

Mentoring is the future for young people, claims business chief

Attn Picture Desk – pictures available on request

Young people who help others can help themselves to a bright future, it was revealed at a Select Committee event yesterday to mark their contribution to the Year of the Volunteer.

Volunteers aged from 12 to 19 discussed their experiences of volunteering, including an entirely volunteer-led helpline for Muslim youngsters, and a scheme in which school children mentor younger pupils. Panel member Piers Blake, Head of Community Investment at Whitbread, said that the kind of experience the youngsters were getting was invaluable.

“You can teach skills and knowledge but it’s very hard to teach attitude,” he said. “I find listening to young people like these very inspirational, and I’m a bit annoyed that I wasn’t involved with volunteering myself at their age. We have an aspiration that every senior manager in our business will have some degree of mentoring experience, and if they haven’t got it then they won’t progress. We’re not there yet but we’re working on it.”

The Select Committee event was organised by the British Youth Council (BYC) as part of the Year of the Volunteer’s ‘Youth and Children’ month, backed by the Home Office. A panel which included three MPs and BBC Five Live presenter Guy Ruddle heard young volunteers offer their opinions on the benefits and problems of volunteering, including whether or not financial incentives should be offered.

A full report on the event will be produced by the end of this month, to coincide with the report of the Russell Commission on youth volunteering. Gordon Brown spoke this week about his aim to encourage one million more young people to volunteer over the next five years.

Jules Mason, Head of Citizenship and Development at the BYC said: “The range of presentations from the young people who spoke today gave a broad indication of the type of projects being undertaken by youth volunteers. And it is unlikely that the members of the panel would otherwise get the chance to hear about projects like these, so we’ve really raised the profile of the kind of voluntary projects people can get involved in.”

The event was sponsored by Matthew Green MP, Vice-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs, who said: “I was delighted to attend today’s event which brought young volunteers to the heart of democracy, as indeed they are at the heart of our communities, providing countless hours of service for the benefit of others.”

Speakers at the event included:

- * Martin Jermyn, an 18-year-old who has won the Princess Diana Memorial Award for his many and varied volunteering experiences.
- * Three volunteers from the London-based Muslim Youth Helpline (Abbas Premji, Shahida Mohamedali and Amina Al-Yasin)
- * Four 12 and 13 year olds who mentor younger children at their school in Lewisham, South London (Marianne Pink, Chynna Thompson-Jarrett, Chanel Ramalingum and Shamara Johnson)



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- * Naja Omeregic and Misha Badr-Safdari, two members of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Youth Forum
- * Stephen Ferguson, a 16-year-old from the Kent Youth Assembly and member of the UK Youth Parliament

The panel featured:

- * Derek Twine - *Chief Executive, The Scout Association*
- * Guy Ruddle - *BBC Radio Five Live presenter*
- * Hilton Dawson, MP for Lancaster and Wyre – *Co-chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Children, Winner of the Children and Youth Champion Award 2004 by ePolitix.com*
- * Matthew Green, MP for Ludlow - *Honorary President of the British Youth Council, Vice-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs*
- * George Osborne, MP for Tatton – *Honorary President of the British Youth Council, youngest Conservative MP and Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury*
- * Piers Blake – *Head of Community Investment, Whitbread*
- * Elizabeth Salter - *Head of Campaigns, CSV (Community Service Volunteers)*

The event was chaired by Ashley Sweetland - *Member of the Young People's Advisory Group, Russell Commission.*

The Year of the Volunteer is being coordinated by CSV and the Volunteering England consortium and has backing from the Home Office. For more information see www.yearofthevolunteer.org

Event details:

Volunteering Select Committee Event

Date: Wednesday 2 February 2005

Time: 2pm – 3.30pm

Place: Atlee Suite, Portcullis House, London

ENDS

For further information or pictures, please contact Chris Pitt, Year of the Volunteer Press Officer on 0207 812 0036 or cpitt@csv.org.uk or Martin Walford 0207 812 0033, mwalford@csv.org.uk

Notes for editors:

1. The British Youth Council is a charity run by young people for young people. As the national youth council for young people aged under 25, we represent and involve a unique range of young people from over 180 organisations and a network of over 450 youth councils across the UK.
2. For details of other events in Youth and Children month, including a seminar on mentoring organised by children's charity Rainer, please contact the press office as above
3. Year of the Volunteer 2005 is owned by volunteers, led by a partnership between CSV (Community Service Volunteers) and the Volunteering England Consortium, and supported by the Home Office.
4. The Volunteering England Consortium consists of Volunteering England, TimeBank, do-it, The Media Trust, Bitc and Youth Action Network.
5. To find out more about events and activities during the Year of the Volunteer 2005, please visit the official website at www.yearofthevolunteer.org and watch The Community Channel 24 hours a day on Sky 585 and Telewest 233. It's also on ntl 14 and from 6-9am on Freeview 46. Alternatively, contact the CSV Action Desk at your local BBC radio station.

