



# City of London

Consultation Findings

I Know I Can Ltd  
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# Consultation Findings – City of London

This Consultation Report summarises the key findings from Surveys and Consultation Conversations that were created to target several key stakeholder groups within the City of London. These stakeholders were identified as follows:

- Children and Young People
- Parents, Carers and Guardians
- Statutory and Non-Statutory Partners and Organisations
- Lead Member for Young People
- The City Youth Forum
- The Children in Care Council
- Local Residents

Amongst all the Stakeholders there was an acknowledgement and agreement of the benefit and added value of Youth and Play Services, particularly when they are able to engage with a variety of Children and Young People. The consensus was that Youth and Play Services are necessary within the City of London (CoL) to not only keep Children and Young People engaged but to also support them as they learn and develop.

## General overview

There was a recognition of the value that various Youth and Play Service provisions add when functioning in an effective manner. This included, but was not limited to, providing an environment for young people to learn and enhance informal skills; build self-confidence; and generally, enjoy engagement with Peers outside of formal education settings. Football, for example, was the most frequently referred to activity in which Children and Young People were able to engage in positively. There was also an acknowledgement that the Youth and Play Service was able to meet Children and Young People's needs and expose them to an array of opportunities that would have otherwise not been available.

The report has been split according to a summation of Stakeholder Findings using the following categories:

- Part 1 – Children and Young People
- Part 2 – Parents and Guardians
- Part 3 – Elected Member, Statutory and Non-Statutory Partners and Organisations

The report will also address the effect that COVID-19 has had on various stakeholders from their perspective in relation to Youth and Play Services.

## Part 1 – Children and Young People

Children and Young People within the borough were asked to identify what worked well within the borough and what could be improved, with specific reference to Youth and Play Services.

Amongst the respondents, 25% were aged between 8 -12 and 75% were aged between 13 – 19.



Regarding the current Provision, the results highlighted the following:

- 67% said they knew how to get their voices heard and 32% wanted to help volunteer
- 17% noted that they were unaware of what provisions were available to them; to which 50% of all young people said social media should be used to further engage their Peers.

Figure 1 below summarises the most commonly used words when Children and Young People were asked about the best ways in which City of London could further engage with them:



**Figure 1**

Amongst the needs identified, Children and Young People requested that they would like access to more activities including visits to parks and more green spaces. This was coupled with a recognition of After School Provisions should always provide food. After School Provisions being able to provide food also served as a solution to counter the financial difficulties some experienced. They highlighted that an increased awareness and access to certain opportunities including the Arts, Culture, Sports and Apprenticeships would be essential, particularly in terms of increasing inclusivity of certain groups such as Girls, SEND and Leaving Care. Equal to this was a call to utilise and explore the network of opportunities that were geographically available. This was in specific reference to CoL being able to facilitate access to Apprenticeships, Work Experience and Employment opportunities within the City.

## Part 2 – Parents, Carers and Guardians

Parents and Guardians of Children and Young People in the City acknowledged the manner in which the Youth Services were able to engage positively when performing at an optimum level.

100% of Parents, Carers and Guardians said they wanted to be further involved in the changes happening for the Children and Young People and their community. As such, they were able to recommend the following ways in which engagement could be increased. That in which prominently featured were as follows:

- Youth Clubs, fun activities, Events, Festivals
- Engagements and outdoor activities that exposes Children and Young People to life outside of the City
- Local engagement; increasing Barbican's remit to accept local children onto their programmes subsidising the financial cost associated with some of their programmes
- Outdoor activities during the winter and school holidays

Overall, there appeared to be an agreement that Parents, Carers and Guardians are less aware of Youth and Play Service provisions which has meant they have not been encouraging their children to participate in activities or to engage with Youth Workers. As a result, often leaving Children and Young People living in the 3 main Housing Estates complaining of being bored. Parents and Carers also fed back that they would welcome more frequent communication on what provision was available and when, and they were clear that they value consistency of Youth Workers so that they know who they are and can encourage the building of healthy relationships with their children.

## Part 3 – Elected Member, Partners and Organisations

Amongst the Lead Member for Young People, Service Providers and Partners, 50% acknowledged that there was a greater need for services to be digitalised to increase the opportunities available to Children and Young People. They highlighted that the Youth and Play Offer could integrate additional online services and content. Increasing CoLs online content and capacity was noted as one of the ways in which the Youth and Play Offer could be promoted. There was also the recognition that access to play areas and sports facilities had been closed for several months due to Covid-19 (including after lockdown) without proper communication (this was also raised by Parents/Carers and Children and Young People; highly contentious as there are no other playing areas for children in Portsoken Estate except on the road/parking areas). Further to the above, an emphasis was placed on Children and Young People benefiting from more Sports and Youth Services, afterschool and homework clubs and schemes such as Duke of Edinburgh to also give them something to look forward to and celebrate.

Equal to the above, Service Providers and Partners also addressed the greater need for communication between agencies; specifically making reference to improving communication and internal support services between CoL internal departments and commissioned Providers. Several Partners fed back that they were not aware if the young people they worked with were also being supported through other Service provisions. An increased method of communication amongst agencies was noted as a sustainable avenue to share methods of best practice whilst providing an insight into what various Children/Young People had available to them/were utilising as a result.

Service Providers/Partners were able to identify tangible means in which barriers that Children and Young People faced could be reduced, of which included the following:

- Increase opportunities for engagement within the borough between the ages of 10 and 14
- Increase provisions by having a purpose-Built Centre providing Training to improve Young People's ability to apply and attain jobs
- Subsidised travel to benefit those who encounter long bus journeys to/from education, employment and/or training. Additional funding support would also enable those who require college equipment to be able to attain the necessary equipment thus increasing opportunities to become more employable for potential jobs

Those who engaged in the Consultation who formed part of the Senior Leadership Teams within the City, emphasised the importance of increasing diversity amongst the facilitation of various opportunities. This was coupled with a need to further promote an array of opportunities across the City in which the Guildhall School of Music and Drama was mentioned as they offer opportunities. This was seen as another effective approach to address the financial barriers that often prevent Children and Young People engaging in certain activities. Additionally, utilising and building on forums that were presently in existence such as the City Youth Forum was an equally tangible resolution to increase the manner in which Children and Young People could have their voices heard, actively engage within the community and build rapport with Elected Members/Councillors.

## Covid-19

The survey asked various stakeholders about the manner in which COVID-19 has affected their engagements to enable CoL to be able to identify what could be put in place to support Children and Young People post-COVID-19/ if there are future lockdowns.

The greatest manner in which participants identified as having been affected by COVID-19 was the cancellation and postponing of plans, particularly for Children and Young People. Equally, the closing of social provisions such as the football cage and other sports related activities were highlighted as having an effect on activities that promoted Health and Wellbeing. Activities such as football, being the most frequently referenced activity that was prohibited due to COVID-19 and access to cycling were amongst those in which Children and Young People mentioned.

Of the Children and Young People that completed the survey, 100% were in Education, Employment and/or Training. This is of significance because another major issue that was highlighted as a result of COVID-19 was not being able to attend school, coupled with the closing of all Youth and Play Services and provisions, appearing equally problematic to many.

57% of Parents, Carers and Guardians were concerned for their children during Lockdown; they specifically cited isolation, claustrophobia and no exercise as their concerns. They noted that despite the Government opening parks and sports facilities, within the borough of City of London no parks or sports facilities were re-opened during the summer. This left many Children and Young People bored at home (especially during the hot days, and those who live with no gardens and/or balconies), increasing their reliance on digital devices much to their Parents, Carers and Guardians dismay. They also highlighted that COVID-19 had resulted in a decline in social activities for their children which they had serious concerns for their children's mental health.

Figure 2 below summarises the most commonly used words when all Survey respondents were asked what measures could be put in place to support Children and Young People post-COVID.

Parents were able to provide a range of sustainable recommendations that City could put in place so as to support Children and Young People post-COVID-19. This included providing free internet, opening sports facilities like the football cage, and an increased capacity to digitalise youth services so as to increase engagement, particularly during times of great uncertainty. Whilst a variety of residents acknowledged that there was free internet available in some areas, this was countered by the fact that some residents often found the internet connection to be extremely weak thus not able to suffice for the duration in which it was required. This was another problematic area for those who heavily relied on the internet for school and college work. There was also mention of a need to provide Career and Job support as well as youth activities, and it was noted that several young people had missed Work Experience opportunities this year due to Covid-19.



**Figure 2**

In like manner, Service Providers recognised the benefit of digitalising their engagements during COVID-19 increasing their ability to run a range of online services. This was further reflected in that 50% suggested there needs to be even more online content for Children and Young People.

## SEND/Additional needs

For Service Providers/Partners who should be working with Children and Young People with disabilities (but too often are not), more Training is required to support their engagement. This was emphasised through the acknowledgment that engaging with SEND Children and Young People often required specialist support and evidence-based approaches to develop their key skills. These Children and Young People would also benefit from increased exposure to social opportunities. These Service Provides also brought to the fore that Speech and Language Therapists were an essential avenue for those within the SEN category to have their voices heard. Additional investment was stated as necessary to support alternative measures of engagement of which Art Therapy was used as a successful example. Service Providers who used holistic approaches to youth engagement highlighted the effective manner in which these methods were able to help Children/Young People with behavioural issues/or had been excluded from school.

To conclude, there is a clear consensus and recognition of the value-added benefit of having sustainable, representative and inclusive Youth and Play Service Provisions to enable, empower and encourage Children and Young People particularly in times of uncertainty. The Youth and Play Service is seen as an essential tenant in supporting the development of Children and Young People whilst ensuring that they stay active members of their community and can confidently contribute to changes. It goes without saying that COVID-19 has had an adverse effect on provisions thus stakeholders alike, yet this has provided a key learning opportunity and avenue to address areas in which additional support from existing providers and potentially more funding ought to be put in place as part of Covid-19 recovery plans/future lockdown preparations to better enable CoL young residents to better have their holistic needs met.