

This month we asked: Is there anyone in the public eye that you think would make a great ambassador for youth work?

Summary

The analysis identified potential ambassadors for youth work, the recommendations included sports personalities, musicians, singers, artists, poets, actors as well as young influencers.

Most people nominated had directly experienced youth work. For some, it was where their careers had begun. For others, they have openly advocated for the value of youth work provision and more funding.

The potential ambassadors mentioned are presented, along with the reasons why they should be considered, overall they:

- Raise awareness of the value of youth work
- Advocate for policy change and funding
- Inspire young people by sharing their own stories or supporting youth-led initiatives.

Sports

Marcus Rashford – footballer

Why? He is a leading advocate for youth wellbeing and tackling food poverty. His campaigning led to government U-turns on free school meals during the COVID-19 pandemic. He is widely seen as a role model for young people.

Marcus attended youth clubs, he has described them as important for his development and provided him with a safe and fun space to go to after school.

Music

Doc Brown, aka Ben Bailey Smith – rapper, actor, writer and producer

Creative industries

Leona Lewis and Alexandra Burke – singers

Why? Both, have roots in community youth arts programmes in London.

Idris Elba – actor and producer

Why? Idris has spoken about the importance of youth centers in Hackney and supports youth-focused charities and has been involved in numerous initiatives on youth violence prevention.

He attended youth clubs and has spoken about how youth clubs gave him a safe space to explore music and acting. He credits these early experiences with helping him stay out of trouble and discover his passion for the arts.

Michael Sheen - Welsh actor

Why? Micheal uses his platform to raise awareness about inequality and social issues affecting young people, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds. He is a big supporter of youth theatre, youth arts organisations and youth homelessness projects. An overall advocate and funder of youth related causes - empowerment, equity and community development.

Other professions

Dr Alex George – qualified doctor & media personality

Why? He is a mental health advocate and has been appointed the UK's 'Youth Mental Health Ambassador'. He supports and advocates for youth work.

Lemn Sissay – Poet, author and broadcaster

Why? - Grew up in the care system and was supported by youth workers. Sissay has spoken about the importance of youth workers in helping him find his voice and identity. He is now a vocal supporter of care-experienced young people and youth advocacy.

Youth influencers

Some mentioned that ambassadors for the sector should be youth practitioners themselves.

Why? Before becoming a well-known performer, he worked with young offenders and refugee children, using creativity and communication to inspire confidence and inclusion. Through his music, comedy, and storytelling, he connects with young people in relatable ways, promoting positive expression and social awareness. His commitment to giving back, coupled with his platform in the arts and media, enables him to champion the values of empowerment, safeguarding, and opportunity that sit at the heart of youth work.

Ezra Collective – British Jazz Group

Why? Femi has actively campaigned for youth work for all young people and the need for more youth centres across the UK. He has regularly used his platform to promote the impact of youth work. His love for music started in a youth club, where Ezra Collective were formed.

Little Simz – rapper and actress

Why? She was supported by youth workers on her journey, has spoken publicly about this, and is an excellent role model for how to make a career that is tied to your values and passion. She is continuing to support young people - for example, opening a recording studio at Lift Youth Hub in Islington last year.

She emphasises the importance of these spaces for fostering talent and creativity, especially given the decline in youth services funding, and advocates for more support for young people to pursue their passions in a positive environment.

Little Simz credits her own musical development to attending youth clubs in Islington, London, calling them *"the place where it all began for me... a second home"*.

Alesha Dixon - Singer and TV personality

Why? Supports a number of youth charities, including the Princes Trust.

In addition, some respondents named young people who have shown their commitment to young people by campaigning on issues relevant to them and using their platform to speak up about issues that affect disadvantaged communities.

Through the #iwill Movement (partnership between UK Youth and Volunteering Matters) we meet and work with a number of young people who could also be ambassadors for youth work. All of these Ambassadors are passionate about raising young people's voice, making changes in their communities and in national policies to improve their living environment and of the generations to come. A large number of our #iwill Ambassadors have achieved getting seats in high profile committees and have influenced national policies.