

Young Londoners taking action: Nasir shares his insight into social action and the issues impacting young Londoners

June 2024

The following blog was written by Nasir, a young person who took part in one of our youth social action programmes and has recently supported a London-wide evaluation as a peer researcher. In his own words, he shares his journey with social action, the issues he feels are impacting young Londoners the most and what he thinks positive community action looks like.

Nasir took part in HeadStart Action, Civil Society & Sport's personal and social development programme for young people aged 14-18, who are at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET). HeadStart Action bridges the link between social action and employability, to engage and inspire young people and elevate their voices, giving them the skills, experience and connections they need to get ahead in the world of work.

"My call to action would be to make young people feel empowered"

My name is Nasir, I am 16-years-old and I live in Westminster. I was approached by one of my football coaches for an opportunity to take part in HeadStart Action a year ago.

I started my HeadStart Action project, whereby we had to plan and run an event in our community. At the end of this, I had the opportunity to partake in the peer research project evaluating the youth social action programmes. Peer research is the action of **conducting research with like-minded people** on a specific issue/topic. I had this opportunity presented to me having completed my HeadStart Action project. My role has been to conduct interviews and lead event days in order to gain data to then evaluate the programmes. The evaluation I had to carry out looked at what programmes of youth social action were doing well, areas of improvement and the overall impact they had on the young people and their communities.

So, **what is youth social action?**

To me, youth social action is the **process of youth making a change within society** whether that be their local community or within policies. My particular youth social action project had set out to achieve this with a group of young people by planning and hosting a sports day which would bring the local community together through the love of sports and staying healthy. Through being involved in youth social action I have developed a plethora of soft skills including **confidence and teamwork**. These skills are key to gaining employment in the future. They had also organised insight days at Barclays and other employers for us, which reinforced skills such as **networking and team building**. In addition, we were able to partake in mock interviews giving us practice to an integral part of getting a job. I've already been able to apply the plethora of skills I had acquired to apply and **successfully get a job as a football coach**.

Through youth social action I've also felt part of the change that is occurring in London and have felt that **I'm playing a role in shaping London's future**. Youth social action promotes positive community action and this is important as **it's imperative young people are constantly involved in the community** as they are essentially what shapes the future of the community.

The main issue I have felt passionate about is the struggle of young people financially living in London with the rise in the cost of transport, the lingering cost of university fees and the general cost-of-living crisis in London. To summarise, the experience of a young Londoner would be best described as a **daily conflict between wanting to enjoy themselves and needing to think financially for their future**. My personal goal in life is to make a change in the world whether that be at the largest scale or even small wins.

Partaking in a youth social project, and now working as a peer researcher, has given me that platform to **voice my thoughts** and make change within my community. It has also opened a window of opportunities for me as a young person to progress into places where I'm able to witness what drives change in London and influence this. Unfortunately, for most Londoners this is not the case. **Young Londoner's arguably are those who will be most affected** by policy changes yet have no say in the change itself. The opportunities of young Londoners to affect policy making must increase. I have been a part of many events that aim to bring young people together and look at practises that increase youth voice, for example the 'Empowering Voices, Inspiring Change' event hosted at City Hall, was a collaboration of organisations in the youth sector but more notably was **created and led by young people**.

After my peer research project, I hope to have opened many doors of opportunities for me to elevate myself within the policy making process. **My call to action would be to make young people feel empowered**, which can only be done through meaningful and constant engagement.

If you have any questions or would like to chat further about our work engaging young Londoners in positive community action, contact the Youth Social Action team at youthsocialaction@london.gov.uk