



FORMERLY KNOWN AS CHILDREN'S EXPRESS

Peter Hain tells young journalists it is time to lower voting age to 16.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Wales, Peter Hain MP, has said he thinks lowering the age of voting to 16 is vital to getting young people interested in politics.

He was speaking at the relaunch of youth media charity Children's Express as Headliners at an event held at BAFTA on Tuesday evening (30th January).

The MP for Neath is a close colleague of Gordon Brown and is widely tipped to become Deputy Leader if Brown is chosen as the new leader of the Labour Party.

Citing his own experience of growing up in a divided South Africa, his work with the anti-Nazi League, and his present role in Northern Ireland, he said that it was important that young people were prepared to challenge prejudice and fight discrimination.

"I have concentrated on trying to bring together people from different communities to engage in dialogue and work together. And I know Headliners has been doing important work in this area."

But he said society had to accept that if they wanted young people to engage in democracy they should be treated as equal; and that meant lowering the age of majority to 16. He suggested introducing automatic registration on the electoral register when a National Insurance number is issued, to help reduce the number of young people who can't vote because they are not registered.

"At sixteen, young people are entitled to marry, leave school and home, and take up full-time employment. They are also entitled to join the armed forces, fight and die for their country. Young people should, therefore, be treated as full citizens – without qualification – when they become sixteen – including being given the right to vote."

Headliners is a unique youth development charity that encourages young people to investigate and challenge the world around them through journalism. Since it started in the UK in 1994 as Children's Express, it has produced over 1,200 stories involving 4,000 young people.

At the ceremony attendees saw a showreel highlighting the best of the last twelve years work; including young people reporting from Africa, interviewing each of the party leaders at the 2001 election and investigating the problems of traffic pollution ahead of the introduction of the congestion charge in London.

The event, hosted by Katie Derham, also featured interviews with some of the current members of Headliners. Twelve-year-old Jordan, from Islington, who has been a member of Headliners since he was nine, said that he wanted to interview Nick Griffin, the leader of the British National Party, and ask him why the colour of someone's skin should preclude them from living in this country.

Rhona, a 17-year-old from Hackney, said that her highlight had been interviewing Benjamin Zephaniah; and how well the report had been received in the local community. Equally, Daniel, from Belfast talked about the first story he was involved on, which was an expose of a local shop selling fireworks to him when he was ten.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Photographs of Peter Hain at the event are available on request.

For more information please contact [Oliver Benson](#) or call 020 7833 2577.



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[Headliners Launch Event Photographs](#) Photographs for the Headliners launch event held on Tuesday 30 January 2007 at BAFTA on Piccadilly, London.

[Praise for Headliners](#) Watch a video of various people explaining why they think young people need to be involved in the news media.

[Children's Express 1994-2007 video compilation](#) Watch some of the best bits of the last twelve years, as we look back at some of the TV news reports that Children's Express members were involved in.

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