To what extent do you agree or disagree that there are widespread negative perceptions of young people within your community?

Strongly agree	18%
Agree	43%
Neither agree nor disagree	25%
Disagree	11%
Strongly disagree	3%

Can you think of any ways to improve things for young people in your local area?

560 answers. To look at this data please contact Helen Deakin, Policy and Campaigns Officer via helen.deakin@byc.org.uk or 020 7022 1974.

Speaking Up

In the last 12 months, have you spoken up about decisions being made in your local area that affect you or issues you care about?

Do you feel you have benefited from speaking up in any of the following ways?

I got a problem solved	17%
I helped improve local services	21%
I was able to give something back to my community	29%
I met new people and made friends	36%
It made me feel part of my community	26%
I had my say	37%
It gave me a sense of personal achievement / enjoyment	32%
I learned new skills	29%
I improved my employment prospects	22%
I gained confidence and self esteem	29%
It gave me a position in the community	18%
No	11%
No – as I haven't spoken up	34%
Other reason	5%

Have you ever faced any barriers to speaking up?

Not enough spare time to get involved	36%
Don't know how to find out about getting involved	24%
Not got the right skills/experience	12%
Wouldn't be able to stop once got involved	9%
Worried I might end up out of pocket	9%
Worried I wouldn't fit in with other people involved	16%
Illness or disability	3%
Feel I am too young	12%
No	3%
Other reason	12%

Would any of the following make it easier for you to speak up?

If I had more time	43%
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If I could get involved in a youth council/forum	20%
If the council got in touch with me and asked me	37%
If I could give my opinion online /by email	39%
If I knew what issues were being considered	39%
If it was easy to contact my local councillor	26%
If I knew who my local councillor was	20%
No	10%
Don't know	7%
Something else (specified)	6%

Do you feel that you are making a difference by speaking up?

No	15%
I don't know	24%
I'm not currently speaking up	31%
Yes (how specified)	30%

In the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?

Civic engagement activity	% saying yes
Contacted your Local councillor	30%
Contacted your Member of Parliament (MP)	38%
Contacted your Welsh Assembly Member (AM) (if applicable)	3%
Contacted your Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) (if applicable)	4%
Contacted your Member of the Legislative Assembly in Northern Ireland (MLA) (if applicable)	3%
Attended a public meeting or rally	42%
Taken part in a public demonstration or protest	27%
Signed a petition	68%
Completed a questionnaire (about local services or problems in the local area)	67%
Attended a public meeting (about local services or problems in the local area)	35%
Been involved in a group set up to discuss local services or problems in the local area	40%

How important is it for you personally to feel that you can influence decisions being made in your local area?

Very important	40%
Quite important	42%
Not very important	14%

Not at all important	4%
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Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know
Your immediate neighbourhood	16%	38%	20%	16%	5%	5%
Your local area	15%	39%	20%	17%	5%	4%
The UK	8%	22%	22%	26%	16%	6%

Thinking about decisions in your local area, such as how the local community is run, and what happens in the health service and schools, would you say that you agree or disagree with the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I would like to have a greater say in these decisions	34%	42%	19%	5%	0%
My views are taken less seriously because of my age	26%	35%	24%	13%	2%
When people like me get involved they can make a difference	25%	40%	25%	8%	2%

You and the Big Society

How would you rate your knowledge on the idea of a 'Big Society', where 10 means you have 'A great deal of knowledge' and 0 means you have 'No knowledge'?

10 – a great deal of knowledge	4%
9	4%
8	10%

7	12%
6	10%
5	12%
4	8%
3	8%
2	9%
1	7%
0 – No knowledge	16%

What does the idea of the 'Big Society' mean to you?

755 answers. To look at this data please contact Helen Deakin, Policy and Campaigns Officer via helen.deakin@byc.org.uk or 020 7022 1974.

Do you think young people should be able to take part in the following 'Big Society' ideas?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Volunteer their time to keep local services threatened with closure, like libraries, parks or post offices, running.	41%	40%	11%	5%	3%
Take part in neighbourhood meetings to hold the police in their local area to account	36%	42%	17%	4%	1%
Be supported to set up neighbourhood groups, especially in the most deprived areas	41%	43%	13%	2%	2%

The Prime Minister has said of the Big Society idea that “You can call it liberalism. You can call it empowerment. You can call it freedom. You can call it responsibility”. Which of these four ideas do you think will engage young people in the Big Society?

Liberalism	8%
Empowerment	37%
Freedom	34%
Responsibility	21%

Would you take part in the following 'Big Society' ideas?

	Yes	No	I don't know	I'm already involved in something like this
Volunteer your time to keep local services threatened with closure, like libraries, parks or post offices, running.	50%	21%	23%	6%
Take part in neighbourhood meetings to hold the police in their local area to account	45%	25%	24%	6%
Set up your own neighbourhood groups	34%	31%	28%	7%

How would you get young people to engage with the Big Society?

484 answers. To look at this data please contact Helen Deakin, Policy and Campaigns Officer via helen.deakin@byc.org.uk or 020 7022 1974.

National Citizen Service.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the National Citizen Service will:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Help 16 year olds feel more part of their communities	22%	43%	20%	11%	4%
Help 16 year olds become leaders in their communities	17%	39%	26%	13%	5%
Give 16 year olds the	27%	40%	21%	8%	4%

skills they need to progress onto education, training or work					
Help 16 year olds make friends with people that they wouldn't normally	29%	44%	19%	5%	3%

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the National Citizen Service will help improve perceptions of young people in their communities?

Strongly agree	17%
Agree	42%
Neither agree nor disagree	27%
Disagree	10%
Strongly disagree	4%

Do you see any of the following being barriers to young people getting involved in the National Citizen Service?

Having a summer job or wanting to get one	66%
Not enough spare time to get involved	52%
Lack of confidence	55%
Worries that they might end up out of pocket/ won't get enough financial support	47%
Worries that they wouldn't fit in with other people involved	48%
Illness or disability	29%
Family/friends not wanting them to get involved	28%
Age - either being too old or too young	35%
No - none of the above	8%
Other reasons	17%

Do you have any suggestions of how to improve the National Citizen Service?

183 suggestions. To look at this data please contact Helen Deakin, Policy and Campaigns Officer via helen.deakin@byc.org.uk or 020 7022 1974.

This question is for 16 year olds only. If you are under 16 or aged 17 or above please skip to question 7.

If you are 16 years old would you take part in the scheme?

Yes	40%
No	40%
I don't know	20%

If you answered 'No' to question 5 please say why not below:

British Youth Council

byc briefing

Having a summer job or wanting to get one	40%
Not enough spare time to get involved	58%
Lack of confidence	5%
Worries that they might end up out of pocket/ won't get enough financial support	14%
Worries that they wouldn't fit in with other people involved	12%
Illness or disability	2%
Family/friends not wanting them to get involved	9%
Age - either being too old or too young	2%
No - none of the above	24%
Other reasons	30%

Do you think that the National Citizen Service is a good idea?

Yes	53%
No	20%
I don't know	27%

For more information

about BYC training:

www.byc.org.uk/training

or to download further resources:

www.byc.org.uk/resources

British Youth Council

We empower young people across the UK to have a say and be heard.

www.byc.org.uk

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