

**PRESS RELEASE****EMBARGOED - 00.01, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2009*****Commission recommends ways to get more young people involved in politics***

Research published today by the Youth Citizenship Commission (YCC) shows that 82% of young people in the UK don't trust politicians to make the right decisions for them.

The research was carried out to inform the Commission's work, which looked at ways of engaging more young people in the political process. It also found that 76% of young people don't feel they can influence government decisions.

This research formed part of a consultation with young people, youth organisations and the wider public into issues surrounding youth citizenship, including whether the voting age should be lowered to 16. In response to this, the YCC has today launched a set of recommendations, which include the following:

- Schools should have a duty to ensure that all eligible pupils are offered supported opportunities to register to vote at school
- Schools should be used as polling stations and should be encouraged to stay open so young people can see democracy at work
- Government departments should appoint panels of young people to advise on specific issues such as schools, job prospects for young people and justice
- An award scheme should be developed for young people who are involved in citizenship activities
- Politicians should decide on whether the voting age should be lowered to 16
- Westminster could consider whether to legislate to allow lower voting ages for devolved and local elections in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, if there was sufficient political consensus in those countries
- Parliament should sponsor and fund the UK Youth Parliament
- Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families and the devolved administrations should ensure citizenship education is effective by moving away from analysing curriculum and leading the development of a delivery plan

- A universal and collaborative system of school and class councils should be developed and supported

The Chair of the YCC, Professor Jonathan Tonge said:

“Our research has shown that young people don’t engage in politics because they feel they can’t change things and they don’t know how to get involved. We believe that, if our recommendations are implemented, they will encourage young people to take action and show them how they can make a positive impact on their communities and the country as a whole.

“Although it’s evident that more needs to be done with regards to engagement, we’ve seen that a considerable number of young people are already involved in citizenship activities and are making a great contribution to the world around them. It’s important to recognise that citizenship isn’t just about voting – it’s about all the things that make up a democracy from signing petitions to community campaigning. We want to develop youth citizenship for the future, with young people being helped to become fully active within local communities and the broader political system.”

Bridget Prentice, Minister in charge of youth democratic engagement, said:

“In a democracy, it’s important that politicians’ decisions take into account the views of all citizens. This is why it is crucial to engage the UK’s young people and encourage them to take an active role in politics.

“Young people have a lot to offer this country. If we can channel their creativity, energy and enthusiasm, we can empower young people to become active citizens.”

The YCC is an independent body set up in 2008 to examine young people’s understanding of citizenship and recommend ways to increase their participation in politics. It is made up of 13 members from different age groups and backgrounds.

Full copies of the YCC’s final report and its recommendations on votes at 16 can be found at [www.ycc.uk.net](http://www.ycc.uk.net)

-ENDS-

For more information or for interviews with YCC representatives, contact Sharon Bange on [sharon.bange@kindredagency.com](mailto:sharon.bange@kindredagency.com) or 020 7612 8874, or Melissa Adams on [melissa.adams@kindredagency.com](mailto:melissa.adams@kindredagency.com) or 02920 444 185.

Notes to editors:

1. The Youth Citizenship Commission (YCC) is an independent body set up in 2008 to examine young people's understanding of citizenship and increase their participation in politics. The Commission's work looked at a range of issues relating to democracy and youth engagement, including whether the voting age should be lowered to 16.
2. The 13 appointed Commissioners of the YCC are: Professor Jonathan Tonge (Chair), Professor Phil Cowley, Dr Andrew Mycock, Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson, Miranda Sawyer, Richard Demby, Wes Streeting, Anne Longfield, Ray Auvray, Hazel Rees and young people, Robyn Keeble, Justin Cole and Victoria Collin.
3. The research referred to was carried out by Jigsaw Research (*Democratic Engagement and Participation – segmenting the 11-25s*, London, Jigsaw Research, 2009) and can be found at [www.ycc.uk.net](http://www.ycc.uk.net).
4. A full summary of recommendations as detailed in the YCC's final report is as follows:

Recommendation One	The Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families and the devolved administrations should ensure that the delivery of citizenship education is consistent and effective.
Recommendation Two	The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the devolved administrations should establish a universal system of strong, supported School and Class Councils working collaboratively.
Recommendation Three	Schools should have student representatives on the governing body.
Recommendation Four	Youth voice: National, regional and local public bodies should commit to holding at least two issues-based youth advisory panels per year composed entirely of representative samples of young people.
Recommendation Five	Parliament should sponsor and fund the UK Youth Parliament on a sustainable basis.
Recommendation Six	Government should explore whether a compulsory programme for youth civic service should become part of the Key Stage 4 curriculum.
Recommendation Seven	Schools should have a duty to ensure that all eligible pupils are offered supported opportunities to register to vote at school.
Recommendation Eight	The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the devolved administrations should direct schools to be available for use as polling stations and promote the benefits of them remaining open.
Recommendation Nine	The Secretary of State for Justice should pilot and evaluate the use of relevant technology (mobile, email, social networks etc) to remind

---

	people to vote on polling day.
Recommendation Ten	The Cabinet Office should establish a New Media Taskforce to set out good practice on the best online methods to engage with young people who seek to be involved in citizenship activities.
Recommendation Eleven	The Government should introduce an equality impact assessment criterion to consider the impact of new policies on young people.
Recommendation Twelve	Nominated government departments should appoint annual scrutiny panels composed of young people to advise on specific issues.
Recommendation Thirteen	Communities and Local Government, Department for Children, Schools and Families, Ministry of Justice and the Office of the Third Sector should track long-term progress on the refreshed aims of youth citizenship annually through representative surveys.
Recommendation Fourteen	As part of the wider work on promoting engagement in democratic processes all local authorities should develop a clear strategy for co-ordinating and promoting youth citizenship opportunities for young people.
Recommendation Fifteen	The Government should facilitate the Third Sector to develop a single, well-recognised award for young people involved in citizenship activities.
Recommendation Sixteen	The Government should facilitate and deliver a way to provide comparative information on, and communication channels for, elected representatives within constituencies.

---