

Press release

EMBARGOED: 12am, 24th September 2010

Thursday 23rd September 2010

Chancellor hears the views of 12,000 NW Teens NW young citizens deliver *Action Agenda* to Government and key decision-makers

Young people (14-19 years old) from across the North West will meet the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne MP at Rudheath Youth Centre, Cheshire, today (24th September) to present him with their *Action Agenda for the North West*. The report represents the views of over 12,000 young citizens from across the NW region. At a time of economic uncertainty, the *Action Agenda* calls for more positive images of teenagers and challenges the Government to support young people in achieving their ambitions to build a better future.

The event with the Chancellor is part of the *Young Citizens' Action Agenda* project, run by the Institute for Citizenship and partner organisations, which aims to develop citizenship life skills and help young citizens understand and discuss key issues in politics, economics and citizenship. The project encourages young people to learn the skills that will give them a voice, helping them to address 21st century challenges and play a bigger part in creating the 'Big Society'. With the results of the Government Spending Review due soon, the authors of the *Action Agenda* will be able to talk direct to Government and make sure they get their ideas in first.

After the *Agenda* is presented to Mr Osborne there will be a Question and Answer session with the Chancellor, chaired by Annabel Tiffin, Presenter, BBC North West Tonight and Politics Show NW. Giving young citizens the opportunity to question high-profile politicians, business and community leaders on issues from MP's expenses to the credit crunch is an important feature of the project, which encourages them to explore how the views of young people can influence policy and decision making.

The main finding and recommendations of the *Action Agenda*, which will also be delivered to key decision-makers and opinion-formers across the NW and UK, include:

- Only eighteen per cent (18%) of NW young people feel they can influence politics. Young people want political education that gives young people the inspiration to match their aspirations with effective involvement, becoming active citizens of today and tomorrow.
- Only thirty-eight per cent (38%) of young people think they are taught Personal Finance Education. Young people want personal finance education that allows them to be independent, take control of their money, plan for a sustainable future and avoid the financial risks of previous generations.
- Fifty-two per cent (52%) of NW teens have never volunteered. They want recognised volunteering opportunities that help them understand their communities and gain life skills to prosper in the future.
- Sixty-seven per cent (67%) of young people think that the media portrays them unfairly. They want a connection with wider society that is not harmed by a negative portrayal of young people in the media and that lets young people be judged by who they are and what they do.

Young people and key politicians from across the North West have welcomed the publication of the *Agenda*.

Rt Hon George Osborne MP (Chancellor of the Exchequer and MP for Tatton) said, *'I am really pleased that young people from across the North West are coming together to propose solutions to many of the economic and political challenges we face today. I have witnessed at first hand the talent of young people in the North West by talking to my young constituents in Tatton. The Young Citizens' Action Agenda is a fantastic way for young people to have their voices heard and help us try to overcome the challenges we all face.'*

Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP (Shadow Health Secretary, Labour Leadership Candidate and MP for Leigh) said, *'It is vitally important that we equip young adults with the skills and experiences to become engaged, active and confident in their local communities in the North West and on the national stage. Decision-makers should listen carefully to the views of young people, particularly when taking decisions with a direct impact upon them.'*

Rt Hon Andrew Stunell MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and MP for Hazel Grove) said, *'Too often young people are taken for granted, and end up feeling totally left out when decisions are taken. We need to do much more to listen to young people across the North West, understand their problems, and provide them with the skills to be able to succeed.'*

Panelist **Shirin Ibrahim**, 16, from Blackburn said, *'I want this Action Agenda to be taken seriously by decision-makers to make young people aware about how important they are to society and show them that we can make a positive change.'*

The Young Citizens' Action Agenda NW project

The year-long *Young Citizens' Action Agenda North West* (YCAA NW) project is supported by a range of high profile national and regional partners. The project has included:

- A high-profile event for 1,350 young people (Opera House, Manchester, 4 February 2010) with Alvin Hall (TV Financial Guru), Baroness Warsi (Cabinet Minister), politicians and business leaders.
- Over 75 free interactive workshop events on politics, economics and citizenship in schools across the North West of England (Sept – Dec 2009) attended by over 8,000 students.
- Free resources to help teachers teach young people about 21st century economic, political and social challenges and the relevance of these challenges to their future lives, opportunities and aspirations.
- A survey of over 5,500 young people across the North West seeking young people's views on skills and aspirations which informed the Regional Development Agency's *Regional Strategy 2010*.
- A Young Citizens' Action Panel NW made up of over 50 young people from Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Greater Merseyside and Cheshire who worked together to write the *Action Agenda*.
- For more information please see: www.ycaa.org.uk.

** Ends**

Note to Editors:

- The event runs from 1.30pm – 3.00pm at Rudheath Youth Centre, Gadbrook Park, Rudheath, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 7RJ. The centre is also known locally as The Venue@Connexions.
- George Osborne MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, will be presented with the *Young Citizens' Action Agenda* at 2pm, followed by a 20 minute debate.

For further information, photography, quotes, and interviews.

To cover this exciting event at the Rudheath Youth Centre and interview special guests and young people, please contact Jon Fitzmaurice, Institute for Citizenship, on: (Mobile) 0772 912 0604. E-mail: jon@citizen.org.uk

The Young Citizens' Action Agenda NW is a partnership led by:



The **Institute for Citizenship** is an independent charitable trust. The IfC promotes informed, active citizenship and greater participation in democracy and society through projects, research, events, education, discussion and debate. Key projects include *Schools Question Time*, devised with IfC President David Dimbleby and supported by the BBC & Parliament's Education Service.

The following organisations have supported the *Young Citizens' Action Agenda NW*:

The **co-operative**

The **Co-operative Group** is the world's largest consumer co-operative with more than five and a half million members, over £14 billion turnover, and core business interests in food, travel, pharmacy, funeral care, farming and financial services. Led by The Co-operative's values and principles, the strength and commitment of the membership is vital in helping to achieve The Co-operative goals – from supporting the community to combating climate change.



The **Northwest Regional Development Agency's (NWDA)** core purpose has been to maximise the region's competitiveness to build a stronger economy. Investment has been carefully targeted at initiatives that unlock the widest possible economic benefit. NWDA work will be reorganised under the new Coalition government.



Government Office for the North West is part of a network of nine Government Offices set up by the previous Government to represent Whitehall in the region. The role of the Government Office has been to strengthen national policy, support partners in the region and drive delivery.



The **BT Learning and Skills programme** equips young people, and the people who teach and care for them, with the skills to get the most out of the world around them. Our educational resources and activities bring people together and help them to become better, more effective communicators, whatever their age.



Parliament's Education Service works with schools and Members of both Houses of Parliament to support young people in developing their understanding of Parliament and democracy. The Service aims to inform, engage and empower young people to understand the work, history and relevance of Parliament.



The **Youth Charter** has a proven track record in the creation and delivery of social and human development programmes and web based tools, research and services with the overall aim of providing young people with an opportunity through sport, arts and cultural activity to develop in life.



The **Greater Manchester Challenge** is a three year programme (2008-2011) to improve educational outcomes for young people in Greater Manchester delivered in partnership between Government, schools, local authorities and all those working to raise education standards.



AGMA (the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities) was formed after the abolition of the Greater Manchester County Council in 1986. The Association is a partnership between the ten local authorities within the Greater Manchester area.