

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Political Literacy
Minutes for 11th Meeting:
Political Literacy Day
on 12.12.2023

Attended on 12.12.2023 (Parliamentarians): Kim Leadbeater MP

Apologies from those who could not attend (Parliamentarians): Lord Iain McNicol, Nickie Aiken MP, Lord Kenneth Baker, Lord Jim Knight, Cat Smith MP, Tim Loughton MP, Lord David Blunkett, Ben Bradley MP, Caroline Lucas MP, Christian Wakeford MP, Flick Drummond MP, Helen Hayes MP, Owen Thompson MP, Philip Dunne MP, Yasmin Qureshi MP, Layla Moran MP, Lord John Bird, Tracie Crouch MP, Andrew Bowie MP, Simon Fell MP, Kirsty Blackman MP

Attended on 12.12.2023 (Secretariat): Lucas Scott-Harston, Head of Opportunities and Social Impact (Shout Out UK), Jilly Rolnick, Programme Coordinator (Shout Out UK), Amy Turner, Digital Growth Coordinator (Shout Out UK)

Welcome from Kim Leadbeater MP

1. Kim welcomes attendees to Political Literacy Day and highlights the importance of political literacy. She underscores that today's meeting will take the form of a celebration.
2. Kim goes over the agenda and introduces Lucas Scott-Harston, Head of Opportunities and Social Impact at Shout Out UK (SOUK), who will be providing an update on the activities of the APPG and SOUK.

Remarks from Lucas Scott-Harston

1. Lucas thanks the attendees for coming to the event and apologises that Matteo Bergamini, CEO of Shout Out UK, cannot make it.
2. He discusses the work that the APPG has begun in partnership with Open University and Dr Sandra Obradović to conduct qualitative research in England to explore what citizenship and democracy mean to young people, and to complete interviews with teachers about the new curriculum rollout in Wales.
3. Lucas tells the group that SOUK and the APPG will be constructing a plan for the upcoming year in January, which will include sharing a letter with Ofsted to begin engaging with them on improving the recording of political literacy activities in schools. He requests that anyone who wishes to be involved should get in contact with SOUK.

4. He then updates the group on SOUK's plans for next year in anticipation of a general election. These plans include the continuation of SOUK's Voter ID campaign and the launch of a mass-scale voter registration campaign titled 'Ballot Bound.'
5. Lucas then introduces Meg Briody from Save the Children UK, who will present on their new project: Our Generation. Our Vote.

Save the Children Presentation

1. Meg Briody began the Save the Children presentation by introducing their new project, Our Generation. Our Vote. The project will take the form of a children's election that will occur in the run-up to next year's anticipated general election. Children will learn about party manifestos and policy positions and cast a vote. She talks about how children have the right to express their opinions and be taken seriously. This will help politicians understand which issues matter to young people and teach children how to better engage with the political process. Meg also talked about the coalition of campaign partners that will help launch Our Generation. Our Vote. The project is hoping to engage 150,000 kids nationally.
2. Kim asked some questions about the project then Tim Adcroft from the Youth Empowerment Service in the London Borough of Newham briefly introduced the service.
3. Obed Onu, a young person involved in the Youth Empowerment Service in Newham, spoke about his experience with democratic engagement. He spoke about how seeing his friends become victims of police profiling and brutality pushed him to get involved in democratic engagement. Since joining, Obed said that the programme has provided him with crucial skills and confidence on topics he previously did not know much about. It empowered him to be the voice of other young people and believes more young people should get involved.
4. Rameez (Ramzy) Saleem, another young person involved in the Youth Empowerment Service in Newham, provided testimony to the APPG as well. Ramsey spoke about his role in drafting the Young People Charter, which is a set of 11 principles that young people want their government to focus on. In particular, Ramsey said he was proud of a provision that equated mental health with physical health. He thinks it is important for young people to lead change in areas that they are passionate about and the Youth Empowerment Service does a good job empowering young people to get involved in politics.
5. Tim spoke again to show a three minute video about the Youth Empowerment Service which highlighted some of the ways Newham tries to centre young people. He also discussed how Newham is a very young borough and by 2030, over half the borough will be made up of people under the age of 25.

Questions / Discussion

1. Kim praised the Our Generation. Our Vote. project and the presenters, saying she will use some of the ideas they talked about when conducting her own youth forum. She asked Tim how everything was pulled together.
2. Tim responded that the Young People Charter and the group of young people they work with came out of a series of online events during COVID and frustration on behalf of young people in how the Council engaged with them. Young people discussed values that were important to them, such as future employment, and followed up with a series of smaller workshops with particularly engaged young people to draft the charter. It also showed that the existing services for young people provided by the Council are not well publicised.
3. A question was asked asking for recommendations to work with schools with disadvantaged students that don't seem to prioritise political education.
4. Kim responded that this challenge really highlights the need to have political literacy on the curriculum because it is not being prioritised in schools. Also, many of the challenges that young people face are connected to their lack of agency.
5. Ramsey also responded to the question, highlighting the importance of building positive working relationships with young people to engage them. He gave an example of using social media and digital ads to reach this population.
6. Obed jumped in to say that his school had "drop down days," where regular school programming is replaced with more creative or unusual lessons. He suggested utilising drop down days to start teaching political literacy.
7. Kim responded that some schools do include political literacy training during these days, but it can be difficult for external teachers to time their lessons correctly. She also said that it can be difficult to engage older students in years 10 and 11.
8. Obed responded that it is important to keep lessons fun, exciting, and relatable.
9. Ramsey agreed, saying that matching the attire of students is key, giving an example that showing up in a suit isn't going to make students relate to you.
10. Kim agreed, saying that creating an open and welcoming environment is important. She said she gives away free food at her youth engagement events to entice participation and attendance.
11. Tim talked about how the original plan was to run a youth parliament in the borough but turned away from it so they could offer multiple paths to democratic engagement and amplify their lived experiences.
12. Kim discussed how she tries to involve sports teams in her constituency in sports-related legislation. She also talked about how the issues she thought would be most important to young people turned out to be different, and not prejudging young people's values is important.
13. Meg discussed how she related to the problem of having trouble engaging teachers and many schools don't have a politics teacher. It is their job to make learning politics as flexible as possible.
14. Kim agreed and brought up that many teachers are nervous to teach politics as they don't want to get in trouble with parents who think they are imposing a certain ideology.

15. Virgil Bitu of the Roma Organisation for Training and Advocacy raised awareness about the lack of resources and opportunities for democratic engagement for the Roma community. He said their representation is ignored and asked for help from Kim and other MPs in gaining access to better services.
16. Kim responded that Virgil has a really good point on inclusivity and everyone has the right to be involved in government.

Closing Remarks

1. Kim wrapped up the meeting by thanking presenters and attendees.