

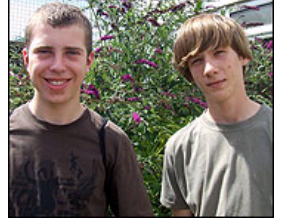
Campaign for change in the media

Does the media paint too negative a picture of young people? David Collier and Terry White think so, and are using their roles in the UK Youth Parliament to campaign for more positive images in the news.

Recently there have been a lot of stories in the news about knife crime and young people. 2008 has seen a great deal of needless violence among young people, and the media plays a role in raising awareness of this.

But this is only one side of the story and by putting the spotlight on a clichéd image of gangs and 'hoodies', the media are stereotyping young people.

A survey by Young People Now magazine in 2007 showed that 48% of all news stories about young people were negative. That figure is even bigger in broadcast news, with 87.5% of all radio and television news stories about young people having a negative theme.



Two people who want to see this change are David Collier, the Member of the UK Youth Parliament for Bexley, and his deputy Terry White. Both David and Terry think the media spread unnecessary fear and worry in communities with all the negative stories about young people.

"Portraying young people in a negative way gives a false impression" says David. "It's unfair and it's making a lot of people, including young people, feel threatened by what they hear."

"People see a big group of kids hanging around outside the shops and feel threatened. But kids hang around outside shops because it's the safest place. It's bright and there are lots of people there. It's a negative cycle."

Terry agrees, pointing out that "The media are spreading fear. They make a big deal out of 'young people being out on the street'. This makes people think 'Oh my God, there's a kid walking the street, he could stab me.' It's a load of rubbish."

The UK Youth Parliament aims to give the young people of the UK a voice that will be heard and listened to by local and national government. David Collier is using his role as the MYP for Bexley to campaign for more positive images of young people in the news.

"There's a lot of good stuff young people are doing, it's just not getting shown out there so people aren't aware of it. To change people's perceptions we have to bombard them with positive images of the good things going on and slowly it will change the way people think."

"I don't think enough people are aware of Youth Parliament", adds Terry. "And we've got a pretty good youth council in Bexley. I want to make more people aware of this."

Hopefully David and Terry's campaign will bring about a change, helping everyone to feel safer and end the confusion that may drive young people into making the wrong decisions.

About this article

This article was written and researched by Jessica Cobby, 15, Katie Cole, 12, Gareth Fient, 14, Amy Marsella, 12, Talwinder Minhas, 13, and Harry Rogers, 16.

This article was written as part of Bexley Summer University 2008

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