

# Youth Funding Task Group

## Final Report and Recommendations

## **Task group membership**

Councillor Max Austin (Chair)  
Councillor Usaama Kaweesa  
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## **Scrutiny support:**

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## **Acknowledgments**

The task group would particularly like to thank the voluntary sector colleagues and council officers, who shared their views and experiences with us.

The task group would particularly like to note the work of Stella Akintan in supporting this report, and thank her for her years of service to Merton Council.

## **Who the task group met with**

- Beau Fadahunsi, Interim CEO, Merton Connected
- Jackie Watkins, CEO Tooting & Mitcham Community Sports Club
- Fisayo Fadahunsi, MD, Filmanthropy
- Keith Shipman – Head of Service Education Inclusion
- Keni Thomas - Youth Service Manager
- Gareth Plumb – My Futures Manger (Targeted Youth Service)
- Sukpal Uppal – Youth Participation Manager
- Paul Munro AFC Wimbledon
- Fiona Sutherland – AFC Wimbledon
- Chris Murray, CEO, Young Brent Foundation
- Daisy Srblin, CEO Young Camden

## **Introduction**

Local youth services provide safe and meaningful activity that supports young people to have fun, make friends, learn new skills and fulfil their potential.

Local budget pressures and the need to fulfil statutory duties has meant that many local authorities have had to make difficult choices about what youth services they are able to maintain or commission. In many cases, this has meant a shift away from universal provision to more targeted activities to meet specific needs.

Research by the National Youth Council Analysis of local authority spend on youth services shows that gross spending has dropped from £1.2bn in 2010/11 down to £379m in 2020/21.<sup>1</sup>

Some local authorities are able to attract financial support from local benefactors or corporate sponsors. Despite significant efforts, Merton does not have this vital support, and as a result has had limited access to larger pots of funding.

The review will focus on identifying a funding model for Merton which will help to generate funding, bring in sponsorship to provide additional resource to the youth service.

Representatives from voluntary organisations as well as feedback from the Merton Survey of Young People has highlighted that the needs of young people has increased post pandemic with more mental health needs, family breakdown and the impact of the cost of living crisis. Therefore, increasing access to funding opportunities is a very pertinent issue.

### **Current Merton offer to young people.**

Following a restructure in 2016, Merton has a mixture of provision. There are universal, participation, targeted youth services, youth centres in the poorest parts of the borough, other youth provision includes the scouts. The youth service is reliant on income generation.

### **Merton Model:**

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<sup>1</sup> [document \(amazonaws.com\)](#)

- Universal Youth Service in areas of the borough with highest need – funded/income generation
- Universal -Merton Connected /Merton Youth Partnership –not commissioned
- Universal Duke of Edinburgh, but also targeted at Special Schools – fully buy back from April 24
- Youth Voice – universal – parliament, but also targeted send/care - funded
- Targeted: Disability; My Futures (neet), funded
- Targeted commissioned: HAF (Holidays Activities and Food programme; short breaks (send) ; Catch 22 risk and resilience service – funded/grant
- Detached (contextual safeguarding) funded

### **Young People’s Foundation**

The task group met with voluntary and community colleagues who explained why they believed that local partners delivering youth services would benefit from forming a Young People’s Foundation to improve access to funding.

Young People’s Foundations (YPF) are an initiative developed by the John Lyons Foundation and City Bridge Trust, based on a consortia approach to securing new investment by bringing together all local partners delivering youth services and the local authority. They involve a central hub that bids for funding from a variety of sources then share it out amongst the partnership. The Young People Foundation is an umbrella membership organisation offering support and training to its members.

### **Why a YPF for Merton Council**

Merton Young Partnership consists of 35 organisations which hold two or three meetings a year. The move to a YPF was described by voluntary sector colleagues as a formalisation of what is in place. Many funders will only recognise organisations with the appropriate governance and accountability structures.

During discussions with voluntary and community colleagues, the task group heard that partners had considered developing a young people foundation a few years prior, but the discussion didn’t come to fruition because individual organisations were still able to bid for funding successfully.

However, in recent years the funding landscape has changed, and it is more difficult for organisations, especially smaller ones with limited capacity to successfully bid for, often complex funding applications. In the current climate organisations need each other to survive. They need to share information and undertake joint working through showcasing what is happening across the borough.

The task group were also told about the disparity between the smaller and larger organisations. Larger organisations have often developed good relationships with

major partners such as the council but in smaller organisations staff often work additional hours without payment. A YPF includes a full-time member of staff to support the partnership.

A collective approach to a YPF will provide local leadership, attract more funding and provide additional capacity to enhance the local offer and implement good practice from elsewhere.

It was reported to the task group that many of the large funders view Merton as an affluent out of London borough, a YPF would provide an opportunity for Merton to gather the data to highlight the levels of deprivation and the need for funding. Hence there are local opportunities which are not being utilised.

### **Getting YPF status**

During the course of the task groups' investigation into the best funding model for Merton, the voluntary sector partners were clearly working towards Young People Foundation status. (Although at the time of writing at least £20,000 in start-up costs was still to be sourced).

The position of the task group was that although they had heard positive feedback about the benefits of the YPF, they didn't feel able to endorse it as they had not had sufficient time to explore it fully or to consider alternative funding models.

The task group turned their attention to consider what relationship the council should have with the YPF, to this end councillors held meetings with the chief executives of Brent and Camden YPF's.

Both Camden and Brent are in a very different position to Merton as they benefit from funding from the John Lyons Foundation, however they both had developed good working relationships with the council that they found beneficial.

### **YPF Relationship with the council**

The YPF plays an important role in connecting smaller organisations which are not council funded.

The YPF can act as a critical friend to the council as they are an independent organisation which does not report to them directly.

There can be a sense of insider and outsider perceptions of funding organisations, with smaller organisations feeling excluded. The YPF has an important role in bringing organisations together.

If the YPF has established a strong relationship with the council this can be helpful when dealing with corporates partners as the council is seen as an established, trusted organisation.

Incorporating learnings from discussions with Brent and Camden as above, it is acknowledged that any representation of the Council on the YPF Board should be carefully considered. Links between the YPF and ward councillors can bring huge benefits with the proviso that the relationship is advisory and collaborative.

The Council can also support the YPF by raising awareness of its role as a local advocate for the youth sector.

### **Ways to attract corporate sponsorship**

The task group were keen to understand what more could be done to identify corporate opportunities for the council, especially what role councillors could play. The task group were informed that ward councillors can be matched in potential projects in their ward where funding opportunities could be available. They could meet with potential sponsors act as an advocate. Councillors can look for funding opportunities and visit funded projects.

In light of the evidence received, the task group would like to make the following recommendations to the Merton Youth Partnership as they develop their bid to become a Young Person Foundation.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Implementation Lead</b>
MYP to consider council representation on their Board.	CLLF with the MYP
MYP to acknowledge the part Ward councillors can play in seeking funding from corporate sponsors and local benefactors, and therefore consider supporting the creation of a YPF Councillor Champion.	CLLF with the MYP
MYP to ensure governance arrangements give an equal voice to smaller organisations.	CLLF with the MYP
Progress with the YPF to report to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	CLLF with the MYP