

Legacy Youth Panel Summary

September 2010





Introduction

The Legacy Youth Panel is a group of 14-19 year olds from the five Olympic boroughs of Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.

The Panel was established by the Legacy Company to capture the voices of young people and get them involved in shaping the plans for the Park after the Games.

The project sought to inspire and educate the young people involved so they could in turn share their experiences and educate their family, friends and the wider community.

Fundamental designed the model used for the Panel project, coordinating the recruitment of the group and devising activities for young people.

This report tells the story of the Panel two years after it was created. It is designed to inform the future of the Panel and to share the model of youth participation that has been developed with other organisations.

Creation

The London Development Agency (LDA) was seeking a creative and engaging means of better understanding the concerns and aspirations of young people about the future of East London.¹

The five boroughs Education Programme (joint funders in year one) wanted to ensure that young people were not marginalised in the huge changes coming to the area. Funders were keen to work with an East London based community group rather than an organisation 'parachuting in' to consult with young people.

Before embarking on the Legacy Youth Panel project Fundamental had established a youth architecture forum called the Architecture Crew meaning that key ingredients such as expertise in planning, a multimedia approach and detailed knowledge of East London were in place from the start.

¹ The LDA oversaw the Legacy project in year one before responsibility was transferred to the Legacy Company



The model

Summary of the overall model of youth participation

Opportunity → Recruitment

The Legacy Company seeking views of young people. Keen to partner with an East London based community organisation to facilitate link between young people and the Legacy Company.

Recruited diverse group of engaged and interested young people from the five host boroughs.

Expertise

Capacity build young people to understand and reflect on planning and their environment. Use themes that run through the work to provide chance to reflect in ongoing way and refine input – legacy and masterplanning, then populating the park and interim land use.

Identity

Support the group to form an identity to engender confidence and a sense of value and status. Logo, strapline and key messages helped formulate their brand.

Empowerment

Provide support and structure to the group whilst progressing towards more youth led activity.

The Legacy Company facilitated opportunities for Panel to access senior staff, MPs, media and other stakeholders.

Toolbox of activities and opportunities

A range of activities to engage young people and really invest to get their input. Use of multimedia and hands on experiences.

Achievement → Development

Influencing decision makers and thereby the future of East London, challenging stereotypes of young people, increasing the confidence and skills of young people. For example, though an official response to the masterplan and development of a Manifesto.

Spreading the word with peer-to-peer work, helping young people secure opportunities, expanding the group and keeping in touch with the Panel members who are no longer regularly attending sessions.



Recruit

Fundamental led on the recruitment of a group of 25 young people to the Panel in year one. In year two an additional 25 people were recruited.

The level of recruitment meant that around 20 young people were actively engaged in the Panel at any one time and that at key meetings, such as those with Masterplanners around 12–15 would attend.

Young people interested in getting involved with the project attended recruitment sessions of group activities. Young people also completed application forms. Drawing on a range of recruitment sources ensured a range of young people with different interests and backgrounds.

The mixing of young people from different geographical areas was essential to ensure a group with an overview of the Olympic Park and surrounding areas of East London. It had wider benefits in terms of young people from different areas and backgrounds mixing and young people visiting new areas of London, including one another's boroughs.

It was important that stakeholders were aware of the limitations of the Panel in terms of representing young people as a whole. To address this a programme of consultation in schools and wider outreach has been undertaken by the Legacy Company.

Identity

Establishing a strong group identity was essential to the engagement and the confidence of the Panel.

The 'label' of the Panel gave a sense of pride and legitimacy to young people. The branding of the Panel has been successful – young people designed a logo and events helped develop the brand further.

*We have a status – we act mature because if we don't we won't be taken seriously
(Panel member)*



Expertise

A key feature of the model developed for the Legacy Youth Panel is the level to which young people were supported to become informed experts. Fundamental is an architecture centre which specialises in young people's engagement in planning and the built environment whereas much youth consultation is of a more generic nature.

Young people were provided with a wide variety of activities to inform them and immerse them in the world of planning. For example, trips to different areas provided inspiration and a basis for reflection on the future of their own area.

Going to other sites, Greenwich peninsular and the South Bank - a critical analysis of places and why they work – educated them and helped them understand masterplanning. (Legacy Company)

The genuine, effective engagement of Aecom the Masterplanners with the Panel was also key to enabling an ongoing dialogue with professionals who influence the legacy of the Olympics.

When we went to (Aecom), they were adults and we were just kids, but they talked to us like adults, and we wanted to go with good ideas. Everything we said they used, and they were talking to Boris Johnson and they made a big booklet with our ideas in it... (Panel Member)

The ongoing themes the Panel focussed on over time gave a structure and meaning to activities. In the first year the key theme was masterplanning – a complex area that required a lot of information giving as a basis from which to generate ideas. In year two the priority was a more in depth study and research around the key topic areas of the Manifesto – People (community); Place (infrastructure) and a new area of interest, Environment. This was combined with a more practical focus on interim uses and an events strategy for the Park.

The nature of the Olympics and Paralympics and the changing political landscape meant that flexibility in the Panel's focus was essential. The concept of legacy was a helpful framework for all the activities undertaken by the Panel. The Masterplan in year one was felt to be particularly useful in focussing discussions and giving a challenging but clear framework for young people to explore.

Empowerment

Young people and others felt that Fundamental were successful in providing support to the Panel whilst empowering them and giving them ownership of the group.

A lot of coordination and organisation was required to plan and deliver sessions for young people. Skills and experiences in youth work, engagement and the built environment within a stable staff team motivated and supported young people.



A toolbox of activities and opportunities

Young people took part in a wide variety of activities as Panel members. Fundamental provided support and encouragement to enable young people to travel to and participate in the sessions.

The Panel produced an official response to the consultation on the masterplan. This level of detailed response to a formal consultation is thought to be unique to the Panel. A detailed report on the three themes explored in year two will form a key resource for the Legacy Company going forward.

The short, well designed manifesto documents provide a flexible means to quickly communicate the Panel's views and to present to senior stakeholders.

The chance to meet with decision makers was central to the experiences of being on the Panel and actually making a difference. For several young people one of the best things about being a Panel member was 'having our voices heard by important people' such as the Masterplanners, the Chief Executive of the Legacy Company and Tessa Jowell - former minister for Olympics.

Adults are really shocked by the knowledge that young people have. When we have meetings with organisations they are like, 'wow you know your stuff'! We are younger but we have a grasp of the knowledge because we are insiders. (Panel member)

The Panel held two successful events. Events helped to mark achievements of the Panel. They enabled the Panel to communicate their messages with other young people and adults attending.

Coverage of the Panel's activities and views in the media was an achievement of both years of the project. Opportunities to communicate their work in the media, especially on television and in the press were very important to young people who aspire to the Panel and its members being 'famous'. To ensure that young people are given positive experiences with the media the Legacy Company's media team work closely with Fundamental who have devised a policy in this area.

The young people gained a practical understanding of planning and of the Olympics by visiting sites, having tours and experiencing spaces and reflecting on what was going on in an area and why.

Tower Hamlets is famed for being loads of flats, council flats, a huge Asian population, and in Canary Warf, everyone is commuting in and it is a completely different world. It shows what happens if things are not integrated properly (Panel member)

Fundamental's use of a very wide range of media to learn and communicate was considered to be a strength of the project. These included drama, music, photography, film, graphic design, interactive modelling.

I like to give ideas, for example the logo, the puzzle idea. Recording, music projects, recording sounds, it's pretty fun. I hate writing etc, I didn't have to write. (Panel member)



They had taken our ideas and put them into work. I feel that I was listened to, kind of important.... They've reduced the number of alleyways. They've put more lighting in the parks.. I wouldn't think they would have involved young people in it. Some of them don't even live in the boroughs. (Young person)

Outcomes

The impact of the Panel

The Legacy Youth Panel is widely considered to have achieved positive outcomes in several key areas.

The overarching aim of the Panel is to get young people involved in planning the Olympic Legacy. All stakeholder groups could see evidence of this being achieved. This was especially apparent in the dialogue between the young people and Masterplanners. Direct access to decision makers and the legitimacy lent to the Panel by its funding sources were central to making this happen. Young people tended to feel that this aim was 'partly' rather than fully met as they wanted to hear more about how their views would change things on the ground.

(We had a) discussion about gang issues and postcodes - how you can create a space so as not to create that mentality - 'design out' .. Young people told us about the need for passive recreational space... (Aecom)

Several young people had opportunities to work with the media and press articulating the work they have been involved in and its impact on the future of the Park to a wide public audience.

Young people felt that the work of the Panel had challenged stereotypes of young people and provided a channel for decision makers to 'see what young people are made of'.

Personal outcomes for young people

Communication and confidence

Young people described a virtuous cycle in which they were listened to, then became more confident and thus became more creative, and therefore more likely to be listened to. Several young Panel members feel that as they speak out they are increasingly able to articulate their views, making them feel more confident.

Before; (when) I went out, I would not talk to people. For example, if I bumped into someone, I would try to be invisible. I will ask on a bus, where it is going (...)That's from talking around a table etc. I find it easier to get my words out. Practice makes perfect. (...)(Panel member)

People are more willing to listen to me, because I believe that what I have to say is important and relevant somehow. (Panel member)

For some of the young people the confidence has come through taking on challenges that they had never imagined themselves even trying, and succeeding in them.

It's helped me to be a bit more responsible. I have to organise my outside life to be able to come to the meetings. I look after my brother a lot, and because of the meetings, because I want to turn up, I tell my mum in advance... I have invited a performer (to the event). I hope that he will perform well, a DJ. I would never have imagined myself doing this stuff. (Panel member)



Patience, vision and reality

There was a strong sense that young people had a clearer understanding of the need for lengthy and involved planning processes to ensure best possible solutions, and the difficult challenges faced by planners in meeting multiple needs. This seemed to make the young people feel more understanding, and less cynical about the intentions of those making the planning decisions.

I have actually changed. I am looking at things with a broader perspective. I am seeing things differently, about how everything has changed, how it is changing up to and around us... It's a good thing, to see the reality ... (Panel member)

Navigating difference

Young people learned to navigate differences within their own group in order to speak with one voice to raise issues as representatives dealing with emotive viewpoints. It seemed to be important to go through discussion and debate, to survive controversy, as a group, in order to better understand how to coexist and respect each others differences.

When I first joined I was less self aware, very opinionated and less confident. Now I am more aware, more confident and take into account the views of others as well as mine. (Panel member)

Seeing more options

Young people identified a range of options for their own progression through the work on the Panel. The Youth Panel experience has made some of the young people want to try new things in life. These include going to meetings, volunteering, community involvement; sharing their knowledge with others in assemblies, and to travel further afield to explore London. Being a part of the Youth Panel has unleashed passions and energetic responses from some members. In particular young people comment on their passion for the Olympics, and a desire to be more proactive in their own futures.

It is like a taster of all of the different opportunities that I could get into(...I knew that multi-media jobs existed, but I never knew how big it could be(...I have seen plans before but this is totally different. (Panel member)

Wanting to know more

Young people reported improvement in a range of specific skills through their work with the Youth Panel in a wide range of areas including masterplanning and mapping; sharing views with peers and professionals; enabling others to share their views.

The desire to learn more about a wide range of issues is apparent in Panel members' responses about what they would like to undertake further work on: how young people are viewed by others; regeneration and communities; the Legacy; inclusion; problem solving in urban development; class issues and housing inequality. One young person feels that her school work has improved due to having new ideas, for example she feels her artwork is stronger due to her exposure to architecture.

In the humanities definitely(...) It has made me more interested. When I'm doing it I put more effort in. For example, Geography is about planning, two terms ago I was a level 6B and now I am a 7A that is meant to take a year. I have done that in 12 weeks. It has opened up my interest. (Panel member)



It will go on my CV...It definitely helps, because you sit around conference tables talking about stuff for a very long time, and not necessarily make decisions straight away. It's good to see how long it spans out, that you have to take into account how it affects the lighting, the view (for example).
(Panel member)

Recommendations

The evaluation has demonstrated the successful implementation of a model of youth engagement which has brought about positive outcomes for young people and for the 2012 Olympic Legacy.

Key features of this work need to be maintained to ensure the future success of the Panel. An example is the strong focus on planning and the built environment which lends the Panel genuine expertise and ensures it makes a unique contribution to consultation on the Legacy.

An ambition for the future of the Panel is to extend its impact on other young people through peer-to-peer work in schools and other forums. This is an area of work that would need additional resources as gaining access to schools and ensuring that the Panel are trained and supported for consulting with peers would be time consuming.

We fall down slightly in that we don't have enough reach, spread the word, new members...50 amazing young people have learnt a lot but it's not being translated further to other young people (Legacy Company)

Related to this is the need to link the Panel's work in to other professional bodies. For example, better dissemination of information at a borough level, establishing a steering group for the project which occasionally meets to lend expertise and profile to the Panel's work.

Young people had a wide range of activities and opportunities they would like the Panel to develop. The ideal scenario would be for Fundamental or young people themselves to secure additional funding to enable further flexibility and variety in the Panel's programme of work.

The group needs to be regularly refreshed to ensure new ideas, opportunities for new Panel members, the full age range being represented and to maintain or expand the group size. If the whole group size expands there may be a need to have more 'sub group' working to ensure manageable and focussed meetings with decision-makers. There is an appetite to ensure that the whole group, including those who have moved away or left the Panel, have means to stay informed about the project.

Securing genuine opportunities for young people in employment, work experience and volunteering as Games-Time approaches will be a real indication of the importance the decision-makers attach to benefiting the local community. This is a sensitive issue and one that Fundamental may only have limited influence on but the Panel are keen to explore this in their work and it was also raised by stakeholders.

From October lot of thing going to be happening, service contracts to feed, provide tickets, meet and greet. Whats their role in that? Look at mechanisms to get young people a look in, local opportunities. Big catering and cleaning projects – there are opportunities there. Some contractors will want to partner with the community as part of their bids. (Five boroughs Education Programme)

As the level of information provided and excitement about the Games grows it is important that the Panel's voice becomes louder and stronger. Spreading the word through peer work and links with decision makers, linking in with other youth groups for events and recruiting more young people to the Panel are all ways in which this can be achieved.

Further information:

For more information about the Legacy Youth Panel contact the Legacy Company at info@legacycompany.co.uk or visit www.legacycompany.co.uk/community/get-involved/youth-panel/ or call 020 3288 1800



Fundamental

Architectural Inclusion

The Legacy Youth Panel is run by Fundamental on behalf of the Olympic Park Legacy Company.

