

Election 2026



# YOUNG MAYOR OF LEWISHAM

## Candidate statements

Please read  
carefully  
before casting  
your vote

[lewisham.gov.uk/young-mayor](https://lewisham.gov.uk/young-mayor)



[insta@lewisham\\_young\\_mayor](https://www.instagram.com/insta@lewisham_young_mayor)



[@lewishamyoungmayor1](https://www.tiktok.com/@lewishamyoungmayor1)

## Message from Brenda Dacres OBE, Mayor of Lewisham

Lewisham is a vibrant and youthful borough, full of driven and talented young people.

For over 20 years, our Young Mayor Programme has shown just how powerful their voices can be. From representing Lewisham at major debates to shaping local decision-making, our Young Mayors continue to make their mark and demonstrate the very best of our community.

Last year saw our highest-ever turnout, with an incredible 62% of eligible young people voting. And this year, we're proud to have 42 candidates from 24 schools, the largest field in the programme's history, aged 13-17 and ready to lead.

Democracy and civic participation remain at the heart of this programme. With the youth service undergoing its biggest refresh in years, this is the perfect moment for young people to get involved and help shape the Lewisham they want to see.

As Young Mayor, Shane Grant has spoken at conferences, chaired a Youth Summit, and strengthened civic links with schools and youth groups. He is also developing an entrepreneurship and enterprise project that will sit within the new youth service as part of his manifesto work.

The Young Advisors have played a key role too – supporting the redesign of the youth service through mystery shopping, task-and-finish groups, and ongoing feedback. They've represented Lewisham at key civic events, volunteered at the Bank of Things, and continued to champion inclusion for young people with special educational needs.

This year also featured summer basketball activities, the opening of Riverside Youth Club, and regular engagement with the Children and Young People's Select Committee.

Lewisham's young people remain passionate about their community and determined to make a difference. The Young Mayor Programme gives them the chance to engage in local democracy and turn their ideas into action. Take some time to learn about the candidates and cast your vote – democracy starts early here in Lewisham!

Best of luck to all the candidates standing this year!



Brenda Dacres OBE,  
Mayor of Lewisham

For more information about the work of the  
young mayor and the election process visit  
**[lewisham.gov.uk/young-mayor](http://lewisham.gov.uk/young-mayor)**

**ONLY ONE** OF THESE  
CANDIDATES WILL BE  
YOUNG MAYOR.

**ONLY YOU** CAN  
MAKE THAT CHOICE.

## What is the role of the Young Mayor?

The Young Mayor gives young people in Lewisham a real say in the future of the area. The role is at the core of the Youth Voice Action and Participation (YVAP) strand of Lewisham Youth Service, which brings additional opportunities for young people in the borough to get involved in decision making and influencing change. This will include area Youth Forums which will work on local priorities and feed back to the Young Mayor.

Lewisham young people have a lot to say about issues that affect them such as schools, youth facilities, the environment, mental health, crime and safety, and much more. It is important that they are involved when decisions are made that will impact on their lives.

This is why Brenda Dacres OBE, Mayor of Lewisham, and the Council agreed that there should be a young mayor, someone who would represent young people and make sure their views are heard. In 2026–27, the Young Mayor will have a budget of £25,000 to spend on improving the lives of young people in Lewisham.

### How to vote

Anyone aged 11–17 who lives, works or studies in Lewisham can vote in the election. Everyone in a secondary school or sixth form college will be allowed to vote in a polling station at their school or college on polling day. You will be given a ballot paper and asked to cast your vote for first and second choices for Young Mayor of Lewisham. If you don't go to school in Lewisham but live in Lewisham you can have a postal vote. See page 27 for contact details.

The candidate who comes in second place will become the Deputy Young Mayor. Third and fourth placed candidates will have the opportunity to represent Lewisham as members of the UK Youth Parliament. All candidates can become Young Advisors or join their local Youth Forums.

### Time to decide

In 2025, 9,914 young people voted, which was a turnout of 61.95% and Shane Grant, pictured above, was elected Lewisham's twentieth Young Mayor. Now it's time for you to decide who you want to represent you and make a difference to young people in Lewisham.

There are 42 candidates standing in this year's election. This booklet contains their election statements which explain why they want to be Young Mayor of Lewisham and what they will do for young people if elected. So, please read this carefully and make sure you vote on Wednesday 4 February so you can have your say on who will represent you.



Shane Grant  
Young Mayor of  
Lewisham 2025–26

For more information about the work of the young mayor and the election process visit  
**[lewisham.gov.uk/young-mayor](http://lewisham.gov.uk/young-mayor)**

## Kelsey Adedji

If elected as Young Mayor I will focus on three key areas within our community.

1. I am committed to reducing the number of young people removed from mainstream schools. Staying in education greatly improves GCSE results, creates widespread options for A-levels, apprenticeships, and future careers. Since 2017, 62% of people in prison had been excluded from school. School leavers with fewer qualifications also have limited options. By addressing exclusion early, we can break this cycle and ensure all young individuals receive the education and support they deserve.
2. Secondly, I will build on the work of the current Young Mayor by collaborating with well-known companies and businesses, that can provide mentorship, work experience (can be paid), and career guidance. Developing essential skills and networks will give young individuals confidence and a clearer understanding of career paths.
3. Finally, I aim to promote religious understanding across Lewisham by offering free religious texts in schools and working with local faith organisations. Young people can learn about different beliefs respectfully and safely, encouraging unity rather than division.

Thank you for listening to my campaign.

Cast your vote, and let's build Lewisham together.



## Hephzibah Akinbosoye

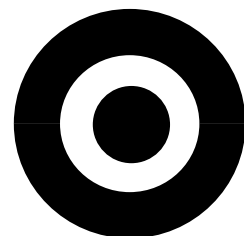
I want to empower and protect young people. I want to work with police to make our journeys safer and I would like to work with safeguarding teams to reduce bullying. I want to work with headteachers to improve mental health services in schools to help those who have been bullied and to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions coming from our schools. Finally, I want our voices, opinions, and emotions to be heard and protected.



## Jasmine Bennett

Why me? Why should I be the new Young Mayor of Lewisham out of all the other candidates? Simply, I care. I care about my school, my area and my people. And not to say others don't, but the difference is that I truly and deeply understand what the people want and need. I am Jasmine Bennett, and I have a deep yearning to campaign for my community, and a strong passion to keep us clean, happy and healthy. All the young people of Lewisham deserve opportunities to grow and the highest level of respect and understanding – I am the person who will amplify this in the borough. I am very focused on the mental wellbeing of our youth, especially neurodivergent people like myself, who are often over-looked in society. I know school is such a unique experience for everyone – some easier than others – and I want to alleviate some of the mental stresses of school on everyone so people actually enjoy attending and feel less forced to learn.

In short, if you vote me for me, you won't regret it, as together we can bring the youth of Lewisham to a better future of peace and security. All I need is you, and I believe in you all, so you know what to do!



## Mali Bernard

My name is Mali Bernard, and I am standing to be Young Mayor of Lewisham because every young person deserves to be heard and valued. Too often decisions are made about us, not with us. I want to change that. If elected I will work to create more spaces where young people can speak openly about their experiences – whether that's in school, youth clubs or community meetings.

I will regularly push student forums led by young people, so your ideas shape the future benefits.

I also really want to expand on career opportunities, from music, arts and drama workshops to coding clubs and sports programmes. I will ensure everyone has a place to express themselves and discover new passions. Mental health is also a large part of my campaign. I'm representing all of us – your ideas, your future, my voice – and together we can build a better Lewisham.

As a candidate running for Young Mayor of Lewisham my goal is to make Lewisham a better place as it can be dangerous, which is bad for the young kids out there. To stop this, I will take action with the police to make sure there are daily patrols to reduce knife crime and also bullying as that can pop up a lot after school. I also want to help the homeless, as all of these are major problems in Lewisham and will be hard to solve but as Young Mayor I will use all my resources to try and fix this.



## Azaan Boukhari

I'm Azaan Boukhari. I'm running for Young Mayor to make your dreams a reality. When others think of Lewisham, they think of a dirty and ghetto borough! I would firstly change the perception of Lewisham through project 'V.I.B.E.S.' – I'll organise Lewisham's annual sports day along with public art projects that celebrates us and the diversity of the community. I know first-hand the neglected state of our local parks. With this, I'll actively improve the quality of sport and socialising facilities, alongside the commitment to finally make Lewisham clean!

We need more youth clubs and business programmes. So, I would add more! These new spaces will offer free essentials like sanitary products and high-value skills such as tax management, job applications and many others, providing guidance for future endeavours and opportunities. Lastly, I aim to create more opportunities for young people by creating paid pathways for them – especially those going through financial hardships.

I will ensure young people are recognised, as others may dismiss our energy and passion and class it unnecessary or useless.

Don't just wish for change – instead remember Azaan's the choice, let's amplify our voice!



## Alexander Boyle

Recently, the world hasn't been so good. We've seen the climate crisis destroy lives, multiple genocides occur, Islamophobia, transphobia, and fascism rise on our streets. We've seen inequality rise massively. We've seen cuts to youth services, and education, while young people suffer in a cost-of-living crisis.

Now you may say that's not relevant to the young mayor – I say that it affects you, whoever you are. What we need is a voice to stand up for our young people, and our futures. The young mayor should be a platform for that.

Those who take action in our borough's communities for the better should be recognised. That's why I propose a reward fund for those people. I know how to handle money – in Southwark's Youth Parliament I played a key role in the awarding of £500,000 in biodiversity funding, and several hundred thousand pounds in funding for young people.

A better world is possible. Young people see this clearly. I can't change much, but I can fight for our voices to be heard. There are council elections this year, and with me as your young mayor I will make sure there is no conversation about us without us.

**Contact:** [Alex4Lewisham@outlook.com](mailto:Alex4Lewisham@outlook.com)

**Website:** [Alex4Lewisham.com](http://Alex4Lewisham.com)

**Socials:** @Alex4Lewisham





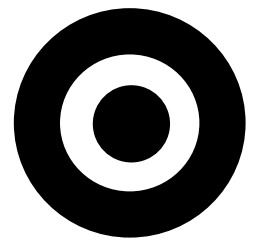
# Stela Butkus

## Confidence, community, and capability

I am standing for election to ensure every young person has a collective voice and the power to choose their future. In the past, I have seen ideas and concerns ignored, and I want to change that. I will improve sports by providing more competitions in netball, football, and athletics, using underused facilities, offering training opportunities, and creating ways for everyone to get involved. I will also raise awareness of career pathways and resources, helping students like me who feel uncertain about their future explore different opportunities.

I will establish a student parliament made up of elected representatives from all schools and colleges, giving everyone a direct say in decisions that affect us. Regular updates will be provided through social media and school representatives, so you always know what is happening and have a chance to be heard.

I believe I am the best person for this role due to my passion for leadership, innovation, and community. I am committed to taking action, creating opportunities, and ensuring the youth of Lewisham are confident, collaborative, and capable.



# Matias Buttner Ramirez

I'm Matias, and this is what I'm promising the young people of Lewisham.

1. Lewisham is, and has been for a long time, a melting pot of creativity, diversity, and energy: but let's be honest, things aren't as good as they used to be. Youth centres and adventure playgrounds have shut down, and there are fewer spaces to hang out. That's why my first promise as Young Mayor would be pushing for more investment in access for youth spaces.
2. Next, are you tired of not being listened to? I promise action on issues that matter most to you, chosen by surveys, with results published and updated publicly – because you have the right to know and decide what your Young Mayor is doing for you.
3. Finally, I propose more agency for the youth – giving you control. With hate and division rising, we need a unified voice to fight back. Imagine a team of young journalists, gaining experience for their CVs while writing stories we must hear, or a team dedicated to supporting the environment, cleaning our streets, or fixing our parks.

Now it's up to you. Together, we can bring access, action, and agency to the young people of Lewisham. Let's prove that Lewisham's youth aren't just the future – we're the change happening right now.



## Laila Chui

Lewisham's talent is undeniable, and my mission statement is to transform creativity into tangible opportunities for all young people.

My plan begins with transforming unused council buildings into working creative hubs, featuring DJ booths, a fashion upcycling studio, a recording room and open art spaces. These hubs will feed into the Lewisham Youth Creative Network, connecting schools, venues and institutions such as Goldsmiths and Lewisham Music. It will open access to workshops, internships, art-therapy sessions and a night-style gig circuit where young performers can play to their own crowd. Evening sessions will give young people a place to create, connect and invest their energy instead of being pushed toward the wrong choices.

Safety matters too. You should feel secure travelling around Lewisham. I plan to ensure that personal safety alarms are available for students who need them and will push for more street lighting.

Students seeking SEN support also need more effective resources. My approach will focus on practical solutions: producing easy-to-understand guides, facilitating awareness sessions with CAMHS and SEN professionals, and introducing Enhanced Support Units in some mainstream schools to bridge the gap between standard and special provision.

Vote for Laila!



## Frederico Czernik

I want to set things straight. Why should we feel as though it's ok to watch bullying, isolation, and allow unsafe environments to affect our ability to thrive? A 2019 survey revealed 1/4 young people felt depressed. I've experienced this firsthand, and now I watch those I care for go through similar problems. This shouldn't be allowed and that's why, as Young Mayor, I will protect the mental health and future of you. To accomplish this, I will reinforce counselling. New small, supportive, safe circles will provide a place to talk, get help, and build confidence, so no one feels neglected anywhere. However, I understand some people are reluctant to speak out – because of this I still want to maintain the creative talent that people have and providing places to connect. By introducing pop-up buses or trucks equipped with laptops, creative kits, and mini workshops that visit Lewisham on non-school days people can build friendships and opportunities, so they feel a part of something.

Finally, I want to set up micro-grants for young people to bring their ideas to reality, whether in art, business, or community improvement. Winners of this competition will receive £500-£1000 to make something happen and build experience in making change. With your help, we can restore the creativity and well-being of young people. Cast your vote for me, Frederico Czernik, to be your future!





# Ryley Dragwidge

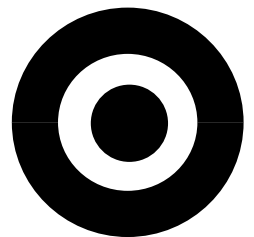
Hello young people of Lewisham. My campaign is centred on protecting the most vulnerable among us. First let's talk about inclusion. Young people with disabilities are often overlooked and face unnecessary barriers. My plan is to amplify their voices, ensuring all schools and services are fully accessible and to provide the support they need to thrive, not just survive. We must guarantee equal opportunity for every student.

Secondly, knife crime in Lewisham needs to be stopped due to so many lives being lost and families suffering. I'll impose that we get more knife boxes around Lewisham and to make a space for young people to hand over their weapons without judgement.

And finally, the epidemic of drugs and substance abuse. This isn't just about crime; it's about protecting the vulnerable young lives. I will make sure there is better education, mental health support and different outlets.

If you elect me as Young Mayor, I promise to fight for a safer and more inclusive Lewisham.

Vote for action. Vote for change. Vote for me.



# Ozioma Eke

## Spread love not hate

My name is Ozioma Eke, and I'm running to be the Young Mayor of Lewisham because I want every young person to feel safe, supported, and proud of where they live. One of my main goals is to create more jobs and sports opportunities for young people across our community.

## Jobs and sports opportunities for all young people

Sport brings people together and helps young people stay healthy, confident, and focused. Many love football, but every young person in Lewisham should have access to the sport or activity that inspires them.

## What I will do:

- Create a Lewisham school football league for secondary schools and sixth forms.
- Run it like a real league, with promotion and relegation.
- Partner with professionals in media, marketing, business, and sports to offer real skills and work experience.
- Support other sports – basketball, athletics, netball, and more.
- Increase sports clubs, sessions, and tournaments for all young people, not just football players.

## Why this matters:

Sport builds confidence, discipline, and teamwork. Expanding sports and job opportunities will help young people stay active, discover new talents, and explore real career pathways.

Spread love, not hate – vote Ozioma Eke.



## Arlo Evans

I have lived in and gone to school in Lewisham my whole life, so I know what it's like here. Lewisham has helped me a lot in the past, such as the hospital helping me through a life changing medical diagnosis 3 years ago so I feel I owe Lewisham something.

The top 3 things that I would do are: creating safe communal places to socialise and do activities such as: skating, playing football, playing basketball and much more. This will promote physical activity, social engagement and better mental health.

I want to be an ambassador, changing negative views about Lewisham and improving safety for young people in the borough by reducing knife crime and violence.

Lastly, continuing the previous young mayors work, raising ambitions and engaging the imaginations of young Lewisham entrepreneurs. This is especially relevant to me as I benefitted from an Urban Synergy event.

I also want to be a role-model for young people living with medical conditions as I have been through this myself. I will listen to the views of others and represent those views fairly and responsibly. It's not about me. It's about Lewisham.



## Stephanie Fernandes

My name is Stephanie Fernandes, and I have been living in Lewisham all my life. As I have been a long-staying member of the community, not only have I seen the positive, like the amazing amount of diversity, I see the negatives too.

In March 2023, the government made a survey that showed the increase in violence. There was a 9% increase from last year, which is a lot. Most youth report feeling unsafe. Personally, I am standing to make young people feel safe, included, and heard. If I become Young Mayor, I will open more experiences and education opportunities for the youth. I will run meetings with young people every month to get ideas and feedback from our people and try to make the streets and schools a safer place. I will be working closely with schools, the council and more. As a woman, I think everyone deserves to feel safe, especially people who are more in danger than others. I believe that every member of our community deserves the right to feel safe, to have fun, feel heard, and have access to food and education. I will work closely with cancer charities, so they can work towards helping our children.



## Tyrese Gayle

The first thing I would like to do if elected as Young Mayor would be to make gyms and sports related events more accessible to the local young community. This is because I believe that success in life doesn't only come from GCSE results but also sports and hobbies that you enjoy.

Additionally, I would also want to encourage a push on additional help relating to GCSE's. This is because 39.8% of students failed their English Language and another 42.4% proceeded to fail Combined Science last year.

Last but not least, I would like to create a safe environment where young people are able to be supported with their mental health. This is because I believe that many young people within our community are experiencing struggles that have a long-lasting effect on their mental and physical health.

These are just a few things I would do as Young Mayor of Lewisham, I promise to make Lewisham a place where the opinions of the youth can be heard and voiced.

Vote me as your next Young Mayor for a better and safer Lewisham.



## Leila Hague

My name is Leila Hague and I want to be the Young Mayor of Lewisham. I will be honest and admit that while I can be shy, I am passionate about changing Lewisham for good. I believe in giving power to the voices of young people all over Lewisham and empowering them to put us on the map. I want to implement a way for people to share their stories and to inspire others to do the same. I will do this by starting a way for accomplished individuals of Lewisham to connect with students and talk about what they do and how they have made it in life. They could be athletes, musicians, artists or politicians but they all have a story to tell.

The next thing I will do is put better care into our streets and parks by:

1. Making sure that basketball courts and football fields will have better and more regular maintenance.
2. Putting better bins on our streets and emptying them more regularly because litter is ugly and depressing. We can turn this around and lead by example for other boroughs.
3. Finding small ways to have a big impact.



## Indiana Jones

My name is Indiana G. Jones. I am here to explain why I am the best candidate for Young Mayor. I have three main areas of focus during my campaign. These areas are as follows: tackling voter apathy in young people, pushing for sustainable projects in the community, and raising awareness about the importance of mental health. I will dedicate a paragraph on each issue.

Voter apathy among young people is an affliction that we have dealt with for years and must be addressed. I plan to give speeches to schools and start a youth group that will be open and politically geared to increase engagement with politics.

I will push for more sustainable projects; when I was in year 5, I started a climate change awareness campaign. It had the objective of raising my school's awareness about the impacts of climate change. Needless to say, I am very passionate about the climate and would see £10,000 allocated exclusively for projects in the hope that we can help Lewisham's ever-worsening air quality problem.

Raising awareness about mental health problems is also very personal to me. Five years ago, I experienced a rough patch in my youth. I found myself very alone and failing my subjects. Luckily, I found good friends who supported me, but many students aren't so lucky. I would personally ensure that every school has the facilities for people that are struggling. I would allocate £5,000 exclusively for this venture.

Finally, I will place £10,000 in reserve for future projects. Vote Indiana Jones.



## Olive Jones

Hello. I'm Olive Jones, and I'm running for Young Mayor of Lewisham. I'm running because I want to improve Lewisham as a community. I want to improve each and every one of your lives.

I'm Brockley born and bred (apart from a brief stint in The Big Apple) so I know what it means to be part of this community. Let me walk you through a day in my life. Like most of you, I walk to school each day, and each day I'm disappointed by the sheer amount of litter in parks and throughout Lewisham as a whole. I've also noticed that my school (a girls' school) does not have any form of pads or period products, which is a major problem that I imagine some of you also face. Finally, after lessons finish for the day, I want to spend more time with my friends, but often parents don't think of Lewisham as the best place to socialise. I hope to remedy these problems by:

- Organising litter picks throughout the borough
- Helping to distribute pads and period products across schools and public bathrooms
- Reviving youth centres in Lewisham

In conclusion, vote for Olive Jones, for *Olive* us!

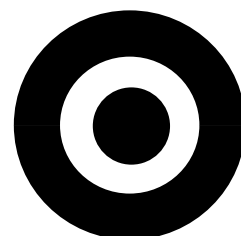


## Elexis Kavanagh

I live in New Cross, a place where there can be many problems for the youth of today. It needs to improve, and it needs somewhere young people can go to and talk about their problems and worries. So, I would set up a programme where young people can go or contact someone using the internet. A help centre/youth centre for young people who need to talk to someone for advice. I'm also looking into adding more recycling bins in parks and in shops and stores. I have noticed we have too much litter messing up our streets, so we need to recycle more – especially in schools. I would like to create more 4G football pitches so more girls and boys can enjoy playing football or any other sports safely all year round. It's important for young people to be fit and have good wellbeing in these difficult times.

Finally, I would also like to set up a place/club where young girls can go to learn and practice self-defence to improve their confidence so that they can be the best they can be.

Vote for me as your next Young Mayor.



## Freddie Kirkham Carter

If you were to ask me my three main policies – I'd tell you that they are:

- Opportunity • Recognition • Representation

### **Opportunity:**

Lewisham has some amazing opportunities for young people, apprenticeships, youth clubs, and extra-learning opportunities. I will strive to support these and fight to keep the right to these opportunities for every young person in the borough.

### **Recognition**

Despite the presence of these opportunities, little of them are advertised to us. Most times, you'll only be recommended an extra-curricular club if you're seen as capable. I believe in granting equal opportunities to all young members of our borough. I won't force them down anyone's throat, I will simply fight to make sure you know about them.

### **Representation**

Every young person deserves a voice, especially in what influences them. I am here to represent all young people in our borough, and I will push my very hardest to make sure everyone is considered and given the input they're entitled to.

In short, I believe we are all just as important in achieving what we deserve, and I will make sure you are represented and allowed the greatest opportunities.





## Izzy McDonald

Hey, I'm Izzy – and I'm standing to become the Young Mayor of Lewisham because it's time for someone who truly understands what it's like to be young here.

Too often, young people speak up and no one really listens. Our voices get heard, but they don't go anywhere. That's why I'm running – not just to speak for you, but to make sure you're genuinely heard and involved in real change.

Let's be honest: decisions about us are often made without us. I want to change that by putting real young people at the centre of Lewisham's future.

I'm not claiming to have all the answers, but I do know how important support and opportunity are. I want to help support young creatives and entrepreneurs where ideas can grow – through real workshops, hands-on skills, and opportunities for young entrepreneurs and creatives to turn dreams into reality.

I also want a safer, cleaner, stronger Lewisham. That means better youth clubs, study spaces, creative rooms, and schools that feel cared for – not forgotten.

Most importantly, I want a real voice for young people through a Youth Panel where ideas actually reach decision-makers.

I won't disappear after the election. If I say I'll listen, I mean it.

Vote Izzy. Your Voice, Your Future, Our Lewisham.



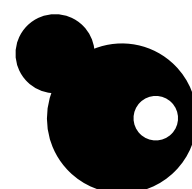
## Mohammed Miah

Hi, my name is Mohammed Miah and I go to Brent Knoll School. I believe we are all equal, but sometimes our different needs mean we might need different support. If I'm elected as your Young Mayor there are four areas that I would focus on:

1. Making youth clubs in our community where mainstream and SEND young people can hang out together and form friendships.
2. Asking all schools in Lewisham to have a multi-faith room for anyone who wants to pray or just be peaceful.
3. Working with the police to help make young people feel safe in Lewisham when they are travelling independently.
4. Everyone has a right to a safe place to live. I would like to provide homeless people in Lewisham with shelter and a hot meal.

If I am elected I would work hard for you guys.

Please vote for me.





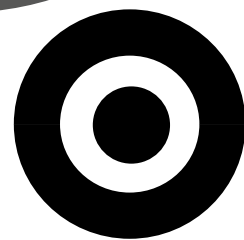
## Rahma Mohamoud

I'm running for Young Mayor because I know what it's like to feel like our voices aren't heard, and I want to change that. One of the first things I'd like to work on is improving youth clubs and organising more sports-related events. We all need fun, safe places to go after school to chill, play, and just be around people our age doing something positive and productive.

I also want to give secondary school students more real chances to figure out what they want to do in life. I'd set up events where we can meet people working in creative fields, business, tech – all sorts – and create hands-on projects that help us build skills we'll actually use beyond school.

And most importantly, I want to talk more openly about mental health. I'll push for more better support in schools, run awareness campaigns, and help create safe spaces where no one feels left out – no matter who they are.

I'm not here to act like I have all the answers. I'm here to listen, speak up for us, and actually get things done.



## Isaac Motalib-Haque

As Young Mayor, I will focus on:

1. Male mental health and create a campaign to encourage boys and young men to speak out when they feel overwhelmed and need some support. This campaign will normalise boys and young men asking for help when life becomes challenging.
2. Start the "Change What I Can" initiative. So every young person in the borough can apply for a small grant to kick-start the positive change in their lives and change what they can. Examples; a musical instrument, sports kit, shoes, a short course, a laptop. Regardless of background and social class – we should all have this opportunity to change what we can about ourselves. Because change starts with us and we can all strive for positivity.
3. To help create a publication for young people by young people. One that not only celebrates the achievements and accomplishments of youth in Lewisham but also features inspiring interviews from role models from Lewisham who have succeeded in fashion, music, sport, politics, business etc. This publication will also be a platform for under-represented and unheard voices. It will also be a campaigning tool so we can lobby the government about issues that affect young people in our borough. The future affects our generation the most as we will be living through the decisions made by the older generation. It is our future – so we should have a say on what that looks like.



# Laila Motalib-Haque

As Young Mayor, I will focus on:

1. Because We Can Initiative. Talks and workshops for underrepresented groups, such as young females, refugees, young carers and young people with SEN needs. To inspire and enable them to try out jobs in industries that may not be easily accessible to them.

Speakers will be role models from these underrepresented communities to prove the idea that the Because We Can Initiative WORKS.

This bold initiative will allow young people to be inspired to pursue their dream career paths and shadow a professional in this field through mentoring and workshops.

2. To lobby government to introduce safe hubs and safe initiatives for young females, so they can pursue their education and extra-curricular passions without fear. Examples include: safety alarms and safety points in every area (such as libraries/leisure centres and shops).

Also self-defence sessions and workshops in every school and youth group in Lewisham.

3. 25 funding grants for 25 local youth groups. These are small grants of £1,000 each so each group can put on an event or buy equipment for sports and music projects.



# Jake O'Connell

Why are you standing? I am standing as I want/aspire to become a well-known figure. And also you only live once so I thought why not become the Young Mayor of Lewisham.

- What will you do for the young people of Lewisham?  
I want to be impactful to the people of my beloved Lewisham. I want to make a great Lewisham community and hold events and festivals to show a nice cool vibe in Lewisham.
- How will you give feed back to the young people of Lewisham?  
I would ask people for opinions of stuff they want to see or have done to the community and see what we could do.
- Why are you the best person for the job?  
I think I am the best for the job as I am gonna involve the community in events and festivals and ask enough young people to get their thoughts on what I am doing or what they want changed or added to the community.



## Olive Onasanya

My name is Olive Onasanya, and I am running for Young Mayor of Lewisham because I want our borough to be a safe and welcoming space for young people. If I'm elected, I will create a new Third Space in the heart of Lewisham, work with local businesses to develop job and work experience programmes and create a link between the youth of Lewisham.

I believe I am the right person for this role because I am a confident speaker, an aspiring Member of Parliament, and someone who genuinely cares about young people and our ideas. I will make it my mission to open doors for young people, listen to their ideas and needs, and I will work hard to make Lewisham a place where young people are supported and heard.

I want Lewisham to become a community where young people are encouraged to become the best version of themselves. I will work to build a community where young people feel valued, inspired, and proud of what they can achieve with the right support.



## Ehinomhen Peter

My name is Ehinomhen Peter, a young Black girl who has lived in Lewisham my whole life. I've always been encouraged to strive for more, and I want to use that drive to create real change.

If elected Young Mayor of Lewisham, my priority would be increasing safety for young people. In the past year and a half, there has been a murder and a stabbing behind my home, and growing up surrounded by news of violence is frightening. I want to improve street lighting in poorly lit areas, install metal detectors in youth spaces to prevent weapons from entering, and expand safe-haven schemes similar to "Ask Angela" but designed specifically for young people. Places like Blue Cage, which is used for sports and skating, would benefit from more CCTV and regular patrols to reduce incidents.

Secondly, I want to promote healthy eating and physical activity. Many young people struggle to stay active after COVID, so I would encourage sports, cooking sessions, and community tournaments to help us socialise, learn, and make healthier choices.

Finally, I would create Academic Hubs in youth clubs to support revision, homework, CV writing, and provide help for young people with SEND.

I want to be a catalyst for change – vote for me as Young Mayor of Lewisham.



## Skyla-Ray Powell

My name is Skyla-Ray Powell and I am a student of Addey and Stanhope School. I would like to be Young Mayor to change Lewisham for the better, especially for the youth. I don't want to speak about things that I can't personally change and are unrealistic, yet I will most definitely bring attention to them when I become Young Mayor.

One thing I do want to personally change is some more youth clubs, as there aren't that many in safe communal areas in the Lewisham borough. Another thing is what we learn. Our schools don't teach us about things like how to buy a house or even what a mortgage is. Young people like us need to know these things to thrive when they become older.

I'd feed back to the young people of Lewisham via online videos, pictures, posts, meetings – going to schools, meeting the young people of Lewisham to find out what they need and want to change. I personally think I'm the best person for this job because I'm reliable, I want change, I'm mature, and I want what's best for our youth.



## Jarvis Quinn

I'm Jarvis Quinn. I'm running for Young Mayor of Lewisham because I want to have my voice heard and I'm passionate about making improvements for my community.

My first priority is to run workshops for young people to support independence. In primary schools and secondary schools, young people should have access to practical skills workshops. These could include first aid, cooking, time management, public speaking and budgeting. The goal is to help children grow in confidence and independence from an early age, preparing them for real-world challenges.

My second priority is to create safer streets in Lewisham. Young people deserve to feel safe. This means safe walking routes and tackling issues like gangs, knife crime and bullying. We will offer positive activities to promote becoming strong role models.

My third priority is to offer suggestion boxes in all libraries, schools and school websites. Every young person's voice matters. This way, students can share feedback easily. This ensures that all voices are heard and that young people can shape decisions about their community.

Community is important and I believe that together we can change Lewisham for the better.



## Thomas Ratnam

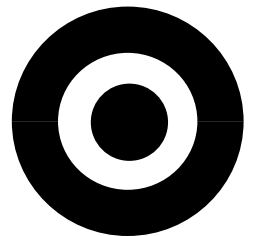
All I see around me is young people struggling. I'm running because I don't want my community, my family, that I find in the Lewisham youth, to have to struggle any longer. They need safe spaces, mental health support, and a Young Mayor that listens.

The first thing I want to work on is hobby spaces, rooms where people and kids, can draw, code, bake, sew, or even just sit with their thoughts. Somewhere that you feel accepted the second you walk in.

The second is mental health support through active spaces. No fancy arenas, just clean open areas for football, basketball and sports after school. Being active helps our minds, and so many young people have nowhere to go.

Finally, I want to give young people the voice we are missing. Simple meetings, monthly check-ins. I want the youth, my people, to say what they need, not just adults guessing for us.

Access, Action, and Agency.



## Hugo Ray

My vision for Lewisham focuses on three key areas: career opportunities, community engagement, and creative expression.

First, I want to help young people plan their futures by organising careers fairs and skills workshops across the borough. These events will connect students with employers and training providers, giving them the confidence and knowledge to succeed.

Second, I aim to strengthen community ties through sports and charity initiatives. As a rugby player and keen runner, I know how physical activity builds teamwork and resilience. I would introduce borough-wide sports competitions and charity runs to promote health, raise funds, and bring young people together.

Finally, I want to celebrate creativity by supporting music and arts projects. As a bass player, I believe music is a powerful way to unite people. A "Battle of the Bands" competition would give young musicians a platform to showcase their talent and inspire others.

My leadership experience as a Corporal in the Air Cadets, combined with volunteering in my school library and an excellent academic record, shows I am committed, organised, and ready to represent Lewisham's youth. Together, we can make Lewisham a place where every young person feels empowered.





## Daniela Reyes

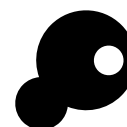
My name is Daniela, and I am running for Young Mayor in 2026 and hope to make this the best year Lewisham has ever had.

First thing I want to do is raise awareness about knife crime because it is a massive problem within our community, I feel there should be more awareness about the situation and those affected by it in order to keep people, especially us young people, safe during these times.

I would also want to make a youth club where people can show their talent through dancing in many styles and have a space where they can express themselves and not be judged.

Last thing I want is to make mental health a priority and make people feel heard and not judged because everyone deserves to be loved.

Don't forget my name, Daniela.



## Luka Rogal

Solon, one of the first leaders of ancient Athens, understood that a city only works when everyone's voice is heard, not just the powerful. He stood for fairness and gave ordinary people the power to shape their future. Lewisham, our home, should be the same. But right now, it's run by adults, for adults, people who were young years ago, and don't understand what it's like growing up here today. What we need is a young voice, someone ready to stand up and make a real change.

Like Solon, I want to give everyone a voice, especially young people so we can actually get what we need. This means improving youth centres and building more spaces where we feel safe and supported. Safety in Lewisham has to be a priority. In the past month since I started writing this, there have been eight stabbings, and still no proper response. I want to change that by installing more CCTV cameras near Broadway Theatre and Lewisham Shopping Centre.

And finally, I want to create real opportunities, workshops, internships and part-time jobs, giving young people the skills and confidence to shape their own futures.

Vote Luka, for a safer, stronger, fairer Lewisham.





## Arjian Saiti

My priority will be to ensure that children and young people with SEN needs receive the support they deserve. Every young person should have the opportunity to achieve strong GCSE results and fully understand the work they are given in school. To make this possible, I will push for better in-class support, more specialised staff, and improved training for teachers.

I also want support for parents that don't understand their child's needs and paperwork so that they can support their child with their education. I want to provide parents with clearer guidance and practical support so they can be confident advocates for their children.

If I am picked to be the Young Mayor for Lewisham, I would employ more youth workers in order for the sessions to be longer and to have more sessions throughout the week for young people. Currently, my local youth club only is open for my age one day a week. I would hire more staff that understand kids with SEN and more staff so that we can open up 3-4 times a week. I believe that with the extended hours, young people will be less prone to commit crimes. I believe that young people commit crimes in the area due to lack of resources and money. Also extended youth club hours would offer young people a safe place to go, reducing boredom and isolation.

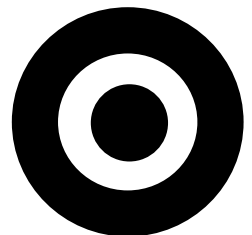
I am committed to building a strong, dedicated team capable of delivering this vision and using the available funding to create real change. Together, we can make Lewisham a safer, more supportive, and more empowering place for young people.



## Amaya Simpson

I'm standing to be young mayor of Lewisham so I can improve community, neurodivergent support, and communication. A strong community provides inclusive environments where teens can thrive and socialise. This includes spaces for specific interests. Interest-based spaces matter. At Lewisham Youth Theatre, I found people who share my passions, so we need more spaces like this for various hobbies, especially for those who struggle to socialise. These services should be free and accessible, preferably run by volunteers. I would also improve support for neurodivergent students. An autistic boy I know was moved in the first half-term of Year 7 because staff didn't know how to support him. The unequal treatment of meltdowns and shutdowns is a serious problem for autistic youth. To fix this, I'd fund more outreach services in Lewisham to train teachers and parents to better understand and support autistic kids. I'd also fix the lack of communication between the government and young people by acting as a representative for teens. These are just my ideas, but as young mayor I'd build on them with input from others.

I'll visit schools, run polls, and stay active in the community. I'm right for the role because I already volunteer and actively seek ways to engage with my community.



## Iris Siveter

I've lived in Lewisham all my life and have been a Young Mayor's Young Advisor since Y7, I want to do more to improve young lives here.

### Staying safe

We need talks in schools about self-defence and reducing muggings/phone theft, sharing tactics like how to hold your phone to stop it getting snatched. Knife crime is a major problem in the UK today, but there are things we can do to save lives. I would like a 'Stop the Bleed' medical kit into every secondary school in Lewisham and share bleeding prevention techniques.

### Youth clubs

I'd seek funding from national charities for youth clubs, covering fitness/sport, music/performing arts, art/crafts, career success/entrepreneurship.

### Wellbeing

We need talks and drop-ins in schools, on anxiety, depression, ADHD, Autism and more. There are simple strategies and techniques that can make a real difference, and every young person should know about them.

### Tolerance and respect

There's too much division in society today. I want us to celebrate the diversity at the heart of this community, further training schools to encourage Lewisham's young people to be free to express their culture, faith, sexuality, gender and neurodiversities, respecting each other's differences.

THANK YOU



## Zhandre Ssali

Hello, I'm Zhandre Ssali, and I'm standing for young mayor because I want every young person in Lewisham to feel heard and supported.

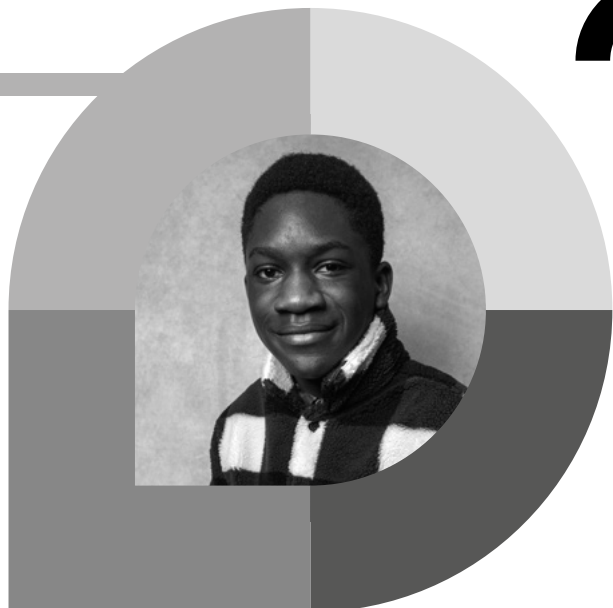
Fix football cages and play areas – I will clean and repair cages and playgrounds. Low-maintained cages discourage physical activity. I want to fix that.

Free feminine hygiene products – Every secondary school will have free products all year. No student should miss school for not having what they need.

Your voice for 5 – I will introduce a program where 5 pupils from different schools have 5 minutes to tackle issues by speaking in a video to us. For example, if the pupils tell us a park is unsafe, we will act on it.

GCSE study hub – a free afterschool space. Many students struggle to revise at home. This hub would give them a space to study.

I will give updates via youth summits, where students can come to the council building to express thoughts. I will also give updates from my social media. Together we can make Lewisham better.



## Calista Tijani

Hi, I'm Calista and I am running for Young Mayor of Lewisham because I want to give young people a voice and provide an opportunity for everyone in our community to flourish.

If you elect me as your Young Mayor, my three key focus points would be as follows:

1. My main concern in Lewisham is sustainability and the environment. I aim to create volunteering schemes for us to protect our environment through activities such as fundraising, gardening and helping with environmental charities to promote sustainability in schools and businesses.
2. I would create a futures program to increase awareness about the opportunities available to young people such as community events, work experience and skills programmes via newsletter to equip us with the best skills to navigate the future. As well as hold events for young people.
3. I strongly believe that a welcoming and safe school environment supports young people in all branches: in their studies and personal life. In order to improve this, I will establish a youth mental health hub that focuses on providing mental health resources, peer-led support groups and workshops at schools to address mental health challenges and provide a safe space for anyone struggling.

To make sure everyone's voices are heard equally, If I were elected, my social media would be an active space for discussion, community as well as through schools for young people who do not have social media.



## Torie Townsend

My name is Torie Townsend, and I am running for Young Mayor 2026. I am trying to be Young Mayor because I feel like I can make a change in Lewisham community. The first idea I have is improvement of homeless shelters. I feel like I see too many people on the streets and not enough shelters or people helping them. The idea I have in mind is not just a homeless shelter. I'd not want to just give people a place to stay. I'd want to offer those in need a place to find a job or possibly a permanent place to live.

My second proposal is to decrease the rising amount of people that don't go outside. I've seen the way that not going outside causes people to be antisocial to the point where it permanently damages their livelihood. As someone who has personally experienced this, I can still feel how uncomfortable I am in social spaces. This problem stretches further than the people of Lewisham. This could apply to anyone, anywhere.

Finally, I would like to build on my second idea, referring to the anti-social epidemic. I would like to open support groups full of people who are open with no worry of judgement or ridicule.

Thank you for your time, and I would love if you supported me, Torie Townsend, in my journey of becoming Young Mayor.



## Sameer Umari

As a candidate running for Young Mayor of Lewisham, my goal is to make Lewisham a better place. It is very dangerous, which is bad for the young kids out there. To stop this, I will take action with the police to make sure there are daily patrols to reduce knife crime and also bullying, as that can pop up a lot after school.

I would also want to help the homeless, as all of these are major problems in Lewisham. They will be hard to solve, but as Young Mayor I will use all my resources to put an end to this.

Schools should also make a system and watch the amount of homework they give, as it stresses students and makes them stay up late, giving no free time and no energy for school.



## Emiliano Vazquez Bernasconi

Hey, my name is Emi, also known as Emiliano.

So, I want to be mayor because I want the voices of young people with disabilities to be heard.

My ideas are...

1. Rehire the lollipop people because they help keep us safe.
2. Make more basketball courts so there are enough for everyone in Lewisham.
3. Remodel and build more affordable houses and apartments because there are people who can't afford to live in Lewisham.
4. Promote the different cultures of all the different people in Lewisham.
5. Reduce the waiting time for healthcare so people don't have to wait as long to get their treatment.

That's why you should vote for me to be Young Mayor of Lewisham.

Bye for now.









## Voting for the Young Mayor

- You can make two choices for Young Mayor.
- Vote for your first choice candidate by marking a cross (X) in the first choice column.
- Vote for your second choice candidate by marking a cross (X) in the second choice column.
- If you give the same candidate your first and second choice, only your first choice will be counted.
- You must use your first choice vote or your vote will not be counted.
- You do not have to vote for a second choice if you do not wish to.

Election for the **YOUNG MAYOR** for **LEWISHAM**  
 On Wednesday 4 February, 2026  
 Vote **ONCE (X)** for your **FIRST CHOICE**  
 Vote **ONCE (X)** for your **SECOND CHOICE**  
**REMEMBER:** You cannot vote for the same candidate twice.  
 You do not have to use your second choice vote, however you must use your first choice vote or your vote will not be counted.

Candidates are listed in alphabetical order

	First Choice	Second Choice
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		X
9		
10		
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Ballot Paper Number: 12345

## Voting by post

If you live in Lewisham but go to school outside Lewisham, you can have a postal vote; send your name, address, date of birth and school to [katy.brown@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:katy.brown@lewisham.gov.uk). You will be sent a ballot paper in the post. The deadline to apply is 5pm on Sunday 25 January 2026.

### For any questions please contact:

Electoral Services

Laurence House, Catford SE6 4RU

020 8314 6086 • [electoral.services@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:electoral.services@lewisham.gov.uk)

[lewisham.gov.uk](http://lewisham.gov.uk)



**VOTE  
BY MAIL**

## Are you 16 or over?

Remember if you are 16 years old you can register to vote online at [gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://gov.uk/register-to-vote)

When you turn 18 you will then be able to vote in local and national elections.

**Make  
your  
mark**

**Don't forget to cast  
your vote for the next**

**YOUNG  
MAYOR  
OF LEWISHAM**

**4 February 2026**

For more information about  
the work of the young mayor  
and the election process visit

**[lewisham.gov.uk/  
young-mayor](https://lewisham.gov.uk/young-mayor)**

**Contact**

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07957 198312

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[@lewishamyoungmayor1](https://www.tiktok.com/@lewishamyoungmayor1)