

## Feltham Convening Partnership's Youth Engagement Summer Programme 2023

**Date:** 24 July - 4 July 2023

The Feltham Convening Partnership facilitated a two week paid work placement over the summer for 18 young people across six local secondary schools. The young people either learned about community organising or community research. FCP were particularly interested in working with young people who are at risk of becoming NEET, young people from diverse backgrounds and/or young people with special educational needs. FCP worked closely with the inclusion teams in the schools to ensure that students were supported to apply and engage fully in the programme.

### The aim of the programme was to:

- Develop young people's employability skills in a fun and engaging way
- Provide young people with professional, paid work experience
- Build relationships between students across local schools in Feltham
- Encourage young people to join the Feltham Convening Partnership's (FCP) youth engagement work.



*This year's cohort of talented Young Researchers & Young Leaders.*

The **Young Researchers** focused on strengthening the evidence base for FCP's mental health & wellbeing priority. Throughout the two weeks, the Young Researchers collected both qualitative and quantitative data on their assigned research question.

*How does young people's physical health influence their mental health, with a focus on substance use and exercise?*

*How does access to sexual health support influence young people's mental health, with a focus on cultural backgrounds?*

They analysed their data and worked together to summarise their key findings, limitations and future directions.

The **Young Leaders** learned all about how to take action in their community and create sustainable long-lasting change around FCP's priority areas. They received training on Citizen UK's 5 steps to social change: they learnt about Listening campaigns, how to plan a strategic response to the issues coming out of listening to our community, how to take action to get a reaction, and how to get a seat at the table and negotiate for change.

The Young Leaders used the Listening that the Young Researchers completed in January this year to identify key issues to take action on. They then used the 5 steps of social change to decide on a solution, plan an action and present their plan to members of the community.



*The Young Researchers & Young Leaders working together over the two weeks.*

**The programme's mentors:**

This year, the mentors were current Young Researchers and Young Leaders who have been working with the Partnership for the past year. This was a change from last year but we wanted to utilise the knowledge and experience of our current Young Leaders and offer them the opportunity to pass on their expertise to the next generation of Young Leaders!

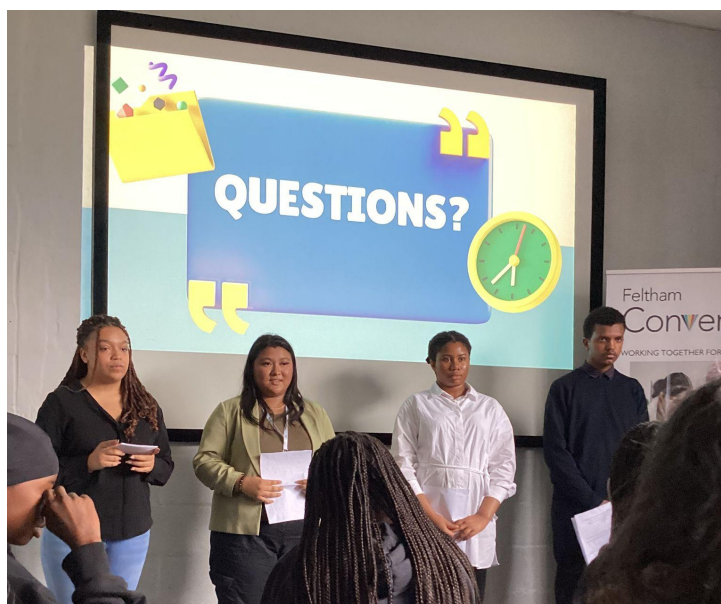


*This year's wonderful mentors.*

### **Presentations:**

On the final day of the programme, FCP invited 50 current partners, residents and parents to a celebration event where the Young Researchers and Young Leaders delivered 10 minute presentations on what they were working on over the two weeks. This was a great way to elevate community voice, encourage cross-sector collaboration and share accountability for babies, children and young people's outcomes in Feltham.

*"My favourite part of the programme was performing our presentation"*



*The Young Leaders deliver a professional and engaging presentation at Riverside Vineyard Church.*

### **Young Researcher Findings:**

The Young Researcher's findings suggest that there is a strong positive relationship between exercise and mental health. Young people scored a higher self-reported mental wellbeing score when exercising frequently throughout the week. Unexpectedly, young people's self-reported mental wellbeing score increased with the quantity of substances that they were consuming. Here's a video created and produced by the Young Researchers to showcase their findings!

Separate findings suggested that there is a weak positive correlation between access to sexual health support and mental wellbeing. Young people from black-british and indian backgrounds were more likely to report shame and stigma as barriers to talking about their sexual health.

### **Young Leader Solutions:**

There were three groups of Young Leaders, who presented three different solutions at the end of the two weeks.

The first group, who named themselves "Uno", analysed the listening and identified the problem of a lack of safe, accessible space for young people in Feltham to hang out with their friends outside of school. From this, they decided the issue to focus on was that existing spaces in Feltham are not being used wisely. Their proposed solution was to turn one of the unused shop fronts in the high street into a youth centre. They identified who had the power to make this a reality, and planned their asks for the relevant power holders. They designed a petition to bring their issue into the public realm.

The second group, Nothing In Common, also decided to focus on the problem of a lack of safe spaces in Feltham. The issue they focused on was that existing shops in Feltham Centre do not cater for young people or their interests, and young people get stigmatised as "troublemakers" as a result. Their proposed solution was to create "safe spaces" for young people in existing shops such as Asda and Starbucks, to provide a smaller scale youth facility for young people and to build positive relationships between young people and the Centre. They created a poster to raise awareness of their campaign within the community.

The third group, The Scientists, decided to focus on the problem of the Cost of Living Crisis and young people's concerns around securing a stable high-paying job for their future. They narrowed this big problem down to the more specific issue of a lack of understanding around the different post-16 pathways; University is often seen as the only viable option and the cost and debt associated with that is off putting to students, but they do not have enough information about Apprenticeships to choose that as a viable pathway. Their proposed solution was to raise awareness of Apprenticeships by introducing a scheme called 'Accessible Apprenticeships' where they would work with local employers to promote and market apprenticeships. They identified Heathrow Airport as a big local employer who they would like to work with, and took action by designing an easily accessible comic to demonstrate the different post-16 pathways available to young people.

### **Evaluation of the programme:**

The number of young people who reported to have advanced listening skills doubled over the course of the two weeks.

*“This work experience has targeted each of the areas i wanted to improve on, for example teamwork, listening, and problem solving”*

23% of young people reported to have advanced public speaking skills when finishing the two weeks whereas only 5% of the cohort reported this at the start of the programme

*“I have built my communication skills and my public speaking skills greatly.”*

The number of young people who reported poor problem solving skills decreased by half by the end of the programme. Only 28% of young people reported high scores on the aiming high proportion of the survey at the start of the survey, whereas 70% reported a similar score at the end of the programme. 80% of young people reported that their leadership skills improved throughout the course of the two weeks, 65% of young people reported to have advanced leadership skills by the end of the two weeks. Less young people reported a development in their teamwork skills. This may have been because many young people already felt that they had strong teamwork skills when joining the programme.

*“I liked working in my team and bonding over our experiences when we had discussions.”*

Many of the young people reported to have built friendships with students who they may not have otherwise met.

*“My favourite thing about this programme was being with new friends during lunch”*

*“I feel accomplished especially because of how far I've come.”*

*“Everyday was a highlight, i genuinely loved everyday we spent together and developing our research and learning new stuff”*

### **Conclusions:**

To conclude, this programme built upon the success of last year's summer programme and the young people left feeling proud of what they had achieved. The work was of a high standard and, overall, the majority felt that their work contributed to the work of the Feltham Convening Partnership. During this paid work experience, they developed new skills and built relationships with students from other schools.

The Young Researchers' work will feed into the work of the Mental Health & Wellbeing Working Group and the Young Leaders' work will support the work of the Feltham Youth Activists and push for change around youth provision in Feltham. This programme has strengthened our youth engagement work; 5 local young people have expressed an interest in joining the FCP from September and they will work with our current Young Researchers to support our participatory evaluation team. 3 young people have expressed an interest in joining the campaign to improve youth provision in Feltham.

Through engaging more young people in the work of the partnership and developing their skills and knowledge, we can be sure that young people in Feltham are at the forefront of our work and driving place-based change to improve outcomes for babies, children and young people in our community.