

LEADERS
UNLOCKED

LEADERS UNLOCKED

IMPACT REPORT:
2015-2021

The first six years



The Youth Board have really changed my job as CEO; I now feel that I share my role with this team of motivated young leaders.

ROSE DOWLING **Founder & Chief Executive**

When I set up Leaders Unlocked in 2015, the basic goal was to support young people from diverse backgrounds to influence change in relation to the issues that affect their lives. I believed that any young person could become a leader if the right conditions were created for them to thrive. That's why all Leaders Unlocked projects provide young people with the space, support and tools they need to lead. Our projects are youth-led from end-to-end – allowing young people to define their own priorities, produce their own research, develop recommendations and co-produce solutions.

Over the last 6 years, we've been able to apply this approach to an ever-increasing number of social issues – including mental health, policing, criminal justice, racial justice, and violence affecting young people. Over time, we've also become increasingly youth-led as an organisation –

a journey that is still very much ongoing. We now have a high-performing Youth Board made up of incredible young leaders who are helping to drive our growth as an organisation – working on our strategy, business development, partnerships, media and communications.

The Youth Board have really changed my job as CEO, as I now feel that I share my role with this team of motivated young leaders. They have co-produced and authored this Impact Report, which is a vibrant record of our collective achievement over the last 6 years. Their voices and authorship make this report one that's worth reading, and we hope you will take inspiration from it. I'm hugely grateful to each and every one of the Youth Board for their tireless work in making Leaders unlocked a fundamentally better, more innovative and more connected organisation.

FOREWORD



The ultimate emphasis is always on amplifying the voices of the young people we work with

AMANIA SCOTT-SAMUELS

Youth Board member

It is an honour to write this foreword on behalf of the Leaders Unlocked Youth Board. The Board was established in early 2020 to help shape the future strategy of the organisation and communicate its impact. I joined the Youth Board because I know the importance of meaningful youth participation and I believe in Leaders Unlocked's process of embedding it. The Youth Board are proof that this process works, and as such, we are keen to contribute to the further growth and sustainability of this way of working.

I came across Leaders Unlocked in 2018 during the final year of my Criminology and Sociology degree, whilst looking for a real life way to impact the lives of young people in my community in Brixton. I was able to join the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) Youth Panel; a chance to work for police accountability and bring my peers' stories to the

forefront of the minds of those meant to serve and protect us. Finding out that Leaders Unlocked works to increase youth participation, voice and empowerment across a number of the systems that stack the odds against me and so many other young people, only further inspired me. So much so, that my postgraduate dissertation focused on the therapeutic and reparative impact being involved in a Leaders Unlocked project can have for young people affected by serious violence.

The disempowerment and demonisation of young people is nothing new. But taken with the rising concerns around serious violence and exploitation; the alarming rates of school exclusion; the crises in youth mental health; the resurgence of punitive justice and the erosion of decades' worth of progress in racial justice, the need for young people's insights and influence is indisputable. For many young people it's not simply 'The System is against us', it's 'All systems are against us.'. We feel that across too many systems, things are done to young people, rather than for them and let alone with them; so, it's unsurprising that youth voice is often missing from the decisions made about them.

For 6 years Leaders Unlocked has worked to embed young, underrepresented voices into the scrutiny and reform of the systems affecting them. The ultimate emphasis is always on amplifying the voices of the young people we work with and taking their thoughts and ideas to the highest level, through our conscientious youth-led process. This Impact Report will share details and key achievements from our work across health and wellbeing; criminal justice; policing; and education. It offers an opportunity to gain insight into the what, why and how we do what we do, includes testimonials from Youth Board members and further insight into our impact.

Several golden threads run through all Leaders Unlocked projects - the first, open questioning about what the problems are. This candid discussion offers validation of opinions and experiences that are too often taboo or overlooked. It establishes a degree of solidarity and mutual understanding among a group of young people who are often strangers. After they have identified their key areas of interest, we support the group to develop research skills and questions on the topic, and engage in peer-research across the country. The group is supported to carry out data analysis of their findings before engaging with key stakeholders on their recommendations.

From end-to-end, young people determine the direction of the work they do with Leaders Unlocked. In a time where it is so easy to feel voiceless as a young person, opportunities such as this are almost one in a million. Our partnership work with decision-makers puts young people on an equal platform to discuss, challenge and call to account. The two-way knowledge exchange from such partnerships also contributes to all-important culture changes within organisations and sectors. At the same time, the process improves prospects for young people through the enhancement of transferable skills, tailored opportunities for development and networking, and pathways to progression.

The Youth Board is passionate about demonstrating the power of active youth participation in design and decision-making within the systems they are most affected by. We know a culture change with regards to perceptions and treatment of youth is needed and we certainly intend to keep being a part of that change.

THEORY OF CHANGE

This Theory of Change has been developed by our Youth Board as a way of articulating our approach to social change.

THE PROBLEM

- Too many systems and services **ARE FAILING** young people.
- Young people **DON'T TRUST** professionals and systems that are meant to serve them.
- Young people are **NOT INVOLVED** in a meaningful way or given opportunities to lead.
- There is a lack of recognition of **THE VALUE** young people can bring.

“Some groups are over-represented in systems, yet under-represented in voice.”

THE VISION FOR CHANGE

- Young people are **HEARD AND INVOLVED** across the UK.
- There's an **ESTABLISHED CULTURE** of involving young people in public policy and provision.
- Systems are **RESPONSIVE** to young people's needs and make a difference to their lives.
- Organisations and society **RECOGNISE THE VALUE** and potential of young people.

“Power is shared and decisions are collaborative. Young people are respected as 'experts by experience'.”



THE OUTCOMES

- **Young leaders:** Develop their **SKILLSET** over a long-term leadership journey; see results from their involvement; progress into jobs and opportunities they are passionate about.
- **Wider youth population:** Increased **ACCESS TO HELP** and support; increased awareness of their rights; improved relationships with professionals and services.
- **Professionals:** Have a **BETTER UNDERSTANDING** of young people and how to engage them.
- **Systems and services:** Important decisions are made using **CO-PRODUCTION**; services are designed around the needs of young people.
- **Wider society:** Increased recognition of young people's value; more **POSITIVE MEDIA** about young people; more opportunities given to young people.

HOW WE GET THERE

- **With our young leaders:** We bring young people to the table who wouldn't otherwise be involved. We give them the **SPACE AND SUPPORT** to take a lead on issues they care about.
- **With the wider youth population:** We use **PEER-TO-PEER** campaigns and research to open up honest conversations and raise awareness about social issues.
- **With decision-makers and professionals:** We bring professionals and young people together to **DEVELOP SOLUTIONS** based on a real understanding of young people's needs.



Decision makers and young people work together as equals to develop solutions.



HEALTH AND
WELL-BEING





We have worked with charities like the Mental Health Foundation and the Health Foundation as well as Local Authorities.

WHAT WE'VE DONE

Our work in this sector has been extensive and wide-ranging but here are some key highlights of what we have done:

- We have built a **partner network** in this sector that includes national charities like the Health Foundation, the Mental Health Foundation and Epilepsy Action, and also Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups across the country.
- We have engaged young people in **every nation of the United Kingdom**, feeding their ideas and issues back into the ears of people who are working to make a change in the sector. We have worked with a diverse range of local areas such as North Ayrshire in Scotland, Denbighshire in Wales, Bradford, Bristol, Central Lancashire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Oldham.
- Since 2016, we have **developed and expanded MH:2K** – a unique youth-led model for addressing young people’s mental health in local areas. This model was developed in collaboration with participation charity Involve, and with funding from the Wellcome Trust. It has now been adopted in 6 Local Authority areas across the country.
- Since 2018, we have partnered with the Health Foundation to enable young people to play leading roles in their **Future Health Inquiry** – a UK-wide inquiry into the social determinants of young people’s long-term health.
- Since 2018, we have worked with the **Mental Health Foundation** to establish and facilitate a national group of young leaders to influence the charity’s research, communications and programmes from a youth perspective.

NAIRN McDONALD

Since 2016 Leaders Unlocked has worked with partners in the public and charitable sectors to investigate, engage and respond to the issues facing young people in relation to health and well-being.

We have worked with charities like the Mental Health Foundation and the Health Foundation as well as Local Authorities up and down the country from North Ayrshire in Scotland to Lisburn in Northern Ireland, from Lancashire in the North to Bristol further south.

My Name is Nairn McDonald and I am a young person from the West Coast of Scotland and I was involved in the Young People’s Future Health Inquiry with The Health Foundation and have since joined the Youth Board with Leaders Unlocked.

Total number of young people and gender and ethnicity breakdown of the young people we worked with:



32%

Percentage from BAME communities



59% Female

5% Non-binary

36% Male

OVER 4800

Young people engaged in peer research and engagement



It has provided me with new ideas, tips of how to cope with my own issues and it also provided me with more information on how to help others.



THE FINAL REPORT FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUTURE HEALTH INQUIRY

This brings together the work done in each locality as well as the work done in workshops and roundtables in London with young people from each locality.

Can be found here:
health.org.uk/publications/reports/a-healthy-foundation-for-the-future



Find out more

BETHAN (20 YEARS OLD, NORTH WALES)

I started working with Leaders Unlocked around 2015. I have been involved in many projects, which has been really eye opening as I have been able to look into the impacts certain topics have on young people and help find a solution in order to give support to young people where they need it.

One project I especially enjoyed was a collaboration with MHF. I enjoyed this as it gave me an insight into young people and the problems they face on a daily basis. I also enjoyed this project as this is the reason I have found a great passion for writing. I started writing about my own mental health and experiences, which helped me mentally.

I thought the Kindness campaign was amazing, as during COVID-19 many people were truly struggling. The viral video showed the importance of being kind to all people, and I personally thought it was a great way to spread awareness.

Leaders Unlocked has truly been an amazing experience, which has developed my skills further than I expected.

If I were to give any advice, I would say never pass up an opportunity to work alongside different organisations, as you never know who you will meet, the things you will find out about yourself and you will be able to truly help others who need it.

WHERE WE HAVE WORKED

Our health and well-being projects have reached a diverse range of local areas across the UK since 2016



WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED:

Through our work in the sector, Leaders Unlocked has helped raise the profile of the issues facing young people in this area by empowering them to speak their truth and work to change the systems and issues that are most important to them - both in their local areas and at the national level. Empowering young people to share their truth is never easy, it requires a great deal of trust to be built with the young person. By using peer-researchers who are based in each locality, we built those bridges more quickly, which allowed for open and frank sharing of personal experiences. Our young leaders have engaged thousands of other young people to get the widest possible views on issues of health and well-being.

Some of our achievements have included:

- As a result of our MH:2K project almost 9 in 10 of the young people involved felt they had **gained more skills and had grown their own confidence** as a result of being involved in the project. It is important to us at Leaders Unlocked that we help the young people who work with us grow and develop throughout their time with us.
- Our impact on those in power was also measured during the MH:2K project with over 98% of the key stakeholders engaged telling us that the stories, recommendations and work of the young people involved would **change how they operate in their sectors**.
- Through our work with The Health Foundation, young people from across the UK have **helped shape policy roles**, which the Foundation has funded through to 2023 to focus and develop solutions on several key issues affecting the future health outcomes of young people in the UK.
- With the Mental Health Foundation, our young leaders have been working to challenge the **stigma, isolation and hardship** that mental health can bring. This includes speaking out, which they have been empowered to do through the charity's social media, website and campaigns. For instance, they are involved in transforming the website to make it a "one stop shop" for young people to find out more information about mental health and get help.
- Our young leaders have also been **covered in the press** - from local newspapers to national ones like the Guardian - for their bravery and their commitment to helping others.

TESTIMONIALS

Jane Caro is our partner at the Mental Health Foundation. Jane has worked closely with Leaders Unlocked since 2018 to establish and develop the MHF Young Leaders project. Here's what she had to say:

"The Mental Health Foundation is committed to working alongside people with lived experience. A key part of this commitment over the past year has been our partnership with Leaders Unlocked who have helped establish our 'MHF Young Leaders' – a group of young people with a passion for preventing poor mental health and who bring a rich and diverse range of life experience to this task.

Over the past year the Young Leaders have been invaluable in providing new and fresh perspectives to our work across the key departments of Programmes, Policy, Communications and Research. To give one pertinent example of this impact: in the past 12 months they have been involved in projects focused on the mental health impact of Covid-19 in young people. Some of the Young Leaders joined us as peer researchers and have co-produced guidance for other young people on how to manage their mental health during lockdown. They have also helped us to think about how we might meaningfully engage other groups with our research work allowing us to continue to grow and develop our impact in the area of mental health prevention.

Without LU, we wouldn't have been able to engage with the young people in a safe and meaningful way which is essential when dealing with the sensitive topic area of mental health. LU are at all times professional, efficient and most importantly sensitive to the needs of the young people they work with and this, in turn, is what gives us the confidence to continue our commitment to working alongside them."

Martina Kane is our key contact and partner in our work with The Health Foundation. During the work with the Inquiry, Martina visited the areas we were working in across the UK and took part in guided tours by the young people involved to get a real on the ground feel for the issues they were facing. On working with Leaders Unlocked on this project Martina said:

"Throughout 2020 Leaders Unlocked continued to run the Young People's Future Health Inquiry reference group. They have been adaptive and proactive partners, allowing us to maximise youth engagement across a range of communications and research activities.

Leaders Unlocked conducted qualitative interviews for us during the coronavirus lockdown. Building on these interviews, members of the reference group have appeared in communications materials

for our inequalities work, and the launch of our Covid-19 impact inquiry. Analysis from these interviews was also published in the peer reviewed youth voice journal and has helped frame our thinking for the £1.2 million open research call we are planning in 2021.

Leaders Unlocked also convened 2 panels of young people to speak to Dame Carol Black as part of her review of drugs policy. Dame Carol herself emailed to express her gratitude for the work and the insight she had taken from them."

I have gained stronger and greater evidence for career progression, including team work and interpersonal skills. I have had the chance to learn about and inform policy in the UK to improve mental health and wellbeing.

Leaders Unlocked has been great at building my skills, both professionally and personally.

Working with MH:2K has been an incredible experience. We now have a better understanding of the pressures that young people in our communities face.

Chairs of NHS Greater Preston Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS Chorley and South Ribble Clinical Commissioning Group (MH:2K Decision Maker)

CRIMINAL JUSTICE







Having a safe space to be myself, grow as a person and a professional, and enable young people to feel listened to has been so powerful.

NADINE SMITH

Hi, I'm Nadine and I have been involved in Leaders Unlocked since its creation. I have loved every single minute on this journey over the past 6 years, and seeing not only myself develop as a result of the support I have had, but seeing the development of the other young adults too. Having a safe space to be myself, grow as a person and a professional, and enable young people to feel listened to has been so powerful. Everything has been created with young adults, for young adults,

and that is something that Leaders Unlocked do seamlessly. Being part of Leaders Unlocked has enhanced and enabled my passion for working in the Justice System. It has helped me personally in so many different ways and given me so many opportunities that I never thought would be achievable due to my own experiences with the Justice System and the stigma that comes with it. My personal highlight would be giving evidence at the Justice Select Committee, as it is something I will never forget.

Total number of young people and gender and ethnicity breakdown of the young people we worked with:



WHAT WE'VE DONE

The upcoming pages are all about our work so far in the Criminal Justice space. Let's start by looking in brief at the work we've done:

- In 2016 we set up the **Young Justice Advisors**, with funding from the **Barrow Cadbury Trust**. Through this project we formed a unique group of young adults with lived experience of the justice system, to become policy advisors at the national level.
- Over the last 5 years the **Young Justice Advisors have gone from strength to strength**. The project has become well recognised in the criminal justice sector – working with a range of agencies including the Ministry of Justice, HMPPS, Youth Justice Board, MOPAC, Select Committees, and others.
- In 2017, we published our **'Race and Criminal Justice'** report and worked with the Lammy Review Team at Ministry of Justice to disseminate the work.
- In 2019, we partnered with HMPPS to involve service users in the **long-term strategy for prisons and probation**. This work saw our Young Advisors running workshops in 7 prisons, and presenting back their findings to key people at HMPPS.
- In 2020 we published our **'Hearing from Young Adults'** report. This youth-led report was co-produced with our Young Advisors. It brought together the findings from their peer research with 500 young adults in the criminal justice system.
- In 2020 we set up the Young Advocates project, in partnership with the **Alliance for Youth Justice (AYJ)**. The Young Advocates project empowers 14-20 year olds to have an influential voice on the youth justice system.

80%

Percentage from **BAME communities**

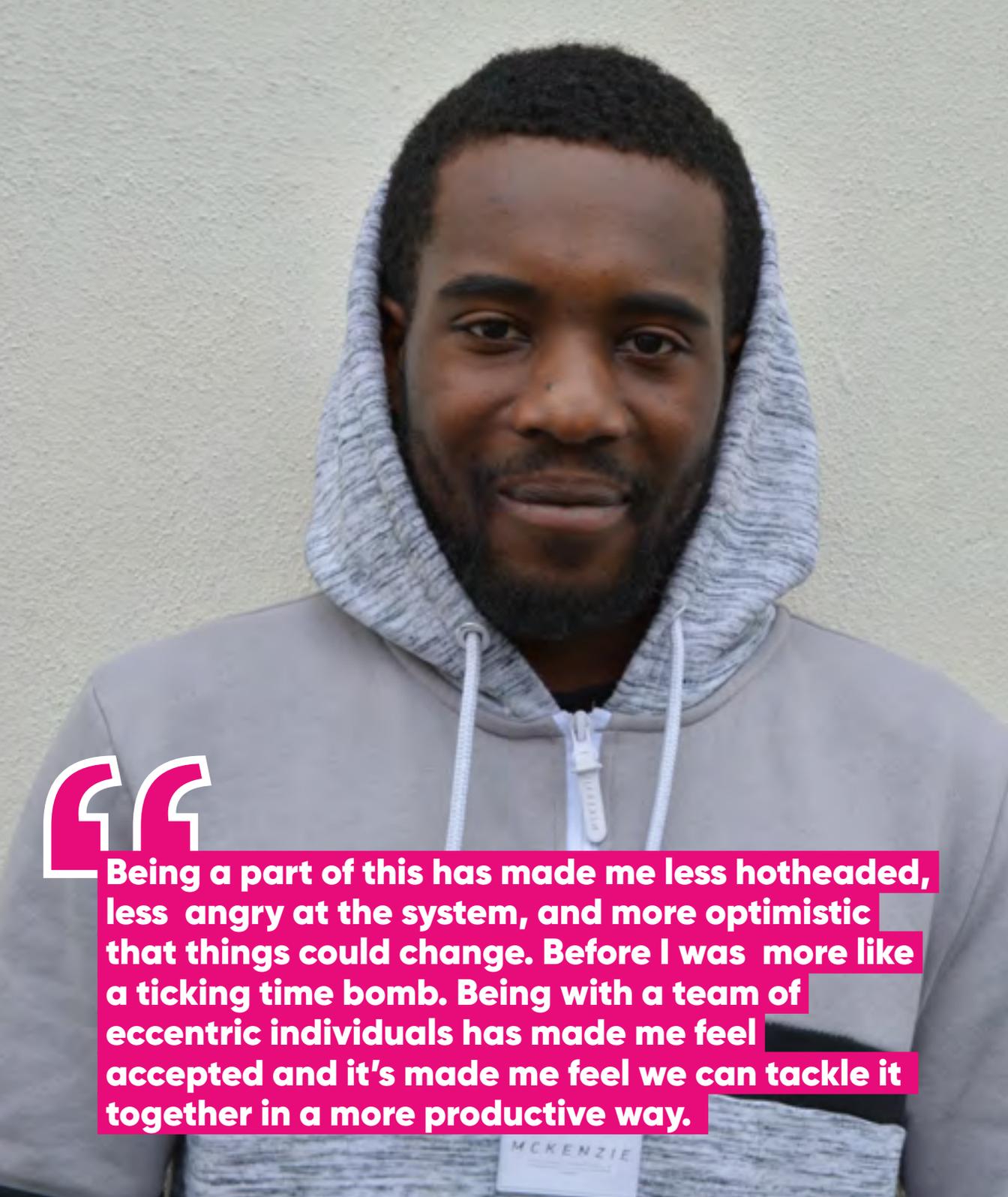


55% Female

45% Male

900

Young people engaged in our peer research in the criminal justice system



Being a part of this has made me less hotheaded, less angry at the system, and more optimistic that things could change. Before I was more like a ticking time bomb. Being with a team of eccentric individuals has made me feel accepted and it's made me feel we can tackle it together in a more productive way.



HEARING FROM YOUNG ADULTS

This report was co-produced by young adults with lived experience of the criminal justice system. It contains findings from peer-led research with over 500 young adults in prisons, YOTs and community organisations.

Can be found here:

leaders-unlocked.org/luwp/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/YoungAdvisorsOnCriminalJustice_final-pdf.pdf



Find out more

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Here are some of our proudest achievements in Criminal Justice:

- In 2017, the findings and testimonies from our 'Race and Criminal Justice' report were featured in the final report of the **Lammy Review**.
- Through our peer-led research, we have provided a platform for over **900 young adults** with experience of the justice system to be heard.
 - In 2020 our Young Justice Advisors presented the findings and recommendations from their 'Hearing from Young Adults' report to over **150 stakeholders** in the Justice sector through a series of webinars.
 - In 2020, three of our Young Advisors gave oral evidence to the **Justice Select Committee** as a part of their inquiry into the youth justice system. The evidence session was broadcast on Parliament TV. Subsequently our young advisors were quoted in the Committee's report and spoke to media on the day of its launch.
 - Our Young Justice Advisors have achieved so much, both collectively and in terms of their **individual progression**. Many of them have gone on to take up professional roles and governance positions as a result of their involvement. We continue to be so proud of them and inspired by their progress.



I have a long history of lived experience of the Criminal Justice System and the Care System. I have witnessed first-hand its failures and lack of support.

FATMATA JAH

What's your name, age and where are you from?

My name is Fatmata Jah but everyone calls me "Fats" for short. I am 26 years old and I am originally from London / Essex but I now live in Birmingham.

How long have you been with Leaders Unlocked?

I have been a Young Advisor with Leaders Unlocked for nearly 3 years.

How did you get involved?

My probation worker recommended me to apply. I was on license at that point and was struggling to find any volunteer work helping young people, so I took a chance and who knew how great the opportunity was going to be for me.

What motivated you to get involved?

I have a long history of lived experience of the Criminal Justice System and the Care System. I have witnessed first-hand its failures and lack of support. I have a great passion for reform and wanted to be part of creating a fairer, supportive and more rehabilitative system for young adults. Having a platform

where I can use my own experience really appealed to me and made me want to be a part of Young Advisors, I'm really glad I am.

What are some of the things you've taken part in?

- I made a presentation at the House of Commons to Minister Agar and key officials from the Ministry of Justice, to support their work to address racial disproportionality.
- I was in a film for HMPPS to deliver service user insights to professionals in the prisons and probation service.
- I provided an individual case study of my journey through the Justice System to HMPPS.
- I am currently working on a leaflet for girls that are transitioning to adult establishments.

What have been your personal highlights of working with Leaders Unlocked?

Having the opportunity to have my voice heard is the biggest highlight, because young adults with experiences like mine aren't listened to.

I've loved being able to create such positive relationships with my fellow Young Advisors and building life time bonds with people who I wouldn't meet in my day to day life that have the same passion as me.

Watching my self-development and growth in lots of areas including public speaking, facilitation, writing skills, confidence and leadership.

How has working with us changed you as a person?

I would say as a person it has made me more focused on what is important. Before I started I never had a focus, I didn't even know where my life was going, I had no routine or deep enough understanding of what needed to change in my life. Working with Leaders Unlocked has opened my eyes and showed me I can do or be whatever I want, I just have to be prepared to put the work in. It has also shown me that, no matter what you have gone through in life, there is always room for change and progression.

Have your feelings changed about the future?

It has most definitely changed my feelings and perception of the future. I now have goals and see myself in such a great place, I have been motivated to create a better life for myself and do all the things I've wanted to do but not had the drive in myself to start. I see great things ahead. I have opened my mind to so many great possibilities all because I feel believed in, cared about and heard. So much has changed for me - I am going to university, I am more organised in what I'm doing and I'm putting more effort into my work. I enjoy every aspect of what I do and I'm proud of how far I have come.

I would just like to add an appreciation for Leaders Unlocked who have never given up on me and see my true potential. They motivate me and push me to do better; without their support and guidance I would have not come this far, so thank you.

TESTIMONIALS



Laurie Hunte, Criminal Justice Programme Manager, Barrow Cadbury Trust

"Working with Leaders Unlocked and overseeing the growth of the Young Advisors has been a great experience. The peer to peer research, in-depth findings and solution focused approach is unique. The platform the Young Advisors have created for other young people to share their experiences and provide a nuanced understanding and recommendations for change has been really inspiring.

The Transition to Adulthood Alliance (which evidences and promotes the need for a distinct approach to young adults aged 18-25 in the criminal justice system.) have learned a lot from the authentic voices. They have been the "go

to" group when we need to hear from young adults who have experience of the justice system and thoughts on its reform. The levels of influence and access the group have created has been powerful and knowing they're doing lots of work to make the system better overall has been incredible to observe. We have really enjoyed working in partnership with the Young Adult Advisors and we are excited to see how their future work will develop."



I wanted to make a change so everything that happened to me when I was younger doesn't happen to the next generation.



Ella Davis, Strategy Unit, HMPPS

"I was always on board from day one, and have been so impressed with the work. But other colleagues, senior policy colleagues, may have needed more convincing than me, and they have been really impressed with the work of Leaders Unlocked. They have heard members' life story journeys and also about the challenges they experienced in their engagement with us. This was really thought provoking for senior colleagues. There has been a receptiveness to the work Leaders Unlocked has done, through all the critical stages of the prison and probation system.

What makes Leaders Unlocked distinct is that Rose puts a strong emphasis on having the team not as a source of data, but as the means to gain data. We are engaging with them as colleagues and they deliver work for us in a professional capacity. They are fellow professionals.

The fact that they are former service users is almost secondary. It is very important and valuable in the sense that they are able to bring an authenticity to the work they do, but the most important thing is the high quality work they are delivering."

POLICING







Taken as a whole, our work across the policing sector has helped to re-define a modern approach to policing in Britain.

DOUG RADMORE

Since Leaders Unlocked was established, one of our flagship projects has been the Youth Commission. I was a member of one of the earliest Youth Commissions in Sussex, and I see the work as foundational for improving the relationship between young people and the police.

Over the last 6 years, we've worked with Police & Crime Commissioners (PCC) across England and Wales to enable young people to influence policing in their areas. In 2018, we also set up the Independent

Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) Youth Panel at the national level, to enable young people to have an influential voice on the police complaints system.

Taken as a whole, our work across the policing sector has helped to re-define a modern approach to policing in Britain.

WHAT WE'VE DONE

Since 2015 we've worked extensively with PCCs, police forces, the IOPC and other stakeholders to amplify the voices of young people in policing.

- We've set up Youth Commissions in **14 different areas of England and Wales** – Leicestershire, Sussex, Hampshire & Isle of Wight, Nottinghamshire, North Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire, Cumbria, North Wales, Norfolk, Cleveland, Lincolnshire, Lancashire, Wiltshire & Swindon.
- We've recruited, trained and supported over **1000 Youth Commissioners** from a truly diverse range of backgrounds and life experiences.
- Youth Commissioners have led **over 850 peer engagement events** with young people, with a particular focus on marginalised groups such as young people in the justice system and those with care experience.
- Youth Commissioners have engaged **more than 55,000** young people in 'Big Conversations' on key issues such as Drug & Alcohol Abuse, Hate Crime and Knife Crime.
- We've worked extensively with **police forces** across England and Wales to allow them to learn from young people's perspectives and experiences – through Youth Advisory Groups, police training and recruitment, and scrutiny.
- In 2018, we established the **IOPC Youth Panel**, to enable young people from across England and Wales to have a voice on police complaints.



14

We've worked with 14 police forces across England and Wales, which is 33% of all police forces

1000

Youth Commissioners trained

We've engaged

55,000 young people

through 'Big Conversations' on priority topics



“It’s nice to have a seat at the table. We have the ears of ‘important people’. It means a lot.”



POLICING THE PANDEMIC

Policing the Pandemic is youth-led study that seeks to provide a snapshot of young people's views and experiences of policing during lockdown.

Can be found here:
leaders-unlocked.org/luwp/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/PolicingPandemic_v1.pdf



Find out more

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Our key achievements over the last 6 years include:

- We established **Youth Police Advisory Groups** in several regions to advise and challenge the police at a senior level. This has helped to influence the way police forces approach their relationship with young people.
- Youth Commissioners have played an active role in the **recruitment of police officers** for a range of roles, Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables, and Deputy Chief Constables.
- Youth Commissioners have been involved in the development and delivery of **training for police officers and PCSOs**. This has included specific training on Stop and Search and mental health.
- We have designed and delivered youth-led roadshows and films to raise awareness of a range of issues including Knife Crime, Stop & Search rights and police complaints.
- Our **IOPC Youth Panel** has made a big impact through helping to recruit and train IOPC staff, producing communications and campaigns, and providing reverse mentoring to IOPC leaders.
- In 2020, our network of young leaders worked together to deliver **Policing the Pandemic**. This youth-led piece of research gathered the views of 4000 young people about policing during the Covid-19 pandemic.





In this world we live in where it's increasingly difficult for young people to feel like they have a say or a voice, it feels like we're doing something positive and we are taking ownership of the situation.

ZION MORGAN

"I was 14 when I first joined Nottinghamshire Youth Commission. Ever since then I've been involved, and six years on I'm engaged in so many different projects with Leaders Unlocked.

I've made two films as part of the Youth Commission which I feel very proud of. These films have made a huge impact - large numbers of young people have watched them and now know more about their rights.

I've always been keen to promote discussions on certain issues, such as stop and search and knife crime. Coming from a black & ethnic minority community, I think it's really important to share my opinions on those issues, and make sure my views are taken seriously. When I first started, I was the youngest in the group and a bit more passive, but now I've learnt to articulate my views and be heard.

I have done three speeches for the Youth Commission, and one for IOPC. It's good to speak out and I am not going to sugar coat anything. It's my chance to speak my truth. When speaking to senior leaders in the policing sector I had to make the point that there needs to be more diversity within management and leadership. There is a

strong misconception about young black men and women, that they're angry. I really want to work to break those stereotypes.

Leaders Unlocked has taught me how to work in a team and engage in group discussions. I have learnt when to speak out and when to step back, and allow other people to voice their opinions. I have learnt how to take a leadership role and facilitate discussions. I have also gained a deeper understanding about the social, political and economic context of the UK. There's this idea that 'ignorance is bliss' but we need to know our rights, and projects like this help to teach people.

Teenagers are being demonised in the media and in politics, with images of riots and gangs. The relationship between the police and young people is very tense. The Youth Commission is a liaison between police and the youth, and it has had an amazing impact. In my area I believe that relations are improving, and we have played a part in that."



TESTIMONIALS



Dan Howitt, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire

"We started working with Leaders Unlocked because we wanted more engagement with young people. We had a lot of vocal adults who we consulted and engaged, but not many young people.

The great thing about the Youth Commission is the peer-to-peer approach and the way the young people use their existing networks to reach out to a large number of other young people. The reach has been phenomenal - across schools, colleges, hostels and other settings.

We used the Youth Commission to form part of a recruitment panel for the new Chief Constable. It had a real impact on him. Since he came into post, he has used the Youth Commission for any

senior appointment within the force. I can't imagine that happening five years ago.

There has been a real culture change at the top. We had such a challenge as to how to engage thousands of young people in Nottinghamshire. There was a massive generational gap, we spoke a different language and it was overwhelming. Leaders Unlocked has helped us to bridge that gap.

The Youth Commission has dealt with many difficult issues, from stop and search to knife crime. The result has been high quality, and has given us a richer picture. Leaders Unlocked has become a really critical partner."



We're holding older people to account, especially those in higher positions. We help them understand that there are young people out there, and we do care. We're not just a figure on a graph in their boardrooms!

EDUCATION







LYDIA BANJO

At Leaders Unlocked, we have always worked with partners in the education sector to help build and engage the voices of young people within their institutions. Through this work, our hopes are to strengthen the voices of tomorrow by challenging and overcoming the social issues of today.

Within this sector we have built long-term partnerships with Further Education (FE) colleges across the country, as well as with groups and federations such as the Association of Colleges and New City College.

My name is Lydia Banjo, and I am a young person from North East London. I've worked with Leaders Unlocked for 3 years now and it's been an amazing experience. I started off as a one of the Student Commissioners on Knife Crime in London and I am now proud to be a peer facilitator helping to lead the Student Commission on Racial Justice. This year I have also joined the Leaders Unlocked Youth Board.



Our hopes are to strengthen the voices of tomorrow by challenging and overcoming the social issues of today.

Diversity stats of the Student Commissioners

83%

Percentage from **BAME communities**



We've worked with 45 FE colleges and sixth forms across the country

WHAT WE'VE DONE

The work we've done in the education sector has been built and developed in collaboration with young people in colleges across England. Here's a quick summary of some of things we've done:

- Since 2015, we have worked with **thousands of diverse young** people in Further Education to ensure that their voices are heard and to support them to take action on the issues that affect their lives. Many of these young people are from under-privileged life situations and have overcome struggles in order to follow their ambitions and dreams.
- We've worked closely with colleges to understand the priorities for them and their students. Over the past 6 years we've developed and delivered student-led projects focussing on many important social issues including: **knife crime, racial justice, exclusion, British values, hate crime, mental health, and teaching & learning.**
- In 2018 we created the **Student Commission on Knife Crime in London**, which was led by over 25 student commissioners from 22 London boroughs and 7 London colleges. The students created a 'Manifesto for Action' which included 7 key national recommendations which they presented at a final showcase event.
- The success of the first Student Commission has allowed us to expand and in 2020 we launched the **Student Commission on racial injustice and allyship.** The number of college partners increased from 7 to 10, and with a national coverage. The number of young leaders involved also increased with 40 Student Commissioners and 7 Peer Facilitators working on the project.
- In 2021 Student Commissioners co-designed an **animation and workshop** to engage thousands of students in conversations about racial justice. Commissioners have trained hundreds of staff in their colleges to facilitate the workshop with the wider student population
- In June 2021, the Commission launched their report 'Young People's Voices on Racial Justice' which explores experiences of racial injustice in education, employment, health, policing and justice. Moving forward, Commissioners will be working alongside stakeholders to ensure the recommendations they made in their report are acted upon at all levels.

30,213

Students that our projects have engaged in this sector

2,534

Student leaders on our social action projects



The Student Commission has only increased my want to change things in society and it has made me more driven to do so. Before the project I might have witnessed injustices and decided to look on but now I am determined to use my own knowledge to help people be free from racial injustices.



STUDENT VOICES ON KNIFE CRIME IN LONDON

This is a youth-led manifesto that contains young people's recommendations for action to address knife crime in London.

Can be found here:
tinyurl.com/2ypnx3a8



Find out more

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

We are so proud of what we've achieved in education since we started. Here are some of our proudest achievements so far:

- Our partner network within the Further Education sector has expanded steadily, and now includes diverse areas across England. Since 2015, we've worked with a total of **45 FE Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges** to meaningfully engage with their students and staff.
- In 2019, Student Commissioners presented their findings on knife crime and manifesto for action to over **60 stakeholders** including: the Association of Colleges, the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit, the Youth Justice Board, the Woman's Equality Party, the police and FE leaders. Students from the Commission have been featured in the Times Educational Supplement and local magazines.
- In the same year, the Student Commission submitted written and oral evidence based on their peer research, to the **Parliamentary Youth Select Committee** enquiry into knife crime. The oral evidence session was broadcast on Parliament TV and the Commissioners were quoted in the final report.
- Student Commissioners created a short film about knife crime and a workshop which reached at least **10,000 students from the partnering colleges**. This was used as a resource to reach many young people, encouraging them to take the opportunity to have open and honest conversations about knife crime.
- Through our two Student **Commissions**, we have gathered the voices of **over 3500** young people on knife crime and racial equality.



To anyone that would want to join Leaders Unlocked, I would say - be open and don't hold back on any ideas because it is a safe space and there are no wrong answers.

JOSH

I got involved through Student Rep training held at my college which was led by Leaders Unlocked. Alev, a member of the organisation, approached me and we spoke more about a new project which was focussing on knife crime in London. She told me I could attend the first meeting and about the free food that they would provide!

I decided to stay on the project after the first meeting, because I was ready to try something new and I received a good first impression from everyone. We did loads of different exercises that sparked up debates and good conversations within the group. It was also really good to see how engaged the mentors were in these discussions. I learnt a lot from the stories that they shared with us from their different, personal experiences with knife crime. In college, you don't get the opportunity to speak about these kinds of issues, even though we see and hear about them nearly every day.

My most memorable moment on the project was through our partnership with the Association of Colleges. We were invited to their national conference, held in Birmingham,

which was a real turning point for me because I wasn't really expecting an opportunity like this! I got to speak on stage about the impacts of knife crime in education and how important it is for colleges to be more aware and try to put more things in place so that their colleges can be safe spaces.

As a man, it was important for me to be a part of the project because knife crime affects mostly men. A lot of GM's (gang members) are male and there are more men carrying knives, so it was important for me to try and use my voice to be a link that helps to break a cycle. I also want to challenge stereotypes which hugely apply to black men and how we are perceived. With the whole Black Lives Matter movement happening, we should pay attention to the fact that police brutality in the UK is mostly targeted towards black men and I wanted to be a voice for that too.

To anyone that would want to join Leaders Unlocked, I would say - be open and don't hold back on any ideas because it is a safe space and there are no wrong answers.



Image from 'It All Adds Up',
a short animation created by
the Racial Justice Commission.
Watch it here: youtu.be/axzNnGDFpmo

TESTIMONIALS

Gill Burbridge, Principal
Leyton Sixth Form College

Leaders Unlocked have real credibility as an organisation that enables students to take action on things that matter to them. They use a co-production approach which helps to develop the agency and voice of young people and supports them to leverage power and extend influence. By providing a clear framework for social action and change, Leaders Unlocked ensure that students build the confidence and skills they need in a very structured and supported way.

They have helped us to develop practical, student-led strategies to reduce school exclusion and to engage students in our commitment to becoming an anti-racist and genuinely inclusive institution. The value of working with them is that they are providing a platform to develop young leaders, giving students access to a wider stage and projects operating at a national level, developing our students as campaigners and active agents of change, supporting related work running in parallel at the college.

Paul Wakeling,
Group Deputy Principal New City College & Principal of the Havering Colleges

Leaders Unlocked helps us to learn deeply about the experiences of our students in college and more widely. This allows us to work on improving the quality of our provision, including support and teaching and learning. More profoundly, Leaders Unlocked's way of working allows our students to take charge of the improvement process and to develop valuable advocacy and leadership skills that will enable them to be more effective in later life, to enable them to exercise leadership and to be active citizens.

They have helped us to understand in meaningful ways the lived experience of young people in East London. Leaders Unlocked have helped us underpin our improvement processes with rich, targeted and useful learner voice. They have also helped us engage with the lived experience of our students and engage with the BLM agenda in a purposeful and active way.

CONCLUSION

The work we've done over the past 6 years has amplified young people's voices and leadership in relation to some of the most urgent issues in our society. Over this time, we've seen our youth-led approach being embraced by increasing numbers of organisations and sectors. There is a growing recognition of the importance and value of this way of working with young people as partners, rather than subjects, in the process of change.

This report showcases the impact that Leaders Unlocked projects have had at a number of different levels: informing the decisions made by organisations; contributing to cultural change within sectors; improving provision and practice; and transforming the lives of young people themselves. Taken as a

whole, we feel that these impacts can help to create systemic change in a way which has real power, particularly when it can be done at scale.

We are ever-grateful to the thousands of young people who have been instrumental in leading our projects over the last 6 years - often overcoming significant personal challenges and pushing themselves far out of their comfort zones to do so. None of this would be possible without their energy, time and motivation for change.

We'd also like to extend thanks to all our partners across the country and the funders who have shown belief in what we do. Particular thanks go to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for funding

our Youth Board and the production of this Impact Report.

Looking ahead, we want to extend and further embed the work we've started in policing, criminal justice, health and education. We also intend to build new collaborations to enable young people to influence a wider range of issues that matter to them (e.g. climate change, the built environment and regeneration, and gender and LGBTQ+ equalities). We hope this report will spark new ideas and conversations, which will be the basis of exciting new collaborations in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend thanks to all of the organisations who have partnered with Leaders Unlocked over the last 6 years:

Alliance for Youth Justice
Barnet & Southgate College
Barnsley College
Barrow Cadbury Trust
Birmingham Metropolitan College
Blagrove Trust
Centre for Mental Health
Children England
Derby City Council
Ellis Campbell Foundation
Epilepsy Action
Glasgow School of Art
Grant Thornton UKLLP
Health Foundation
Hereward College
Hickman & Rose Solicitors
HMPPS
Independent Monitoring Boards
Independent Office for Police Conduct
Involve

Jisc
King Edward VIth College – Nuneaton
Kirklees College
Kooth
Lancashire Violence Reduction Network
Lambeth College
Lewisham College
Leyton Sixth Form College
London South East Colleges
Long Road Sixth Form College
LSE Covid and Care Group
Mental Health Foundation
New City College
Newham Sixth Form College
NHS England
Nottinghamshire County Council
Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Revolving Doors
Southwark College
The National Lottery Community Fund

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire
The Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland
The Police and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria
The Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire & the Isle of Wight
The Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire
The Police and Crime Commissioner for Lincolnshire
The Police and Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire
The Police and Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire & Swindon
The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire
The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire
University of York
The Sheffield College
Wellcome Trust
West Thames College
Westminster Kingsway College
York College
Youth Custody Service
Youth Endowment Fund



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