

# A National Conversation: Young People and Respect

## Final Report

**LSIS** LEARNING  
AND SKILLS  
IMPROVEMENT  
SERVICE



## About LSIS

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) is a sector-owned and sector-led body driving the development of excellent and sustainable provision in learning and teaching through further education and skills providers.

Working alongside its educational partners, LSIS devises new approaches to improvement which build upon the sector's own capacity and innovation to design commission and deliver quality services and strategic change.

LSIS also initiates research, disseminates policy information, organises seminars and conferences and provides dedicated online teaching and learning resources, in order to inform institutional improvement through the sharing of information and best practice.

## About NIACE

NIACE is an independent charitable organisation committed to securing more, different and better learning opportunities for adults of all ages. During the last twelve years, NIACE has developed and undertaken an extensive programme of work focussed upon the needs of young adult learners, aged 16-25, particularly those who experience social exclusion or are not in education, employment or training (NEET), which has enabled NIACE to develop extensive knowledge and understanding of:

- Policy relating to young adults.
- The environment within which learning provision for disadvantaged young adults operates.
- The complex and often inter-related difficulties experienced by many young adults that effectively prevent them from engaging in learning.
- The key factors that contribute to the effective and successful re-engagement of young adults.

Through this work NIACE has been involved in extensive consultations with both young adults and the practitioners and managers who support them to re-engage in learning. As a result NIACE has developed a strong understanding of the experiences of young adults who are socially excluded and/or NEET, and the needs of practitioners in the further education and skills sector who work to re-engage young adults.

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# Executive Summary

From the summer of 2010 to March 2011, nine regional conversations with further education and skills providers were held to explore young people’s views and perceptions about respect. Pilot conversations took place with Blackburn College, New College Nottingham and South Essex College in Southend-on-Sea followed by conversations with Petroc College in South Devon; Warwickshire College in Leamington Spa; The Yard (community interest company working with excluded young people) in Lowestoft; Longley Park Sixth Form College in Sheffield and Westgate Community College in Newcastle upon Tyne. A total of 382 participants were consulted representing young people drawn from communities in city and unitary authorities, coastal communities and areas of ethnic diversity, deprivation and regeneration.

The conversations had a lively and engaging approach using interactive formats in a supportive atmosphere, addressing the topic of respect through five contexts: ‘Your Community’, ‘Your Workplace’, ‘In your Place of Learning, ‘In the Media’, ‘Your Right or Responsibility?’

## Key Findings:

Young people defined respect generally as being considerate and polite to others and not hurting them, being treated fairly and not being discriminated against because of age, gender, ethnicity, religious belief, disability or sexuality.

*“To me respect is an important thing that you learn through life and is something that you have to earn from people, friends and family. It is something that is an important part of society and without people respecting each other and all that, society would be a mess.” - South Essex College, Southend on Sea<sup>1</sup>*

The main findings about young people’s opinions on respect are included under each context in the main body of this report. The key findings below are those most common to all of the young people consulted for each of those contexts.



<sup>1</sup> All quotes are from young people taking part in the consultation unless otherwise stated.

## In your community

Give respect – get respect! Young people thought that respect had to be earned, that they had to give respect to receive it. This came up strongly across all the contexts.

*“Someone has to prove they deserve your respect. They have to do something that makes you respect them.” - The Yard, Lowestoft.*



Young people’s attitudes to respect in the community were affected by their environment, for example, young people in London were much closer to gang culture and post code tensions and were clear on steps to combat gang culture, whilst those in rural areas felt more isolated and distanced from gang activity.

*“Mozart (Mozart Bloods - a gang drawn from the Mozart housing estate with membership on the adjoining Queen’s Park and Avenues estates, within the W9/W10 postal districts. housing estate) have problems with Ladbroke Grove, they step a few yards into Ladbroke Grove and they have a problem... if they go there they will be scared they will get stabbed or attacked.” - London Apprenticeship Company (LAC), Westminster.*

*“Where I live near Clapham common, on my end of the street its quiet. The other end of the street there is always police and fighting...” - LAC, Westminster*

*“There needs to be more people who have been in this life come out and show the young people this is not the way forward, you can do more with your life, better things.” - LAC, Westminster*

*“Bored in country- not very many people or young people around - so can feel isolated, others think they know about others and they can make judgements about others.” - The Yard, Lowestoft*

Many young people felt the need to ‘belong’ to a group of young people who might dress the same and like the same things, and that this was sometimes labelled as a gang and not always understood by the police:

*“I think if you feel safe being with people who share the same views, well, continue to be like that. But the police need to have a....., be better educated, they need to have a better*

*attitude themselves, not to just suddenly (judge), because they're presumably looking at your appearance and making some sort of decision themselves.” – Westgate College, Newcastle upon Tyne*

*“You see community police officers thinking we are gang members. We are not. We are just a group of people with spare time on our hands.” - Blackburn College*

The majority of young people were very clear that the fear generated by gang culture is not respect, although gang members might call it this.

*“So it's not so much a real respect thing as more as a I'm going to stay out their way - I'm going to do what they say for the simple fact I don't want to get hurt, I don't want to end up in trouble type of thing.” - Westgate College, Newcastle upon Tyne*

*“It's just street cred, if someone goes, “ I just stabbed some guy round the corner”, your mates gonna say “oh you're hard ain't ya..” - What's the point of that? You're just a mug at the end of the day really”. - LAC, Westminster*

*“If they do get respect it's to do with fear, they want people to fear them, it's viewed as cool.” - New College Nottingham*

## In the media



Young people felt there was too little positive reporting in the media and that the popular press was overwhelmingly negative and disrespectful towards young people. They thought there was a need for much more balanced and fair reporting.

*“The media does not focus enough on the positive contributions that young people make like volunteering, caring for adults or helping others who are less fortunate. Perhaps this is because it is not so sensational and won't sell papers!” - Petroc College, Devon*

Both young women and young men felt pressured to conform by the stereotypical imagery used of young people in newspapers and lifestyle/celebrity magazines and felt this led to eating disorders and poor levels of self confidence for some young people.

*“The media promotes a stereotype for young people which is that they do not respect one another or society – which is wrong” - Petroc College, Devon*

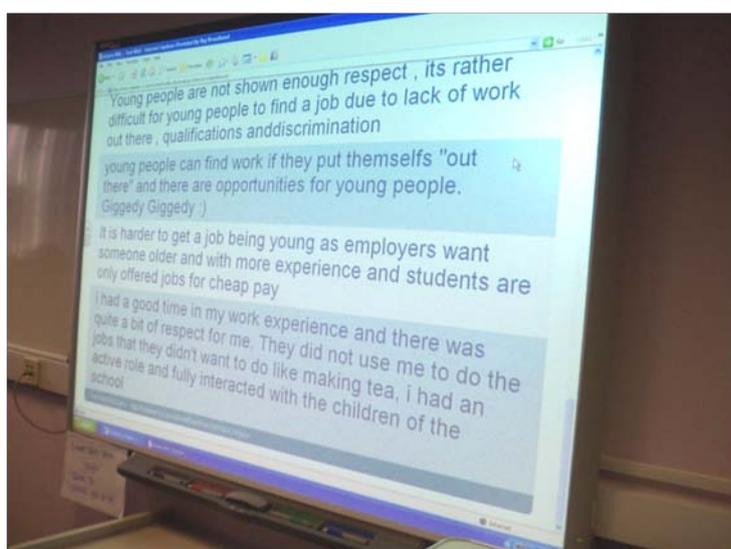
*“I think if you see a celebrity wearing something and you like that person as well I feel like they’re trying to force you into being like that person. It’s like media bullying” - Westgate College, Newcastle upon Tyne*

Media reporting on gun and knife crime and terrorism was unbalanced and focussed unfairly on particular disadvantaged areas and stereotyped young men from particular ethnicities as the offenders.

*“Because of the stereotypes, everyone is talking about knife crime and gangs” - LAC, Westminster*

*“Muslims are portrayed as all terrorists and obviously they are not” - LAC Westminster*

## In the workplace



The majority of young people recognised the importance of mutual respect in the workplace but felt, as a young person, it could be harder to get respect in return.

*“I think to gain respect you have to earn it, but young people have to work even harder at it because they are young.” - Petroc College, Devon*

Amongst those young people who had worked, there was a feeling of being taken for granted and undervalued due to their lack of work experience, despite the fact they said they had a lot to bring to the workplace, in terms of up to date knowledge of technology and IT skills as well as different life experiences.

*“They said that where they didn’t feel respected, made them not want to work, it ‘made the day hard and time go slow’ one young person said that it made them ‘feel down, watching your back, you know you will be watched and you have to be constantly be on guard’.” – Project Officer, The Yard, Lowestoft*

Young people valued the opportunity to work and overall enjoyed the work they were involved in:

*“Being in work and feeling respected through work was clearly very important for the young people who took part in the activities, although none were in full time work, many had some part time jobs and realised that the skills they gained from these were very beneficial.” - Project Worker, The Yard, Lowestoft*

## In your place of learning

Young people were very clear about what represented disrespect in their place of learning, such as littering, swearing, smoking inside the building, being late, not turning up for lessons and meetings, or discriminating against others. One young person sums it up as:

*‘I guess it’s the fact that they don’t appreciate their learning ... “Defacing property, bad language, misusing equipment” - Longley Park Sixth Form College, Sheffield*



Young people felt most respected when they were treated by adults as equals, were consulted about and could influence activities or changes in provision and could rely on the support of a trusted adult such as a mentor or teacher.

*‘If you’re a teacher I obviously need more from you than you do from me, but there still has to be respect ...there is power in the relationship but that shouldn’t be the main thing so that there is a lack of respect.’ –*

*‘A tutor who goes the extra mile makes a big difference’ - The Yard, Lowestoft*

## Rights and responsibilities



The majority of young people from all regions thought respect was both a right and a responsibility but overwhelmingly agreed that respect had to be earned.

*“If you don’t like someone, you’re not going to try and respect them. It happens at work that you might not like someone, but you’re not going to leave your work because you don’t like someone.” - LAC, Westminster*

*“Basically to earn respect you have to give respect and everyone is different in their own way just accept people for who they are.” - New College Nottingham*

Young people thought that it was most common for older people to get more respect than young people in the workplace and in the community and that some older people feared young people.

*“On building sites, you see the older guys getting respect, not the younger people”. - LAC, Westminster*

*“They don’t respect us, if they fall over we, like, pick them up, but they just look at us, they don’t trust us.” - Warwickshire College, Leamington Spa*

Young people thought that men received more respect than women. They suggested this was due to men doing more physical work and the media portraying them in a more positive light, unlike women who were often featured just for their physical attributes.



## Introduction

Following on from the success of the [Safe Colleges Safe Communities](#) website, an event was held in October 2009 where the then Minister for Higher Education, David Lammy, gave a speech in which he cited ‘respect’ as the main reason for young men and women joining gangs. Subsequently, the Chair of LSIS, Dame Ruth Silver, asked for an initiative to be developed whereby young people from the further education and skills sector were given the opportunity to unpack the word ‘respect’ and lead on an initiative to make a case to senior politicians outlining what they would like to see change in the way they are treated by government.

## Policy Context

Much work is taking place in the further education and skills sector to examine the issue of ‘respect’ and to counteract the negative image of young people, as often portrayed by the UK media. A survey carried out by the British Youth Council and Youthnet, using Facebook, found that:

- 90 % of young people denounce anti-social activities and the majority accept that swearing, arguing and loud music can be anti-social.
- 98 % of young people feel the media always, often or sometimes represents them as anti-social.
- 75 % of young people lose respect for politicians when they say negative things about young people.
- Over 80 % of young people believe the way they are portrayed leads to older people respecting them less<sup>2</sup>.

The currency and relevance of the respect agenda was reflected in the previous government’s manifesto on democratic reform (April 2010) which refers to young people and respect:

*“Our society rightly demands respect from young people. At the same time, society should respect young people’s views and aspirations.”<sup>3</sup>*

The coalition government has continued to emphasise the importance of the respect agenda through a number of initiatives and policy directions, including the launch of the Big Society, the arrival of the National Citizen Service for young people and plans for reforming Welfare to Work to encourage less dependency on government benefits alongside greater responsibility on individuals.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.youthnet.org](http://www.youthnet.org) 16.4.10

<sup>3</sup> [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net) 16.4.10

It is clear that the National Conversation: Young People and Respect could not have happened at a more timely point.

## Background and purpose of the project

In April 2010, LSIS commissioned NIACE to deliver the pilot of this work, entitled, 'A National Conversation: Young People and Respect' across three regions. Based on the success of the pilot, further conversations were delivered in the remaining six regions. The purpose of this project was to:

- provide young people within the further education and skills sector with the opportunity to consider what the word 'respect' means to them; and
- allow young people to ensure that their voices are heard and to play a key role in influencing the development of the respect agenda.

Subsequently, the invitation was broadened to include a wider network of organisations working with young people across the further education and skills sector. This included third sector organisations, informal learning providers, youth services, work-based learning providers, adult education providers and Connexions services.

The events had the overall intention of enabling young people to explore the following:

- what the word 'respect' meant to them:
  - as individuals, as learners, as family members, as volunteers, as employees and as part of a peer group and the wider community
- whether the definition of the word differed depending on which part of England a young person came from:
  - young people's perceptions of the national picture
- whether young people were afforded enough respect:
  - examples of where young people did and did not feel respected
  - factors that influenced respect e.g. race, age, social class, peers
  - where respect did (and did not) come from (individuals and sections of society)
- whether young people taking part in learning were afforded enough respect:
  - was there an existing protocol/culture of respect for young people in their place of learning? what did it look like?
  - what were the factors that impacted on this?
- what they would like to see changed in the way young people were perceived and treated:
  - what should change and how could this be achieved?
- how negative perceptions of young people could be challenged and overcome?
- what respect meant in the workplace?

- whether respect was a right or a responsibility;
- what responsibilities were involved in gaining and keeping respect? and
- what behaviours had a negative effect on respect?

The 9 events structured the above questions into 5 themes:

- Your Community.
- Your Workplace.
- Your Place of Learning.
- In the Media.
- Your Right or Responsibility?

The events addressed the topic of respect in its widest sense, with particular reference to the following areas:

- |                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Gender               | • Racism                 |
| • Dress and appearance | • Sexism                 |
| • Attitude             | • Homophobia             |
| • Culture              | • Gangs, guns and knives |
| • Social class         | • Anti social behaviour  |



## Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative data was gathered using a range of methods designed to engage and interest the participants, and to enable them to consider and express their perceptions and opinions in a range of ways.

### Respect Conversation Toolkit

A comprehensive toolkit has been developed to support practitioners wishing to undertake independent conversations with young people about respect. The toolkit details the methodology used to run the regional events detailed in this report and is available as a downloadable pdf from the [Excellence Gateway](#).

### Choice of providers

The nine providers who took part in the conversations were chosen to represent the broad range of providers within the further education and skills sector from a range of locations, e.g. town, city, rural, and coastal. The following describes the organisations that took part, when they held their respect conversation and a brief outline of their activities.

### Pilot phase

**Blackburn – Thursday 8th July, 2010:** Blackburn College is a large mixed economy college situated in a town centre on one main campus, and provides education for over 15,000 learners. It is situated in a unitary local authority with a population of 141,000. It has a large, long-established and growing Asian community (22 %) and has one of the youngest populations in the country (nearly one third of people are under 19 years) with 10 % of those young people being in the NEET category.

The local authority has extremely high levels of deprivation, and a strong local focus on regeneration, allied to an increasing emphasis on community cohesion. The College is committed to widening participation in learning at all levels and between 2007/08 and 2008/09 the number of learners at the College from widening participation backgrounds has increased from 37 % to 42 %.

The conversation took place in the recently transformed cross college student common room, named the **Centre of Respect CoRe**). The CoRe was to be the focal point for the respect agenda in the college in all forms including respect for the environment in the form of sustainability and Fairtrade, respect for health and well being promotion of healthy eating, sexual health, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. The event was facilitated by staff across a range of departments but led by vTalent year volunteers. It included graffiti walls, text walls, electronic voting, online surveys and internet searches. Stands were put on display with information about careers and student finance and membership of NUS, others included information on sexual health, drugs and alcohol service.

**Nottingham – Monday 12th July, 2010:** In recent years, Nottingham (East Midlands) has gained a national reputation for gun crime and turf battles between rival gangs. New College Nottingham (**ncn**) is an integral part of the Nottingham community, with centres located throughout the city. With approximately 18,000 learners enrolled in 2007/08, 40 % were aged 16 to 18, nearly 61 %

studied on a part-time basis, nearly 58 % were female and over 22 % were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with 15 % of people from similar communities in Nottingham.

The college recruits just over half of its learners from areas of deprivation. Just under a third of its learners live in areas ranked amongst the most educationally disadvantaged in England. Many learners aged 16 to 18 come from schools with relatively low GCSE pass rates. The size and diversity of the College ensures an interesting student mix, reflecting a broad range of cultures, backgrounds and ages. The conversation took place in the ICT suite of the college and included group discussion, graffiti walls, research on the internet, text walls and voting technology.

**Southend-on-Sea – Wednesday 21 July, 2010:** Southend-on-Sea is a unitary authority area, town, and seaside resort in Essex. The district is situated within the Thames Gateway on the north side of the Thames estuary 40 miles east of central London. With the decline of seaside resorts, from the 1960s much of the centre was re-developed for commerce. Unemployment in Southend is slightly higher than the Essex and UK averages.

South Essex College is located on six campuses in Southend and the surrounding area. The main campus, built in 2004, is in the town centre. The college provides courses for students of all ages, from 14-19 year olds to undergraduates, adults and businesses.

In 2007/08 the college recruited around 3,600 full-time equivalent students aged 16 to 18, and 1,000 aged 19 and over. At 11 %, the proportion of students from minority ethnic heritage is above the 7 % in the local population. The college were keen to participate in the respect conversations, as a key part of their customer focused quality improvement strategy is listening to the Learner Voice. The event was held in the Enterprise Centre and a range of activities, such as text wall, graffiti wall, Big Brother diary room and a video presentation by the local fire service were used.

**London Apprenticeship Company (LAC): Tuesday, 8 February 2011:** LAC is a not for profit organisation dedicated to increasing the number of apprenticeships in London and reducing youth unemployment. LAC ran their respect conversation during Apprenticeship Week at City of Westminster College, and for the morning session, invited a panel of experts, including Richard Barnes, Deputy Mayor; Tim Campbell, adviser to the Mayor on apprenticeships, an apprentice and several employers. Young people put questions to the panel about apprenticeships, respect and how they felt about the future for young people. The afternoon session was given to the respect research activities. Young people volunteering and working at LAC facilitated each of the activities and encouraged young people attending to contribute and give their points of view. Stalls were provided by Paddington Arts, London Transport Museum, City of Westminster College, and the host organisation, London Apprenticeship Company.

**The Yard, Lowestoft – Friday, 4 March 2011:** The Yard is a small Community Interest Company and primarily works with young people aged 16-24 who find it hard to engage with or sustain education, work or training. It also works with the local community, in a ward with high indices of need, in Lowestoft, Suffolk. A drop-in event was held at their premises in Lowestoft, facilitated by staff known to the local young people who attended. It included discussion, voting technology and art activities around the 5 main themes of the respect conversations..

**Longley Park Sixth Form College, Sheffield - Monday, 7 March 2011:** Longley Park is a widening participation college which aims to draw learners from all social groups in the north-east of Sheffield. They have about 1,300 students from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures. They identified respect as an important issue at the college in relation to usual teenage concerns, but also to cultural, social and religious differences. The college used their respect conversation as a chance to use the Art and Design and Humanities teams and Facilities, Marketing and Student Services teams to engage a cross-section of students. They organised four interactive workshops based on the theme of respect. One of these was a question and answer session with Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) whilst other themes were explored through a 'Big Brother' diary room activity and arts mural painting activities.

**Newcastle City Council, Westgate College – Friday, 18 March 2011:** Westgate College is part of the Westgate Community Complex and provides adult education courses for residents primarily in the west of the city. Staff from a range of departments facilitated the day and for its young people-led activities, used a collage made up of popular press and broadsheet newspapers and lifestyle and specialist magazines to explore respect for young people in the media; quotes from employers about young people as employees, as the central focus for a discussion about respect in the workplace; a graffiti wall and 'thought clouds' for a discussion about respect in college; voting technology for a discussion led by Police Officers on respect, rights and responsibilities, and a 6-minute DVD on knife crime to discuss respect in the community.

**Warwickshire College, Leamington Spa – Wednesday, 30 March 2011:** Warwickshire College is a mixed economy FE, HE and work based college; offering learning opportunities for 19,500 students aged 14 and above. Its portfolio is diverse and includes two specialist land based sites, offering land related courses, eg, agricultural studies.. Staff from a range of departments took part in the conversation: Skillbuilders, Adult Learning, Level up (Foundation Learning) (Rugby and Leamington sites) and Positive Choices (NEETS). The college included mandatory discussion sessions at the beginning and end of the event to draw the audience together and to give a feeling of achievement and to summarise the day as a conclusion. The first discussion was with a panel of young people who had completed projects in the community and the audience of young people asked them about their work and how respect was part of it. Information stands were provided by a number of agencies including the local police.

**Petroc College, Devon – Wednesday, 30 March 2011:** Petroc College is the largest further education college in Devon and serves a geographical area which stretches from the North to the South coast of Devon and includes the districts of North Devon, Torridge, Mid-Devon and East-Devon as well as North Cornwall. These areas are largely rural districts, with the challenge of low and dispersed populations, limited transport links and significant economic deprivation. The college places great emphasis in the giving and receiving of respect between staff and students. To support this philosophy, it has developed a respect policy, indicating the rights and responsibilities of everyone involved in Petroc. The college also employs two full time respect co-ordinators, one located on each of the main campuses, whose job role is to work alongside staff and students to ensure that the college respect policy is implemented effectively. The college used a mix of arts activities and technology to draw out young people's thoughts on respect in each of the contexts.

# The Findings

The following is a summary of what young people across the 9 regions said about respect for each of the 5 contexts.

## 1. In your Community

For all the conversations, young people took part in introductory discussion about their community and what it comprised. Overall, young people believed that demonstrating respect was a positive step for communities. At The Yard in Lowestoft, the young people included social networking sites as part of their wider community which they recognised could be positive but also reflected disrespect as well. There was evidence of work by community based agencies to work alongside young people to help improve the image of young people in their communities,. For example, positive steps had been taken in Lowestoft by the Police who had invited young people in the area to put forward their ideas and opinions by taking part in a recently formed community forum.

### Relationship with the Police

Emergency services attended some of the conversations to increase their visibility and try to improve mutual respect in their relationships with local young people and raise young people's awareness about staying safe in their communities.

*“How do you feel about us being in College? How can we help you to be safe and help with careers and lots of other things? That’s why we’ve got a good relationship with College and lots of other agencies, like Youth Workers are all now realising that we don’t know what’s best. We need to talk about it. We need to work together and that’s the only way and it’s proving a lot more successful.” - PCSO who visits Longley Park Sixth form College on a weekly basis*

Young people talked about their relationship with the Police in both positive and negative terms.

*“You see community police officers thinking we are gang members. We are not. We are just a group of people with spare time on our hands, but no, we are shown in a bad light and it’s the media’s fault.”*

*“They (PCSOs) will just come out with the same stuff they always do ‘we keep order on the street, we stop anti-social behaviour’ but they don’t! They just pick up cans and have a go at you for smoking.” - Warwickshire College, Leamington Spa*

### Regional differences

Ethnic diversity and economic prosperity in different regions did have an impact on the types of comments received from young people about respect in their communities. For example, young people in Nottingham and London had more to say about gangs, whilst young people in Blackburn had more to say about race and equality.

*“The theme community seemed to go hand in hand with young people talking about gangs and knife crime.” - Volunteer, LAC, London*

Young people in London were most aware and fearful of crossing over the boundaries in terms of post code areas and described this as a form of respect for boundaries. They were keen to improve the respect for young people from other community members by suggesting ways of keeping young people out of trouble such as providing more facilities and appropriate activities. However, they felt unable to access facilities such as youth clubs and leisure centres available in other areas, because of post code tensions and not wanting to stray into another area for fear of being abused. Additionally, the decline in facilities was seen as adding to the frustration of young people:

*“In Hackney there used to be a lot of youth centres, they are closing them down now. If there were still youth centres people wouldn’t need to be on the streets.” - LAC, Westminster*

Young people across all the regions commented on the ever decreasing facilities for young people to use in their communities.

*“The Government are shutting down all these youth clubs, it’s their fault there are young people hanging around.” - Blackburn College*

In Nottingham, young parents felt they were stereotyped and disrespected by other community members, including their peers.

*“I was like eight months pregnant - I was on a tram it was packed and you ache, you know you ache don’t you and there was other young people who wouldn’t get up to let me sit down and it was about a twenty minute ride. They should say have a seat.”*

Young people at South Essex College appeared to have less direct experience of gangs and knowledge about the experiences of young people from different ethnicities.

Young people living in rural communities, such as Lowestoft, felt they had fewer opportunities than those in urban areas and were more easily bored, experienced more isolation and were judged by others as trouble makers for hanging round in groups which were often described negatively as ‘gangs’.

### **Give respect – get respect!**

*“You’ve always got to give it to start with or you’re always waiting for the other person to give respect, it’s like if I haven’t got it so why should I give it but you’ve got to give the respect to get it back.” - New College Nottingham*

The vast majority of young people felt that respect is something which has to be earned, and that it brings with it a balance of rights and responsibilities which we should all adhere to – that being worthy of respect is something that has to be proved. When this was challenged, a few young people agreed that when meeting someone new they deserved to be respected until they proved otherwise. However, the majority agreed it had to be earned by everyone.

Young people had clear ideas about how respect should be demonstrated - mainly through being considerate and polite to others and not hurting them and secondly by respecting the environment and keeping it clean and tidy. They identified that they wanted respect from their friends and how this should manifest itself, whilst acknowledging the amount of disrespect young people sometimes have for others. Young people agreed that it was the responsibility of individuals to behave well but in some cases, the parents should be held accountable, for example, where underage young people were found drinking and smoking in public.

### Definitions of respect and gang culture

*“The fear one, I don’t think I even view it as respect because really I despise that person and if it wasn’t for the intimidating whether it is a gun or whether it is a bully or whatever...”*

Experience of gang culture differed across the regions. It was more prevalent in urban areas such as Nottingham and London. However, the majority of young people made clear distinctions about respect amongst young people in gangs and those in the wider community – identifying fear as being different to respect. There was little respect for gang culture and the fear generated within and by gangs amongst young people and other members of their community. Some young people in London said that their peers took part in gang culture just to survive on the estates where they lived and that they had little choice in the matter, particularly younger boys aged 13 – 14.

### Equal opportunities

Young people in all regions felt young people should not be disrespected in their communities because of their age, gender, sexual preference or ethnicity but recognised that the reality was often very different to this. Many had experienced discrimination as a young person because of their age, sexuality or ethnicity.

### Friendships

*“Have a little bit of trust and build it up, I have a few friends who I call brothers cause I have a lot of respect for them.” - The Yard, Lowestoft*

The majority of young people were clear that respect was a key element of healthy, successful and sustained relationships. They were clear about how respect should manifest itself as part of friendship and that it should include honesty, listening to each others’ points of view, having friends’ best interests at heart, not betraying their trust, and supporting them through hard times.

### Trusted adult

Young people in all regions valued the support of a trusted adult who they could respect and feel respected by. This might be a shopkeeper in the local community or a PCSO that they had been able to get to know or a teacher or mentor at their place of learning.

*“My tutor has supported me 100% and I have been through a really tough time this year.” - Blackburn College*

## 2. In the Media

Overwhelmingly, young people found it difficult to find positive, respectful reporting on young people in this activity

### Disrespect for young people from the red top newspapers

*“Young people are represented in media by a hooded jumper e.g. All young people are thugs”*

*“We get portrayed as Tavs, smashers, EMOs, Goths, thugs, hoodies they are all bad stuff.” - Blackburn College*

### Gun and knife crime

Young people identified the powerfully negative impact of imbalanced, stereotypical media reporting about gun and knife crime on respect shown to young people in their communities. This was more poignant in Nottingham where incidents in particularly deprived areas, such as St Annes, were highlighted regularly by the national media. Young people who lived there did not perceive it to be as dangerous as reported.

They also identified the perception created by the media that young Black or mixed race people were more able to cope with incidences of gun and knife crime because they might be more likely to live in those areas affected. It was felt the media had a responsibility to represent black young people more fairly and equally.

*“People do have set images, someone said to me ‘oh you’ll be alright walking through Hyson Green’. They think because you’re mixed race, they assume because of your race you’re immune from harm because you’re one of them, they stereotype you”.*

*“I think people are more stereotypical of black people, of them being the violent ones. People have got to realise there is good and bad in every race.” - New College Nottingham*

The Police recognised the challenge of stereotypes set by the media for themselves and young people.

*“No. No, you lot are unfortunate because you have got one of your biggest enemies, which is also one of our biggest enemies and that is the media. They are really good at making the fact that young people hang about on street corners, you all wear hoodies, you all cause bother and you intimidate old people.” - PCSO at Longley Park Sixth Form College, Sheffield*

**An unbalanced view** - overwhelmingly, young people thought that reporting by popular press and lifestyle magazines in particular had a massively negative impact on the general public’s perception of young people and their contribution to their communities. All young people thought that the media should present a balanced and fair view of young people and their achievements with more representation of young people’s achievements such as exam success, good parenting and participation in voluntary and charity work. Discussions about music and television highlighted that whilst positive images of young people are getting more common, there remains much stereotyping which can negatively affect the perception of older generations. More positive role models were

thought to be required, especially for young women and young Black men. Some young people thought that censorship on reporting about young people could have a positive impact but this might be particularly difficult to achieve by online media. Some young people suggested that a national consultation panel made up of young people could contribute to this type of censorship. A few young people thought that the negative image portrayed of young people by the media instilled a feeling of apathy and submission to that image for some young people, who then felt powerless to fight against it.

*“They should show how young people can achieve in education, get higher, maybe do volunteer work.”*

*“Everyone thinks we carry guns and knives but we don’t!” - Blackburn College*

**Stereotyping** - Young people noted particularly the disrespect for young women in popular culture magazines which pressurised young women into conforming to a particular image, thus encouraging a lack of self confidence amongst young women and propensity to eating disorders and self harm. Although young women at the conversations were able to rationalise the stereotyping, they still felt under pressure to conform, to be accepted in their communities and by their peers. Equally, young men were conscious of stereotypical images portrayed, particularly negative images of young Black men.

*“Most boys have to prove themselves to their friends, girls are the same with clothes and nails etc but boys have to show off in a different way.” - New College Nottingham*

### 3. In the Workplace

*“If they’re younger than you (your manager), you still have to respect them because they’re your boss” - New College, Nottingham*

For young people in all the regions, being in work and feeling respected in the workplace was clearly very important. Those young people who had not worked before expected to be shown respect provided they respected others. They indicated that they would need to earn respect by clearly showing their interest and willingness to work.

Young people who had worked or were currently employed in a part time or voluntary capacity, gave accounts of mixed experiences of respect in the workplace. Young people felt disrespected by employers for the following reasons: they lacked experience and skills; were paid less money because of this; they were stereotyped as not having the personal or social skills to work effectively and that there were not enough opportunities provided, or chances given, to gain the relevant experience required by employers. However some young people had more positive experiences:

*“I worked at McDonalds and got offered breaks when I did not need them so I got respect from them like that.” - New College Nottingham*

Some young people felt they were less respected by colleagues when they were given menial roles, such as a labourer but when they worked as part of a coordinated team found it easier to gain respect.

*“I feel respected on the market as everyone is very friendly, they chat and I feel included and one of them.” - The Yard, Lowestoft*

Being disrespected made young people feel they didn't want to work – they spoke of constantly being watched and not trusted to do their job.

On the positive side they felt that: creating jobs in the community; having the opportunity to do volunteer work; and the offer of apprenticeships and internships for young people, all recognised the potential, energy, enthusiasm that young people could bring. Young people felt they had a lot to contribute to the workplace and that despite their lack of practical experience they may have more and different knowledge to older people and that their different life experiences were valuable as well. They also thought that their IT skills and knowledge of new technology was a positive for the workplace but that this was overlooked because of their lack of work experience.

Young people suggested activities that might help them fit into the workplace more easily, such as team building exercises and getting the work team together socially to get to know each other better. A trusted adult in the workplace, such as a manager or mentor, could provide reassurance and encouragement and be approached for advice.

## 4. In your place of learning

For the majority of learning providers taking part in the conversations, respect and listening to the learner voice was an important part of their internal policy. For example, the conversation in Blackburn took part in the CoRe centre (Centre of Respect), recently developed as a common room in consultation with the students. At East Sussex College in Southend, a committee had been set up particularly for listening to the student voice and had fully met all the recommendations made by the students on the committee as part of a refurbishment project. Additionally, East Sussex College had measures in place for giving ideas and receiving feedback from students about ideas for changes. New College Nottingham (ncn) is currently working on the respect agenda and at the time of writing, had recently held a Student Conference where this was explored.

Young people recognised the importance of respecting your learning environment in order to have a positive and adult experience of college. The majority agreed that being in a dilapidated building generally would encourage lower levels of respect from young people and staff working there. Once again young people from all regions agreed that respect had to be earned in their place of learning and that it was a two way process, most effective when young people were treated on an equal basis as adults.

*“If you don't treat the college with respect, you won't get it back and won't learn; you'll be wasting your time.” - Blackburn College*

A young person in London thought that his experiences of respect outside of the learning environment had an impact on his expectations for being respected in other environments. There were mixed experiences of being supported in the learning environment. Some young people described support mechanisms and relationships with trusted adults that enabled them to manage any issues about being disrespected whilst others appeared frustrated, maintaining there was little support. Student councils were generally not seen as successful in dealing with students' difficulties. Young people had mixed experiences of support from tutors.

*“Everything is fragile, like glass. If someone is messing around in class, instead of ending it there, they have to fuff around and be nice and be official instead of dealing with the problem and getting it sorted.” - The Yard, Lowestoft*

## 5. Your Right or Your Responsibility?

Under this topic, it was possible to categorise comments and opinions under various themes as listed below:

**Defining respect** - the majority of young people from all nine regions thought that respect was being considerate and polite to others and not hurting them and being treated fairly and not discriminated against because of age, gender, ethnicity, religious belief, disability or sexuality

**Respect as a right** - there were conflicting views amongst young people. The majority of young people from all regions thought respect was both a right and a responsibility but overwhelmingly agreed that respect had to be earned - that people had to prove that they deserved respect from them and that they themselves were responsible for proving to others that they deserved to be respected.

**Respect across generations** - Young people across all regions generally felt they were expected to respect their elders but didn't get that respect in return and that older people generally did get more respect in their communities. Young people gave concrete examples of where they had tried to help an older person in the community and been disrespected because of their age or appearance.

*“A group member recalls a story of his friend offering an elderly neighbour help with his keys and the elder turned around and hurled a racist remark at him, that wasn't giving and getting respect....” - Volunteer, LAC, Westminster*

**Gender** - young people across the regions thought that women and men got equal amounts of respect and disrespect but in different ways. Men got more respect for performance in activities such as sport but were disrespected for family life whilst young women were respected for taking part in voluntary work in their community and taking part in activities that were typically undertaken by young men, such as plumbing. Young women felt disrespected in terms of appearance and parenting skills, particularly in the media.

**Sexuality** - young people overwhelmingly thought that gay people were much less respected in their communities and that this disrespect was often shown in a subtle way



## Impact on learning providers and young people

As part of the analysis of the conversation outcomes, learning providers reported on the positive impact on their organisation and the young people taking part.

### Impact for learning providers:

- Raised awareness about respect - staff had to think about respect and what it meant to young people and to themselves and to evaluate their own relationships with young people they came into contact with in the organisation.
- The respect conversations encouraged partnership work and promoted a holistic approach to working with and supporting young people. External organisations that attended the conversations were promoting the 'respect yourself agenda' in regards to health, sexual health, drugs and alcohol use and economic welfare.
- Lessons were learned on how to run an effective respect conversation and to engage young people in consultation activities.
- Existing strategies on respect were strengthened and new ideas brought to light.

### Impact for young people:

- Empowered young people to voice their opinions freely.
- Young people felt valued, that their opinions were being listened to. They enjoyed expressing their opinions in interactive ways and having their voice recorded.
- The activities and discussions added to their understanding of what respect might mean and how it can be put in practice in different contexts.
- The events presented the opportunity to share their views with a wider range of young people than they would usually come into contact with.
- It improved young people's knowledge of religious beliefs, as well as others' attitudes and opinions towards each other and the wider community.
- Promoted the idea that consultations can be fun to participate in.
- It raised their awareness of the experiences of young people in different types of community.
- Young people not enrolled at college had the chance to familiarise themselves with the environment and opportunities there.

## Next steps for learning providers

Learning providers identified a range of ways to move forward with the respect agenda:

- dissemination of the findings from the respect conversations to senior management;
- continuation of the conversation through on line surveys;
- publicising the findings from the respect conversations in public areas in the organisation;
- the findings will be used as part of tutorial materials to promote Every Learner Matters: Making a Positive Contribution;
- run similar events in the future that are young people led; and
- create a national forum of young people on respect.

## Conclusion

The conversations about respect across the regions have demonstrated young people's hunger for opportunities to communicate their views, experiences and opinions to policy and decision makers. The conversations modelled respect for young people by enabling them to take part in a fun and interactive way in a consultation that clearly was about a subject that was of interest and mattered greatly to them, listening and recording their views, experiences and opinions. The learning providers taking part also benefited in terms of discovering effective ways of consulting their learners, learning more about respect and strengthening existing strategies on respect.

The Executive Summary of this report pulls out the key messages from young people under each context. Strong messages came through all the contexts with one overriding message that young people believed that to get respect you need to give respect, respect had to be earned. For 'In the Media' young people clearly felt they were being disrespected by the stereotypical images and reporting on young people in the community and that this impacted on all aspects of their lives. The images portrayed in lifestyle and fashion magazines were dangerous to health and wellbeing, particularly for young women. Images of gang culture and negative reporting created a feeling of apathy for a few young people, almost to the point of conforming to those stereotypes. There was a real thirst for positive reporting of young people and their achievements and a recognition of the power of the media in being able to do this.

'In your community' highlighted different experiences for young people in urban or rural settings. Whilst young people were aware of what would ideally represent respect in the community their life experiences differed. Some had experienced discrimination for their ethnicity, their age or their situation, such as being a young parent.

Respect in the workplace was seen as invaluable by young people and they welcomed any opportunities to find work and for them to make a positive contribution as young employees. The event held in London formed part of a wider remit to publicise apprenticeships and for young people to ask questions of a panel which included a successful young apprentice, the Mayor and Apprenticeship Champion, Tim Campbell. The number of young people attending the event demonstrated young people's will to find work and a suitable apprenticeship. However, many young people reported they felt devalued because of their age and lack of experience.

All of the events demonstrated positive attitudes, enthusiastic participation and strength of character from young people across a broad range of backgrounds and experience, some from disadvantaged backgrounds, struggling to stay in education. From these events a number of young people have volunteered to take part in a roundtable discussion with ministers and are looking forward to having their opinions heard directly by government.