

To whom it may concern,

RE: Professor Jonathan Tonge/ Youth Citizenship Commission.

Far too often citizenship education is considered to be an afterthought in terms of both young people's formal education and in terms of their more general understanding of their place in society.

At the Citizenship Foundation we welcomed the Government's commitment to understanding what citizenship means to young people, and were thrilled to learn of Jonathan Tonge chairing the commission. This was reflected across the youth sector, with a number of organisations benefitting not only from the commission's dedication to citizenship, but also to youth participation.

I have worked with groups of young people, who have openly said they are disaffected by politics and by political processes. Yet this doesn't chime with their passion for affecting change on both a local, national and international level. Young people are some of the most passionate campaigners we have. I have worked with people as young as 13 who are leading incredibly effective knife crime campaigns, or are campaigning for better youth provision in the area. These young people are interested in politics, perhaps as adults or professionals we are just not communicating to them that formal politics is just another way to affect change.

Whilst for many, the focus of the commission really opened the debate on the voting age, for me it vitally addressed questions around participation and engagement. I was pleased to see the commission really focus on the positive perceptions of young people. As the report states, they are not apathetic, but have a strong passion and belief in political structures that affect them. It was incredibly positive to see one of the recommendations endorse the importance of political literacy, highlighting how young people currently do not feel empowered by politics.

Professor Tonge led a very thorough commission. His background in politics demonstrated his real understanding and belief in the importance of ensuring that young people engage with political processes and structures. I'd like to thank him for his role in bringing this vital topic forward, and for including me in the process.

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