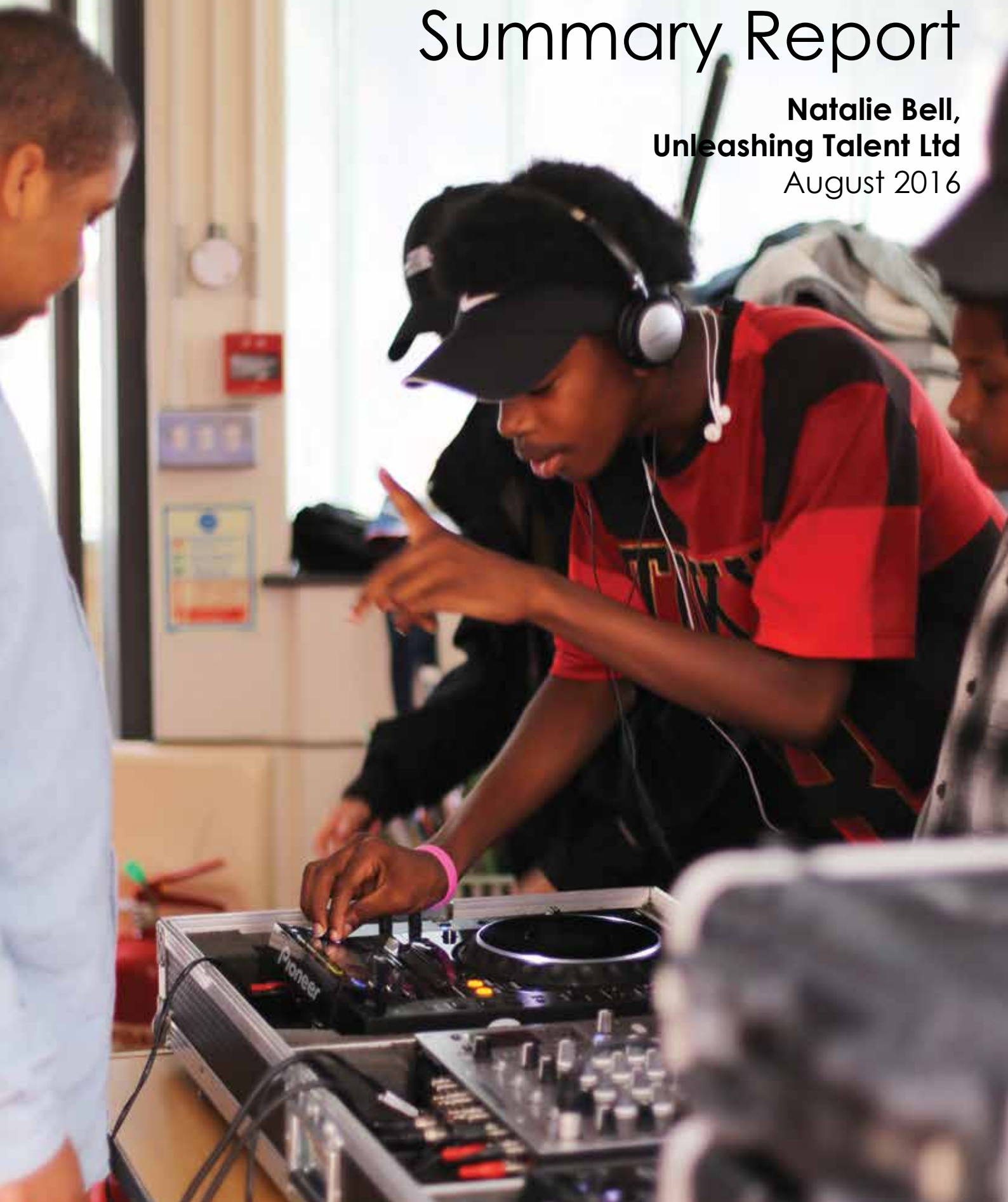


Waterloo Youth Strategy Research Summary Report

**Natalie Bell,
Unleashing Talent Ltd
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The Waterloo Youth Strategy Group (WYSG) comprises seven local organisations providing youth services in the Waterloo area. WYSG wanted to find out the current needs of young people in SE1 aged 10–21 years old. The group employed Natalie Bell (as a local community researcher) to write this report. This work has been sponsored by Coca Cola London Eye and administered by WaCoCo. The research received input from 193 young people.

“Young people shouldn’t be seen as disadvantaged, disengaged, disabled or NEET – but instead as:*

*ASSETS that can be developed
TALENTS that can provide solutions
EXPERIENCES we can draw on
RESOURCES we can tap into
ENERGY to spark change and create progress
POTENTIAL to lead society and
the ABILITY to be the authors of their own destiny”*

London Youth and The Foyer Federation
Advantaged Thinking, August 2016

*Not in Education, Employment or Training

Introduction

The information in this report is to be used to shape and inform youth providers in the Waterloo area of the needs, ideas and voices of local young people (aged 10-21 years) and help provide evidence for support and funding. Youth organisations in Waterloo are having contracts slashed and competition for grants is fierce. The current austerity cuts have had a dramatic effect on youth work across the UK as described below by Hannah Richardson (BBC News education reporter).

The whole infrastructure is at risk of disappearing which will put even more strain on social services, schools and the criminal justice system to pick up the pieces at a huge cost to taxpayers:

“Unison general secretary Dave Prentis said youth workers were tireless in the support they provide to young people,

helping them find work and educational opportunity.

He said: ‘It’s youth services which prevent problems happening in the first place by reducing feelings of isolation among young people and helping teenagers to lead positive lives.

‘But they’ve been relentlessly cut and undermined at a time when they are needed more than ever. Youth services are heading for collapse.’”

(BBC News 2016)

Young people have harder lives than before with a lack of housing, high unemployment, rising costs of living, student fees and decreases in accessing benefits. This leads to less opportunity, higher emotional stress and a poorer quality of life.

Did you know that...

- 1 in 10 children and young people aged 5-16 suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder (Source: Youngminds)
- The latest figures, for 2014/15, show that 19.1% of children in Year 6 (aged 10-11) were obese and a further 14.2% were overweight (Source: Public Health England)
- In Jun-Aug 2016, 624,000 young people aged 16-24 were unemployed and the unemployment rate for this age range was 13.7% (Source: House of Commons Briefing Paper 2016)
- The poverty rate among 20-24 year olds grew from 24% to 30% in the last decade, more than any other age group. Poverty among young people is highest in London at 38% (Source: New Policy Institute)
- ChildLine reported a 34% rise in the last year in the number of calls from teenagers distressed by sexual images viewed online
- Despite the largest decrease in underage pregnancy rates, Lambeth still has the highest rate of any London borough; almost 4 times higher than the lowest rate (Harrow) (Source: London’s Poverty Profile)

It is imperative that we maintain this part of London as a safe area offering opportunities, advice and security to young people, particularly those from low income backgrounds.

Methodology

We ran a standardised wide angled questionnaire online. 193 young people (65% male, 34% female) aged 9-21 years from the following organisations in SE1 responded:

- Blackfriars@Living Space
- Oasis Academy Southbank
- Coin Street Girls Club and Wednesday Youth Club
- SE1 United
- Colombo Centre

- The Bridge at Waterloo and St Johns Church
- Scouts at St Andrews Church
- Peabody

We also ran focus groups and themed workshops around different areas of:

- Youth Enterprise and Employment
- Youth Sports and Health
- Targeted Youth services
- Communication with Young People

Young people told us:

We want more football, sports, youth club, trips, arts, swimming, graphic design, setting up my own business, laser tag, netball, food, gym and basketball

75% of us feel strongly or fairly connected to their community and feel part of it

More access to education, jobs, opportunities and money signify the biggest changes which need to happen to improve our lives.

Leaflets, word of mouth and social media (Twitter, Facebook and texts) are the best ways to advertise opportunities!

“In many cases, there is a widespread misunderstanding of the role of youth work and what it can offer. In some instances, this is less about what youth work is and more about the need to raise awareness of the local youth offer. Communication and perception

barriers are also manifest within the education and training environment for each profession, barriers which can only be removed by stronger collaboration between youth work and education training providers.”

(Source: National Youth Agency Commission into the Role of Youth Work 2014)

Our most popular activities are:



Sports

77%



Volunteering

29%



Arts

37%



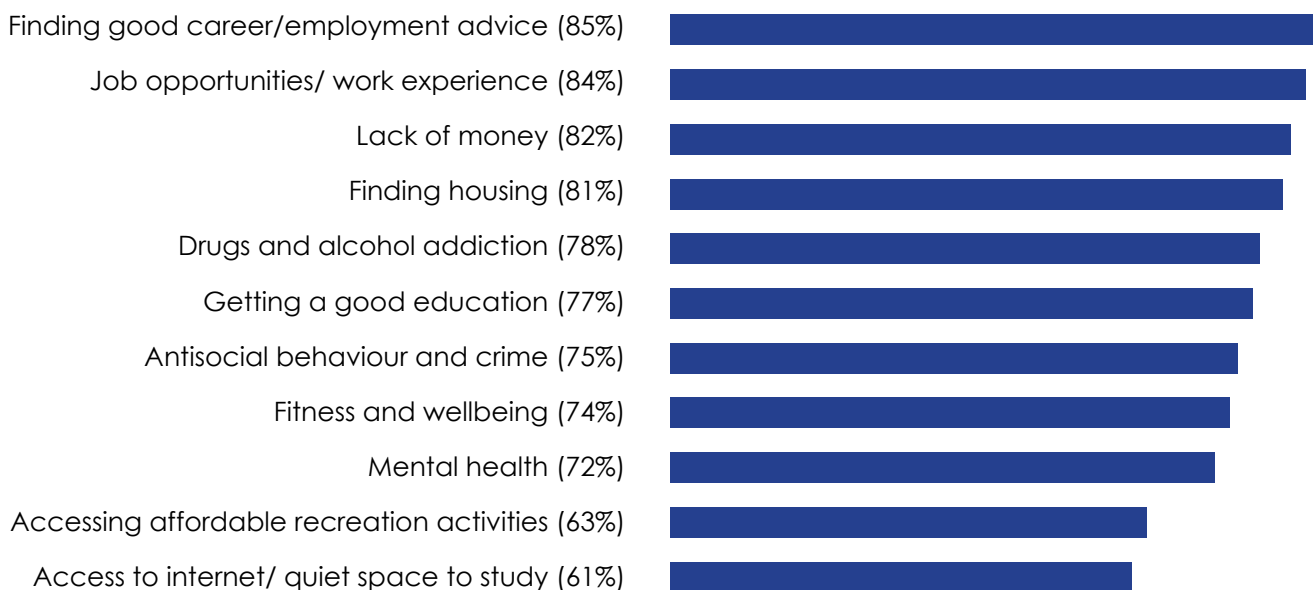
Education

25%

What activities would make you put down your phone and come out of your house?



What do you think are the biggest challenges young people face in your local area?



Recommendations

For youth providers to deliver successfully, they need an understanding of government recommendations in light of cuts and shifts in responsibility for young people. The National Youth Agency highlighted the following:

“The Government has identified four principles for the future of youth and youth services:

- Promoting a positive and active role for young people – urging young people to get involved with youth councils, youth mayors and the Youth Parliament.
- Strengthening local communities to take responsibility for their young people.
- Targeting funding that prioritises the most vulnerable children and young people and focuses on quality outcomes.
- Achieving greater diversity of service providers, to get the best value for money and to support growth in the voluntary sector.”

Waterloo is a unique area full of opportunity. Resources need to be unlocked and shared. Young people should be a priority group who are seen as an asset, not a negative drain on society. We have to engage the whole community including corporates, large statutory organisations, community providers and small voluntary groups to offer services needed to support young people to positive adulthood. An “invest to save” model needs adopting, where initial investment is committed to youth programmes until young people become skilled enough to lead and self-manage. This is key to a sustainable model which becomes a self-replenishing virtuous cycle of effective delivery.

There are many areas of strength and exceptional practice in the youth work providers in Waterloo, including valuable partnerships and highly committed, skilled practitioners. High quality youth service is built on trust and relationships. This knowledge and social capital with local families and young people should be retained and built on.

Priority themes

1. SPACE AND RESOURCES:

Young people need dedicated, well-managed, purpose-made, safe youth spaces where high rents are not charged to youth organisations to use. There is a need for visible, accessible, inclusive, open access youth sessions where young people can drop in, meet people then be signposted to specialist support. More access is needed to places where young people can access cheap, healthy food and cooking facilities. There is a requirement for more access to computers, the internet and administration facilities for

study and employment support. Larger, more established organisations should prioritise the sharing of resources and to enable financially weaker but effective youth organisations to safeguard vulnerable core youth services.

2. ACTIVITIES:

More activities should be set up to tackle enterprise, employment, careers advice and work placements in order to support young people in becoming job ready, financially independent and aspirational. Activities which purposefully support and safeguard

young people's mental health must be readily available. Girls' projects which support girls in accessing wellbeing, sport and confidence building need to be continually available. Young people should access services easily through a central communication point and promotion tools and find out what is going on in a simple, effective manner.

3. YOUTH LEADERSHIP:

Young people should be involved in designing, leading and running their own activities with the commitment and support of youth workers. Youth workers should keep the youth offer up to date, relevant and aspirational and promote activities with young people.

4. COMMUNITY:

There is a commitment to ensuring young people understand their citizenship role in society and feel part of the wider community. Young people should be celebrated and treated as equal stakeholders in the Waterloo community and are consulted widely on an annual basis to ensure needs are being met. More should be done to directly support young people in families in crisis and gang involvement (violence, drug selling, crime, intimidation) which is causing antisocial behaviour particularly in social housing estates. More partners should engage in delivery and seamless signposting and support.

Actions for Members of the Waterloo Youth Strategy Group

1. To SWOT analyse the current youth offer, resources and youth organisations providing for young people and plan support for the major areas of weakness and fragility with strategic partnership work.
2. To co-create with local young people and key partners a vision and business plan for a 5 year outstanding youth work offer and youth spaces in Waterloo.
3. To ensure ongoing WYSG meetings with high quality co-ordination and support for forming and implementing the business plan and explore consortium bidding opportunities and in kind resources.
4. To engage wider partners and commit to long term partnership work, not just short term pilot schemes. If pilots are successful, to commit to building on success without losing momentum.
5. To promote and signpost current youth activities more effectively and set up a youth-led central point of information.
6. To build on these findings and start co-creating projects with young people meeting these needs and explore new methods of working inspired by the young people's ideas.



For a full report with data please email: unleashingtalent1@gmail.com or visit www.coinstreet.org
 Sponsored by the Coca Cola London Eye and administered by WaCoCo



Waterloo Youth Strategy Group members:



And supported by Oasis Academy South Bank