



Youth First Annual Report 2017/18



A message from our Chair

Looking back

Youth First's (YF) second year has been one of considerable challenge and change. The operational challenges have included:

- Completing the process of putting in place a strong executive management team (EMT) of directors to support the CEO in the executive leadership of the Mutual and in the delivery of YF's strategic priorities. Key appointments have included Directors of Operations, Finance, HR and Corporate Governance, and Business Development and Fundraising, underpinned by high quality Marketing and Data Management managers.
- And delivering on an ambitious set of targets which have included substantially increasing activity levels, broadening the range of services, raising staff morale, reducing unit costs and increasing the organisation's profile as part of YF's aim of becoming an exemplary youth service provider.

'Exemplary' involves providing a very good universal service; early intervention support for the increasing number of Lewisham's vulnerable teenagers that are a consequence of local levels of childhood poverty, fractured family life, loneliness, inadequate housing and underperforming secondary schools; and a street-based service in Lewisham's main shopping hubs.

The principle means of service provision are our 10 youth centres and adventure playgrounds which are open for young people for as long as the limited funding allows during out-of-school hours, weekends and holidays. They are places where young people can relax, meet peers, develop new hobbies, enjoy themselves in a range of games and sports and develop the life-skills and self-confidence they will otherwise lack, while at the same time avoiding the temptations of drug or alcohol misuse, idleness, gangs and crime.

Board members at Youth First, including employee representatives and Youth Directors

And looking forward

Parallel with these services is the Board's responsibility for meeting high standards of corporate governance, for developing YF into an organisation which is owned and led by its young people and staff and for developing secure and increasing streams of independent funding.

Much remains to be done on these three fronts, which is why:

- An away day is planned for YF's leadership group aimed at improving standards of corporate governance and developing YF into a genuine Mutual with the objectives and values inherent in Mutuality.
- Acquiring new sources of independent funding, which is an aim shared by both the Board and the Management team and described in more detail in the CEO's report which follows.

The Board's challenges in 2019 will include delivering on these aims, adapting YF's operations to future levels of London Borough of Lewisham funding and working ever-more closely with parents, schools and other key stakeholders in developing YF's support for Lewisham's young people.



Sir Ian Mills
Chair, Youth First

Summary of year and year ahead from CEO

We have collectively achieved much in our second year and whilst we now face a number of new challenges I want to first consider some of the successes.

Perhaps most important in terms of meeting our mission is the growth in the number of young people attending sites. This has increased from c.2000 overall attendees and c.800 regulars in 2016 to the likely 5,620 and 1,768 respectively that we are on track to reach during 2018/19.



Youth First mentioned three times in House of Commons by Ellie Reeves MP, Janet Daby MP and in response to Vicky Foxcroft MP

Perhaps most remarkable is that this development and growth has been achieved over such a short time and at a reduced cost compared to the youth service we came from. We have through a combination of reducing costs and income generation saved LBL £600,000 during the duration of this first contract and taken a recurring £350,000 per annum from the base all whilst growing and improving delivery beyond what we promised at our inception.

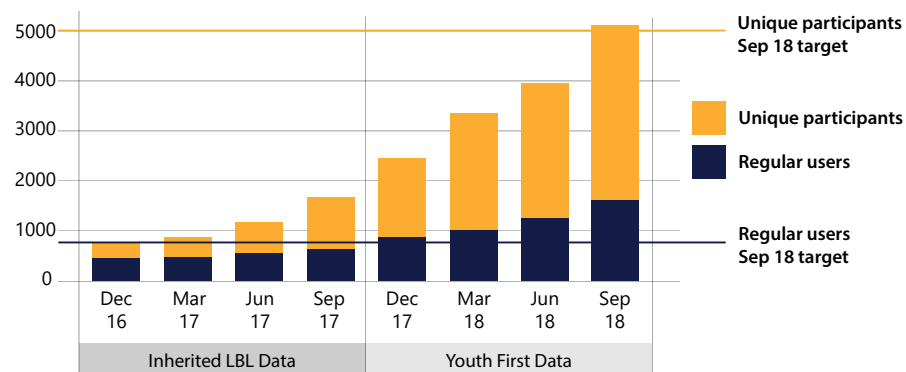
At the end of the year we produced a high quality assessment of impact and a vision for our future over the next five years entitled 'The Futures Report'. This is available on our website and clearly lays out the needs of young people in Lewisham, the manner in which we feel we can best meet these and the level of funding required to do so. It provides a good blueprint for us to head into our work in 2019.

The main challenge for 2019 therefore is how we survive beyond our current contract into 2020 and beyond and continue our success to date. Whilst we knew this would be a challenge when we began our journey in 2016 it is one we should now be able to look at with a level of confidence.

To this end we will continue to work with LBL to help them understand the needs of young people and how youth and play work can support them, what the costs of this are and ultimately, within any tender process they offer, demonstrate how Youth First is best placed to meet these in Lewisham.

Alongside securing a future we will continue to look to improve further at both the frontline and back office specifically putting in place plans in 2019/20 to address the challenges and frustrations with our ICT and property maintenance both of which I know put an undue amount of stress on frontline delivery. We are also working hard to generate more income from sources outside LBL.

It would not surprise me if the uncertainty about our future causes some anxiety with members. I encourage everyone to take heart in how far we have come in the past two years, the foundations we have built within our mutual and suggest we are stronger by joining together to focus on our survival. Given the level of need, how well we have done so far and the foundation this gives us for doing more in the future, this is a challenge we nor LBL and the people of Lewisham cannot afford for us to fail at.



This is a testament to the hard work that goes on daily at each and every site. The numbers are of course only part of the story and later in this report we offer more detail on some of what this has meant on the ground and in terms of new programmes.

This growth in delivery has been supported by less visible, but equally important improvements we have made to back office functions and management structures. Over the two years it is quite remarkable that we have developed and embedded functions which were either previously covered by other Council teams or are totally new. All have been created and put in place with little to no disruption to the frontline. This includes the creation and recruitment to an entirely new management structure as well as HR, recruitment and workforce development, insurance, payroll, finance, income generation, communications and PR, governance functions, a new volunteer scheme and parents' groups. There is more detail on a number of these areas within the rest of this report.

We also massively raised our profile with three mentions in the House of Commons and various radio appearances. This is important not just to help us promote to young people and parents what we do but also to increase our chances of securing funding in the future.



Mervyn Kaye
CEO, Youth First

Update on need and young people in Lewisham

Just over 40,000 8 to 19-year-olds live in Lewisham, out of a total population of 300,000. It is the 15th most ethnically diverse borough in the country. From the 2011 Census, 46.4% of Lewisham's people are from a Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background. It is also a young borough compared to the demographic profile of the rest of the country. This will remain the case, with the numbers of young people increasing in line with overall population growth, at about 7% p.a.

Lewisham has one of the highest rates of child poverty nationally, ranking 20th worst of 354 local authorities and 11th most deprived in London in 2017. Child poverty has a direct impact on the life chances of young people, limiting their chances of succeeding at school and going on to finding secure employment. Child poverty is also associated with a wide range of health-damaging impacts, including adverse long-term social and psychological effects.

In 2018, 40.7% of pupils in Lewisham achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths in the latest available statistics at time of writing. This is below the national average of 43.3% for all state-funded schools in England.

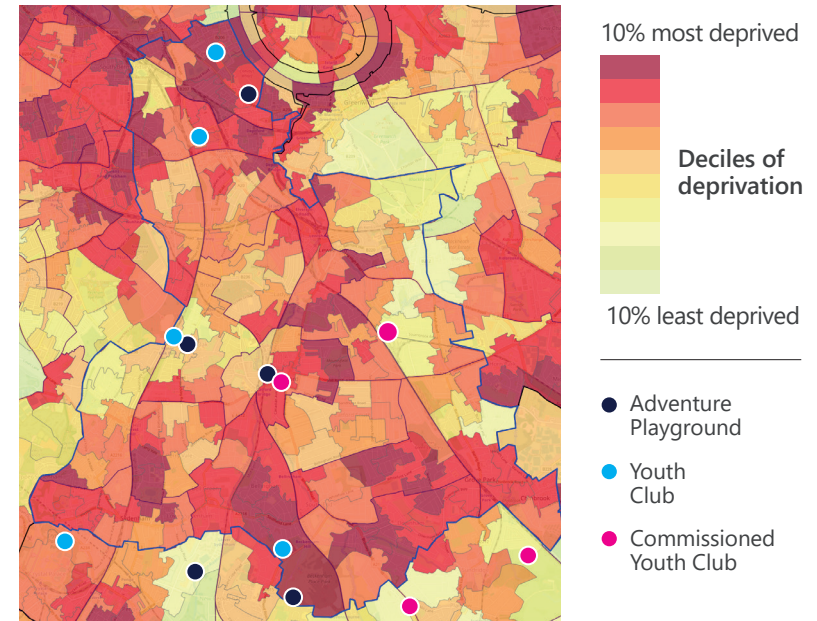
Historically Lewisham's school exclusion rate has been high and so data in 2017/2018 showing a 32% drop in exclusions from the previous year is welcome. This bucks the trend of rising exclusion rates but Lewisham's overall exclusion rates remain significant.

Research by Youth First in partnership with London University, Goldsmiths in 2018 found that Lewisham residents perceive the borough generally to be quite dangerous and many young people and parents highlighted 'gang' violence and knife crime as being prevalent in the areas where they lived. There was also a perception shared by both young people and parents that the streets are unsafe, and some who have lived in the area for a long time think that it is now worse.

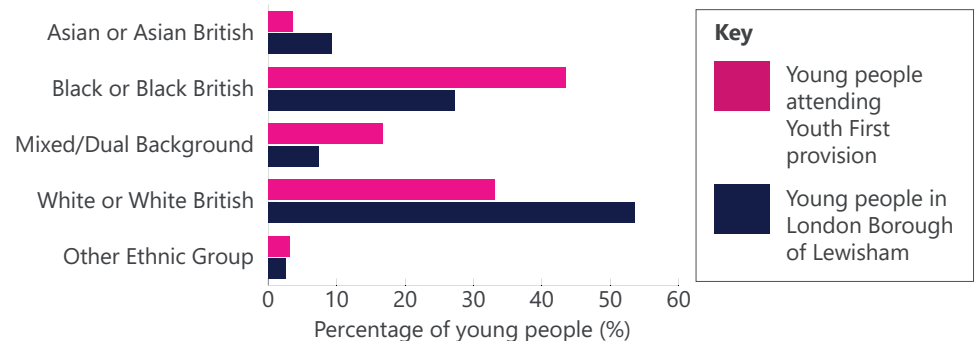
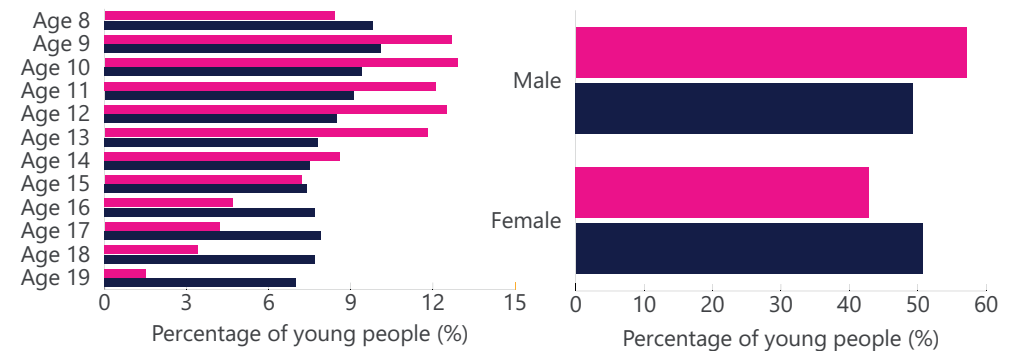
Ultimately, amidst all of the negative experiences and perceptions of Lewisham, survey participants consistently described Youth First's services as a positive aspect of the local area.

The map to the right shows the location of our centres and the areas of highest deprivation in the borough, using the Index of Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). Most young people who attend our centres on a regular basis live close to our youth clubs and adventure playgrounds which are a meaningful aspect in the lives of many families and young people.

The bar graphs opposite show the age, gender and ethnicity of the young people participating in Youth First's activities compared with Lewisham as a whole.



Map showing Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)



Activities and operations

The past year has seen us continue to meet and exceed our operational targets both in terms of individual participants and those who attend regularly. New targets for 2018/19 are for an increase of ten percent from the 2017/18 actual performance. This equates to 5,620 unique participants and 1,768 regulars. These targets are based on a simple ten percent increase from the previous year's total attendance and does not take into account where an individual site had particularly strong growth in the previous year. This slightly crude target setting method potentially makes it harder for all sites to grow as fast in 2018/19 as they did in 2017/18. That said, in the first quarter we have already seen a 16% growth in overall attendance and therefore believe that the overall targets remain achievable.

We believe growth in the last year can be put down to a number of factors including the operations team's improved strategic planning. This has included better utilisation of a wide range of data and ensuring cooperation and input from colleagues across Youth First. Seniors now regularly meet with each other and with their teams and colleagues from management, data, communications and finance. We are far better at collating and utilising data to inform planning, with seniors regularly accessing comparisons of their site usage against local demographic data. This enables an understanding of unmet need and allows us to better plan how we can meet it. Data is even more powerful when combined with the knowledge and expertise of youth and play workers and information gathered from our more regular and systematic consultation with young people.

The latter is supported by our participation and engagement offer which has itself continued to improve and increasingly ensure Youth First is genuinely youth-led. This includes better support for our increased number of Youth Directors (from 2 to 4), a second successful election for these posts, continued provision of quarterly borough-wide youth forums, an increased number of local youth forums and the continuation of our mystery shopping scheme. Throughout the last financial year 89 young people took part in the borough-wide forums led by experts; learning and discussing topics affecting them such as mental health and knife crime. Nineteen young people also took part in mystery shopping both at our directly run and commissioned provision.



TOP: Climbing wall at TNG Youth & Community Centre
ABOVE: Lewisham Youth Theatre perform at Riverside Youth Club

Sites are now better at creating dynamic and robust localised action plans with SMART goals, better assessment of opening and closing times, efficient deployment of staffing capacity and the creation and use of community partnerships. Ultimately sites are providing more of what works and developing innovative, creative and appealing activities.

We believe that in 2018/19 we will continue to meet or exceed activity targets. Two prime examples of where this is successful are Honor Oak Adventure Playground and TNG Youth & Community Centre.

New activity in 2017/18

We have:

- Developed new open access term time and holiday provision in: Lee Green (in partnership with Triple Helix), at the Goldsmith's community centre in Downham (called 'Urban Connect' in partnership with Phoenix Community Housing) and in Lewisham town centre as a 'street based and pop-up' (in partnership with Fusion). This increases our site-based delivery to 15 sites.
- Developed better working partnerships with schools including introducing three walking bus programmes. These have shown great success in increasing new participation and we have received feedback from parents that it is allowing them to stay at work. We now plan an additional five to be rolled out in quarter two of 2018/19. One of these is in partnership with Beleve UK who will also focus on offering girls' groups across the service.
- Increased participation through themed events e.g. Halloween and Christmas parties, fairs, music and talent showcases, community events such as the 'Winter Night Light' week at Honor Oak. These themed events provide the opportunity to increase engagement with young people but also serve to promote and publicise provision to parents and the wider community.



The Youth First Musical Showcase, hosted by YOYO

- Developed targeted marketing including an increased use of Facebook and Eventbrite as a way to track and promote activities. Our music showcase at TNG is an example of one of our biggest successes. It was carried out in partnership with YOYO and had over 160 attendees from across a broad intergenerational group. The event will be repeated at least twice more in 2018/19.
- Created a new Youth Stories media team. Young people are exposed to working in journalism and media by sharing positive stories about their peers, which is a much needed alternative to some of the negative and stigmatising stories that are often portrayed in the media.
- Been recognised as finalists in two categories of the CYP Now Youth Work Awards and won an award from Lewisham Sugar Smart and public health for our work reducing sugar in the food we serve by 71%.
- Continued development of a broad trauma approach for staff by offering clinical supervision and emotional support.
- Continued the Universal Schools Safety Programme (USSP) and received positive feedback from both pupils and staff in the schools that use our services. We are now seeking additional funding to roll out the six USSP topics at our own sites and looking to increase the schools' delivery within Lewisham PRUs and to increase the offer in schools from Yr7 to possibly Yr9. The operations team are working closely with the fundraising team to enable this.
- Installed impact safety matting at all APG units based on the recommendation of ROSPA-approved testing.



Youth Stories of Lewisham media team interviewing an act at the musical showcase

Challenges

- Coping with the fear and trauma of increased knife crime and youth violence remains a major operational challenge with its lasting impact on young people, staff and the site's surrounding communities. This is no more evident than the tragic murder in Bellingham on October 31st. This horrendous loss of life destabilised the community and regular operations at Bellingham as well as having a ripple effect at all sites. At the time we ensured staff were available to support young people by putting out street based teams and supporting the victim's family and friends at the memorial. We continue to look at the best ways we can support young people to avoid these issues.
- We have staff capacity issues with poor responses to recruitment drives. This is having an impact on our ability to deliver frontline services. See the workforce development/HR section of the report for more information.
- Poor property support by Lewisham Council's providers and resulting health and safety issues have frustratingly continued from our first year. We have continued protracted discussions with LBL about alternative support options including the potential for Youth First taking over as much property maintenance as possible from LBL. These issues appear across sites but have been particularly acute at Home Park. At all sites they have an almost intangible effect on activity numbers and staff morale. It is vital this is tackled in 2019/20.

- ICT has also continued to be a challenge and consequently we have begun to exit from our current ICT supplier to a new provider which we will hopefully roll out from March to June 2019.

The Future

Alongside continuing what works 2018/19 will see even further creative programmes with plans to:

- Work with young people, the community and key agencies such as the police, Children's social care, CAMHS, schools and community safety teams to tackle knife crime and incidents of youth violence. This includes a partnership with local Bellingham Community groups as part of the '#TOGETHER' campaign, the development of Lewisham young people to create anti-knife crime messaging, the targeted use of anti-knife and crime workshops in partnership with PYE, possible hosting of knife surrender bins and workshops in schools and youth clubs in partnership with the James Ross Hunter Foundation.
- Provide a 16-plus offer with a focus on employment in partnership with DWP
- Expand a partnership with Lewisham Homes to reduce local estate based anti-social behaviour and increase the opportunity for fundraising.
- Facilitate multiagency youth network fora in the North and South of the Borough. This will better meet our remit as a facilitator and umbrella for all youth provision in Lewisham and realise our commitment to being community owned and led.
- Closely evaluate how the relationship between young people and our Board can be more effective. A clear action plan is expected to ensure that our commitment to being youth-led reaches its full potential.
- Achieve the London Youth Bronze Quality Mark.



Youth First hosting the All-Party Parliamentary Group report on youth services. Photo includes Leigh Middleton CEO NYA, Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP (APPG youth services Chair) and Lewisham Young Mayor.

Case study: Honor Oak Adventure Playground

Starting last summer, Honor Oak hosted a walking bus from nearby Beecroft Primary School on Wednesday and Friday afternoons. Youth workers meet children when school ends and escort them up the hill to the site. Similar schemes are run at other sites, but none have been as successful as this one, with often over 100 young people making the trip over the railway bridge and joining the fun at the APG. This has also boosted participation on other days of the week, meaning that in the first two quarters of 2018/19 attendance has doubled and regular participation has almost tripled when compared to the same period last year.

While this huge influx of new members has brought significant challenges, it has allowed staff to engage with new groups of young people and build new strong relationships. It has been found that children who may be involved in disputes at school are much more likely to smooth things over and work collaboratively in activities due to encouragement from a youth worker. On some Wednesdays a volunteer tutor is on hand to help children with their homework.

The programme has been particularly good at addressing security concerns within the area. On 25th February Youth First's first Parent Forum was held at the site, with parents expressing that while one of their main concerns is crime and security in the area, programmes such as this one go a long way towards addressing those concerns.



Youth Directors and the engagement of young people

A core part of our mutual remains the ownership and empowerment of young people. In the year 2017/18 our second term saw the election of two new directors. The elections took place annually across all ten Youth First run sites with 339 votes cast. The winning candidates were Amy West and Joel Owusu-Ansah. Apart from sitting on our board as equal directors they also headed up our borough-wide Youth Forum and its range of activities and worked in close partnership with the young mayor and advisors. Over the last year the directors' and the forum's work have included:

- Five borough-wide youth forums which had themes including anti-knife crime, the Young Mayoral initiative curriculum for life, healthy relationships, fundraising, youth enterprise, positive and negatives of social media, self-motivation techniques and the power of youth voice. Young people debated and shared their opinions on the topics and were supported by various external expert organisations.
- Working with a team of young mystery shoppers to evaluate Youth First's commissioned provision. The participants gained many skills including report writing, evaluation, problem solving and how to give valuable feedback to help us improve our delivery.
- Taking part in an under 17's driving course which included getting behind the wheel of a police car, fire engine and HGV.
- Participation in the National Citizen Service Dragons Den.



Newly appointed Youth Directors receive certificates at Bellingham Gateway

- A continuation of the initial youth director initiated cooking programme helping participants learn about nutrition, improving one's daily diet and how to make a meal for £5 or less for a family of four.
- The design and participation of Youth First's presence at Lewisham's Peoples Day.
- Running Youth First's presence at Lewisham's youth conference.
- Team building exercises including a trip to an escape room.

As part of our Futures work a wide ranging quantitative and qualitative survey was conducted with over 200 young people participating alongside parents and professionals. The findings from this are available on our website and are being used to inform our long term plans for Youth First.

The challenge in the year ahead is to broaden out youth voice activities including revitalising the local level youth forums and ensuring that the input from young people will directly influence the company's future strategy. Although it's within the year 2018/19 we have, in response to last year's AGM, now increased our number of youth directors from two to four and extended the terms from one to two years. Our four directors for 2018/19 are Amy West, Trey Brown, Harri-Jade Martin and Rhianon Montaque.



Employee Directors summary and staff engagement

Activities and successes

We are now in our third year of our three year term as employee directors. This second year has consisted of a number of successes, challenges and goal-setting plans.

A core part of the role is of course to attend the board at quarterly meetings and sit on board working groups including the Risk and Audit, Personnel committees and, as chair, the Employee forum. Last year all board meetings had at least one employee representative present to ensure the staff's perspective was heard. We inputted and influenced key discussions and decisions around targets and performance, budgets and the Futures work. For the latter this meant the board setting up the Future's group to ensure a broader staff involvement in this key focus on our organisation's future direction and pitch to LBL and other funders, as well as finally ratifying the final report when it came to the board. The report itself is available on the Youth First website.

The employee forum is made up of employees from across the service. We aimed on meeting on a quarterly basis preceding Board meetings where possible, although this proved difficult due to capacity and unavoidable changes in membership. The meetings that took place allowed us to pass on issues, comments or information to the Board.

Alongside all of this we have worked with other Employee Forum members, to organise our very successful end of (calendar) year celebration. This brought the whole of the Youth First team together for food, drinks, karaoke and dancing with very positive feedback from all who attended. In the next year we recommend a second end of summer event to complement the winter one.

Challenges and plans for year ahead

Whilst we have had some influence as noted above there remains a number of challenges which we, with the Chair, CEO, EMT and other NEDs, are working on to ensure we continue to make Youth First an active and real employee mutual. These are based on our reflections and those of others across the service and include:

1. Ensuring it is practical for employee directors to take a full role in the board.

After two years it is clear that a large amount of additional hours are required to be an employee director specifically to read board and sub group papers and plan out how best to input into decisions. It has remained difficult to balance the demands of the day-to-day responsibilities with the role. To this end we are recommending that we alter Youth First's Rules to increase the number of staff directors to four and that all are allocated more paid time for board prep.

2. Ensuring that all staff and Board members have a good understanding how the governance of the 'mutual' function and that employee directors and others can actively put forward agenda items, opinions and views to the board/working groups and that Board and working group meetings are structured so as to engender as much staff (and young people) involvement as possible.

Both the staff and young people's forums are not yet working as well as they could to enable truly active staff and young people ownership. To improve this from an employee perspective it is recommended that a NED sits on the employee forum, that the forum has clear agendas that are linked to the objectives of the board and that there is regular supervision for the employee directors from the Chair or a nominated non-executive. The latter would be scheduled before board meetings to ensure we can input even better and set and suggest agenda items or points of discussion for the board. We also suggest refreshing the employee forum annually to ensure the mix of employees on the forum represents our actual staff group.

Whilst the meetings have become slightly more interactive over the past year the structure of meetings needs to evolve to ensure that participation is engendered even further. To date the structure has been very Chair led and required the digestion of extensive paperwork. Whilst to meet strong and professional corporate standards a level of formality is required and that to meet Youth First's transparency aims there will always be the need for information we have recommended papers are shortened and where possible summarised. We also recommend that the agenda and chaired meetings allow for more time for discussion to ensure that everyone, not least our youth directors, can more easily and adequately give input.

Our third year will also see the elections for new employee directors. This should take place later in 2019 and we look forward to working with those elected to carry on improving our mutual.



HR and Work Force Development summary

Our current workforce

Youth First is committed to employing staff and using volunteers who are:

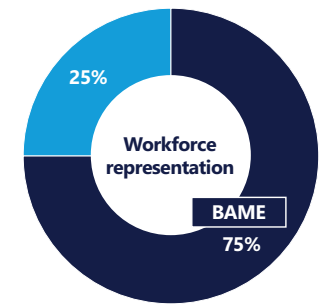
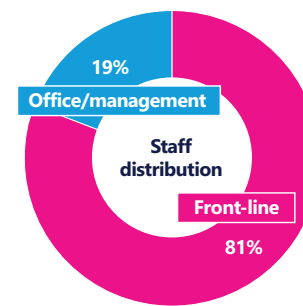
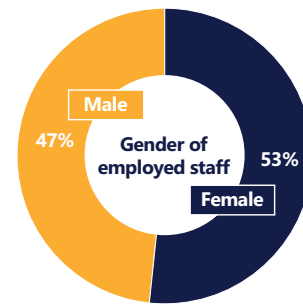
- Highly professional and natural role models
- Have high aspirations for the young people they serve
- Never give up on individual young people when difficulties arise
- Prioritise safeguarding early intervention and risk assessment.

In 2017/18 Youth First ran eight recruitment campaigns for various posts, from these 21 new staff were appointed. We are constantly reviewing our recruitment practices and assessing the success of the advertising channels for all posts, but especially youth and play.

Data on all our directly employed employees from 1 September 2017 to 31 August 2018 shows that in the past year we have been successful in maintaining a diverse workforce matching the population demographics in terms of gender and ethnicity.

As at 1 September 2017, Youth First employed 57 people on a permanent basis. Of these 30 are women and 27 are men. 75% are from a BAME community.

The management/office based level represents 19 per cent of the organisation. There are 79 youth and play workers which represents 81 per cent.



Recruitment and retention

- During 2018/19, 15 people left the organisation. Exit interviews have been conducted to identify reasons for leaving and any learning becomes implemented into our workforce practices.
- During 2018/19, 21 employees were recruited. Recruitment is an ongoing process and recruiting youth and play workers is particularly challenging as seen across the entire sector.

Investing in people

As an employee-led mutual we regularly consult and involve staff so that we can respond to real demands and needs. In 2018 this saw us repeat approximately 7 focus groups with employees and utilise the feedback to inform our workforce strategy. These will be repeated again in 2019.

The overall aim of our workforce strategy is to recruit, reward and develop great employees across all functions. To this end the past year we have increased our investment in workforce development from c.£3,000 to c.£13,000 as well sourcing multiple pro bono opportunities. We have also put in place a number of new and amended processes, practices and policies:

1. We evaluated salaries of new senior youth and play workers to ensure they matched market rates resulting in a one-off increase to the starting salary for this post from £28,560 to £30,000 per annum and an increase in annual leave entitlement from 20 to 26 days per annum.
2. In a bid to increase applications to posts we have broadened our advertising to include stronger use of social media and partners. We continue to consider the best places to place adverts and are moving away from using recruiters and instead targeting our marketing more effectively. We currently advertise the posts in a number of media channels via networks and universities.

3. We have appointed an internal candidate to the new Volunteering, Parent and Alumni Co-ordinator to develop and run our Volunteer programme with the aim of supporting paid employees with volunteers drawn from the community. We believe this will also empower communities with champions who understand safeguarding and early help. We also hope that it will increase successful recruitment to paid posts from the local area.
4. We have revamped our induction process with Organisation and Local inductions now conducted and logged for all new employees. This is aided by a new induction pack and this and accompanying sessions focus on providing all new starters with information on procedures, our values and ethos and where to access further information about all aspects of individuals' and the organisation's work. We will continue to review and amend the induction in the future.
5. Our learning and development offer has continued to increase including the provision of two inset weeks per year. The content of these are created in consultation with staff to ensure topics are task relevant. Alongside the two weeks we continue clinical supervisions for Seniors, promote year round opportunities and continually evaluate where there may be gaps in learning and look at how best to meet these. The latter includes partnerships with LBL, LSCB, VAL, London Youth, London Play and others.
6. To encourage staff to excel and to reward those who do we have developed an Excellence Award Scheme. This is being rolled out in 2019 with the first of these awards expected to be given in April 2019. This will be in the form of a statement of recognition and a cash reward.
7. To better support staff we have revamped our performance management appraisal framework. All managers have been trained in the framework with the expectation that they will conduct appraisals annually. This is now monitored centrally. Pay increments have been linked to performance rather than time served. A new pay scale is also currently being consulted on with the expectation that it will be in place by September 2019. The pay scale will be independently evaluated to ensure we best match market rates before it is signed off by the Board.

Challenges

Recruitment remains our overriding challenge, especially for support youth and play workers. We do not believe this is related to the rate of pay which seems to compare favourably with the sector. Instead we believe that there is a reduced market of professional youth workers as a result of ongoing austerity measures. Alongside this it is possible that Youth First's own fiscal insecurity is deterring candidates from applying to posts. Over the next year we will seek solutions in consultation with the Board and staff.



Case study: Riverside Seniors Session

The session was set up a year ago, arising organically out of requests for older young people (age 12-19) to stay later after the juniors meeting on a Monday night. These are generally the young people with the most acute needs and who are often on the periphery of crime and anti-social behaviour.

The session runs using a young person-led format with the opportunity to dip into activities – boxing, football, music making, games – and young people are involved in preparing, cooking and eating together. There have also been work-shopped discussions in the lounge on issues suggested by young people (e.g. relationships, drugs) and opportunities to talk confidentially to a Compass nurse about sexual health. This partnership with Compass has also grown organically and has expanded into drug and alcohol advice, mental health and wellbeing support.

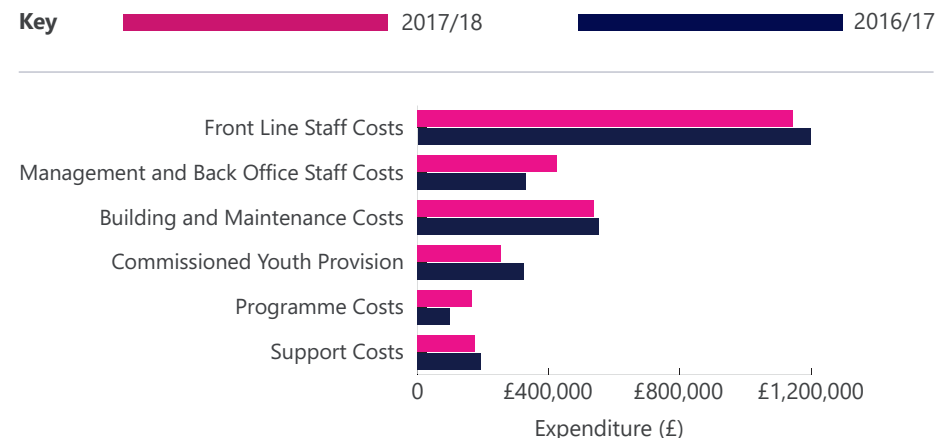
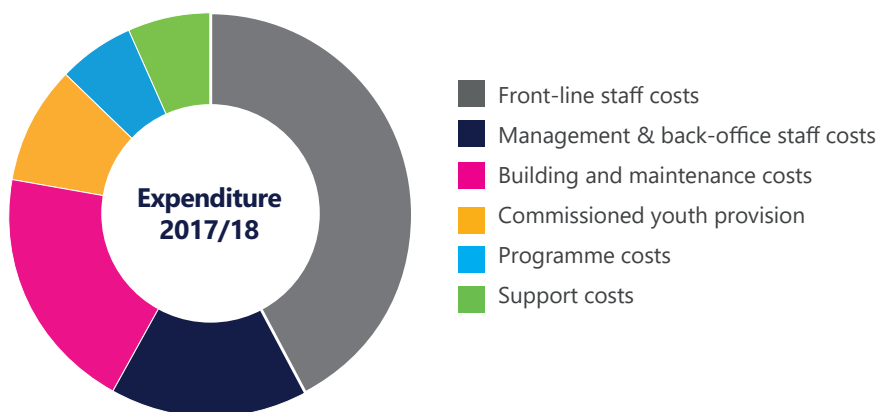
Young people from different backgrounds and areas in Deptford relate positively in the sessions, even if there can be tension. Any disputes are dealt with sensitively and used as opportunities to build conflict-resolution skills. Young people are respectful and have built up trust with each other and staff. Having somewhere to go with positive role models has a great impact on young people's lives, showcasing the early intervention aspect of Youth First's service. Compass staff are referring more disclosures (e.g. self harm) at Monday sessions than they do at other sessions in the borough because the levels of trust are so high. This is also resulting in young people bringing their friends to consult for advice.

Recently young people have produced a film on the theme of absent fathers. They have written, acted, filmed and edited it themselves with support from youth workers and the film is due to be premiered in the May half term.

Finance and resources summary

Financial Summary	2017/18	2016/17
Income	£3,216,920	£3,350,582
Expenditure	£2,704,785	£2,700,547
Net income	£512,135	£650,035

Expenditure	2017/18	2016/17
Front-line staff costs	£1,146,006	£1,198,530
Management & back-office staff costs	£425,362	£330,614
Building and maintenance costs	£537,232	£552,390
Commissioned youth provision	£255,467	£325,867
Programme costs	£165,555	£98,331
Support costs	£175,164	£194,815
Total expenditure	£2,704,785	£2,700,547



As the contract with Lewisham Council is tapering in our second year, we continue to seek new sources of income and increase existing ones. Although overall income has reduced year on year, a substantial amount of work is being done in the background to ensure new income streams are established in the future.

Our total expenditure has increased only slightly by £4,000 year on year. Proportionately the largest increase has been in the category of Programme costs. That is largely as a result of allocating increasing amount of money for site managers to spend on direct delivery such as off-site trips, site equipment and on-site entertainment.

This financial year income exceeded expenditure by £512,135. This will be an addition to our reserves, which are now at £1,162,170. Building up reserves will enable the organisation to be financially resilient to any future income or expenditure fluctuations and will give us the opportunity to make investments in the service in the future.

Going forward we are working on improving our ICT capabilities. This will enable our back office to be more efficient and our site managers will have access to more reliable ICT infrastructure. This will therefore will lead to improved services for Young People.

Income and fundraising

In 2017-18 we began in earnest the task of raising sustainable income for Youth First. As a new independent organisation with an equally new fundraising and communications team, we have focused on putting in place the foundations that underpin good fundraising practice. At times this has felt like a diversion when what we really want to do is bring in funds, but we are now in a much stronger position to generate income than we were 12 months ago.

Our data collection has improved significantly. We know with certainty how many young people we reach, at which centre, how often they come and what they do; and we have an electronic membership system for collecting and holding data.

We have embarked on a more robust approach to capturing evidence of the impact of our work and we have a stock of excellent photos. We also have over 500 people signed up as Friends of Youth First who are willing to help us.

We have excellent communications and marketing materials in place including effective ways to reach our audiences on line and through social media. We reached 28,000 Lewisham residents last summer with our Google Ads for the summer holiday scheme and unique visitors to our web site have increased from 300 to 4,500 a month over one year.

We have a fundraising strategy that focuses on four key audiences: community and parents; major donors, grants and foundations and income from site rentals. Alongside this we have a clear set of priorities for what we raise funds for, including our open access provision and new street-based and targeted support teams.

For each audience we have appropriate marketing materials and resources. For example we have a fantastic new fundraising kit for parents and community fundraisers which was rolled out in January 2019. We have a new investment prospectus for major donors and a managed pipeline of opportunities to keep track of funding opportunities from grants and foundations. We still need to do more to promote rentals to our sites and this will be easier when the long-term future is clearer and we can offer long-term contracts to customers.

While our focus has been on setting up systems and processes, our income success has been modest in 2017/18. We submitted 10 applications to grants and foundations with a value of just over £1m, (including one large application to the Young Londoner's Fund of £857,000). Three were successful totalling £42,000 (Phoenix Housing, Lewisham People's Day, Football Foundation Development Grant). Seven applications were unsuccessful (five submitted by Youth First; two by partners) and we considered applications to six more but didn't submit (ineligible, not our focus, time capacity to deliver etc.).

Putting the next generation first



Help us change the life chances of young people in Lewisham

Food and fitness on our active summer programme

Youth First's holiday summer scheme

Most young people look forward to a break from school in the summer holidays. But for some six weeks can seem like an eternity if parents or carers are working and you're at home all day with nothing to do.

This is the reality for many young people. Parents often have to make an impossible choice between leaving children at home unattended or missing work and a loss of income. For children left at home there's a risk they end up out on the streets and getting into trouble.

Youth First's free summer holiday scheme operates across 10 of our sites right through the summer holidays. Run by professional youth workers we're open for 8-18 year olds and proud of the huge range of activities available. There's a big emphasis on sports and physical activity, but also arts and crafts, visits from experts who teach African drumming, recording for radio, caring for dogs, birds of prey demonstrations. You name it we've done it!

We provide healthy food and young people can get involved in cooking. For some we know this is the only food they have during the day.

Plus, there's always a trip away for each site and a big community event for parents too.

We want young people to come together in a safe place, make friends, take part in new experiences, stay out of trouble, get some exercise and eat healthily. It also means that parents can continue to work over the summer holidays - often because they have little flexibility in their hours to take time off with their children.

In 2019 our aim is to provide 2,500 places on our holiday summer scheme in 10 of our youth clubs and adventure playgrounds. Each will offer a minimum 5 days a week in July and August.

Sites taking part in the 2019 summer scheme will be: Bostville Youth Club, Deptford, Deptford Adventure Playground, Hove, Hove Youth Club, New Cross, Honor Oak Youth Club and Adventure Playground, Ladbroke Youth Club and Adventure Playground, Bellenden Community Youth and Community Centre, Durney Adventure Playground, Home Park Adventure Playground and The Youth Centre, Sydenham.



Programme funding

We are looking for headline sponsors for the whole programme as well as individuals or businesses that want to associate with a particular site.

Depending on the size of investment co-branding, PR opportunities and video/media management are available. Detailed business plans and budgets for this area of work are available on request.

Outdoor challenge and fun at our adventure playgrounds

Supporting young people through Youth First's five iconic adventure playgrounds

Youth First runs five of London's most iconic adventure playgrounds that were regularly used by over 2,500 young people in 2018. Our sites provide opportunities for exercise and physical activity, places to explore and feel safe, meet friends and take part in programmes run by trained youth workers, community and play workers. Many provide food after school through a partnership with FareShare.

In the summer all our sites have summer fun days for parents and neighbours. Some arrange walking buses from local schools so older children have somewhere safe to go until their parents can collect them after work. This means parents continue to work and can support their family.

Many of the sites were built by local parents and youth workers over 10 years ago and although they are still safe, all sites will soon be in need of major repairs.



Putting the next generation first



Help us change the life chances

We are currently working on four more opportunities with deadlines in early 2019 and we have a pipeline of some 80 further opportunities to explore.

We currently have a team of two consultants (1.4 FTE) working on fundraising, an associate supporting us on marketing and communications (0.6 FTE) and one full-time member of staff on data management. As is the case for so many small to medium-sized voluntary sector organisations, the challenge is to focus our limited resources on the most likely and profitable income generating opportunities. Bid writing is time consuming but offers good potential to generate significant income. However, as we found with the Mayor of London Young Londoner's Fund, these opportunities are often highly competitive.

In 2019 we will continue to diversify our income, building relationships with funders and helping our supporters and young people to get active in raising funds for Youth First.



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