



Annual Report 2016/17

An introduction from Sir Ian Mills

Against the background of successfully managing change in the charity world, I agreed to become the founding Chair of Youth First (YF) in 2016 when it was set up by the London Borough of Lewisham (LBL). The brief was:

- to help equip the rapidly growing number of young people in Lewisham with the skills they will need but don't yet have for a successful and fulfilling adult life.
- to take over and transform the youth service by building an outstanding leadership team, improving partnerships with schools and in this way making a real difference to the lives of young people in need of help and attracting the new sources of funding which will be required.

Over the last 12 months, the CEO, myself and a group of new non-executive directors have recruited a very strong management team to develop a transformed youth service. It is a leadership team which:

- aims to increase the number of young people accessing and benefiting from youth services in the borough;
- understands the testimony from past users of just how effective the regular attendance at a good youth club or adventure playground is;
- is persuading the large number of occasional visitors to our youth clubs and adventure playgrounds to become regular attenders and enjoy the proven benefits;
- and is putting in place new services aimed at helping particularly vulnerable teenagers including those at risk of exclusion from school.

This first annual report describes these challenges and illustrates how Youth First is seizing the opportunity to tackle them and bring opportunity and inspiration to the lives of young people in our borough.

The young people of Lewisham represent this borough's future and during 2018 we plan to add to the insights and experience which working closely with so many local young people has given us, the results of an independent survey commissioned from a reputable market research organisation of what sort of support our 8- to 19-year-olds are expecting from their local authority. The combined findings will form the basis of how we design Youth First with LBL and others for the 2020s and 2030s.

Sir Ian Mills

Chair, Youth First



A renewed focus and energy

Youth First officially opened its doors as an independent organisation on September 1st 2016, stepping out from the London Borough of Lewisham's longstanding youth service.

It is with great pride that I lead this unique organisation. We are constituted as a community benefit society, one of only a small number of youth mutuals in England owned by staff and the young people we support. Our task has been to re-energise, refocus and empower the staff and young people to design and run provision in ways that meet the needs of young people in our borough and can best sustain youth and play work in the future.

We have faced significant operational challenges in our first year of independence. But we have also seen a big improvement in the morale of our staff and a commitment to rise to these challenges. We have an experienced independent Chairman and Board of Trustees who offer constructive critique and support, and new programmes and partnerships are beginning to increase attendance and make an impact on the lives of young people.

Now, as an independent organisation we are able to move swiftly to respond to need and we are beginning to build strong partnerships with schools and to increase our contribution to the borough's priorities in crime reduction and early help. We are raising new funds to support investment in youth centres and to extend programmes to young people across the borough.

This report highlights the impact of our work. Importantly, it also describes some of the challenges we have faced and the ways we are tackling them. Our aim is to become a gold standard youth organisation so young people can benefit from one of the very best youth services in the country and to do this through our distinct employee and young person governed structure.

Mervyn Kaye

Chief Executive

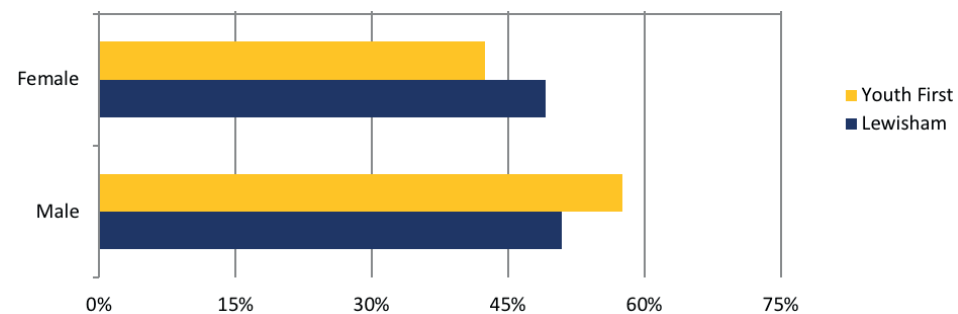


Young people in Lewisham

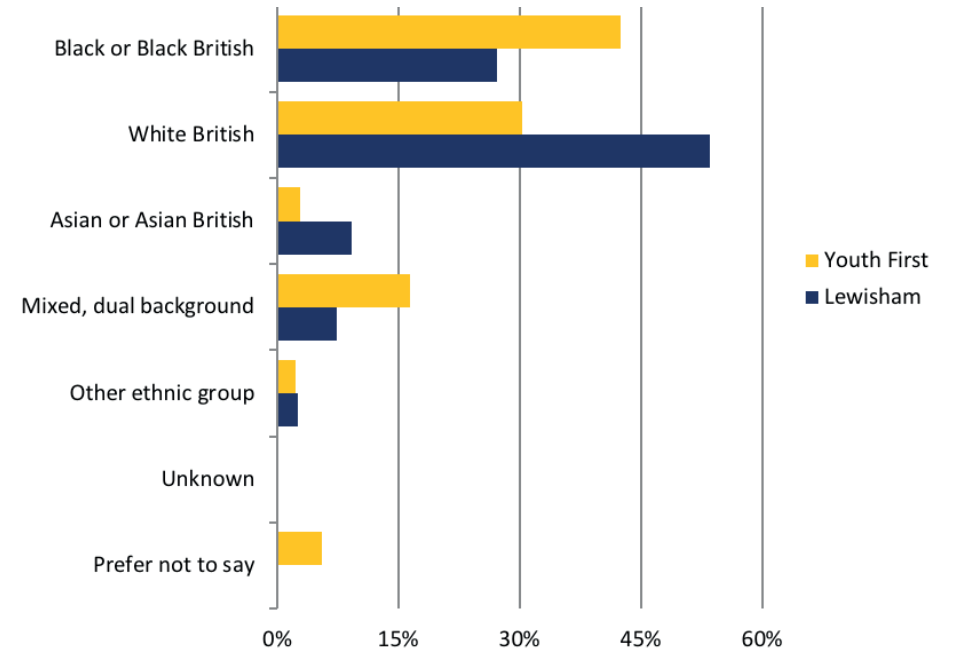
Lewisham is one of London's most deprived boroughs. According to the government's index that measures deprivation affecting children, a fifth of Lewisham's neighbourhoods are amongst the 10% most severely deprived areas of the country. Nine out of 10 of its neighbourhoods are in the worst 50%.

In spite of the challenges of deprivation, Lewisham's young people do well in its primary schools which are ranked as some of the best in the country. However things change in secondary education: the borough has some of the worst exclusion and GCSE attainment rates in England. Youth First is ready and willing to make an important contribution to supporting the change needed in our borough's secondary schools.

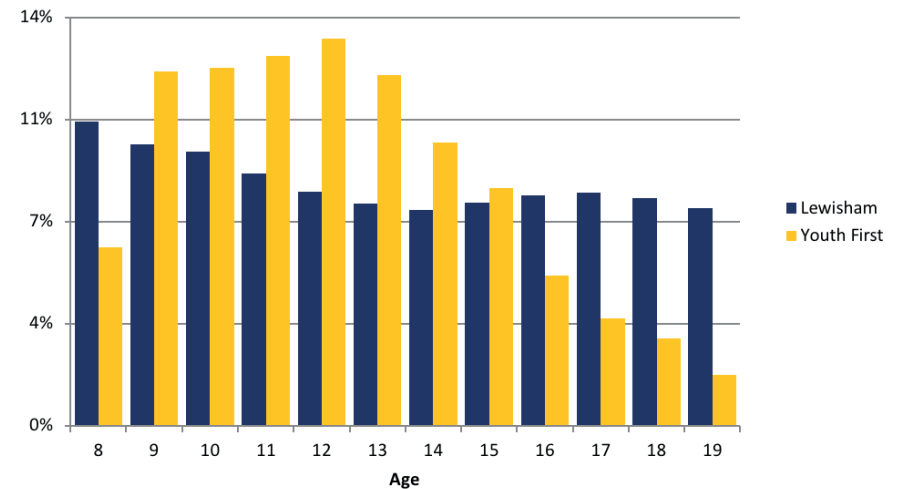
Youth First participants by gender, Sept 2016 - Jan 2018



Youth First participants by ethnicity, Sept 2016 - Jan 2018



Attendance in Youth First centres by age compared to Lewisham population



Lewisham data is taken from the 2011 ONS Census.

A new community benefit society, owned by staff and young people

Youth First's staff and young people are the owners of the not-for-profit organisation and are directly and democratically involved in its management, meaning we're a committed workforce that is truly young-person-centred.

Our aim is to grow and sustain youth work in the borough. We provide young people with safe places to go, positive things to do and the benefits of consistent relationships with professional youth workers.

Our clubs and projects are open to all young people but our direct work is focused in some of London's most deprived neighbourhoods where we work mainly with 8- to 19-year-olds. We run adventure playgrounds and award-winning youth clubs¹. We also commission a wide range of services across the borough, including focused programmes tackling knife crime, music projects and arts and theatre workshops.

We aim to be an umbrella organisation for youth provision across Lewisham. We partner a range of other organisations who share our values and aspirations. Increasingly we are working with schools, running programmes that build young people's resilience and self-confidence; we act as a hub for parents of the young people we work with; and we offer a place for wider members of the community to come together, learn, get active and celebrate together.

¹ In 2017 YF won the Three Faiths Network award for its work on diversity, faith and inclusion. YF's TNG centre in Sydenham won the Royal Institute for British Architects London Regional Award in 2014.





Youth First's youth directors

Dolly Nightingale and James O'Keefe were our first two directors and in October 2017 they handed their roles over to Amy West and Joel Owusu-Ansah. All were elected by their peers in a ballot across the borough.

In 2017 candidates spent a month campaigning in youth clubs and adventure playgrounds across Lewisham. That November, 340 young people voted across the borough.

Youth directors play an active and legal role in the structure of Youth First. They are board members but also canvass the views of young people from across Lewisham to make sure their interests and desires are at the heart of Youth First.

They have also run programmes and activities of their own. In February 2017 Dolly and James successfully applied to the Young Mayors fund to run a cooking project. Thirty young people learned about health and safety in the kitchen and how to cook a healthy meal for under £5. They have also run workshops, delivered speeches and attended training sessions to build their skills.

Creating exciting places for young people to go

Our challenge is to increase and convert more young visitors into regular attendees. Because the evidence shows that it is the regular contact with youth workers and participation in our provision that best enables us to impact young people, we have set a high bar for defining regular attendance. At 24 times a year, it is more than four times government standards. We now have the systems in place to monitor attendance and encourage more young people to come to our centres on a regular basis. This involves new and innovative programming, building new partnerships and reaching out to parents and community leaders to help them see the value of the work we do. In the summer holidays we organised summer festivals and community gatherings in many of our clubs, bringing parents, young people and their friends together. As a result, regular attendance rose in the autumn.

A majority of the young people we work with are under 14, giving us an opportunity to build long-term relationships with families and to ensure our programmes are designed and developed in response to the needs and of the young people themselves.

We run a wide range of performance arts projects including dance, music studio sessions, DJ workshops, steel bands and open mic events. Specialist partners such as Albany/ Love to Dance, XRP Musical, YOYO and just a few of the groups that have worked on these events with Youth First.

Our work with schools has started to increase significantly and we are developing young people's team work, resilience, confidence and communication skills projects. Several centres run a walking bus, providing a safe place for younger children to stay until their parents come home. We also offer computer and homework clubs, half-term activity weeks, supplementary maths sessions and chess for young people who are interested.

From September 2018, funded by MOPAC, we will run a universal schools safety program for 30 Year 7 classes addressing specific safety issues that affect teenagers. This work will encourage young people to attend the other positive activities we offer after school and during holidays.



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| 1. Dumps Adventure Playground | 7. Bromley & Downham Youth Club |
| 2. Home Park Adventure Playground | 8. Grove Park Youth Club |
| 3. Honor Oak Adventure Playground | 9. Honor Oak Youth Club |
| 4. Ladywell Fields Adventure Playground | 10. Lee Green Youth Club |
| 5. Richard MacVicar Adventure Playground | 11. Riverside Youth Club |
| 6. Bellingham Gateway Youth & Community Centre | 12. TNG Youth & Community Centre |
| | 13. Woodpecker Youth Club |

Many young people want the opportunity to play sport and get fit. This year we have offered girls' fitness programmes, junior gym, basketball, horse riding, archery, table tennis, hover board football, Zorbing, football and rock climbing (our TNG centre and APG in Deptford both have climbing walls). Our adventure playgrounds also offer a range of unique outdoor activities with structured and free play for children. Every centre also offers programmes to encourage healthy eating and nutrition. Some of our clubs have fully equipped kitchens that offer 'cook and eat together' sessions and healthy eating classes. Some centres offer gardening projects and support allotments as well.

Levels of youth crime and knife crime remain a real concern to young people and the wider community both in Lewisham and London more generally. Our service offer aims to engage with young people who are otherwise on the streets and at serious risk of getting into trouble. Our staff are trained to work with individuals whose behaviour can be challenging and endeavour to help and empower young people to be critical thinkers able make positive, informed choices and, where required, turn their lives around for the better. This includes working closely with the police, social care, schools and other partners.

Changing lives

If we actively listen to young people and understand their needs and circumstances, and we get the right skills and resources to run effective programmes, then young people will respond positively, developing their social and emotional skills to be better prepared for adult life. Evidence shows that young people can then achieve short and long-term benefits in areas such as education, employment, health.



Case study: Growing through sport at TNG

Paul originally came to TNG Youth Club in Sydenham just to attend the table tennis sessions. We encouraged him to try other activities and by mixing with a wider group of young people and trying out new things he has grown in confidence and is enjoying his TNG experience.

Paul has benefitted from mentoring from youth work staff. His mother approached us to support and prepare him for a school assessment around table tennis that would allow him to gain a scholarship into a secondary school.

We offered extra support on a Saturday morning. As a result his knowledge of table tennis, his fitness level and mental state have all improved. He passed the school assessment and received a full scholarship for table tennis.

Paul has inspired other young people in the club and was held up as a model of determination and good character by a leading coach working with another sports academy. We are really proud of what he has achieved at TNG!

To protect anonymity names have been changed.

The future

An independent survey of young people's needs

To add further credence to our core aim to be a truly youth led organisation, we will commission robust research into the opinions of our young people and parents. This will help focus our finite resources to make the greatest impact, maximising services that young people truly want to access and to best meet young people's, parents' and the wider community's needs.

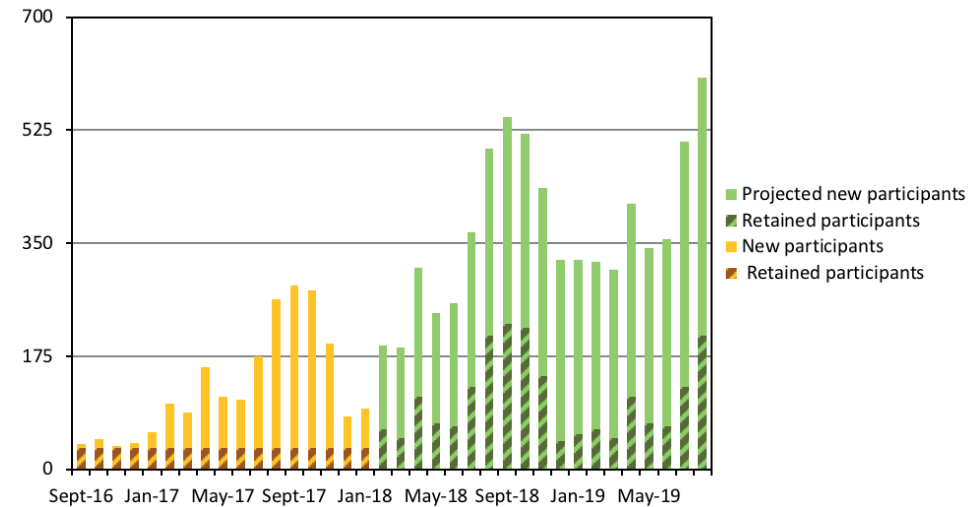
Alongside ensuring that future planning is based firmly on young people's opinions and needs, Youth First's priorities in the coming year are:

- to achieve ambitious income generation targets which provide longer-term security for the organisation and diversify its funder base. We do this against a very competitive background in the charity fundraising sector with a new fundraising and business development team to lead this area of work.
- to improve our early intervention work by embedding a trauma-based approach which helps our understanding of the needs of the children and young people we work with. This is aided by the already funded supervision time and independent clinical support for frontline seniors which is improving morale and encouraging staff to respond effectively to the needs of the young people they support.
- to recruit and retain high quality staff by improving employment contracts and being more flexible working hours. We will build on the successful training we delivered this year and ensure we give staff the most attractive and productive employment offer. A new role of HR and Governance Director will work with an HR consultant to make inroads into this vital area of work.
- to significantly improve maintenance and IT provision in our centres. Existing contractual arrangements are not straightforward to resolve but in 2018 we need to reduce the adverse impact this has had on our direct delivery and staff morale.

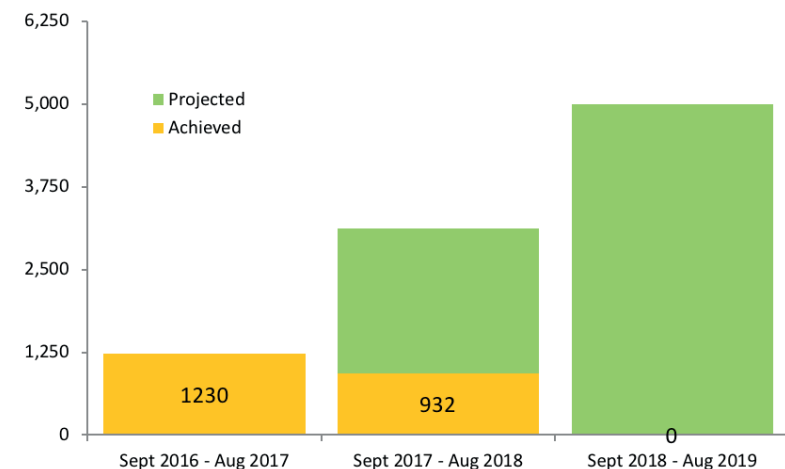
Perhaps our biggest challenge is to maintain the momentum we are now building to increase the number of young people who attend our centres. The top graph opposite shows the numbers of unique individuals who attend and more importantly the numbers who return on a regular basis.

If we are going to become the gold standard organisation we strive to be, we need to see a rapid and significant improvement in our reach. We have set stretch targets to reach 5,000 young people in 2018-19, 800 of which are regular attendees.

Youth First: existing, new and projected unique participants, Sept 2016 – Aug 2019



Existing and projected unique participants in Youth First centres, Sept 2016 – Aug 2019



Youth First data taken from attendance system on 2 February 2018.

New methods of delivery informed by data and testing

To enable us to meet these new targets and to start thinking about broadening our activities and sustaining our work beyond our current contract, we are investing in new ways of delivering our services. For example in Bellingham Gateway we are piloting an intensive youth work service by increasing youth work hours and partnerships across our Bellingham sites via links to the local network of schools.

In Lewisham Town Centre we are planning a new street-based outreach service and we are also exploring a programme that supports young people at risk of exclusion from school. These are being funded by our own investment and by the Elizabeth Legacy Fund which is contributing £2million towards support for young people.

We are assisted by accurate attendance data on a well-managed database. This gives us a baseline from which to judge our year-on-year performance and to understand better where there are gaps geographically and demographically. This in turn allows us to focus our work, increase participation and meet the needs of our community. With training and support, staff are using the data to inform their planning.

We are a borough-wide organisation and although our centres are mainly in the north, centre and south-west of Lewisham, we have commissioned a range of providers to ensure that good support for young people is available across the entire borough.

Third party partners

We were able to commission 7 out of 10 tenders beginning from September 2017. An additional tender for a Youth First Football League will begin in March 2018.

The final two tenders relating to geographical areas of the borough did not attract a successful provider and in early 2018 we will consider why this occurred and whether the wider local market is able to support need.

Impact

In the longer term we need to find a clear means of judging the impact of our work, something that still eludes both our organisation and the youth sector as a whole. We need to be able to show we are making a real difference to the lives of our young people, something that is the core ingredient of a best value for money service and it is what our future funders will be looking to see.





Case study: Support and encouragement at Dumps

Kelly was 11 when she joined Dumps Adventure Playground. She has ADHD and problems with socialisation and friendships. Initially she came with a carer as she was unable to cope without additional support, but with a lot of help from our staff gradually she has come on her own.

When Kelly becomes excited she can become loud and physical and does not know when to stop. Staff constantly reminded her of when she was getting too excited and now she has a better understanding of when this is happening and most of the time she stops straight away.

During discussions Kelly has said she would like to have friends but they are only nice to her when she has money to buy them something. Staff started working with her and the wider group of young people, letting them know what was acceptable and how to treat each other. They also put a buddy system in place with other young people to help start building friendships.

We introduced a reward system for Kelly and as a result she managed to earn her place at a residential. She had never stayed away from home and wasn't able to go on school holidays so this was really special.

Kelly is 15 now and due to her ADHD she still struggles with friendships. She continues to be supported by staff and her peers at Dumps and has made significant progress. Since the success of the first residential she has attended others and was recently nominated by her peers to win the Jack Petchey Award. With the other nominees she went out for a great meal.

Kelly is signing up to become a peer motivator herself at Dumps and we will continue to offer her support as she goes through transitions in the future.

To protect anonymity names have been changed.

Financial summary

The financial summary shows Youth First's financial position at 31st August 2017 which is the end of our first year as an independent organisation. The table shows our income ('Incoming resources'), our expenditure ('Resources expended') and the balance between the two.

The column headed 'Restricted funds' refers to money that is only to be used for the specific purpose that was given by the funder. 'Unrestricted funds' have no such restrictions.

Our income was made up of:

- income we raised through grants and contracts ('Voluntary income') - £58,173
- income from London Borough of Lewisham and other specific contracts (£3,170,985)
- other income from sales of services such as room hire (£121,424)

Our expenditure was less than our income and the difference between the two – our reserves – was £650,034. The apparent underspend arises as a result of:

- the timing of expenditure relating to our transitional to an independent organisation;
- revised plans for the funding of innovation and pilot activities;
- delays in recruitment; and,
- the need to build up initial reserves to help us mature as a sustainable entity.

More information is available on our website at: youthfirst.org.uk/annualreport

Income and expenditure account for the period from 8 July 2016 to 31 August 2017

	Note	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2017 £
Incoming resources				
Incoming resources from generated funds:				
Voluntary income	2	47,950	10,223	58,173
Activities for generating funds				-
Incoming resources from				
charitable activities	3	-	3,170,985	3,170,985
Other incoming resources	4	-	121,424	121,424
		<u>47,950</u>	<u>3,302,632</u>	<u>3,350,582</u>
Resources expended				
Charitable activities	5	41,950	2,658,598	2,700,548
		<u>41,950</u>	<u>2,658,598</u>	<u>2,700,548</u>
		<u>6,000</u>	<u>644,034</u>	<u>650,034</u>
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward		-	-	-
		<u>6,000</u>	<u>644,034</u>	<u>650,034</u>

The surplus for the year represents the total recognised gains for the period.

The society commenced all activities within the period.

None of the society's activities were discontinued during the current period.



We are ambitious for young people

We are ambitious for young people. The challenges they face like housing, jobs and political and economic uncertainty are not things we can easily resolve as a youth organisation. But what we can do is help to build resilience, self confidence and pride in what young people achieve. We think youth work, delivered by skilled staff in communities and through strong partnerships with like-minded organisations, can better equip young people to deal with the uncertainties of life. Whatever their future circumstances, these qualities will hopefully remain with them.



Friends of Youth First

In the coming year we will be launching an exciting Friends of Youth First network as well as an alumni network of those who have benefitted from our services. We are looking for volunteers to help across the range of our work – in our youth centres and adventure playgrounds, in fundraising, marketing and communications.

If you have a particular skill or interest we'd love to hear from you! You can join our Friends Of network at youthfirst.org.uk/friend

If you're a business or organisation operating in Lewisham and you'd like to support our work please get in touch. We can offer flexible partnership options, including staff volunteering, sponsorship and social investment. Again, get in touch through the dedicated page on our website.



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working together

Youth First is a community benefit society and registered mutual no.7363.