



A new charity is partnering with businesses in the borough to create opportunities for young local people. CEO Phil Barron tells us more

BY ANTONIA WINDSOR

Forging brighter futures

WITH YOUTH SERVICES across London seriously depleted and knife crime on the rise, the news often paints a depressing picture of what it is to be a young person in the capital in 2019. However, in that bleak landscape a new charity is making a huge difference to young people in Victoria and beyond.

The Young Westminster Foundation (YWF) represents a diverse membership of 75 non-profit organisations in the borough, supporting them with advice, networking opportunities, training and grants. Among the members are St Andrew's Youth Club and the Cardinal Hume Centre, which supports young people in overcoming poverty and homelessness.

"We have a bird's-eye view of what's happening for young people in the borough," says Phil Barron,

who has led the charity since 2017. "We connect with the police, the NHS, the council and local businesses and carry out important research into the needs of young people in the area."

YWF's first significant piece of work was a needs analysis called *A City within a City* – a call to action for partners and businesses. The foundation has several Victoria-based business partners, including John Lewis, Colas Rail, St James' Court – A Taj Hotel, Landsec, Capita and the Victoria BID.

"We discovered that real anxieties exist about housing, employability, the cost of university, pollution, gangs and crime," says Phil. "We need to support the next generation to be resilient. Our vision is for young people to grow up healthy, safe and happy, with the best opportunities for brighter futures."

The charity also works with 11 young ambassadors who are empowered to create opportunities for their peers. Tommy, who is also part of Westminster's Youth Council, says: "My journey as a young ambassador has helped me reach out to my community and better understand the experiences of other young people. I want to raise awareness of the current issues that young people face in the borough."

For businesses in the area, YWF offers a great partnership opportunity. It's a chance to help the next generation in Westminster to flourish and to access future local talent. It also offers employee engagement opportunities such as volunteering, skill-sharing and mentoring.

To find out more or get involved, email phil@ywffoundation.com