

the Howard League for Penal Reform



Use your situation to change your destination

Evaluation of The Howard League for
Penal Reform's U R Boss

The title 'Use your situation to change your destination' was derived from a conversation between U R Boss young advisors.

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Reform's U R Boss

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the **Howard League** for **Penal Reform**

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1. Context and background

1.1 Young people and criminal justice: The context and rationale for U R Boss

The way in which the state deals with young people who are deemed to have broken the law has always been a contentious issue. In particular, the extent to which young people should be held responsible for their actions has been the subject of considerable debate; as has the question of how to meet any welfare needs associated with their reported offending. In academic terms, this has sometimes been viewed as a historic and endemic tension between 'welfare' and 'justice', and which is the most appropriate lens through which to view young people's problematic behaviour. In terms of policy debates and the public arena this translates into a question as to how far young people should be held responsible for their offences, and what form any punishment or other intervention should take.

Historically, approaches to dealing with young people who have offended have tended to overlook the importance of recognising their rights, and the continuing entitlements they hold as children (Smith, 2010), irrespective of their status in the criminal justice system. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2002), for example, had expressed continuing concerns about the improper 'administration' of criminal justice processes, and the shortcomings of legislation which appeared to 'violate the principles and provisions' of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Indeed, not only were the legal framework and administrative structures of youth justice prejudicial to children's rights, but also it seemed, the wider internationally-recognised rights of children (to decent standards in education and care, for example) were breached in various respects by way of inadequate and oppressive practices in the delivery of criminal 'justice' (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2008).

For the Howard League for Penal Reform, with its historic focus on the interests and human rights of those caught up in the justice system, the effects of any such intervention have remained a matter of continuing concern, particularly in relation to the consequential impacts on young people of the form of punishment administered. This in turn has led to the initiation of campaigns such as the Troubleshooter initiative in the early 1990s (Howard League, 1996), with the objective of ensuring an end to remands to custody for young people under the age of 16; and more recently, the initiation of an inquiry into the effects of the use of restraint, strip searching and segregation on young people in secure conditions (Carlile, 2006).

By the early 2000s, in the period preceding the implementation of U R Boss, there was widespread and increasing concern about trends in the treatment of young people in conflict with the law, which appeared to reflect an increasingly punitive approach. From the early 1990s onwards, a decline in the use of informal out of court measures for dealing with the crimes of the young was reflected in the published figures, which demonstrated a sustained increase in

the numbers of young people being drawn into the justice system, for example by 19 per cent for serious offences and 39 per cent for lesser offences between 2003 and 2006 (Solomon and Garside, 2008: 41). This was mirrored by an equally striking increase in the use of custodial disposals, across the age range (Smith, 2013), particularly when seen in the light of international comparisons. Between 2000 and 2008, and despite a change of government in 1997, this pattern remained fairly constant, with, if anything, a slight increase in the numbers of young people being incarcerated. At the time the Howard League was preparing its bid for the U R Boss project the average under 18 custody population was almost 3,000 (MoJ, 2010), and had been around this level since 2000.¹

In addition to persistent concerns about the use of punitive measures to deal with the reported crimes of young people, the question of their treatment once drawn into the system has also emerged as a key issue. Indeed, the Howard League's Carlile inquiry drew attention to deep-rooted problems relating to the treatment of young people in secure settings, especially concerning the use of restraint and other coercive practices, and the harms associated with these. As the inquiry report put it: 'Children in custody... should expect the same treatment, protection and standards before, during and after detention' (Carlile, 2006: 15); but this was observed to be very far from the case, not simply in terms of the 'improper use' of restraint (Ibid.: 48) and other measures of direct control, but also in relation to the conditions of their confinement more generally, including the lack of physical exercise and access to fresh air, and a lack of attention to the views of children and young people, or their involvement in decision-making (Ibid.: 33). The inquiry was able to meet and consult with a significant number of children who had experience of secure settings, and this represented a significant achievement in enabling the voices of this group of young people to be heard.

As the Carlile inquiry also observed, despite the harms experienced by young people in the justice system, there was an extensive body of national and international policy instruments which had been put in place to guarantee the rights of children, both universally and in the context of specific settings. The ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 can be seen as an important milestone in this respect, giving considerable impetus to the efforts of campaigning and service organisations which have sought to use it as a positive tool for enhancing children's status and well-being. In addition to the convention, there have been a number of specific international frameworks developed to promote the rights of young people within the justice system, including the 'Havana Rules' relating to the treatment of children 'deprived of their liberty' (UN, 1990), the Vienna guidelines on the administration of juvenile justice (UN, 1997), and, since that inquiry, the European Rules for juveniles subject to sanctions or measures (Council of Europe, 2008). These measures appear to have been increasingly influential, and there has been some evidence that government and other bodies have begun to take children's rights more seriously, both in general terms and in the specific context of youth justice. For instance in 2001 the then Children & Young People's Unit (DfES, 2001) issued

1. It should be recognised, however, that there has been a change of direction more recently, with a substantial decline in the numbers of young people being processed and being placed in secure settings from 2008 onwards, with, for example, a decline from 3,072 in secure placements in June 2008 to 1,744 in May 2012 (Smith, 2013). This trend that has been sustained so that by March 2014 there were 1,105 children in custody.

guidance for all government departments about listening to young people, the introduction of which stated:

*The Government wants children and young people to have more opportunities to get involved in the design, provision and evaluation of policies and services that affect them or which they use.
(DfES, 2001: 2)*

Despite this call, which specifically included the need to seek the views of ‘hard to reach’ groups such as young people in the youth justice system, little progress was made. It has been pointed out that this is not routinely recognised as a feature of the experiences of young people themselves (Hart and Thompson, 2009). More recently, however, the Youth Justice Board, for example, has committed itself explicitly to seeking and acting on the views of young people in the youth justice system, both in and outside custody (Youth Justice Board, 2011: 3). In addition, government has appeared to take the needs and well-being of children in the justice system more seriously with a renewed emphasis on rehabilitation and support for young people (MoJ, 2010). Ironically, though, other aspects of government policy appear to contravene these progressive aspirations, such as the proposed ‘secure college’², which has been roundly criticised for its potential to create just the kind of historic problem outlined here, and the reductions in the provision of legal aid which came into force in 2014 (Bateman 2014: 92). In both cases, it seems that pragmatic and funding-driven policy changes threaten to undermine what must be seen as fundamental rights, that should be respected, and concern for the well-being of children in criminal justice settings.

On the one hand, then, there has been some recognition on the part of government and state agencies both that children and young people have not been properly provided for, nor have they been appropriately consulted over matters affecting them in the justice system, and that this has been associated with poor treatment. On the other hand, despite this, there has remained considerable doubt as to whether steps taken to make improvements have ensured either that children and young people would be properly ‘listened to’, or that their generic rights as children would come to be more consistently respected and acted upon, especially in custodial settings. These continuing fears are further amplified by the direct experience of the Howard League through the operation of its legal service for young people in custody in England and Wales, first established in 2002. Since the legal service began, it has encountered many individual examples of children and young people suffering unnecessarily as a result of their treatment (see <http://howardleague.org/casestudies/>), and the combined effect of these experiences contributed to the belief in the wider organisation that more should be done to represent the collective interests of those whose rights appeared to be consistently ignored or denied.

1.2 The early development of U R Boss

It was against this backdrop that the Howard League began to develop the thinking behind U R Boss, informed by the experience of providing a legal service for young people in custody. Initially established in 2002, the Howard League legal service provided children and young people in custody with advice

2. Part of the coalition government’s current plans to transform youth custody, Secure Colleges would be large purpose-built institutions designed around an education facility (Criminal Justice and Courts Bill Part 2 Clause 17).

about how to improve their treatment and conditions and aimed to make sure young people were released from custody safely with the support to which they were entitled. The child-centred service which was free to the young people took a holistic approach to the work, providing advice and support on a wide range of issues, both legal and welfare. As well as helping the individual young people, this approach had proved to be effective in enabling the Howard League lawyers to successfully bring test cases to court and establish legal rulings about the treatment and support of these young people. It had become clear that there was a substantial need for increased capacity to support such young people, and also that there was a need to enable the experiences of young people to inform policy and practice in a more direct way.

The opportunity to address these concerns arose with a funding call from BIG (the Big Lottery Fund) in 2007, which was formulated to prioritise young people's participation in and leadership of projects geared towards improving their lives across the 'five outcomes' originally developed under the Every Child Matters initiative (Young People's Fund 2). The programme specification highlighted the importance of promoting young people's active role in determining the shape and delivery of funded projects, alongside the expectation that these would have a national impact on improving outcomes for children and young people, on improving their 'image' and enhancing 'public understanding' of young people and the issues affecting them. The proposal by the Howard League combined a concern to address the real injustices experienced by young people who had been in custody with a rights-based approach which recognised their entitlement to be heard and influence decisions about their treatment, rights which should not be diminished simply due to their status as young offenders. Young people participated in the process from the very start, with some legal service clients being consulted about the bid and the proposal. The precise objectives of the project were developed in response to the call and emphasised a number of key goals:

Work with children on legal problems and complaints in custody and preparing for release; practical support and guidance; they guide the staff to shape the legal service.

[Make sure that] corporate parents must assume responsibility [for those who are 'looked after'].

Provide training and support so young people can present their views, needs and experiences and say how they want to improve their futures and the lives of children facing similar challenges.

Work with young people in custody to participate in planning, management and dissemination of service to enhance our outcomes, their futures.

(U R Boss funding application)

Six detailed and quantifiable outcomes were specified for the project, combining both 'participation' and 'quality of life' objectives, which would be achieved through:

attitudinal, structural, policy and practice improvements for young people encountering the penal system – with young people driving that change....

and developing a:

*safer/healthier environment for children inside custody and on release by more organisations involving young people; enhance their potential on resettlement; work with them to reduce reoffending.
(U R Boss funding application)*

This established the shape of the project and determined the broad strands of work which would be pursued: the extension of the existing legal and advocacy service, and the establishment of a programme of participatory activity for young people with experience of the criminal justice system.

Thus the Howard League established U R Boss as a participatory programme of work aimed at improving processes and outcomes for young people in the criminal justice system. Funded by the Big Lottery Young People's Fund 2 to work from July 2009 to 2014 the aims of the U R Boss project, as described in the evaluation specification were:

- *to enhance the legal service being provided by the Howard League for Penal Reform to children and young people in the penal system;*
- *to campaign to change national and local policy and practice in the statutory and voluntary sectors working with children and young people;*
- *to change public attitudes to children and young people in the penal system; and to come up with new ideas about children and young people in the penal system.*

The views and experiences of young people are seen to be fundamental to achieving these aims and the reason for having a range of activities focusing on 'participation'.

The work programme specified a number of detailed expectations and performance targets in relation to each area of work, with resources and detailed activities ascribed to each of these.

The funding enabled eight new posts to be created within the Howard League and also part funded a number of existing posts contributing to the work of the project. The new U R Boss team posts were a project coordinator, a policy officer, two youth participation officers (initially called 'agents', a name chosen by young people in an early consultation), two solicitors, a training and development officer, and an administration and finance officer, to be recruited over the first two years of the project. The first four appointments (project coordinator, administration and finance officer, agent and policy officer) were made in October 2009, the recruitment of which involved several young people in considering questions to ask of applicants and one young person being a member of the interview panel for the agent and the policy officer.

Once the funding for the programme had been achieved, a process of consultation with young people and detailed project development was initiated. Thirty-four young people aged 13–21 and from diverse backgrounds were involved in this preparatory consultation exercise. As a result, a number of priority

areas for action were identified by the young people, the most important of which was the day-to-day life in custody for the average young person in prison. The new U R Boss team undertook a series of workshops and interviews with young people in three young offender institutions which led to the publication of *Life inside* 2010, as a baseline document, to enable young people to set the agenda for discussions with 'policy makers and practitioners' (Howard League, 2010: 3). This report highlighted many of the everyday practices and experiences associated with custody which young people viewed as demeaning and unacceptable, and which could and should be improved upon, including degrading admissions processes, restrictions on contact with family members, absence of meaningful learning opportunities, inappropriate use of disciplinary measures and inadequate responses to complaints, in a sense offering further validation and support for the aims and objectives of U R Boss itself, as well as its strategy of engagement with young people and the promotion of effective participation. Young people participated in the launch of this report at a major event attended by 140 guests from policy and practice. A wide range of young people had been involved in the production of three complementary animated films which were also shown at this event.

2. Evaluating U R Boss

In commissioning the U R Boss project, the funder, BIG, made it clear that it should be evaluated in order for lessons to be learnt to support future developments. An external team of evaluators led by the Centre for Social Action at De Montfort University³ was commissioned. The Centre for Social Action was chosen due to a shared ethos and approach to working with young people. The fact the Centre employed a small team of young people to work on evaluation and research projects was key to this, as it was recognised that the young researchers had the potential to regard the issues of the young people in U R Boss very differently from the 'standard' academic team. Employing young researchers, rather than working with young people as volunteers, was seen to show a real commitment to young people's involvement; and it also meant that the evaluation team would have already dealt with many of the issues involved in working in partnership with young people that U R Boss was likely to have to grapple with. The team had direct, hands on experience to draw upon and not just a theoretical understanding of youth participation.

The remit of the evaluation was reviewing the implementation and activities of the project, both in terms of its discrete elements and its overall outcomes and impact. The evaluation was designed to consider specific aspects of U R Boss in depth (detailed in a series of interim reports), and to provide a more comprehensive account of the overall impact of the project addressing:

- The development of the U R Boss project;
- The degree of achievement on the six identified outcomes of the project;
- The application of youth participation strategies;
- The impact of the engagement and participation of young people on the charity's practices and outcomes;
- The prominent themes emerging from the evaluation for both interim and final reports;
- The emerging lessons on the potential and practicalities for youth participation as a means of shaping legal and children's services and the identification of key service delivery signposts.

In broad terms, the evaluation was devised as an 'end to end' exercise, considering all aspects of the project, from its organisation and delivery arrangements, through specific phases of implementation, through to the identifiable impacts in terms of policy influence, and the participatory role of young people. A series of interim reports was produced, each with an agreed focus, as well as this final report. The evaluation team met with the Howard League Research Director and managers from U R Boss regularly to discuss the progress of the evaluation and to agree specific areas of work to consider in detail as the focus of interim reports.

3. Jennie Fleming, Co-director, Practical Participation (formerly Director of the Centre for Social Action, De Montfort University), Jean Hine, Reader in Criminology, De Montfort University, Roger Smith, Professor of Social Work, Durham University (formerly of De Montfort University).

2.1 Methodology

In keeping with the participatory ethos of the UR Boss project, the evaluation was designed to involve young people. The development of the methodology was supported by a group of young people working as associate research assistants employed by De Montfort University. They contributed to the development of the methods and questions asked, particularly focusing on the participation of young people. They undertook a series of interviews with U R Boss staff about participation, attended a number of the meetings with the Howard League's Research Director and contributed to the discussions around the focus and scope of the evaluation. The overall design of the evaluation and the topics to be addressed in the interim reports were developed in partnership with the Howard League; interim findings and their implications for the development of the project were shared with the Howard League regularly throughout the evaluation.

In order to achieve its broad aims, the evaluation has drawn on the in-depth knowledge of the youth justice system and young people and participation within the evaluation team. It has employed a range of methods of enquiry, using a number of tools appropriate to the task, including face to face interviews, telephone interviews, surveys, progress meetings with U R Boss team members, observation of work, review of written materials and records. The main method of data collection consisted of detailed evaluative conversations with key personnel from the Howard League and the UR Boss project. Where possible and with permission interviews were recorded and transcribed, where recording was not possible (e.g. in prisons, or noisy venues) detailed written notes were taken.

Over the five years of the evaluation, the evaluation team has spoken with some people a number of times. These include Howard League staff and young people who have been involved for some time. Others have contributed to the evaluation just once; this included practitioners, training course participants, and people from other organisations in the sector. The evaluators also undertook web-based surveys with practitioners and reviewed website, Twitter and Facebook use. The evaluators read the reports prepared by the project for BIG and reviewed a wide range of documentation about the project and minutes of meetings. A full breakdown of data sources is in Appendix i.

The evaluation team collected a large amount of quantitative and qualitative information from these sources. This wealth of interesting and useful data has been comprehensively and critically examined by the team. Themes and relationships have been identified and the commonalities and differences that emerged noted and checked. The evaluation team analysed the information using a coding system derived from both the evaluation brief and the question framework. The data sets (qualitative and quantitative) were integrated in iterative and deductive processes. The team drew on all the data collected in the creation of this report.

2.2 Reporting

As agreed in the evaluation brief five interim reports were produced. These focused on the legal service, organisational change to support the work of U R Boss, policy influence, campaigning work and public legal education. Four⁴ of these reports were made publically available on the Howard League website:

- *Justice + Welfare* (2011) reviewing the delivery of the legal service and its impact on young people
- *Embedding participation* (2012) assessing the impact of youth participation on the charity's practices and outcomes
- *U R Boss campaigning for change* (2014) evaluating the U R Boss campaign around the Police and Crime commissioner elections, particularly the participation of young people in the campaign
- *Public legal education – an evaluation* (2014) reviewing the public legal education work around resettlement and its impact on practice and young people in the justice system.

This report does not detail all the achievements nor challenges there have been in the life of the project; nor does it provide a comprehensive history of the project or a chronology of events. The aim of the report is to provide an overview and evaluation of the main strands of work and the key issues arising from the work, and to provide an analysis of them illustrated by the views and opinions of a range of people involved in the project. Section 3 of this report sets out the main areas of practice coming under the U R Boss funding. It briefly describes them in turn and then offers an evaluation of each. Section 4 focuses on the impact of the U R Boss project on young people's participation and influence, on the young people involved in U R Boss, on policy and legislation and finally the impact on the Howard League itself. Section 5 considers the future and legacy of U R Boss within the Howard League, and Section 6 presents the team's conclusions to the evaluation.

4. The unpublished report focused on follow-up work undertaken on a specific policy report. It was utilised internally to aid development of future strategies.

3. Areas of practice

U R Boss was designed to offer support and work with young people in a number of ways within two main areas: the extension of the existing enhanced legal service; and the development of participation work with young people to involve them in campaigning for change on issues arising from their experiences in the criminal justice system.

3.1 The enhanced legal service and access to justice

Since 2002 the Howard League legal team has provided free, independent and confidential advice and representation on a wide range of issues to young people under the age of 21 who were in prison or secure children's homes and centres. The U R Boss funding enabled the expansion of this distinctive enhanced legal service practice model. Young people can call the Howard League on the help line, which is free for all young people to use, including those in prison where it automatically appears as one of their PINs (numbers they can ring free of charge).

The legal team offered help on legal issues affecting young people: they could legally represent clients and in some situations had been able to get funding through the legal aid system. If the team were unable to help directly they would refer the case to others who could. The lawyers who worked with the young people took a very child-centred approach to the work, ensuring that they understood what was happening in their case, and that they were in a position to make informed choices about the work that was undertaken on their behalf. The lawyers also helped with the wide range of problems that were faced by young people they worked with, including help with accommodation on release, help with parole, and helping them raise complaints and make representations about how they are treated.

During the period of the Big Lottery funding, the team's work covered many areas of law and where possible the team tried to develop the law to bring about improvements for all young people in the criminal justice system as well as their clients. They also took forward issues raised in the legal work to inform policy and practice, lobby the government, hold seminars and talks, and develop publications, as well as contributing evidence to government consultations and enquiries.

In the five years of U R Boss, 787 new cases were taken on by the legal team.

The BIG funding has enabled us to expand the enhanced legal service without feeling incredibly under pressure about funding. At a time when our colleagues across the profession have been stripped down to the absolute bare minimum level of service. It has allowed us to continue to provide what we think is the right level of service to our clients.
(Legal team member)

The enhanced service the solicitors provided meant that they could spend more time with the young people and get to know them and their circumstances better. They felt this led to a better legal service as it enabled them to build up trusting

relationships and provide a more tailored service, for example trying to avoid important hearings on the anniversary of the death of a young person's loved one.

We put a lot of time and effort into making sure every aspect of the young person's needs is dealt with in order for their case to be progressed. So it is not just taking a silo approach to the issues, but looking at the whole picture and saying, 'What can be done about that? Can I do it, if not who can?' It is a different approach, lots of other solicitors will say, 'Sorry that is not part of my job'.
(Legal team member)

The legal work was the focus of the first interim evaluation report, and has been discussed during many interviews with young people since. Young people are universally and overwhelmingly positive about the service and support they received from the legal team. A review of 137 'Client Feedback forms' showed that all clients who completed the forms were very satisfied with the service, indicating that the advice given was understandable and that they felt the solicitors dealt effectively with all the issues they raised. The few additional comments young people made were also all positive:

She took me serious and took everything I said into consideration. Thank you for your hard work and dedication for my release. I appreciate your help and I will be keeping out of trouble. Once again thank you.
(Legal feedback form)

One young person in prison who was interviewed for the evaluation pointed out that receiving legal support from the Howard League was very different from what they had encountered elsewhere.

Duty solicitors don't really care; they speak a language you can't understand. Until I had a Howard League solicitor no one explained what was what and wrote me letters I could understand. She explains what is happening – explains the options and what could happen with each one. It feels like she really cares and is doing all she can.
(Young Advisor⁵ in custody)

The level of care that young people experience from the Howard League is much appreciated, particularly when many feel very isolated and vulnerable.

Regular solicitors would not want to know. You would not ring a regular solicitor and say 'I am worried about this or this is going off', they would not be bothered to do something to help you. With the Howard League you can ring with anything and they take it serious.
(Young Advisor in community)

Other key agencies working in youth justice, described the legal team as 'very well respected', with one organisation making the point that,

The free helpline for young people is vital, particularly as lawyers can only do the bare minimum with legal aid cuts now. No one else provides that.
(Other organisation)

5. Young advisors are young people who advocate for those in the criminal justice system. They worked with U R Boss on an ongoing basis, helping to decide on the direction of U R Boss work and actively taking part in its delivery. The 'in custody' or 'in community' indicates where the interview took place.

Calls to the helpline, which increased from 568 calls in year 2 of the project to 857 in year 5, and the legal work with young people also informed another important aspect of the work of U R Boss: public legal education (PLE).

3.1.1 Public legal education

PLE work is about ensuring that practitioners and clients understand the legal requirements and entitlements of young people in and on release from custody. This aspect of work was the subject of the final interim report *Public legal education – an evaluation*. This report described the development and impact of the resettlement guide that was developed by the legal team and the young people involved in the participation work of U R Boss. The resettlement guide was designed to explain the legal position and entitlements of children and young people on their release from custody. Publication of the guide was accompanied by training delivered jointly by a member of the legal team and a member of the U R Boss team, which was attended by a wide range of participants. (See section 3.4 on work with practitioners and section 3.2 on work with young people).

The legal team also worked closely with the young people involved in U R Boss participation work to produce materials for young people. Examples include the *What is MAPPA?* and *Moving on from Prison* leaflets, where the topics and content came from young people, but the legal team was closely involved to ensure legal accuracy of the materials.

Other areas of PLE are being developed such as information for young people and training for practitioners about adjudications, and a library of precedent letters that can be sent to and used by young people who contact the helpline about things that are no longer within the scope of legal aid. In these situations young people can be given advice over the phone and also sent a standard letter prepared by the legal team 'which sets out the whole situation for them in child friendly language.'

3.1.2 Welfare Fund

U R Boss had the facility to provide financial support for young people who could not access it from any other source. The Welfare Fund was designed to help young people to meet practical needs and was initially open to requests from all young people in custody or recently released. This policy was reviewed in year three as a large number of applications were being received from one institution. The revised Welfare Fund policy and protocol (September 2013) stated that the fund was for 'financial assistance for young people in contact with the participatory work of the U R Boss project'. The fund supported 169 young people, 21 in the community and 148 in custody. The range of things supported by the fund included toiletries, phone credit and clothes for those in custody, and help with household goods, bills and food for those in the community.

Many of the young people we spoke to mentioned how crucial the welfare fund had been to them. Two young men said it had enabled them to have contact with their mothers who were seriously unwell at the time:

It is really important, I could not have got that money from anywhere else. I applied yesterday for some phone credit to be able to speak with my Mum, she is sick and I really want to be able to speak with her.
(Young Advisor in custody)

I have had money as I had no electric in the flat and no food either. I did not like to ask, I was ashamed to ask, I like to rely on myself, but I had nowhere else to turn.
(Young Advisor in custody)

Another young person was supported to get ready for a university interview.

I needed an outfit for my university interviews, and I probably wouldn't have asked, I know I wouldn't have asked, because I know not to ask for things but when I was saying about it, [Participation officer] was like "We have got a fund, we can help you." Me and [Participation officer] went out and I bought a shirt and trousers, and when I went to my university interview it made me feel so much more comfortable.
(Young advisor in community)

Other young people said the welfare fund had been a lifeline for them, for example providing money to get to appointments with solicitors or shoes when theirs had holes in.

3.1.3 Referral to participation work

The enhanced legal service for young people was the route by which nearly all the young people were recruited to the participation work. The good relationship that solicitors have with the young people they advise enabled members of the legal team to mention U R Boss participation opportunities to young people and explain what it was about. If the young person expressed interest and gave consent then, after discussion at referral meetings, their names were passed on to U R Boss staff who would write to the young person and offer to visit and explain more about it. It was seen as important that the participation work was separated from the legal work from the very start, therefore communication with the participation officer, with due attention to confidentiality issues, started as early as feasible. The quick response from the participation officer was appreciated by the young people.

The lives of young people when they meet with the legal team are very difficult, which made it hard for many of them to actually be involved in participation activities. The young people the legal team work with tend to be those with very complex cases and some of the most serious offences in the criminal justice system. One legal team member said they talked about U R Boss with less than half their clients as for the majority 'things are just too chaotic'. This was confirmed by some of the young people who said they had heard about the possibility of participating in U R Boss from their solicitor but it was often months before they felt ready to be able to take part.

When I first got told about U R Boss I was in a place where I thought no one could help me, that nothing can get done, . . . But the more work I have done with my solicitor, and then things that she would show me, like U R Boss done this campaign or U R Boss done that campaign or.... I wanted to be a part of that, because it is real, it is not fake.
(Young Advisor in the community)

Young people wanting and actually being able to be involved are not the same thing.
(Legal team member)

There is a general consensus that the referral process was refined and much improved throughout the project and that from Year 3 it worked very well.

I just think the process has been smartened up. They have worked out what they can offer, they have worked on the issues of risk and how to work with young people together in a way that is actually safe for them and the organisation and still allows them to meet targets and have outputs.

(Legal team member)

Communication between the two elements of U R Boss was seen to have improved over time. The second interim report *Embedding Participation* highlighted some difficulties in this area but increasingly the leaders of the two strands of work were committed to ongoing two-way communication. This, together with young people being increasingly visible and active throughout the project, was seen by some to have helped the referral process.

The project has gained so much momentum over time, they are keener to refer. You know it is a kind of positive cycle where the more they see that young people are engaged and it is working, the more confident they are to refer.

(Participation officer)

It all helps with the referral process, because it gives us confidence to refer young people when we have had five other clients tell us how great it is.

(Legal team member)

Inevitably some young people work with both the legal team and the U R Boss staff – either because they have residual legal issues or because they have been recalled to custody or have further court appearances. The legal team recognised the value of the continuous support offered by the participation officers.

He kind of dips in and out from the legal point of view – I represented him when he has been recalled, but it is [participation officers] who have worked with him consistently the whole time.

(Legal team member)

The work the young people have done as part of U R Boss and their relationships with the U R Boss staff can be used in addition to legal evidence at, for example, parole hearings. Participation officers wrote letters setting out what young people were doing as part of U R Boss and members of the legal team report that these letters were ‘not always, but generally’ referred to and acknowledged in decisions.

The evaluation team had no conversations with young people who decided not to get involved, being able to speak only to young people who did become involved in the participation work. All of these young people spoke of their desire to see things change in the justice system. The Howard League’s reputation and links with influential people were motivations:

I thought about it, before I got involved I had a lot of problems and people I was going to they weren't really sorting them out. So when I heard we could go to higher people and express our problems to them I thought well that is going to help a lot more. And not just me, I know 8 or 9 people with the same housing problems as me, so if that changed things how many people who benefit?

(Young Advisor in custody)

I am putting myself in the hands of people who are responsible for young people and have the power to raise awareness about the issues.

(Young Advisor in community)

In addition some also wanted to repay the Howard League in some way for the support they had received, or to offer reparation more generally

With the amount they have done for me, I wanted to give something back. I help whenever I can. They are wanting to change things, but they can't do it without us as we are the ones that know what is wrong with the system. (Young Advisor in custody)

It feels like doing something good – a bit of karma – the opportunity to give something back even from inside.

(Young Advisor in custody)

Case study: 21-year-old Young Advisor in custody

When I was about eight I moved around a lot of schools – a lot... We were moving all the time... I thought it was normal. I thought every family was like that... It was only when I moved in with my old friend and then I started to realise that not every family was like that. If you had met me when I was 14 and saw me now, I've changed a lot. Then I didn't care about anything. Now I've got the awareness but I just need to start thinking more. I'm now 21.

My mum still drinks but not half as much as she did. She got a boyfriend about eight years ago and she's better now. I ended up moving in with one of my mum's friends because mum and my sister used to argue all the time. I was only supposed to stay there for about a week until things calmed down but I ended up staying for 18 months. In that 18 months all my family moved back to Wigan and I was left there. I think I was just 11 then. I was in touch with my mum and I ended up moving in with my older brother back in Wigan. That's when I met a group of people who were at the school I was in. I felt like I was settled then because I didn't have the strictness of my mum and dad but I still had a role model in my brother. I stuck to his rules but then I made another group of friends at this school and that's when I went a bit wrong. I wanted to stand out and that, and go around fighting and that.

When I moved back to Wigan it was like I was trying to make out that I could do this and do that. My mindset changed and that's when I started to not care about anything and that's when I started to take drugs and do all this crime. I was about 13 or 14. I went from living with one of my brothers to moving in with another. He was just as bad as me.

I had the choice of staying in mainstream school or being put into exclusion. I went into the exclusion and that messed everything up. I had gone from trying to impress that group of friends to something else. I would see other people in my first school and think 'he's the top dog, I want to be the top dog'. I want people to talk about me. That's when I started to show off in front of other people. They used to urge me on. I used to fight all the time. I was only good at maths because I liked my maths teacher. People used to always tell me when I was younger 'make the most of school or you will regret it'. I used to think 'shut up' but now I regret it. I wish I had made the most of school. Now I wish I had stayed in the mainstream school.

With drugs, it was with some friends of my older sister. I was about 11 and she was about 16. That was the first time I had ever taken weed. Then I used to go there every night. I used to get high at 11 years old. Every time my mum and dad argued, I used to run there and I just used to get pissed off my face and get high. The first time I went on to harder drugs, it was my 13th birthday. My older sister had been on ecstasy pills. On my 13th birthday I got £5 and she said 'I could get you three ecstasy pills'. I gave her one and I took two pills at the same time. I really liked the buzz. I was using them every day at 13 and 14. I got them for the weekends but I needed cash, and that's why I used to go out and do burglaries. Shops and houses. That's how I got the money to go partying which I thought was excellent at the time – pills, cocaine, drink, MDMA....

The first time I got a jail sentence, I had robbed a phone shop. I got eight months and did four. I went to [a secure unit]). I was 14. It was so easy. That's when I thought 'it's worth taking risks again'. I was getting away with so many and getting done for one. After that, I kept out of trouble for 18 months. I never got done in that 18 months and I wasn't as bad as I was before I went in. After that 18 months, things went downhill again. I got sentenced for a burglary again and I got 12 months and did six in a YOI. I got out and met my friends and started to party every day. I started to do robberies and burglaries and that's when I got four years and served two. Did another two-year sentence after that, and took part in restorative justice.

The second YOI was absolutely shit. You got half an hour out of your cell every three days. Clothes were absolutely shit. Eventually it just kicked off. Things have changed since, it's 100 times better. It's freshly painted and they've built another gym. They're building another wing. I was in there for three years. I was a wing rep. I was a server worker, and also a mentor in drug cases. It was making the time fly and I learned a lot.

I am happy with the man I have grown into. I have grown into a man who has got a lot of respect for other people. I have learned to appreciate things more now. You miss out on a lot of things in jail. When you get out, you appreciate the little things, like chicken burgers! When I was younger, I didn't care about how the other person felt. I didn't care what the circumstances would be for other people. It was just me, me, me. I think when you are a kid you don't really listen to anybody else. People try to give you advice, but you think you know best. I needed a stable life; that's what I needed. I needed the same love 24 hours a day, not just once every month [in a prison visit].

When you get out... how do you expect me to come out and look after everybody else when I have only looked after myself for six or seven years? My mum is ill. I can't have any visits off my mum. The relationship I have with my family isn't going to be as strong as it was when I was out. They need to help people more in that way. When I get out I'm not going to have anybody on this wing to take care of me... I don't have any accommodation when I'm out. I need help with the benefits. I just need some support here. I don't know the arrangements. I just need someone I can ring so they can help me. That's the main thing if you want to keep out on your licence.

I were told about U R Boss during the two year sentence. I was interested in it then. I got a phone call when I got out. I've done loads of things with U R Boss. We went to the Houses of Parliament. I was excited. I've never had a chance to do anything like that before so having the chance, it was really good. And meeting [a senior politician] that was a good thing and he was on our side. He's like at the top so, it's not like in here when you put a complaint sheet in, you're going to the top person, he's got the power. 100 per cent U R Boss makes a difference. You spend a lot of money don't you? 100 per cent it's worth it, even if you only tell a couple of people of course it's worth it. Being in here costs the most but it's not going to work.

All the young advisors worked as a team and I enjoyed it. All of us have been in a situation so having a point of view from everybody was even more important. I might have a problem but that person might have a different problem, and I might have a solution for their problem and they might have a solution for mine. I was helping them, but I was getting a lot of help off them as well. How they've been out of jail and now they're on a university course. It made me feel like that was achievable. I think it helped me because it made me think about things from other people's point of view. When you get a point across it means a lot, to me and to the things that I'm changing. When I know I've made a change it makes me feel better and it makes the things you want to change better as well. You're not just helping yourself you're helping other people in a situation like you.

I want people to learn from where I went wrong and not go down the same road that I went down. In jail there are a lot of people who have gone down the same road as me. If I can catch their attention and make them change their ways that would make me feel a lot better. Think about your mistakes and think 'I remember reading about that the other day and I won't do it'.

(Edited from interview with Howard League worker)

3.2 Participation of young people

The in-depth, ongoing work with young people involved in U R Boss (who are called young advisors) has developed in both depth and reach over the life of the project. Much of the direct participation work with young people was undertaken by the participation officers, though in the later stages of U R Boss many staff at the Howard League worked with the young advisors in support of campaigning work for both U R Boss and the Howard League.

In the early years of the project there was some turnover of participation officers and the U R Boss lead, and the job titles of both posts changed more than once. This resulted in some challenges to the project in terms of pace of development,

as well as consistency and the ability to build on learning. Some of the young people commented on the high staff turnover, feeling it was a shame to have to build new relationships, and start afresh with new people. However they also said that the handovers were managed well, with the young advisors being kept informed of what was happening.

[Participation officer's name] introduced [name] as like she is going to be the new participation assistant, she will be working with you in the future ... It was fine like that. ... it wasn't like one day we'd wake up and we would be like [participation officer] is not working here no more, and we've got this new person – that might have been a bit shaky. . . . So I think the way they did it was great and nobody really felt the effect of people changing or staff changing or anything like that.
(Young Advisor in community)

Young people also recognised that the workers were all working to the same aims.

They have all been really different, but you can tell they are all trying to do the same thing. They have all been great and we have adjusted to the new workers fine.
(Young Advisor in community)

The project developed a diverse range of ways of involving young people that took into account their different circumstances, skills and abilities. In the final years of the project young people from around the country were involved, living in the community and in custody. The young advisors contributed to the development and direction of U R Boss mainly through their ongoing and active involvement in decision making and campaigning, as well as by being involved in key internal events, such as the recruitment interviews for the participation officers. A wider range of young people in the justice system who had less contact with the project also influenced the direction of U R Boss by giving their views and opinions in a number of consultations.

Towards the latter part of the project there was a core group of young people in the community and in custody who had consistently acted as young advisors, however it had taken time to build this group. In the early stages, young advisors 'were hard to find and harder to keep' according to one of the workers. Staying in contact with many of the young advisors was a challenge throughout the project. Many lived very transient lives: they moved frequently, they repeatedly did not have credit on their phone to be able to let participation officers know where they were, and they were often dealing with a number of very pressing issues that left little space for U R Boss. By September 2013, however, the participation officers said they were maintaining consistent contact with about 30 young people across various pieces of work. This was partly due to the improved systems for referral, communication and support, and partly because some of the young people were living more stable lives and found it easier to commit and stay in contact.

The young people decided what they would take part in and to what extent they became engaged; their involvement frequently varied according to other things happening in their lives.

We have to be aware of everybody's situation and we mould and adapt the service as much as we can to make sure that that young person can participate, it is not just for young people who can get themselves on a train, and get to the office. We'll say OK we'll come to you then.

(Participation officer)

3.2.1 Safeguarding issues

Ensuring that young people and staff are safe and able to contribute to the project has been central to all the work of U R Boss. It took time for the project to develop workable safeguarding systems that considered all aspects appropriately but within a mindset of 'how can we make this happen' rather than seeing problems as barriers impossible to overcome.

Confidentiality and consent are key safeguarding considerations. When referrals were made to U R Boss the solicitors could not and did not share information about the young people's offences, licence conditions etc.

We provide limited information to U R Boss namely whether or not they can be asked about this, whether they can work in a group environment, is it safe for that person and/or any other young people for you to ask these questions and how should you ask them.

(Legal team member)

Young people were asked by participation officers for their permission to contact solicitors or probation officers to gain any relevant information. This was the responsibility of the senior campaigns manager (SCM). She would review this information in the light of the Howard League's safeguarding policies and consider any risk to the young person (such as licence breach) to other young people, or to workers, and then advise the participation officer on what it was possible for the young person to do. Most young people were happy for this information to be shared, and the SCM said they were surprised that it was not already shared.

We have to explain to them that even though we share an office, without their permission this information is completely confidential to their solicitor.

(SCM)

Given the variety of backgrounds of the young people, this could make working with them complicated. Safeguarding was an item on the regular meetings between the legal and participation workers of U R Boss to ensure any concerns or potential issues were addressed. U R Boss did not want to offer young people opportunities for involvement that they could not actually take up because of restrictions, so this process of risk assessment was undertaken as early as possible to ensure that when they had a detailed conversation with a young person they could be clear about what was available to them. The rigorous addressing of risk and safeguarding issues enabled U R Boss to work with young people no matter what their offence or license conditions, and so young people with serious index offences and complex license conditions could be included. These considerations, as well as young people's preferences and situation meant that U R Boss had to be very flexible in how it worked with young people.

Some can do group work, and some we only do individual work with. Some are two workers to one young person; there are young people for whom we have to avoid overnight stays, others who have to be home at a set time. We have some young people that cannot come into contact with each other, or travel through particular areas... And of course this needs review as things change!
(U R Boss team member)

With some young people, such as Schedule 1 or Section 90 offenders, or those with an imprisonment for public protection [IPP] sentence, this element of the work could be time consuming and added to the amount of work involved in organising a meeting with a number of young people or visits involving overnight stays. It was not always possible for all young people to be involved in events or activities, as the prohibitive nature of some conviction and license conditions prevented them from doing so, or they posed too high a risk in the risk assessment. In these cases it was not always explained to the group, as to do so could have exposed an individual's offence, and it was agreed by all this must never happen, so this inevitably limited some activities.

Overseeing client contact, there is not a day that goes by that I am not doing it, it is hard to estimate, but it takes maybe 30 to 40 percent of my time? It is completely variable, and if someone goes into crisis then suddenly it goes right up.
(Participation officer)

The participation officers did not know the offences of the young people they worked with, as it was felt that this enabled them to work with the young people as people, not the offences they had committed. As one of the participation officers wrote in a blog on the U R Boss website:

In my professional role, I'm not entitled to the information unless there is a relevant and existing risk that I need to be aware of. And personally, I just don't care, it is not necessary.
(Participation officer)

The impact of this policy could be seen when the young people said they did not feel judged by the participation officers and felt they were treated 'as people first'.

They do not treat us as criminals like everyone else does. Even if they are trying to be helpful they [others] treat us as criminals who have done wrong. U R Boss want to talk with you, listen to what you have to say and help change things.
(Young Advisor)

Given the role of young people in campaigning, safeguarding was also concerned with what young people shared about themselves, making sure they were aware of the possible consequences of sharing information which had the potential to come back and haunt them in the future if it was in the public domain. The legal and participation workers worked together to establish systems for ensuring that publicity would not

harm a young person's legal position and that they understood fully any potential consequences.

Without negating from the ethos of participation and that everyone should be given a voice... there are certain checks and balances that ensure properly informed consent.

(Legal team member)

We put up this Chinese wall in the office, which is the legal term for it, which means that the young person can have their voice without detriment to their legal case.

(Legal team member)

Safeguarding issues could also be raised via the helpline if young people were in immediate danger and in need of help. From November 2011 there were more than 50 vulnerable young people for whom safeguarding referrals had to be made. In addition there were other young people for whom the workers had a 'watching brief'. There were four designated safeguarding officers within the Howard League who responded to these concerns. These cases and the issues arising from them were also discussed within the bounds of confidentiality in the joint legal/participation referral meetings.

3.2.2 Support for young people

Many of the young people who became young advisors faced challenging issues in their lives and the participation officers offered them considerable personal support. The issues facing young people, and therefore the support, varied considerably. It was policy that U R Boss did not do anything that social services or others had a legal responsibility to do, but this still left many issues that young people needed support with. These included accommodation, family crisis, financial issues, high levels of stress and anxiety, and mental health issues. All the young advisors spoken to told us of how crucial this support was to them. Whilst some of the young advisors had very good professionals around them, many did not, and both the young people and U R Boss workers pointed out that the relationships between them were different to those with statutory workers.

You can tell they care, they actually want to help us. Probation workers don't help at all, not one bit. I have had a lot of experience of them over the years and I can tell you they do not.

(Young Advisor in custody)

As part of the support for young people participation officers could spend a considerable amount of time liaising with other professionals both to ensure there was not duplication of effort and to point out issues that were their responsibility. As with many young people in custody, some young advisors had experienced the care system, often resulting in difficult issues and little stability in their lives. While a number of young advisors had not had contact with the justice system for some years, many were in current contact with the system and some were in and out of custody.

Careful records were kept, with all contact with young people logged on a spread sheet, giving a brief outline of what happened.

Everything goes on a vast spread sheet which has an entry for each young person.... The contact we have had with them, what kind of contact it was, who had it, what came out of it and then we can hyperlink to any document if relevant.
(Participation officer)

A review of the spreadsheet showed a very high level of contact with some young people, sometimes about specific U R Boss work but very often focusing on the issues facing the young people and how to resolve them.

U R Boss and the other young advisors give me more support than anyone else. More support than my social worker, more support than my mum even. (Young Advisor in custody)

3.2.3 Young advisors, in custody and in the community

The first young advisor meeting was in November 2010, and this was followed by regular meetings of the young advisors in the community. In the first years the numbers were not high, with meetings often being just two or three young people, but in the last two years of the project the number of young advisors increased significantly. This was due in part to the project having devised more effective ways of engaging young people as young advisors and in part to developing increasingly effective methods of ensuring young people had a voice and influenced the project.

Many of the decisions about the broad directions of the work of U R Boss were made at meetings, but there were a range of ways young people could contribute to this, even if they could not be present at meetings. Young advisors in custody could take part via, for example, worksheets, questionnaires or commenting on materials. For some young people there were issues with literacy, which the participation officer became aware of as part of the referral process which included asking young people how they would best like to communicate: some young people would respond to materials in writing but others preferred to phone and talk.

[Worker] came and saw me to talk to me. She wrote back quick to every letter, and that is nice. She always does what she can to include me. She didn't just leave it to letters, she come to visit me to understand better what I wanted to do.
(Young Advisor in custody)

Considerable care and effort was made by the participation officers to keep all the young advisors in touch with all that was happening. Young advisors in custody, and those living some distance from London, were visited by the participation officers to enable them to keep up to date and ensure their opinions and contributions were included alongside others. An example of how young people in prison were included comes from the Re-imagining Youth Justice conference. Young people in custody contributed suggestions as to how the young advisors' session could be run, what it should cover and activities that could be included. They also prepared written pieces that were read out by the young advisors present as part of the conversation. At the conference attendees posed questions to the young advisors present as part of a 'Question Time' event and after the conference all young advisors were

sent the questions and all responses were posted on the U R Boss website. Another example was after a meeting of some young advisors with the then Shadow Minister for Justice:

We updated everyone about the meeting we had with Rob Ffello. We wrote about what the young advisors had talked about and the issues that Rob raised, and asked them what they would like to tell him about them. We sent that out to a lot of people and got quite a few responses back and we are collating these to send to Rob.
(Participation officer)

As one young person who had been a young advisor both in the community and custody said,

Being a young advisor in custody you are doing the same thing as outside, but have more time to give it thought as there are less distractions. It is the same you just don't meet with the others. It gives you the opportunity to do something good even when you have messed up and are inside.
(Young Advisor in custody)

Another young advisor pointed out they had realistic expectations of each other and what they could all manage.

We don't pressurise each other, no one is going get hassled for not coming to a meeting. We all understand how difficult life can be and what people are dealing with. Some young advisors have gone back to prison and we do what we can to stay in touch with them.
(Young Advisor in community)

As part of the evaluation one of the evaluation team went with a participation officer to speak with some young advisors in custody. These visits were part of a routine conversation between the young advisor and the participation officer, and offered an opportunity to observe the session. A description of an observation of a two hour visit in prison is set out below.

Visit with young advisor in custody

The young advisor, John, was clearly very pleased to see the participation officer Sam, and they exchanged a warm hug as a greeting. The first part of the visit was spent discussing how things were going on the wing, what contact he had had with family members, probation etc. John thanked Sam for helping him when he was anxious because he could not get hold of his mother who was unwell. He had not been able to speak to her for some time, as he had no money. When he finally managed to get £1 to make the call, she did not answer the phone. This made him very anxious, and he had not received any support from prison officers, so had rung the free Howard League helpline and Sam had been available to talk with him. In the conversation he had come to recognise that his mother not answering the phone did not mean something terrible had happened and he had gone back to his cell calmer. As he said, 'in here if you are worried or wound up, the smallest thing can make you blow, and then you can throw everything away, you helped me feel calmer about it and then when I rang again the next day she answered and she had turned her phone off so she could sleep, but she was OK.'

John said he was hopeful to move to a Cat D prison in the next few months, but, despite having written to his probation officer some weeks ago had not heard anything back, and he did not think he would be bothered to contact them again. Sam wondered whether showing he was being proactive and was on top of things, but not hassling, could move things on. Later in the meeting John said, 'you know I think I will write to the probation officer, like you said. You have made me see it differently, it can't do any harm.'

The bulk of the meeting was spent talking about U R Boss things. John had written one blog and Sam asked if he would like to write about anything else:

John: Can it be anything?

Sam: Absolutely.

John: Legal aid – I think it is really rubbish what is happening there.

They then talked a bit about what the Howard League was doing about the legal aid cuts and agreed John would write a blog on this. Sam gave John a number of options for creating the blog, he could talk and she would take notes, he would write it and post it in, or they could talk on the phone when he had thought about it a bit more. John wanted to write the blog himself and post it in when it was ready. Sam suggested he might also like to write about housing difficulties on release, as he had experience of this and U R Boss would like a blog on this topic. John was keen to do this as well and talked about some of the things he would say.

Sam moved on to discuss the U R Boss workshop at a forthcoming Howard League conference, and John had plenty of ideas of how to do things 'Start by asking them what they think, then tailor what young advisors say to that, have an exercise not just talk at them.' For John, housing and finance were the most important things from the manifesto, along with relationships and support: 'you need the right people around you when you get out to be able to take the next steps'. Whilst discussing these issues in general terms Sam also spoke about John's specific experience of them and interwove advice and information into the discussion.

John had been involved in judging the Community Sentencing Awards when in the community last year. He was keen to take part again and said he would read all the applications this year and fill in the feedback sheet. They agreed Sam would talk through it on the phone with him when he had received the applications.

Sam told John about policy reports that were being drafted for young people so they could understand what was happening currently with the justice system. John volunteered to read them through and comment on how easy to read and understandable they were.

As the meeting drew to a close (the prison officer had to come in three times to ask us to wind up) the talk moved to more personal things, the Narcotics Anonymous meetings John attended, what others thought of his involvement with U R Boss and how they would be in contact. Sam summarised what they had both agreed to do and what the next actions were, before a farewell hug and us departing.

Some of the young advisors, both in custody and in the community, shared what they were doing with others; peers, family members or professionals who work with them. One young person in prison had a board covered with U R Boss photos and leaflets and collected issues and views from others on his wing and fed them back to the wider group.

As well as the regular young advisors' meetings there was one two-day residential event in 2013. All the young people attending this clearly enjoyed it, 'it was fantastic, one of the best things.' They had detailed discussions about the focus of the young advisors' work for the coming year, but for many the highlight was a session they ran with young people at the local YOT. Working with other young people in the justice system was something many of the young advisors were keen to do, and so this was a key element of the residential. They spent some time planning the session so that they could share some of their experiences and also had space for the young people to reflect and contribute.

We planned it and it worked out really well. I think at the start they weren't that interested, but as we got going everyone got involved. They had their input and also we had our input as well, so it was good, really good.
(Young Advisor in community)

The residential was very complex to organise due to safeguarding and risk assessment issues, and while the young advisors were very keen to have a second similar event it was not feasible to arrange.

In the latter years of the project many pieces of work happened simultaneously and young advisors were always able to choose what they focused on.

At the beginning I would do anything that was suggested – talking to MPs, going to the House of Commons – but now I am more interested in some things than others, and make my choices accordingly.
(Young Advisor in community)

The young advisors in custody had time and were often keen to take part in most things, whereas some of the young people in the community had other responsibilities and commitments or struggles with resettlement which meant they made choices as to what they were involved in. The voice and influence of the young advisors is considered in detail in section 4, but it is important to note here that the young advisors all spoke of how they felt respected and listened to by U R Boss and the Howard League.

I definitely feel listened to and taken seriously, that is not always the case with other organisations. They believe in you and that feels good. They have more faith in me than I do in myself.
(Young Advisor in custody)

Those who had been involved over a long period of time could see how the work of U R Boss was changing.

Our work is moving with the times, and the law.
(Young Advisor in community)

3.2.4 Young advisors working together

Young advisors came and went and new members joined the group, either by coming to meetings in person or their contributions being represented by others. All the young advisors who were asked said new members joining the group had not been a problem, mainly because they all had experience of the justice system in common and that being introduced by the participation officer who they all trusted made it easier.

We all know what we have in common, though we may not talk about it. Also we all have trust with [worker] who introduces them, and often we know what work they have been doing like blogs, or contributing to conversation about leaflets before we meet them.

(Young Advisor in community)

Despite their different ability to physically attend meetings due to geography or incarceration they did all see themselves as part of a group. Even if they had not met others personally they were often aware of who the others were and what they were doing.

I know of the other young advisors, but I have not met any. I have read some of their blogs and things, so I know something about them from that.

(Young Advisor in custody)

Young advisors felt their common experience and commitment to change things for themselves and more widely was one of the reasons they could work well together:

I think it is mutual respect because we know where we have come from and we have mates who have gone in the opposite direction to us. That mutual respect for being able to break out of the cycle and having the Howard League there to offer support is why it works so well.

(Young Advisor in community)

Everyone comes in with different ideas, when you are inside you are thinking to yourself this really needs to change. In the group you are coming up with an idea and everyone else says, oh yes, I have the same experience and we start to debate about how to make it better.

(Young Advisor in community)

A few young advisors pointed out they did have disagreements at times.

Yes sometimes we have disagreements, but it is just about how can we make it better, how we make the campaign more effective – everyone in the world has disagreements. It is not just for yourself we want this change it is for everyone like us.

(Young Advisor in community)

Some recognised the role of the workers in helping them resolve any disagreements or difficulties.

We do have conflict, yes. I'll have one idea and another young advisor will have another. But the staff are there to help us meet in the middle... . It's great fun all the same, people always have something to say.

(Young Advisor in community)

They [workers] are phenomenal with us. They know exactly how to, handle us isn't the right word, because we don't need handling, we are not children, but they are incredibly attentive and they are quick to clock any difficulties that arise.
(Young Advisor in community)

Others thought that they did have different priorities and also were at different stages of their lives, as a young person in the community said,

The ones in custody, will have different issues to me right now, and times change it is different being in custody now than when I was. So we have the two parts, custody and community. We all have deep discussion on each topic, and everything we say is written down and we make decisions from that.
(Young Advisor in community)

It is not just me shaping it, it is alongside other young people that have had a similar experience, but in a different manner. So being a female ex-prisoner is completely different to being a male ex-prisoner because we've had the same sort of experience but in a completely different manner. So I found that really great because we will all have similar stories but in a different sort of way and it will all add up in some way and it will all lead back to some sort of foundation at the end of how we ended up there.
(Young Advisor in community)

3.2.5 Capacity building and personal development

Capacity building and personal development, ensuring the young people had the skills and knowledge to undertake their role as a young advisor and develop in their lives, were talked about by both young people and staff. Young people were offered training and skills development in a range of topics including: presentation and public speaking, interviewing, graphic design and visual communication (young people designing leaflets etc.), facilitating and chairing meetings, team work, web design, film making, and the use of social media (Twitter, Facebook, blogging etc.) to get messages across to wide audiences. Inevitably the things the young people were supported with were varied and so the plans were personal and the support flexible, including help with CVs, mentoring, opportunities to work with young people, access to information and advice and introductions to people in their areas of interest.

The young people all valued this support highly as it gave them both the skills and the confidence to do new things. One of the key skills young advisors wanted to develop was the ability to speak in front of others, particularly large audiences.

I got training on public speaking because I remember I was really nervous. Talking at conferences my palms used to sweat and I started breathing really heavily and they provided us with that training and that helped me a lot.
(Young Advisor in the community)

At the start I couldn't speak in public, I would stammer, get my words messed up, I was too nervous, but with their support I can do this now.

(Young Advisor in custody)

It was really helpful and boosted my confidence a lot, it made me think, oh OK maybe I can do this. It was definitely good at getting me prepared for the real thing.

(Young Advisor in community)

It was not just the confidence to speak that young people recognised they had learnt, but how to get their points across to different audiences, who may have had very different views to their own.

We had a day training at the Howard League where she showed different ways of answering questions, both for us when we are answering, but also to make sure people answer what we are asking when we speak with them. She said politicians can be very handy at agreeing with a point, but then dismissing it, so she showed us lots of ways of avoiding that by how we phrase the question and how we come back at something.

(Young Advisor in community)

I have learnt so much about how to think things through, having an idea and being able to make it clear to other people.

(Young Advisor in community)

They were also enabled to develop the skills to represent themselves and also the views and experiences of the wider group of young people in the youth justice system.

It helped me decide what I wanted to say and represent myself and how to talk about what had happened to other people, so it was not just me.

(Young Advisor in the community)

All young advisors had individual personal development plans setting out their hopes and plans for the future, aimed at helping them achieve goals that were important to them. They were then supported to reach their ambitions. As with other aspects of the work, the use and impact of the personal development plans increased throughout the project.

The Howard League CEO was keen to support the young advisors to have some of the things many of their peers would take for granted, such as owning a passport or having a driving licence. Many young advisors were encouraged to get ID, which was challenging for some of them due to not having the necessary documents. They were supported through the process.

With my passport they kept on at me about it, not hassling, just have you done it. They helped me fill in the forms and paid the fee. I am really pleased to have it.

(Young Advisor in the community)

A number of young people were keen to take driving lessons and be able to drive legally. A number had recently passed their theory tests. One young person had passed his driving test and was able to drive the minibus at the youth club where he worked so that many young people benefited.

The Howard League has an established intern programme across all its work and two young advisors had internships with U R Boss. Both of them spoke extremely highly of the experience, saying they felt the work placement was tailored to their needs and interests.

The good thing was they asked me what I wanted to do, what I wanted to achieve in the internship, we had a lot of discussion about it. Then she put it down on paper and I signed it.
(Young Advisor in the community)

They also felt that they learnt a lot about the work of the Howard League and about the world of work generally, and said they felt they were able to make a contribution to the projects they were working on.

It helped me get that sort of office environment, office experience, so in the future like how the working environment is ... that early morning, getting up, getting into work, and feeling part of the team. And it was for two months as well, it was quite a lengthy period. I didn't want to leave to be honest; I really enjoyed my time there.
(Young Advisor in community)

I actually felt like I was making a real big impact because I was taking what the young advisors have done, which is one of me as well, and then taking it on board and working on it as a sort of staff member. So I was seeing both sides of it. So I was seeing where the work of young advisors, what we do at the meetings, where that goes to or that leads to and it leads into so many different branches that we don't see at the time of the meeting.
(Young Advisor in community)

A number of the young advisors are using this new confidence, knowledge and skills to develop other areas of their lives. Some now have permanent jobs, some are in youth work, some are setting up their own businesses, others are at university – many studying criminology.

3.2.6 Consultations with young people

As well as the in-depth long term work with the young advisors over the life of the project there were a number of focused consultations with young people to highlight issues that were important to them. Many of the consultation exercises were with young people in custody. In the early stages of the project two separate consultations were undertaken with young people about life in prison and life in the community. These resulted in the reports *Life Inside* and *Life Outside*. While some of these were one-off events with a group, most involved a number of meetings with young people so that issues could be explored in more depth and the young people could be involved in setting priorities and planning what could be done to address the issues they raised. Smaller groups of young people were involved in more detailed work such as creating films of

their experiences. The two reports informed the early campaigning work of the project (for example, discussions with the Schools Food Trust about food in prison) and played an important role in identifying themes that were followed up in the work of U R Boss, such as campaigning on issues around policing and work around resettlement.

Other consultations included work with young people in Warren Hill YOI about education, resulting in a paper to inform action for both the YOI and the Howard League. There was a similar piece of work focusing on the experiences of young adults in prison. In three prisons U R Boss workers were able to go back several times to develop policy themes and explore what the young people would like to see changed.

These and other consultations with young people and a lot of in-depth work with the young advisors fed into all the work of U R Boss, as the SCM said, 'I think everything has been used in some way'. Ultimately all this resulted in the development of the *A Young Person's Manifesto* which was launched at the Party Conferences by the Young Advisors in 2013. The manifesto has been a key document informing the work of the Howard League and U R Boss and its more recent campaigning work. In this way young people have shaped the U R Boss project aims, the development of policy and campaigns work and its media profile.

3.3 Campaigning and policy work

The young advisors took part in a wide range of activities contributing to campaigning and policy work. These included:

- Giving verbal and written evidence to All Party Parliamentary Groups including Women and the Penal system and Children and the Police
- Contributing to responses to policy consultation
- Presenting at committees and groups
- Contributing to major policy reports and numerous political briefings (some with partners) e.g. strip searching on arrival at YOI, treating 17-year-olds as children and the right to an appropriate adult
- High level meetings between politicians and young people e.g. meeting with Crispin Blunt (while he was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Prisons and Youth Justice) and Rob Ffello (while he was Shadow Junior Minister for Justice)
- Briefings for decision makers, lobbying and influencing documents, e.g. *On our side* about young people and the police
- Campaigning activities e.g. Police and Crime Commissioners' campaign where the young advisors spoke on panels alongside senior politicians; the young advisors have been active in the campaign against secure colleges and joined with the Howard League campaigning for books for prisoners
- Speaking at political events e.g. all the party conferences for two years running
- Speaking at Howard League student meetings and AGMs
- Attendance at or written contributions to committees and enquiries e.g. policing, prisons and custodial environment, resettlement, the Who Cares Trust enquiry into young people in the criminal justice system who are looked after

- Attendance and presentations at a range of meetings e.g. the National Participation Forum
- Contribution to a wide range of media and press e.g. on secure schools or experiences in Feltham
- Contributing to training and materials e.g. the resettlement training for practitioners (PLE)
- Leading workshops or being key speakers at Howard League conferences e.g. Policing and Children, What is Justice? Re-imagining penal policy, Re-imagining Youth Justice
- Creation of the U R Boss website and much of the material on it, e.g. blog postings on topics such as life inside prison, being in care, self-harm, impact of having to disclose criminal records, recall, secure colleges and prison libraries
- U R Boss twitter and Facebook, young people also have their own accounts that they use to promote issues around the justice system
- Creation of a range of materials and resources for young people and practitioners e.g. the What is MAPPA? leaflet
- Young advisors judged the youth category of the community sentencing programmes competition for 3 years, as part of the Howard League for Penal Reform's 'Community Sentences Cut Crime' conference
- Development of the U R Boss manifesto informing the direction of both Howard League and U R Boss work.

As well as directly taking part in such activities the Howard League has utilised the knowledge and experiences of young people in many of the wide range of written materials they produce. All the work with the young advisors and the consultations has fed directly into the work of U R Boss and the Howard League more generally, giving the voice of young people wider influence throughout the organisation's activities.

The response document is peppered with their statements, with case studies, with examples explaining why certain things are problems. More and more you will see documents built heavily around young people's statements.
(Member of participation team)

The young people recognised that their issues and experiences add relevance and power to the work of the Howard League.

The fact they work with us young people and people who have been inside already, it means that is not just their perception of what needs to be changed in prison. It is the actual issues that a lot of people who have been there say need changing.
(Young Advisor in community)

The U R Boss and Howard League websites give further information about the campaign and policy work of the young advisors. It has a wide range of topics and pages such as What we think which address policy issues that are significant for young people, such as Intensive Supervision and Support orders, minimum age of criminal responsibility and strip searching. There are also blogs from young advisors on these and other topical issues.

Two of the interim evaluation reports consider aspects of this work in detail. *U R Boss Campaigning for Change* (2014) focuses on a U R Boss campaign to promote young people's interests in the criminal justice system that was designed to coincide with the establishment of the role of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) and the first PCC elections in November 2012. The evaluation found that the campaign was important to the young people involved with the U R Boss project, who successfully convinced opinion formers that they had something credible to say, and also encouraged a wider group of young people to get involved with campaigning, U R Boss and the Howard League. *Public legal education: An evaluation* (2014) considered the impact of the resettlement training and the guide for practitioners Resettlement: The legal rights of children and young people in the criminal justice system in need of accommodation and support; and the production of materials for young people. The evaluation found that listening to children was integral to the work, and that the PLE activities had increased the awareness of practitioners of issues facing young people around resettlement. Some practitioners reported this had led them to change their practice in ways that they anticipated would improve outcomes for young people.

In the following section we consider two key aspects of the work of the young advisors in depth: meetings between politicians and young people, and the development of the U R Boss manifesto.

3.3.1 Meetings with politicians

The young advisors met politicians in a number of situations: meetings with MPs and Ministers, which were sometimes specially arranged and sometimes at other events, and sharing platforms with them at party conferences. Young people's opinions and experiences were also conveyed to politicians through a range of written materials.

Many of the young advisors spoke of these meetings as some of the high points of being a young advisor. One particular meeting was mentioned frequently by both the young people who took part and workers and managers: a meeting between seven young advisors and Rob Flello when he was Shadow Minister for Justice. The meeting was arranged following a conversation between Rob Flello and some young advisors at the Howard League event at the Labour Party conference 2012. The fact that senior managers at the Howard League 'let' the meeting take place was seen as a significant shift in their confidence in the project. The SCM put a lot of effort into ensuring all the young people who wanted to take part in the meeting could, including someone who was in custody in a Cat D prison at the time.

It was the first time I had been anywhere official like that, somewhere I can be proud of. That is something I can be proud of, having been there and said my piece. Yeah I did that, not failing all my years.
(Young Advisor in custody)

The young advisors prepared thoroughly for their planned meetings with MPs. Before they met with Rob Flello, they identified the issues they were interested in raising with him and the legal team prepared a briefing for them on these

issues to help inform their considerations. They then decided in more detail what they wanted to say, who would speak on what topics, who would chair the meeting and how they would respond to his questions.

Everyone had an input. They helped us make a plan: this is what we need to go through, these are the points that we need to go through ... just trying to get everything covered like, just try and get everything said that we do need to say.

(Young Advisor in custody)

At the meeting with Rob Ffello they were so well prepared, and knowledgeable. They set the agenda, agreed how to express themselves. They were also spontaneous and responded to him and his agenda. They knew their own safe zones. They put serious work into getting ready.

(SCM)

The young advisors raised five issues with the shadow minister: resettlement, work and education, legal aid, schedule 1 offenders and foreign national young people in prison. Rob Ffello brought three questions to them: the age young people move from YOT to probation, early intervention, and what can be done to stop so many young people in care ending up in prison. The young people who attended thought the meeting with Rob Ffello was very significant. They felt he took them seriously, and listened to what they had to say.

It felt like he was on our side, and he is a top person, he has power.

(Young Advisor in community)

He was listening. He gave us time to talk, he gave us time to raise the issues. He was keen to go into it and how we can work on it so it could be better. He seemed to take a real interest in the work we do and how we go about it.

(Young Advisor in community)

The positive view of the meeting was shared by Rob Ffello himself. In a telephone interview with the evaluators he said:

It was a very good meeting, there was really good engagement from the young people. They were all very different and different levels of ability. None were what you would call shy, but some were more skilled communicators than others. The fact it clearly wasn't a scripted meeting, was a real strength.

He went on to say that the young people talked of the practical issues they faced that make it harder for them to turn their lives around and move on. They gave a level of detail he could not have understood without hearing from young people with experience of the justice system.

They talked of education, legal aid and its importance to them and other young people, and about the lack of basic necessities in the secure estate, and how these things impact on their lives. It is a real credit to the young people that I can remember this level of detail all these months on.

He said he had used the information he gained from the meeting in two main ways:

- He had fed all the issues they raised into the Shadow Justice Committee, particularly about legal aid and women in prison, 'So the useful points they made were in there and available to everyone'.
- He had written a series of papers for the Labour Shadow Justice team about the issues raised in his three years in post, and the young advisors' experiences were part of those papers. They were internal party documents that would be shared with others in the party. 'It is up to the shadow team now to act on them, but they capture their points and their suggestions for improvements.'

He felt such meetings can be very effective, with the caveat that it will depend who young people are meeting. If someone did not take the young people seriously and just paid lip-service to what they were saying he felt that it could be demoralising. He emphasized, however, that he had found this meeting valuable.

The young people were widely knowledgeable. The personalisation of the issues was powerful. The detail of how things play out, the impact they have on young people and how this limits their ability to move on, was really useful to me in my role.

The impact of a person of such office meeting with them was very significant to the young people.

*I am very proud of meeting and talking with Rob Ffello, I didn't think people like me met people like him. People here [prison] do not believe I have spoken with an MP and been in House of Commons.
(Young Advisor in custody)*

The young advisors met politicians from all parties in the course of their activities and they felt that some were more interested in what they had to say than others. Young people reported they did not feel listened to by some politicians and workers were aware of the potential for such meetings to be frustrating and potentially upsetting. However, even when the young people did not feel that the engagement was productive, some of them felt the meetings enabled people to see how well informed and organised they were.

*I think he was kind of taken back by what we were discussing and how it was discussed and the manner of the meeting.
(Young Advisor in community)*

Staff from U R Boss and the Howard League also attended these meetings and observed the positive interactions.

*There was an obvious gulf in where they come from and where we come from but I thought he genuinely engaged with them, that for the moments of awkwardness, it was a genuine engagement, and he didn't rubbish the fact that there were quite radical things being said in the report.
(Executive Management Team (EMT) member)*

The young advisors were not only prepared for public encounters with politicians, but were also supported during them, as one young advisor recounts her experience at one of the party conferences.

Frances our Chief Exec she was on the panel and she realised I wasn't getting asked any questions so I wasn't given an opportunity to speak, but I was following it and she was like did you want to say anything? So she always gave me the opportunity and I would then speak.

(Young Advisor in community)

While it was young advisors in the community who actually attended meetings with politicians, the views of young people in custody were directly fed in too. In preparing evidence for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Children and the Police, a participation officer visited young people in custody to specifically hear from them what they would like to say to the committee. This then formed the basis of the verbal evidence given to the committee by a young advisor and the SCM.

After the meetings the young advisors who had not been present were updated as to what had happened, and given the opportunity to contribute to moving the conversation on. For example, after the meeting with Rob Ffello:

We said this is what the young advisors specifically talked about, so these were the things that they identified, and then we said these are some of the issues that Rob raised, what would you like to tell him about it. So we sent that out to a lot of people and then got quite a few back so we were then collating them to send back to Rob as case studies.

(Participation officer)

3.3.2 The development of A Young Person's Manifesto

At the beginning of Year 4 of the project all the participation and consultation work that had been done with young people and the work of the young advisors was pulled together by the young advisors in a document that would be key to the rest of the project and the wider work of the Howard League as well: *A Young Person's Manifesto*. The development of the manifesto was a culmination of input from over 350 children and young people in custody and in the community bringing together a whole range of voices. Children and young people contributed information about what issues they faced through a series of group discussions in custody, the community and through individual reflections verbally and in writing. A number of sessions were facilitated with young people in custody, starting with a 'blank sheet' so that they could identify the issues that were important to them. Over the course of a series of group meetings issues were identified and discussed and 'drilled down' for a greater understanding of them.

The U R Boss workers reviewed the large body of material and produced a list of all the issues that had been raised. At this time one of the young advisors was an intern at U R Boss and so was able to take a lead on this work alongside the participation officers and policy development officer. Once the list of topics had been drawn up young advisors started grouping and ordering the issues. The young advisors who were able to come to meetings had briefings from the legal team on the context and dynamics of the issues and support from others in the campaigns team to help them think through what a manifesto was and how best to convey the issues in it.

Working at the Howard League on the manifesto was really good. We had meetings with [name and name] who helped us think things through, helped us be more clear and more focused and helped us organise our thoughts loads. Like if you have a number of connected thoughts, how do you get them clear and condensed into a powerful message.

(Young Advisor in community)

One of the things that made it really unique was the combination of the young people's issues and the resources we have in legal and policy teams, so that the young people had as informed a voice as possible.

(Legal team member)

All those interviewed agreed that the content came from the young people. Young advisors in custody were very involved as well, commenting on the issues, prioritising them and feeding in views and opinions.

The manifesto is a list of topics that have been gathered from all the meetings we have had with young people, all the kinds of participation work we have done, to draw out some key themes of the issues young people want to work on. Young people in custody have prioritised these as issues for change.

(Participation officer)

Time was a pressure because the Howard League wanted the manifesto ready for the party political conference season, but as one of the participation officers commented, there was 'no way [Young Advisor] was going to compromise on the participative process'. After due negotiation and discussion with all concerned the manifesto was indeed ready for the party conferences and young people were on the panels presenting it at each conference.

We all have a criminal past and all believe we want to make change, and Howard League provide us with the tools to get things done. They explain to us what things are and what we can do to achieve the change that we want. They do not feed the words into you, it comes out of you.

(Young Advisor in community)

A *Young Person's Manifesto* identifies ten key issues: licence conditions, breach and recall; relationships and support (family and friends and professionals); work and education; wiping the slate clean; the basics – housing, finance and ID; legal aid; it's different for women and girls; police; prisons; and participation. The manifesto stresses that the calls for change should not be seen in isolation. They overlap and all of them need addressing for the criminal justice system to be reformed effectively. Many of the issues match key concerns of the Howard League more broadly. The young advisors clearly felt a great sense of both achievement and ownership of the manifesto, referring to it as 'our' manifesto.

It is everything that we picked, it is nothing to do with the staff because at the end of the day they have not experienced what we have, so we know more about it. So we shaped it all.

(Young Advisor in community)

The manifesto has since shaped much of the work of U R Boss and the Howard League. The young advisors had discussions with members of the campaigns team to consider policy related to each of the ten points and what could be done with them. It has been used to inform practice both proactively and reactively as issues arise, such as blogs on specific issues facing women and girls that were produced for International Women's Day, and a requirement that all the papers submitted for the Re-imagining Youth Justice conference had to address one of the manifesto issues. It also informed how responses to current political issues were framed, for example, the campaign against secure colleges was shared by both the Howard League and U R Boss, as both viewed education in custody as a major concern. Both spoke out against the proposals, supported the petition and promoted alternative models. The books for prisoners campaign was another shared issue. The manifesto enabled the Howard League to seek to highlight the key areas of change for young people in the justice system with authority, knowing the key areas were the result of a thorough participative process.

Many of the young advisors were aware that the reputation and status of the Howard League helped them get their message across to people they would otherwise have no access to.

Without U R Boss no one would care about our points, no one would care about our opinions.

(Young Advisor in custody)

Because it is the Howard League people listen. They are quite powerful and they have authority.

(Young Advisor in custody)

In the later stages of the project they also recognised that the organisation was committed to enabling them to raise their issues, and the manifesto was a demonstration of this

The Howard League they say we will bring you up to the front and you can say it yourself, they are not going to take it and like sugar coat it . . . U R Boss don't twist anything – it is the truth coming straight from young people. So it is my truth what I say.

(Young Advisor in community)

3.4 Work with practitioners

The bid for funding for U R Boss focused on 'practical improvements' for young people both in custody and on release, and this included work with practitioners including lawyers, YOT and YOS workers, staff from YOI and prisons, and workers from local authorities and NGOs. Contact with practitioners was mainly via the website, the Policy and Practice Newsletter and the public legal education work.

In 2011 a practitioners workshop was held for about twenty YOT/YOS practitioners and managers from a geographical spread; the day was organised around a presentation from U R Boss, group exercises and discussions. The workshops introduced people to the U R Boss website

and online videos produced by young people, aiming to introduce the notion of participation and offer practitioners a possible resource for sharing and developing ideas (through the website especially). Following this the stated intent of U R Boss was to build on the initial success of the day and to organise further events and web-based activities to promote practitioner networking and exchange, and to identify potential sites for U R Boss activities on the ground. However, despite plans to support a practitioners' network, this turned out to be a one-off event. A member of the U R Boss team at the time reflected that the Howard League was primarily focused on policy change and 'gave little thought about change at practice level'. This they believed meant there was little discussion or debate about how to influence practice, which had implications for the development of this aspect of the work.

Ongoing contact with practitioners continued through the website and *Policy and Practice*, a quarterly newsletter which contained updates on U R Boss activity, youth justice policy developments and innovative practice. The most recent issue (March 2014) was sent to 2008 people as well as being available on the website. An evaluation survey for recipients of the newsletter received few responses (6) but all found the information useful. One respondent commented that one of the most useful aspects was 'the alternative perspective – a young people centred perspective on YJ system' and another that it was 'raising awareness that young people in CJS are children first and offenders second'. Respondents said they shared the information in *Policy and Practice* with others and all had used it in some way, for example to raise awareness or to campaign for change in youth justice issues within their workplace and networks. A number had visited the U R Boss website and Facebook page or followed the project on Twitter. All felt that the involvement of young people in U R Boss was important.

The web pages for youth justice professionals had links to policy, legal work, news and updates (*Policy and Practice*), publications, training and campaigns. U R Boss also had a Facebook page and a Twitter account, each with many hundred 'likes' or 'followers'. These social media platforms shared news and updates about U R Boss and provided links to blogs, reports and campaigns, as well as other information about youth justice issues. An evaluation survey was undertaken to obtain people's opinions on these internet resources, and in total 31 people responded. Most respondents thought U R Boss did a good job of giving voice to young people, informed them about what more could be done to support young people in contact with the criminal justice system and promoted and advocated well for the rights of children and young people. All had used information from the website, Facebook page or Twitter account in some way: to learn more about the youth justice system, to campaign for change, to inform others and to raise awareness within their networks. One person gave the example of giving *What is MAPPA?* leaflets to young people 'to inform them of the process and their rights in it'. Others mentioned sharing the manifesto with young people, and showing resources to colleagues. Again most, but not all, were aware of young people's involvement in U R Boss and all thought young people's involvement

in such projects was important. Some people took the opportunity to comment on what they thought was the major achievement of the project and mentioned the fact that U R Boss was based on listening to young people. Others gave a general comment about U R Boss and again these focused on the involvement of young people and the need for change in the youth justice system.

*What you are doing is so important to change perception[s] of young people in the CJS and raise awareness of the complex and often unjust reasons for them being there. Very well done, especially to the young people involved in this project.
(Survey response)*

3.4.1 Public legal education

Public legal education (PLE) was a major piece of work with professionals in the youth justice system. This strand of work was the focus of an interim report which reviewed the PLE around resettlement. The issues addressed in the PLE came from young people in calls to the helpline and were confirmed as significant by the participation work with young people and the young advisors. While the work of the legal team covered many areas of law and a range of problems faced by children and young people, resettlement was consistently the main issue about which people contacted the helpline.

*We continue to work extensively on resettlement law cases with individual clients. In year four we have 71 cases on resettlement forming over 23 per cent of our legal work.
(Big Lottery end of year report, July 2013)*

The interim evaluation found the PLE strand of work brought together the specialist resettlement knowledge and experience of the Howard League solicitors with the expertise of the U R Boss workers in involving young people and the practical experience of the young people themselves. This joint working created useful resources for a wide range of professionals, and materials for young people on issues relating to resettlement. The training and the guide produced universally positive feedback. There was some early evidence it had led to better resettlement outcomes for some very vulnerable young people. This highlights the value of the education and training, and its subsequent identifiable influence on both awareness and practice. The guide was published on the Youth Justice Board's website in their effective practice library.

The PLE resettlement work demonstrated the project's maturing approach to participation and the involvement of young people. By being responsive to young people and listening to them, resettlement was identified as a relevant area for young people that could be developed. The guide and training for professionals were endorsed by young people; in addition the foreword was written by one young advisor and the cover designed by another. The group work with young people in custody enabled them to identify and develop resources specifically for their peers. Listening to children was integral to this work.

The legal team and U R Boss subsequently developed similar training around adjudications which was also well received. Importantly, both courses resulted in professionals being more aware of when to seek legal advice and led some participants to call the helpline with queries. One person who attended the adjudications event said it was

*A really good training and has made the team have a more proactive approach to challenging the prison on some things and encouraging prisoners to appeal if appropriate.
(Training participant)*

Overall, this section has highlighted the wide range of activity undertaken in each area of practice to meet the aims of U R Boss. The activity is of value only if it has impact, however, and this is the focus of the next section.

4. Impact of the work of U R Boss

The outcomes and impact of U R Boss have the potential to be wide ranging: on the young people who had direct contact with the U R Boss staff, on the wider group of young people in the justice system who are affected by changes in policy and attitudes that U R Boss has contributed to, on other professionals and organisations and their practice, and on the Howard League itself.

This section will explore the main themes to arise from the analysis of the large body of data collected over the life of the project. The main and recurring issues that arose were:

- Young people's participation and influence
- Impact of the work of U R Boss on young people
 - Young advisors
 - Wider group of young people – changes in policy, legislation and practice
- Impact of U R Boss on the Howard League
 - Organisational support for participation
 - Embedding participation within Howard League.

These themes are closely related and very much intertwined

4.1 Young people, participation and influence

*I think we have moved from the back seat into the driving seat
(Young Advisor in the community)*

Young people's participation was at the core of U R Boss, however this was not seen as entirely new practice for the Howard League. The legal service always aimed to give the power and control to young people as far as practicable, supported by the specialist knowledge of the lawyers. The Lottery funding was seen as creating an opportunity to systematise and extend what was already being done within the legal service, and to extend the range and influence of young people through participation. These topics have been part of all the evaluation information collection; however in 2011 the evaluation team conducted a series of interviews with Howard League and U R Boss staff and young advisors focusing specifically on young people's participation. The framework for these interviews was developed by De Montfort University's young researchers and some of the interviews were conducted by one of the young researchers in the team.

In 2011 the commitment in principle to participation from all concerned was clear to see, and there was an understanding that the voice of children would enhance the campaigning messages of the Howard League. U R Boss staff talked of how the project added to the campaigning work of the Howard League by bringing participation into the mix.

On the most simplistic level as an organisation that purports to represent a particular group in society – young people in the youth justice system – how can we do that if we don't know, if we don't work with them how do we know what needs to change?
(U R Boss co-ordinator at the time)

The need to counter negative stereotypes about young people in the justice system was considered an important part of this. As a member of EMT said, young people in the justice system are not seen as deserving and are 'vilified and unpopular; they have been failed and have failed themselves'. This was confirmed by the then co-ordinator who said,

Ethically we have a responsibility to offer a different dialogue and get their views and opinions out there and countering all the rubbish there is about them.
(U R Boss co-ordinator at the time)

The participation work with young people started with consultations where the broad questions and areas of interest were set by adults: staff went to young people in custody and in contact with YOTs in the community and asked them about these issues. At this stage the Howard League was 'listening and responding to young people' (DfES, 2001), though people spoke of 'feeding the views of young people to the media and policy makers' rather than young people representing themselves, and referred to the young people's lack of campaigning skills.

They can't write a press release, they can't run a campaign by themselves, they just don't have the skills or the experience although they are learning them, they will get there. ... they actually have other qualities which are just as important.
(CEO)

The early consultations with young people produced a wealth of information about young people's experiences and provided material for the reports *Life Inside* (2010), about the experiences of 15- to 17-year-old boys in prison, and *Life Outside* (2012), which explored young people's experiences on returning to the community from custody. Both these reports raised issues that were pursued by the Howard League (such as the issue of food in prison) and also formed the basis of the subsequent focus on resettlement. Campaigns were developed to act on the issues and therefore avoid the consultations with young people being tokenistic.

At this stage, other than with two or three young people, there were no ongoing and consistent relationships with young people. There was talk of trying to establish an advisory group, but without such relationships this was difficult. At the same time, workers were keen to be clear what the purpose of the group would be and what it would be able to do. Many different ways of making contact with young people were tried, including having satellite groups based around the country with links to YOTs and YOIs, but none got off the ground. One reason often given was that the Howard League was seen as an adversary, as some local authorities and institutions had been the subject of legal proceedings taken by the Howard League. Another issue was that

the attempts to engage YOTs was at a time of great upheaval for them, with re-organisations, redundancies and budget cuts not making it a good time to develop partnerships. This meant the legal service was the main means of letting young people know about U R Boss, and inevitably the young people supported by the lawyers had many other things on their minds. In year five of U R Boss a member of EMT offered this reflection:

*When the Howard League meets these young people for the first time, they are pretty much at the bottom ... they have gone through an awful lot of very bad things ... so it is going to take time before they are ready, are confident enough to do the things they now do so well, like using their experiences that have been so negative and using them in a positive way. So when you think about it, we were never going to get a large number of young advisors in that kind of place quickly.
(EMT member)*

All the workers employed by U R Boss to work with young people were very committed to young people's participation and experienced in working in such a way in other organisations. However, there were a number of challenges involved in working with this group of young people: their lack of confidence, them not being used to working in this way, chaotic lives with changes often not within their control, and the safeguarding issues discussed in the previous section. All of these issues made it difficult to get going. The structures and systems needed to support the work had to be developed organisationally.

*It is like a chicken and egg at the moment, it is frustrating because we are having to make decisions I would rather young people were making, but we need the decisions made to involve them.
(U R Boss co-ordinator at the time)*

Interviews with those young people who were involved at the time showed a clear understanding of what U R Boss was about.

*Getting our voice heard and other young people's voice heard and getting involved in campaigns and projects so that young people can change policy and promote change. We are like a microphone for other young people in custody.
(Young Advisor in community 2011)*

Young people also spoke of not wanting to rush things and to learn and take things step by step.

Looking back, there was recognition that maybe working with young people in the way envisaged in the funding application for U R Boss was more complex than expected. More had to be done within the organisation than anticipated. Many approaches with young people had to be tried and tested to develop the most appropriate ways of working with them, and to develop the support systems that would enable young people to take part both when in custody and in the community. During the first half of the project two co-ordinators and three participation officers left, with some expressing frustration about the slow pace of development. While the staff turnover was disruptive in some ways, it

also enabled changes of job title and description as understanding of what was needed developed. Speaking about the participation officers, an EMT member said of the role:

It's someone who understands where the young people are but can also interpret and help and guide. It's very very subtle and very skilled and I think we have got excellent staff now, absolutely brilliant. The quality of the staff and the quality of the relationship with young people is crucial.

However at this point things were being decided by the Howard League responding to young people's concerns rather than young people making decisions themselves.

Some of our efforts in the first couple of years were slightly artificial. We had to come up with stuff ourselves. It was chicken and egg, we needed to get moving and we weren't going to get moving unless we got moving... . Once we did young people got more and more involved and were able to take on the reins.
(EMT member)

Around the third year (2012) of the project momentum was developing in the work with young people. The rigorous referral system (outlined in 3.1.3) was starting to work, the policy and practice to support the work (for example confidentiality, safeguarding, record keeping, communication, combining of legal or policy expertise with participation) were in place, there was a more stable staff team and much had been learnt from the previous work. In addition the few young advisors who had been involved had developed a range of skills and knowledge around campaigning and the legal and political context of youth justice. This enabled U R Boss to be more responsive to both young people and to requests for input from young people by the Howard League. An example of this was a young advisor being asked to contribute to a media request: all the checks and balances were in place and working, having been previously negotiated between the legal team, the participation officers and the press office, enabling the young person to contribute their experiences safely and competently.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) campaign in 2012 was the first major piece of work to actively involve the young advisors in all aspects. The PCC campaign was the focus of the interim evaluation report: *U R Boss: Campaigning for Change*. The new PCC policy offered an opportunity for joint working as policing was a concern of both young people and the Howard League. While police behaviour was an issue raised by young people, the idea of the PCC campaign was the Howard League's.

With the PCC campaign the Howard League saw an opportunity to link the young people's concerns about the police to the elections and suggested to the Young Advisors that this might be a way forward. The Young Advisors did not know about the elections (most people did not) but all saw it had potential for impact. But we would not have campaigned on policing and PCCs without knowing it was a key topic that young people wanted to talk about.
(EMT member)

The PCC campaign was driven by the Howard League. [It was] smart thinking about recognising that something was happening and that it could match with a big issue for the young people. I get that it makes perfect sense for the Howard League a campaigning organisation with a hundred years' experience. So you can't just dismiss that because you have got a participation model.
(Participation officer)

The campaign and its Children and Policing Conference brought young advisors into contact with other young people in the criminal justice system and with professionals outside London. It was the first time the young advisors attended and spoke at party conferences and that the young people had a more central role in driving campaigning work. A briefing document On our side? was published for the campaign, setting out young people's concerns about the police and what they wanted to change. The campaign used social media and the website and developed the project's use of social media considerably. Many of the young advisors took part in the campaign and valued the opportunities it gave them and also recognised they learnt a lot from the process. However, when the elections were over, despite invitations to 'police things', the young people were not keen to continue this work. As a participation officer said,

This year when they [Howard League] were talking about continuing it, asking if they wanted [to be involved] ... and they were like 'No no we don't really feel it.' So they decided to park it and move on to other things. It might not have been what the Howard League wanted, but it was a decision made by the young advisors and so that is what happened.
(Participation officer)

Involvement in the campaign helped to create a stronger group of young advisors – there was a consistent and considerable commitment from a core group of about nine young people. Importantly, the campaign gave everyone a concrete example of what young people could do. The group was meeting more regularly and systems for including young people in custody were developing, giving the group more legitimacy and developing their confidence and campaigning skills. The young advisors, U R Boss and the Howard League were building on all that had been learnt from listening and responding to young people and moving to a more participative model where young people were active in setting the agenda and acting on the issues they had identified.

I love that about it – it is us that define things. We think of the issues that we could work on, we decide which are the most important and then what we will do about them.
(Young Advisor in the community)

Young advisors who had been involved for the longest recognised the change in their influence.

At the start the Howard League or the participation officer would tell us about things and ask if we wanted to be part in some way, like going to a meeting, telling our story. Now though we have more control, we have done all the work on the manifesto and we have our issues that we want to work on. They do still ask us to be part of things, but now usually around the issues in the manifesto.
(Young Advisor in community)

From the experiences we have gained from campaigning it's kind of given us the knowledge you know we can do this . . . we have all had a taste and now let's get out of the paddling pool and go for a swim.
(Young Advisor in community)

The proven track record of the young advisors meant the Howard League was more confident about involving them in different events and campaigns, and hence opened up many more opportunities for joint working (e.g. the campaign against secure colleges). In the early years of the project a number of people referred to the reputation of the Howard League as needing to be protected, 'the Howard League has a very long established reputation, it does not want to risk that', but the proven abilities and responsibility of the young advisors created more openings. This was not lost on the young advisors.

They take risks with us, like I could have gone to Portcullis House and acted like an idiot, I could have done that, but they treated me like an adult and I like that.
(Young Advisor in custody)

As a campaigning organisation the Howard League needs to be responsive to a wide range of current issues and sometimes act very quickly on issues, many of which inevitably were outside the scope of the manifesto, but the manifesto was seen to give the U R Boss workers the authority to work on certain issues.

So we have this authority... you should be looking at that because this is what we have set our agenda to be. So it is really helpful to guide us. It is also great for turning people down, because we get so many requests for the young advisors to do things, we can say, sorry, no it is not one of their strategic objectives.
(Participation officer)

This worked in a number of different ways in practice. One way was when an issue identified by young advisors became a topical issue. An example given was of a submission to the Who Cares Trust enquiry on young people in the criminal justice system who are looked after. This was an issue that was very important to young people and they had previously said, 'anything going on about this we need you to do something about it'. U R Boss workers contributed to the enquiry basing their submission on things young people had told them from all the conversations they had had about the issue. The document gave cases studies and examples of how and why things are so problematic for young people being looked after.

Another way U R Boss worked was to inform young people of what was happening in the policy world and then ask them which issues were priorities and how they would like to respond.

We bring them the policy smorgasbord. We say, this is what's happening in the world, this is what is going on and these are the hot topics. The idea being that we are the antennae, we are the part that can see where the policy influencing is happening, where the power is lying or not lying, where things are changing.
(U R Boss team)

This policy smorgasbord was prepared by the team and informed from contacts the team had with a wider group of young people via the helpline and visits. The young advisors would then decide and direct their response. The minutes of their meetings show they were active in decision making and deciding on the direction of the work. The policy officer also prepared policy briefings specifically for young people so they were well informed about current issues, and these briefings were made available for all young people on the U R Boss website. In this way many young people developed knowledge of how politics operates.

I think in terms of political awareness, I wouldn't say they are reading the House of Commons update every week, but several of them have a very strong sense of political influencing and how party politics work.
(U R Boss team)

The Howard League and U R Boss worked towards different strategic objectives, though there was overlap. The manifesto informs the young people and justice stream of Howard League work, and there were discussions about how to embed the manifesto more strategically. Just how much influence U R Boss had over the work of the Howard League was questioned by some of the workers.

They have plenty of influence over U R Boss, but what degree of influence over Howard League is a different question ... [it] varies depending on what we are doing, where there is overlap yes, an example is work and education which is relevant to both.
(Participation officer)

An illustration of this was when young advisors wanted to do something about Stop and Search and the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), but these were not taken further as Stop and Search was seen to be outside the remit of the Howard League, and too many other organisations were campaigning about the IPCC. However, young people's concerns about arrest were taken on because arrest is the entry point to the penal system.

We will explain and explain repeatedly why this and why that, it is not unusual but it has been [a] good learning experience for them.
(EMT member)

The young advisors understood this, with one saying,

It is not the end of the world if we say something, but nothing happens. There is plenty that needs to be done, we can't do it all.
(Young Advisor in the community)

However one thing many of the young advisors were keen to do was work with other young people in the justice system directly. Some wanted to be able to run the type of consultation sessions the workers did with young people and to talk to prisoners inside so they could find out how they could make it better by campaigning on those issues

*I know it would be difficult as we all have convictions and the prisons might not let us in, but I would have liked to have tried it and seen if the conversations were different in any way.
(Young Advisor)*

Some opportunities for this type of work were created through the personal development plans of the young people. Those who ran the session for young people at the YOT as part of the residential rated the experience highly, and were keen to do more such work with young people both in and out of custody in the hope that sharing their experiences might have an impact on them.

*If someone had come and talked to me when I was at the YOT stage and told me what a waste of time prison was then maybe, just maybe I would have made some different choices. If I could do that for someone...
(Young Advisor in custody)*

Neither the Howard League nor U R Boss were funded to do preventative work with other young people, so the potential for this was limited; but because the young advisors were passionate about working in this way the participation officers explored links with other organisations and ways to enable the young people to do this type of community work.

Young people were involved with U R Boss at different levels. The young advisors had the ongoing relationship and built up considerable skills and expertise, but there was also a wider group of young people who contributed their voice via consultations, group work and written feedback. As the young advisors developed, they were very clear that the voice of U R Boss was not just theirs and that they had a role and responsibility to make sure all the issues and concerns raised by young people in the criminal justice system were brought to the attention of those with influence. Many of the young advisors talked to the evaluation team about this.

*I want to be able to speak on behalf of other young people, I need to be able to speak about every issue whether it is one that affected me or not, we have to speak for a bigger group of young people than us. It is not just me that has been messed up there are a lot of other young people out there that have been messed up by the system and we need to speak for all of them.
(Young Advisor in community)*

*I have to think about what other young people would say as well and get their words across.
(Young Advisor in community)*

The workers pointed out that prison is a very individual experience and there is no encouragement to think or act collectively as the system breaks down any kind of bond or cohesiveness. They felt that initially there was less enthusiasm from young advisors to consider material created or issues raised by others so they supported the young people in learning about advocacy and developing these skills.

A few of them have said they don't feel they can advocate on behalf of other young people, because how can I possibly say that if it wasn't my experience? Which is a basic thing that all campaigners think at some point and have to work their head around.

(Participation officer)

4.1.1 What has facilitated this level of participation?

The young advisors felt genuinely in control of the work of U R Boss, and that the too common tokenistic involvement of young people had been avoided. They consistently highlighted this in conversation with the evaluation team.

U R Boss doesn't twist it or turn anything, it is coming straight from young people.

(Young Advisor in custody)

The fact that they give us the upper hand, the staff are there to facilitate it, but we are in charge of shaping it and deciding where the project focuses ... they put us in control.

(Young Advisor in community)

At the end of the project U R Boss took young people's ideas and acted on them without the continued involvement of the young people, but ensured that they represented those views accurately.

Checking things out with young people, before they use anything I have written, they also come back to me and check is this exactly what you said are you completely happy with that?

(Young Advisor in custody)

If they are not sure about anything, they come and pick our brains and make sure they are understanding exactly what we want and where we are coming from.

(Young Advisor in community)

The young people identified key elements that enabled them to take on new and sometimes daunting roles or tasks. First, the quality of the workers and their values and attitudes:

They do not judge me about being in prison.

(Young Advisor in custody)

The workers they all care about young people in prison, and not many people out there do. They show a passion for getting things to change.

(Young Advisor in custody)

I can talk to [name] about anything and everything. I can approach her and trust her with anything. It has been the same with them all, everyone felt they could trust [names] with all their heart.
(Young Advisor in community)

Second, the level of support and preparation that they received (also discussed in 3.2.2). Young people told us about the information they were given, the role play they experienced in preparation for meetings, and the encouragement they were given.

They always make sure we are comfortable with what we are doing, they continuously ask us are you sure you are OK with it?
(Young Advisor in community)

All the talk and discussion kind of helps us prepare for any situation ... and helps us think about what obstacles might fly in our path ... the way [participation officer] asks questions really makes you think, so we are not giving half an answer but a full description of the issue, but it is still completely us.
(Young Advisor in community)

The young people in custody pointed to the amount of contact they had with the workers through visits, phone calls and letters. After group sessions in prison the participation officers wrote personally to all the young people who had taken part.

We hand write on each of them, so it has got a personal touch. So after Portland for example we wrote something like 30 letters ... We try to ... personalise them, with something like how is your new work going. Then if they write back we reply and keep the conversation going.
(Participation officer)

The workers pointed out that the level of funding for the project helped ensure the participation of young people was meaningful. It also meant that workers could spend the time required to support young people around the country, in the community and in custody, to participate.

There is a very high intensity of work in ensuring everyone knows what is going on and can contribute their ideas. It takes a lot of time, and it is great we have the funding to do this properly.
(Participation officer)

I don't think either of us has ever worked in a project that's so well-funded ... [to the] extent of being able to put all the time and money in that does go into being able to engage with them.
(Participation officer)

Having the systems and structures right was seen to support the participation of young people effectively.

We have all the processes and structures right, I think it's working very well and everyone is working together and talking together and sharing information and learning from each other. That's across and within teams.
(EMT member)

The production of the *What is MAPPA?* leaflet was seen as an illustration of this. The leaflet was young person led and produced using the expert knowledge of the legal and policy and campaign teams working together with young people, and according to a member of the legal team, ‘going backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, until everyone was happy with it’.

The involvement of young people in U R Boss was seen as a success by members of the EMT, who considered that young people had been able to add their voices to the campaign for penal reform through U R Boss. A member of the EMT said the participation gave young people a voice and a platform that is unusual in youth justice, but that a lot of thought had been given to how to present that voice, for example to ministers.

4.1.2 Young people and governance

As young people’s knowledge, skills, experience and influence over the strategic direction of U R Boss grew, consideration was given to their involvement in the strategic decision making of the Howard League. This was a topic of debate for some time and different models were still being tried at the end of the project.

The Howard League has a board of trustees including a designated trustee linked with U R Boss. However, she pointed out that the role did not come with a job description defining what the position might entail. This trustee met and worked with many of the young advisors the first time they judged the Community Sentence awards. She had regular briefing meetings with the SCM to ensure she was up-to-date with U R Boss activity and issues. The work of U R Boss, however, was not a routine item for the Board agenda. The trustee reported that the board were aware of the work of U R Boss and the young advisors, through, for example, short presentations given about the work, and leaflets and publications that were presented at meetings for people to take away.

Some young advisors had attended Board meetings, but they were not keen to do this on a regular basis. Those that attended found the trustees friendly and welcoming, but one young advisor felt they ‘didn’t have much of a role really, there was a big agenda to cover and the meeting was really busy’. The designated trustee confirmed this saying:

They just listen really. I can understand that, in a full meeting there are twenty plus people there and it must be very intimidating to say I have a point to make.
(Trustee)

The young advisors discussed their attendance at the Board and considered possible models of involvement in governance that would suit them, and after several of them attended different meetings they reviewed the options. They decided that for the moment they would prefer a rotating presence at the campaigns sub-committee, one of a number of smaller groups of trustees that met before the full trustees meeting and focused on specific areas of Howard League work. The young advisors attended the campaigning sub-group, though for historic reasons the link trustee was part of the legal sub-group. The young advisors considered they had more to offer at the smaller and more

focused meeting and would get more out of attendance, and they preferred a rotating arrangement so that the opportunity would be open to all young advisors not just one

We want to have two of us at the campaigns meeting, but not so much the main meeting. As it is not the main meeting we will have more of a say, and with two of us it will be better. We will talk about what we want to say and the advisors meeting before and then about what has been said at the one after, so everyone will know what is going on.
(Young Advisor)

The role of young people in the governance of the Howard League in the future was under review at the time of writing. The CEO said it could be possible for a young person to be a trustee, but wondered if they would really want that, and questioned whether that would be the best way forward. As has been pointed out, young people are only one group of people for whom the Howard League campaigns and so decisions about young people's involvement in governance would need to be expanded to consider involvement of others in governance as well.

4.2 Impact on young people involved with U R Boss

For young people the degree and nature of impact varied considerably depending on the nature of their contact with U R Boss.

4.2.1 Legal clients

The enhanced legal service reached a large number of young people with over 2600 calls to the telephone helpline and solicitors working on 787 new cases over the five years of the project. For the first interim report on the legal service the evaluation team heard directly from a small number of young people who had used the legal service only, and many of the young advisors were also legal clients. All young people who had been clients spoke very highly of the legal support they had received. The evaluation has set out (section 3.1) how much the young people valued the service and particularly how they valued the care the U R Boss lawyers took to ensure they understood the process and potential outcomes. These cases frequently resulted in better outcomes for young people, such as obtaining accommodation on release, support from a local authority, Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL), and legal representation at adjudications. For example the BIG report for year three presents figures which show that of the 73 legal cases which concluded during the year, 57 had a 'favourable outcome for the client', a 78 per cent success rate. The legal team reported that the Lottery funding had directly enabled 'us to help more children before they get released from custody to ensure they have somewhere to live on release'. An example was given by a member of the legal team:

A lot of children, if they do not have legal representation [at adjudications] get found guilty when they shouldn't be ... then they are subject to punishment in the regime which could involve loss of association so they cannot mix with others, loss of canteen so they cannot have their chocolate or cigarettes or shower gel . . . all the privileges that keep young people sane in custody.
(Legal team member)

The Big Lottery funding enabled the legal team to work with many more young people on their legal issues than had been possible before. On the legal client feedback form most young people said they were satisfied with the outcome of their case.

You honestly changed my life with your help.

(Client survey form)

The interim report on the legal service, *Welfare + Rights*, concluded that the legal service provided an outstanding level of support to young people, addressing their legal needs and delivering continuing support that was genuinely empowering for young people facing very difficult challenges.

It was not part of the evaluation remit to establish the impact of the outcomes of the legal work on young people. To take young people and accommodation as an example, however, many and repeated research findings suggest a strong association between accommodation problems at resettlement and the risk of reoffending. This was highlighted as long ago as the mid 1990s (Carlisle, 1996), and has been further illustrated by subsequent reports at both local and national levels (Waring, 2004; Glover and Clewett, 2010). The Social Exclusion Unit (2002) concluded that stable accommodation can reduce reoffending by as much as 20 per cent; and a subsequent report commissioned for Barnardo's concluded that

'[our] experience of providing floating support and supported accommodation for homeless young people, including those leaving custody, has convinced us that having the right level of support at the right time is crucial to ensuring adherence to the terms of a community licence, engaging with education and training, and accessing vital support services'

(Glover and Clewett, 2010: 4).

The achievements of the project in securing suitable acceptable accommodation and support for young people on release suggest the project demonstrably improved young people's chances of staying out of trouble.

4.2.2 Young people in custody taking part in consultations and group work

As previously described, the level and the length of contact between U R Boss and the young people in custody taking part in the participation work varied. Some young people had been part of one-off group discussions while others had been to group meetings over a number of sessions, sometimes continuing the conversation via writing and telephone calls. As the SCM pointed out, many of the young people U R Boss worked with had not had the liberty, literally, to take part in events, training and meetings with key people.

When you are in an environment where very few decisions are your own, being asked to talk about the things that are important to you, to be listened to and set the agenda of the conversations and influence decisions can be a significant experience. For many it is the first time anyone has listened to them.

(SCM)

The young people in custody confirmed this. Evaluation forms created for this report and those U R Boss sent after group sessions highlight that the young people involved felt they were listened to and they valued this.

*Since I have been in prison it felt like the first time I have been listened to. I felt that [workers] were taking my words seriously as well as everyone else's.
(Evaluation form from young person in custody)*

While only a small number of evaluation forms were returned, it is clear the young people found the sessions informative, useful and interesting in addition to feeling respected and listened to.

4.2.3 The young advisors

Young advisors were the group of young people with whom there was the most consistent contact. These young people identified profound impacts for themselves as a result of their involvement in U R Boss. Although the young people received vouchers for attending meetings and events, these were not mentioned to the evaluation team, suggesting they were not important motivators for attendance. A number of them recognised that the work they did added positively to their CV and recognised the skills they had learnt,

*I am now in strong position to apply for work when I finish uni, networking and people [I] know, skills I have learnt, experiences I have had.
(Young Advisor in community)*

*Howard League helps my CV and has given me things to talk about in interviews, I recently went for promotion and when they ask you about a challenging situation I was able to use an example from U R Boss.
(Young Advisor in community)*

The young advisors also recognised that they gained from the contact with a wide range of people, many of whom they would never have met otherwise. Sometimes this was not just one-off contact as some stayed in touch after meeting young advisors at events, for example by following young advisors on Twitter. The young people appreciated the interest in them.

*People remembering me from other events and asking how things are, she has kept an eye on the work I am doing.
(Young Advisor in community)*

This contact with professionals and politicians in a different relationship changed some young people's views of them

*I look at professionals in a completely different way. By talking with them in meetings you see them in a whole different light. They are just people like you and me... even police officers, I used to hate them before attending meetings where they were at too ... you see a different side. Some of them do care, how they come about it might be a bit weird, but they do care.
(Young Advisor in community)*

Howard League staff recognised the significance of the opportunities the young advisors had:

The young people realise they can do all sorts of things, they may not have thought they can; can I do that? Will they listen to me? It adds to their self-belief.
(EMT member)

However for most of the young people the more tangible outcomes were not the most significant. All spoke of huge increases in confidence and self-belief.

When I came out of prison I didn't have much confidence because I lost it all inside the prison and I got my confidence back by coming to the U R Boss project. Because of your loneliness and sadness inside prison you are losing your confidence, you are losing your personality.
(Young Advisor in community)

Hope – look at us – look at where we came from and where we are now! All of us whatever may still be going off for us, we are all making an effort and trying to make that influence so that other young people won't have to go through what we have been through.
(Young Advisor in community)

Others pointed to how this had led them to be able to take on new things they had not thought possible, such as work and university.

I did not think people like me went to university, but I start in October.
(Young Advisor in community)

U R Boss have shaped me and shaped my future. It has sculpted me into the person I am today.
(Young Advisor in community)

These changes in the young people were noticed by others too. Staff were both excited and impressed by the personal achievements of the young advisors.

We saw them coming in and flourishing, they are just amazing. The transformation that we helped happen, they had it in them and some of them would have got there anyway, but the relationships and the opportunities really made a difference.
(EMT member)

They are a silenced group whose views are not taken seriously and so this is particularly emancipating for young people. The participation gives young people a voice and a platform and opportunities that are unusual.
(Legal team member)

The significance of the change for individual young people was recognised.

One of the Young Advisors, I remember when I first met her she couldn't make eye contact. She and I couldn't manage a conversation for very long, and now she has presented at all manner of events and activities, written blogs. That kind of a difference. It has felt quite enormous knowing them and seeing them change, there is a great growth in confidence.
(U R Boss team member)

Young people spoke of how being part of U R Boss had enabled them to use past experiences positively.

If it wasn't for the Howard League and U R Boss I wouldn't be able to use my prison experience to the positive, it would just be a negative hanging around from my past forever. I wouldn't have had that confidence in me.

(Young Advisor in community)

A legal team member thought it important that U R Boss gave the young people the 'opportunity to do something with what have generally been really horrific and horrible experiences'.

A profound impact highlighted by many of the young people was the significance for them of being listened to, being part of an organisation like the Howard League campaigning for change, and as a consequence being able to be part of creating change for many other young people in the criminal justice system.

Every other person I have dealt with inside the penal system is instantly dismissive of what I had to say. They have the power, but they would prefer to divert away from that conversation. The Howard League is different, they actually really want to know the real truth of what [it] is like inside, why it is failing – because obviously it is – and what are the reasons for it.

(Young Advisor in custody)

The Howard League gives us that voice. The Howard League is more powerful than young people alone and has more authority, if they talk about an issue, because they are the Howard League some people will listen. (Young Advisor in the community)

4.3 Impact on policy, legislation and practice: Benefits for wider group of young people

A lot of people think, 'oh you talk about things that is not going change anything', but there are small things that change and the small things can lead to the big things and that will have a positive impact for young people.

(Young Advisor in community)

Policy and practice improvements for young people affected by the penal system, with young people driving the change, was a key objective of U R Boss. Such policy and practice changes were seen to have the potential to create better experiences and outcomes for young people in the justice system.

U R Boss found that the policy concerns of young people included a range of issues, some very individual and others which might have wider implications. Thus, it was through drawing on their direct experience that the poor quality and limited quantity of food in custody was identified as a priority; and it was through the direct involvement of the legal service with one young person that restrictions on religious rights were addressed in one institution.

Similarly it was the voice of young people, articulated through U R Boss, which gave a keener edge to wider campaigns: to end strip searching in custody, to improve resettlement arrangements, and to 'wipe the slate clean', so that young people do not have to declare convictions gained in childhood. The widely acclaimed U R Boss manifesto, too, is an example of a conventional lobbying tool which has been given new life and energy because it is informed by the experience and expertise of young people who have been there, and are able to make concrete broader aspirations for improvement in their treatment.

The uptake of information and materials can be considered a first stage in potential impact. The fact that 4500 *What is MAPPA?* leaflets were delivered to NOMS to be given out to young people is a significant step towards young people being better informed about the role of MAPPA and their rights. It took some time for adequate systems of recording to be developed so that the organisation knew who was accessing publications, reports and web pages, which was surprising for a campaigning organisation such as the Howard League. However, throughout the life of U R Boss these systems were developed and the Howard League collected comprehensive monitoring data about the range of uptake of the resources created. For instance, in year four of the project the e-bulletin was distributed to over 13,000 contacts and the legal e-bulletin to 1,432 contacts. At the time of writing the U R Boss Twitter account had 986 followers and 2883 tweets, and the Facebook page had 552 'likes'.

Howard League staff almost universally said it was impossible to overestimate the impact of getting the voice of young people, their views, opinions and experiences of the justice system, out there and influencing the conversation and debate. This was supported by others who took part in surveys for the evaluation with almost all saying that the involvement of young people was important or extremely important in such work. This is illustrated by the following tweet sent from a conference.

Amazing session from @U_R_Boss advisers at @TheHowardLeague #youthjustice – articulate, passionate young people telling it like it is.

Having an impact on policy and practice was a key concern of the young advisors, who spoke of creating change and making life better for young people as primary motivations for being part of U R Boss.

*I wanted to be part of getting things to change. I want things to be different for young people in prison – not just me, but others too. I want to help things change.
(Young Advisor in custody)*

The CEO agreed

*I am more concerned about what is happening externally ... how what we are doing affects young people's lives.
(CEO)*

It is difficult however to show a direct causal link between U R Boss activity and policy change. Government officials and civil servants do not as a rule say they were influenced by one specific thing or another. When challenges or representations are made, as a member of staff observed, it is sometimes that, 'the idea has been got rid of or changed and when the next piece of paper comes out, that bit is missing. And that is it.' However as the case study of the meeting with the Shadow Minister for Justice shows (3.3.1), hearing the views and experiences of young people can have a ripple effect, and can change how young people in the penal system are seen. A member of the Howard League EMT gave another example: One of the young people who attended a meeting between young advisors and a senior politician

...had committed a very serious offence, he was a Section 90 offence... He was still under 18 but had been in the system for some time which is a sign of the seriousness of the offence that he had committed. And the look on the minister's face when it dawned on him ... he was really shocked ... he was shaken out of his complacency, which for politicians is always a good thing to get to try to happen because otherwise they will just go through the motions.
(EMT member)

A member of U R Boss staff pointed out that policy influence was often about 'smoothing the corners, a little change here and there'. It was also noted that influence can be as much about what does not happen as what does. The example given was the PCC campaign where there was the danger that some candidates might use young people as scapegoats and run campaigns against young people's anti-social behaviour. While there was at least one such article before the launch of the campaign, none were seen after. As the PCC interim evaluation report highlights, half of those elected as Police and Crime Commissioners signed up to the U R Boss pledge, which included commitments to avoid stereotypes and negative language about young people and if elected consult with young people, particularly those with experience of the criminal justice system, as part of developing their plans. It is likely that the U R Boss pledge along with similar actions by other organisations had an impact on the number of PCCs who have appointed a youth advisor or established a youth panel since their election.

In addition, potential impact came from key people changing their opinion of young people in the criminal justice system through the contact they had with U R Boss. As a member of EMT pointed out, 'the quality of relationships and how people have responded was very positive'.

U R Boss employed a policy development officer for youth policy, who worked with the legal and participation teams of U R Boss and with the young advisors to identify key issues that arose for them. She stayed up-to-date on current policy debates and issues and sought the young advisors views and opinions on these. This partnership working is seen as essential, as effective

policy work needs a combination of the experiences, skills and knowledge of each of these groups. Policy work will always have an element that is reactive, but even here the voice of young people was included.

We lead openings to responses and reports and things like that with words of the young people, not the words of the Howard League. And that is just standard practice now, which is great.
(U R Boss team)

Alongside the influencing of opinions and legislation more generally, U R Boss was considered to have made a direct contribution to a number of important policy changes. One of these was the ending of strip searching of young people on arrival at a YOI. The issue was raised by young people in the first consultations with them at the beginning of the project and was included in the *Life Inside* report. When the opportunity to challenge the policy arose, the policy development officer had all the material needed ready.

We knew it was an issue for young people, we knew what young people were saying about it, and then we saw the policy opportunity, and actually achieved success and managed to do it. It was such a team effort.
(U R Boss team member)

The approach to policy change taken here, quietly and with little publicity, was unusual for the Howard League. Young advisors and workers mentioned this change in policy as a significant achievement.

In 2012 twelve thousand children were strip searched and this year it will be a handful at most. I think U R Boss has achieved loads of stuff, but if that was all we had achieved I think the money would be worth that alone, because it is one of the most horrific practices and U R Boss has brought that to an end.
(U R Boss team member)

Other organisations agreed that it is hard to pin-point a causal link to attribute policy change to one particular source, but U R Boss was seen by others as key in stopping strip searching for children and also in promoting the debate around access to education for young people in custody.

The strip search change was most definitely down to them. It is a huge transformation, the end of routine strip searching for young people on arrival in custody.
(Other organisation)

The work of the legal team contributed to influencing systemic change in the justice system by taking appropriate individual cases to judicial review and representing young people to challenge rulings. This was sometimes in partnership with other organisations, for example the successful campaign to ensure children in the justice system are treated as children until they are 18 years old and that all 17-year-olds have access to an appropriate adult in police stations. In this case U R Boss worked closely with Just for Kids Law, providing additional legal evidence and stories from young people who had received support from the legal team and others.

*not pure U R Boss if you like but it's what's effective about the charity when it works with others... to support the other organisation in actually winning that case.
(U R Boss team)*

Responses to policy initiatives and legal challenges that U R Boss contributed to, which resulted in 'victories', spoken of as part of the evaluation, include:

- The ending of routine strip searching of children on arrival at YOI
- Representing seven children against Ashfield, a privately-run children's prison which was found to have unlawfully punished seven boys after they were involved in a protest over conditions on their wing. This partly led to Ashfield prison no longer holding children, as it was recognised as not suitable
- Remit of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman extended to young people detained in Secure Training Centres. This meant that in addition to the current internal complaints process, young people in STCs will now be able to refer their complaint to the PPO
- Intervention in the legal case in the High Court which resulted in the change in the law such that 17-year-olds are now treated as children in police stations and have access to an appropriate adult
- Changes to declaring convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, which came into force in March 2014, changing when young people must declare convictions. Spent convictions were a big issue for many of the young advisors and a key element in their manifesto. The manifesto sets out the changes as a guide for young people under the header 'Wiping the Slate Clean'
- Campaign to end Project Daedalus at the Heron Unit, Feltham YOI, an enhanced resettlement unit set in a separate wing, where the authorities were accused of 'covering up' poor results
- Strong opposition to proposals to scrap the protections for young adults when sentenced to Detention in a Young Offender Institution and dedicated prisons, which led to the proposals being shelved until after the next election
- Part of the campaign for an independent review into the deaths of young people in custody which has led to the Harris Review
- Remand threshold being substantially raised under LASPO (Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act)
- Changes to remand legislation, which means that 17-year-olds are now treated as children when on remand, and all children on remand now get Section 20 status (relating to accommodation and support), something the Howard League has consistently campaigned for
- All YOI units for girls being closed; girls are now only held in secure units
- Continuous calls regarding the over-representation of care leavers and black and minority ethnic children, both now the focus of work within the Youth Justice Board
- Repeated criticism of OFSTED and calls for HM Inspectorate of Prisons to be the inspectorate body for Secure Training Centres. There is now a joint inspection framework.

The Howard League has also worked over the long term to reduce the number of children in prison. This number has gone down, but as with other changes it is not possible to identify which factors contributed to this change.

As part of the evaluation the team had brief conversations, on the telephone and at events, with people working in key organisations in a similar area (such as Office of the Children's Commissioner, Children's Rights Alliance for England, PCC's offices, an Australian State Children's Commissioner, National Association for Youth Justice, Centre for Mental Health). All were complimentary about the model of working in partnership with young people. All stressed the importance of listening to young people with direct experience. Many were aware of the manifesto and said its policy calls were shared concerns.

*U R Boss and [organisation] is a meeting of minds, we are not surprised about their findings affirming what we know and do too, but it is really useful to have other voices supporting each other both about listening to young people and also about the justice system.
(Other organisation)*

*The youth justice system is slow in learning from young people. They have very important things to say. It is frustrating.
(Other organisation)*

Some pointed out that working in partnership added strength to the lobbying voice.

*U R Boss provided additional legal insight and case studies to show the issues were broad and go beyond the individual case we were representing. The contributions from U R Boss and other organisations added real weight to the case.
(Other organisation)*

No one thought there was duplication with their work and that of U R Boss, though there was some crossover of work, each organisation was seen to have its own specific focus.

*As far as we are aware U R Boss is the only organisation of its kind working with young people in the justice system in this way, it is very important that such work continues.
(Other organisation)*

However one organisation did make a comment about working in collaboration generally.

*The NGOs in this area do need to collaborate and do want to collaborate, but there can be an issue of branding and wanting to put their own brand on things.
(Other organisation)*

The range of quality materials produced by and for young people, alongside the resources for policy makers, were seen to have increased interest and awareness in youth justice issues.

*The manifesto and other publications were at the party conferences and other high level places, and I think it helps put youth justice more on the agenda than perhaps it might have been.
(Other organisation)*

The materials produced by U R Boss were used by other leading organisations in the field as well as the Howard League to inform policy debate. These materials were reported to give credibility and integrity to other organisations by confirming or adding to their own policy positions. In this way the U R Boss materials helped define the policy position of other organisations. Some reported using specific evidence from U R Boss in their own documents. The fact that young people were so centrally involved in the creation of the materials was crucial to these other organisations, both from a rights-based perspective, that young people have the right to be involved, but also because their voices were seen as more persuasive with policy makers.

The reality is that the work of U R Boss will have resulted in a series of impacts, some large, many small, that cannot be traced or maybe even known, but will have made a significant impact on young people.

*There must be young people out there holding a What is MAPPA? leaflet, or a Moving on leaflet, who have never heard of U R Boss and won't ever see more of us than the leaflets, but hopefully they will have a better understanding of their rights from what we have produced.
(U R Boss worker)*

4.3.1 Practice changes

The Howard League has traditionally focused on changes in policy and legislation; however U R Boss was also seeking changes at the practice level. These are often closely linked, as illustrated by the issue of breakfast packs in YOIs. As part of the *Life Inside* consultation children identified food as a big issue. The specific issue regarding breakfast packs was that they were given out to young men around 5pm the night before, who hungry and bored ate their 'breakfast' during the evening and then had no food at the start of the next day. This was a big issue for the young people, but was not a high level strategic change of the type that the Howard League would normally pursue. However work was undertaken with the Schools Food Trust and it was the understanding of U R Boss staff that in a number of institutions breakfast packs were no longer given out the evening before, but in the morning instead.

A large number of practitioners engaged with U R Boss via the resettlement and adjudications training, the website, the Policy and Practice bulletin and other materials the project produced. This brought many new people into contact with both the Howard League and U R Boss.

*Looking at how many professionals we managed to reach specifically with the training courses and things like downloading the resettlement guide, reading through our promotional materials. Things like distributing over 5,500 MAPPA leaflets, it certainly feels like that's reaching a much broader audience and having a much broader impact.
(U R Boss team member)*

The resources were reported to be very popular with workers, and other organisations.

I get more requests from contacts in the charity sector from people asking to do stuff with our young advisors or asking for quotes, opinions that we are able to take on.

(Howard League staff member)

When we had a stand at the youth justice convention we had it flooded with all the young people's documents and they were just flying off. Practitioners from all over the country were asking how can I get more of these?

(U R Boss team member)

U R Boss staff reported increased contact with a range of professionals, often with people coming back for advice or information on more than one occasion and organisations requesting more training for a wider pool of staff. This increased their influence within the field.

People seem to be more and more turning to us as the voice of young people in the criminal justice system. Even though we are a challenging voice they recognise the quality of the voice.

(Howard League staff member)

Being that link to professionals so that we're actually influencing them and they want to do the practice we are asking them to do. And it almost feels like they... have been looking for someone to take them down this path. I think that's a real achievement that relationship. And then being able to evidence that you are actually having the impact is quite nice.

(U R Boss team member)

Several times during the evaluation the team contacted practitioners to ask them about U R Boss. The findings from this contact need to be considered with care, as the numbers were not large, but the responses were always very positive. Practitioners were asked if the training or materials led them to change their practice in any way and some examples have been given in the 'Areas of practice' section of the report (3.4). The evaluation of the resettlement training (see the PLE report for more detail) indicated that some people had incorporated their new knowledge into their practice, with a number of people reporting specific circumstances where they had used the information learnt to positive effect. People reported referring to the guide to check guidance, timescales, the use of ROTL, local authority responsibilities, and young people's status and entitlements. Some people said they had recognised that a young person needed legal advice, when previously they might have dealt with the issue themselves. One example was approaching a solicitor about an issue relating to mental health.

It helped me understand where it is appropriate for someone like myself to challenge someone and when to get a solicitor for further legal advice.

(Practitioner)

A number of practitioners also highlighted how, inspired by U R Boss, they were further developing their own participation work with young people locally and how they had used the successes of U R Boss to help argue the case for greater participation within their organisation.

4.3.2 Young people's participation in the wider youth justice system

An aim of U R Boss was to promote the voice of young people in the youth justice system more widely; to increase the sources of that voice and systematise youth participation. This is also included in *A Young Person's Manifesto* which points out, 'The voices of children and young people in the criminal justice system are not listened to. The more young people in the system are heard and their opinions acted on, the better outcomes for everybody'.

Throughout the evaluation all practitioners and people working in other child focused organisations have felt that the involvement of young people in the youth justice system is important, no one has spoken against it. U R Boss is seen by many as an effective model of working with young people to enable their voice to change the youth justice system. For example, an Australian children's commissioner was impressed with the model and wanted to implement the U R Boss idea in their territory. Other individuals and organisations use the U R Boss work both in terms of its output and the process of working with young people.

*[organisation] is certainly conscious of them and draws on their work to illustrate good practice.
(Other organisation)*

It may be too early to see real change in how the justice system listens to young people, but recognition of the importance of effectively listening to young people and hearing what they consider to be the most important issues is growing.

*We are starting to carve out a need and that was in some ways the whole point of the project, to say that young people in the criminal justice system need to be listened to, need to have a voice, they are silenced and don't have a voice... And it's brilliant that people are asking for it, but there are so many asking for it and there is so much need.
(U R Boss team member)*

Towards the end of the project the young advisors' aim of increasing participation in the youth justice system led to a focus on influencing organisations such as the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to become more participative. Meetings with the new chair of the YJB were planned, and it was reported to the team by a U R Boss worker that Lord McNally, the then incoming chair of the YJB, had said that young people's participation was one of his top priorities. The young advisors also gave presentations to the National Participation Forum on the role of young advisors.

4.4 Change within the Howard League

4.4.1 Organisational change to support U R Boss

The establishment of the U R Boss project created the need for considerable organisational changes at the Howard League. U R Boss brought a number of new workers to the Howard League, increasing the staff team by about 50 per cent. This larger team needed different, and sometimes more formal, methods of communication, management and organisation. As a member of EMT said, 'it's very difficult to manage a lot of people coming in on a big project, it was very hard to do well, but we did settle into it'. These organisational issues were the focus of an interim evaluation report *Embedding Participation* produced in 2012, which found 'some tensions in the development of U R Boss within the Howard League' but also 'a genuine commitment to pursuing a creative approach to embedding participatory principles at the heart of both the project and the organisation'.

Staff turnover within U R Boss was high in the early phase of the project, but membership of the Howard League's EMT, which had overall responsibility for the management of U R Boss, was stable with only one member leaving in the five years of the project. When revisiting some of the organisational issues for this final report in 2014, many of the U R Boss team interviewed had not been in post in 2012, and could not comment on change over time. There was a feeling, however, from EMT members that most of the issues raised in *Embedding Participation* in the early stages of U R Boss had been resolved. Organisationally, one of the things that was seen to have helped address these issues was the work undertaken to achieve Investors in People status. This involved the streamlining of communication structures, linking all meeting agendas to the strategic plan, better information sharing and mutual learning.

Reflecting on the change process, members of the EMT suggested that some independent support via the Lottery could have been useful in the early stages of the project. It was pointed out that the Lottery has considerable experience of giving large grants to organisations who may initially struggle with the complex organisational changes required when a small organisation (such as the Howard League) is establishing a large project (such as U R Boss).

There could have been some help from the lottery. Not interference but for someone there, management support, project management... they are giving a large amount of money to relatively small organisations and to actually have someone to say look you will need project management, this is how you do it, we will help you. That would have been quite helpful at the beginning, and I think we could have avoided some of the problems if we'd had some guidance. So some kind of independent support, it's possible to do it in a different way.
(EMT member)

The Investors in People Award was concerned with whole organisation policies, but in addition there was considerable time spent on developing policies, systems and structures specifically to support young people's participation. With the benefit of hindsight, a member of the EMT questioned whether too much time was spent developing these, rather than utilising existing policies and adapting them if it became apparent this was needed.

I wonder now if we made a mountain out of molehill, maybe attempting to be too thorough and do everything 'properly'. But was that right? Did we need all participative policies in place before we did anything? We did have policies that had worked well and maybe we could have started work with young people, and adapted and developed policies as we went along. We tried to re-write everything and get it all ready before we did any work with young people. I wonder now if we needed to re-invent everything rather than shave off bits, or add them on to existing documents?
(EMT member)

Even with hindsight the high level of staff turnover was viewed as a challenge by some. It was seen to slow the project down, as new staff inevitably took time to familiarise themselves with the work, the people and the organisation. Induction and training took time, and while posts were vacant it was hard to plan. Some people however also saw an advantage in the staff changes, as new skills, experience and energy were brought to the team by new staff, and the skill set could be moulded to fit the development of the project.

I suppose the honest truth is the staff turnover has been a barrier to achieving things... but having those different skill sets has been brilliant and new people brought new things to the project, and that has been positive... . The whole thing just slows you down, you can't make commitments, if they are going to be truly ready to do good work, it will take time.
(EMT member)

Over time it was felt that the role of the participation workers particularly become clearer and at the same time the Howard League gained knowledge and skills in the appointment of participation workers, a post and role new to the organisation.

The EMT member responsible for developing the bid for the project had little role in its initiation and early development, which was raised as a possible issue by another member of EMT. Capacity and role were acknowledged as the reasons for this, but it was felt that if there had been more involvement then this might have assisted the development of the project from vision to application.

A number of people identified the third year of the project as the point when the organisational issues had in the main been addressed: the staff team was more stable and it was possible to start building on the previous work. Organisational responsibility for the U R Boss team had moved from the legal team, where it had initially been located, to the policy and campaigns team, which was seen to support U R Boss with more appropriate management skills while moving the work away from the 'natural caution' of a legal approach. At this time milestones and some budget headings were re-negotiated with the Big Lottery. There were also changes to the welfare fund policy and a fund to support the participation of young people was set up to better support young advisors' travel costs and remuneration.

4.4.2 Creative tension

Whilst the Howard League had a tradition of listening to people affected by the law and with experience of the criminal justice system, the level of participation created by U R Boss was new. Several members of the EMT acknowledged they did not 'really understand the subtleties and complexities of what participation meant' at the start. Achieving the level of participation envisaged as part of U R Boss in an organisation with established goals, objectives and ways of working was recognised as a challenge:

When you are putting two things together they rub and they don't fit and particularly if they are both quite big and it's difficult too... it's not necessarily unhealthy having that conflict and that challenge.
(EMT member)

A number of people identified this as a creative challenge. An example of this was described by a member of the legal team.

I think maybe where the solicitors did struggle is the fact that U R Boss does want to talk about what the young people are doing and give them a voice. And that goes against what we are taught at law school and from all our practice; that you don't talk about your case, you protect the identity and you leave it there. So it's a massive clash of cultures and that's something I have struggled with personally. Because if someone comes to me and says can we talk about your client's case I will go no. Even if you have won a case and its gone to the High Court and there are certain documents that are made public if that client ends up going back to custody which they often do, it can change things.
(Legal team member)

However with the development of clear policies on confidentiality, protocols and practice to ensure the safety of the young people concerned (see section 3.1.3 and 3.2.1) the legal team could see real benefits for the individual young people, and the wider group of young people, of speaking out about their experiences of the youth justice system. The sharing of knowledge and expertise between the legal team and the participation workers was key to the success of this.

It is a bit like the synthesis of differences, if you put differences together you end up with something better ... give them the time and the right environment and they will grow together and produce something qualitatively and quantitatively better.
(EMT member)

The different pace of working and the amount of preparation when working with young people were also a challenge to the long-term planning and level of detail in traditional Howard League work. The participation workers knew from previous experience that young people were not likely to engage in planning for a conference presentation months in advance, and it was seen by some to take time for management to have confidence that the young people would deliver at such events.

Howard League is risk adverse and so will prepare for things in advance, but young people are not ready to be interested in a conference in three months. So actually the week before we might start the detailed preparation, and then meet in a coffee shop for an hour before. Now there is a bit more understanding of that, and also confidence that though it might be done differently the young people will be ready and able.
(Participation officer)

Faith and confidence in the project, its workers and the young advisors gradually increased as U R Boss delivered consistent quality input from young advisors. This was due in part to having a more settled group of advisors, and the development of better systems of communication, which meant being able to maintain contact with young people even if they were recalled or sentenced again. However, it was recognised that more needed to be done to both embed and support participation further within the organisation.

We have made really good adjustments about actually being very practical with young people. Laying out the principles and then working very flexibly with them ... that's not to say it is perfect, but I think we do have a much better knowledge of what the picture looks like. What is working for the young people, what isn't, what they have asked for, whether we are doing that or not. That knowledge is in the organisation now. It's nowhere near perfect, and it's certainly not the best policy model but it's definitely good foundations. And something that the organisation has learnt beyond what a lot of others have learnt.
(U R Boss team member)

Justice for young people is just one of five strategic objectives for Howard League work. One strand of this objective was child arrests and the other was U R Boss, so the participative approach was seen to have a clear place within Howard League strategy. However, ten manifesto objectives were created by U R Boss, and it was unlikely that the Howard League would be able to support the young advisors in all their campaign objectives. This could be seen as a contradiction or mismatch between the objectives of the Howard League and those of U R Boss, as on the one hand the U R Boss work was central to the Howard League objectives, but on the other U R Boss identified more than the Howard League was likely to be able to support.

In year three of the project the U R Boss team offered participation training to all the Howard League staff. This was very well received, as demonstrated in the end of session evaluation and the positive comments in interviews with some Howard League staff. People reported having learnt much more about the work of U R Boss, the involvement of the young advisors and hence how they could become more participative in their own work. People spoke of thinking more about how to involve young people in event planning, campaigning, and the recruitment of members. The U R Boss team reported improved communication with others in the Howard League after the participation training.

We had the massive peak after the participation training and everyone went 'oh I get it now'. And then people have been more able to think about how you build it in. So the legal aid and the commission on sex are probably the best examples of how they started off [with] something slightly different and thought about how to incorporate young people and then have adjusted.

(U R Boss team)

It has stopped us being maybe a little patronising to young people.

(Howard League staff)

4.4.3 Impact on Howard League: It validates what we say and do

Without exception staff of the Howard League identified how the involvement of young people and the work of U R Boss gave them greater expertise in issues and problems experienced by young people in custody and on release which fed into many areas of their work; this created more authority and hence has brought the organisation greater standing.

The first person account is supreme, it changes things and the impact you can have. I think it validates things. Politicians, the media they want to know how we know things ... [it] added real value the fact they are strong, coherent young people's voices, it gives us traction for change.

(EMT member)

I think they have made it come alive. Seeing and speaking to people who have first-hand experience of custody, of the difficulties of coming out. It makes it real, rather than theoretical.

(Trustee)

The voice and involvement of young people was seen as not only adding to the picture, but also increasing the organisation's credibility with young people, with practitioners, and with policy makers as it 'grounds what we say'. This increased credibility was then seen as making the Howard League a more effective campaigning organisation.

The point is to make a difference and change things for the better and the young people's involvement helps us do this more effectively.

(Howard League staff)

A member of the campaigns team said they were constantly asked for information and stories from young people, and gave an example of how people could learn from both the process and the content of the young people's message. In some cases people were as interested in the fact it was young people asking the questions as they were about the discussion itself:

Young people asking questions of one of the senior police officers in the country, goes beyond the stories from the young people to a recognition that these young people have been given a voice and shows they are much more effective at asking the questions than Andrew Marr or Eamonn Holmes because of who they are and the experiences they have had.

(Howard League staff)

They went on to say that the combination of participation and campaigning skills and knowledge added real value to each other.

It is a really good example of how we as campaigners work with the participation people to arrive at a situation that was beyond what we could have realistically expected.

(Howard League staff)

Staff saw how the involvement of young people was shaping both the detail of what they did, by contributing quotes, examples or case studies, and was simultaneously directing the work at a higher, strategic level by influencing what policy initiatives the Howard League worked on.

It's really shaping what we say, not only how we say it but also what we're saying about in terms of policy... like actually directing what policy that I'm looking at, which obviously in the last year it's mostly come from the work around the manifesto.

(U R Boss team member)

A number of specific examples of how the involvement of young people had shaped the agenda of the organisation were given. Early in the life of U R Boss there was the issue of breakfast packs which came from *Life Inside*. This was seen as quite a radical change for the Howard League, which up until then had focused on high level strategic issues rather than more practical issues, but the Howard League responded to the issue raised by young people and worked with other organisations to highlight the issues at a strategic level. As one Howard League worker said the 'breakfast packs are awful, awful'. More recently policing became a major issue for the Howard League and it was felt that young people had influenced this.

Now so much of campaigning work is looking at the police, and why has that happened? Several reasons I think, and one of them is certainly having these teenagers tell us the police never listen to us. This led us to looking at the police as the gatekeepers of the criminal justice system and how once you are in the system it is very hard to get out. So it is really important we talk with the people at the gate who decide if you are in or not, this led to us asking questions about child arrests and taking it from there.

(Howard League staff)

The importance of the involvement of young people was recognised by the CEO who felt the involvement of young people in the organisation had led to changes in the way she campaigns.

So for example on the child arrest stuff when I am talking to chief constables I will talk about the way they interact with young people, that's not just about not arresting them it is about listening to them and being involved with them and engaging... So it affects the narrative if you like.

(CEO)

A member of the EMT gave an illustration of how this worked in practice:

A journalist rings up from the *Independent* and says Feltham has had a terrible inspection report, we would like to do a piece, we need some case studies. And this is a perennial problem for the Howard League, how do you get cases from our young people. But hey the press officer walks over to the desk there, it's three steps, talks to the participation officer, 'have we any case studies?'. The participation officer looks at her file, and finds that indeed we have got a young person [name] who has just been in Feltham and has literally just come out. [Name] is very articulate, the participation officer has met him and knows he can talk. And in the end that becomes a big feature in the *Independent Saturday magazine*, fantastic. And [name] since then has been involved in other ways as a young advisor. That kind of thing we would have struggled to do in the past but because we have got this smooth system between the legal team encountering young people, either representing them themselves or referring them on to other lawyers, but basically the helpline being the hub for the contact and then being referred to U R Boss. Those young people who want to participate, want to be involved and be referred, that feels very smooth and it does produce these kinds of outcomes. That allowed a story which was otherwise quite dry about stats and inspection reports [to] become a human story about what happened to this young man when he went in and what he felt.

A final area in which U R Boss was seen to have influenced the work of the Howard League was their use of digital and social media, which had increased across the whole organisation.

I think our digital engagement has been much improved and we have just had this petition around the secure college which has received over 5000 signatures and U R Boss has had a lot of traffic and getting people onto the site. There is a steady amount of stuff happening [on the U R Boss micro-site], blogs from young advisors going up and things like that.
(Howard League staff)

4.4.4 Lessons learnt by the Howard League

The Howard League learnt some important lessons about how to involve young people with experience of the criminal justice system in campaigning work. These have been key learning points from the development and functioning of U R Boss that will be of value to other organisations interested in such work. Members of the EMT saw this as a resource for their use, but also one to share with others, though this had not happened in any formal way.

It was something we wanted to do, to share that and to get other structures to take on board the principles of participation. I don't think perhaps at this stage we have done that quite as much as we should have done.
(EMT member)

The lessons learnt can in the main be grouped under the themes of:

- Values
- Preparation and support
- Being prepared to take risks
- Time

There is much interrelation between these four themes.

Values

U R Boss had at its core recognition of the value of young people's participation and involvement and of the values which underpin effective and fulfilling participation, and over the life of the project it developed a range of ways of facilitating this involvement within the Howard League. Young people spoke about clearly identified values underpinning the project and they repeatedly spoke of these values being demonstrated in the workers' attitudes and respect for young people, their care and their behaviour when working together. The young people also pointed to the fact that they were taken seriously throughout the organisation and were able to have some influence at all levels.

Appointing the right staff was seen to be crucial, and members of the job recruitment interview panels felt that the right values sometimes mattered more than previous experience of working in participation. Young people's involvement in the staff interviews was important in getting this right.

*If they have got the right attitudes in terms of not seeing young people as instruments, and not just being about listening, but understanding and being able to interact with young people, which you can see if you have young advisors in interviews.
(EMT member)*

Preparation and support

*There is a lot of paddling under the water that others don't see
(EMT member)*

As has been explored already in section 3.2, putting these values into practice with young people took a significant amount of time. The work required considerable preparation and support for the young people. This was needed at a policy level, for instance the provision of the welfare fund and personal development plans for the young people; as well as at a practice level with workers ringing young people to get them up in the morning to catch a train. It required people to think about basic issues such as whether young people would be hungry, or free enough of other anxieties to be able to concentrate on issues in the youth justice system.

Preparation and support depended on having a skilled and experienced team of participation workers and dedicated managers and trustees to advocate for the work in the organisation, as well as the infrastructure (such as the welfare fund, the personal development plans for young advisors, safeguarding and risk assessment policy and practice) to enable the young people to take the opportunities created.

Being prepared to take risks

There was some disagreement about the extent to which the Howard League was prepared to take risks with regard to the involvement of young people. However, there was more agreement that risk taking was necessary in this work.

I think it is not being frightened of taking risks which might sound very vague. For example not being frightened of putting some young people in a room with an important person. As long as you have prepared them it should be... I remember when we first did a meeting between young people and a government minister there were two young people there. One was [name], who was obviously a safe choice in that instance, and we had this other young person who we were at that point engaging with who had committed a very serious offence. We felt it was a bit of a risk, but worth taking and it was right. (EMT member)

As the project developed so did the capacity of the Howard League to be ambitious and try new things, learning from everything.

Give it a go. Never saying no, it's too hard. Just saying let's see how we can make it work. (U R Boss team)

Time

Time was considered to be an issue at a number of levels. The overall length of the project was one. U R Boss was funded for five years which was seen and has proved to be the minimum amount of time for such a project to be set up, developed and start performing as anticipated. More time would have been advantageous.

If you are going to give that kind of money the lesson very much is you have to give it over five years and seven would have been perfect. Because that would have given us another couple of years to embed the whole thing. But it was long enough to have made a big difference internally and externally. (EMT member)

As has been discussed it took some time to establish U R Boss, to create a stable staff team and to establish systems and structures to support the work. It also took time and patience to make contact with young people in the justice system and form the quality relationships with them that were necessary to develop commitment and trust on both sides. Genuinely listening to the young people to hear what was important to them and working with them to develop the skills to become effective campaigners in their own right could not be rushed.

It takes a lot of time, it's not the first thing people say to you it's the second and third thing and it's the way they say it. And that's what a prisoner said to me recently, he said it's having someone who doesn't just come in the door and say are you ok, but sits down with you ... and listens and spends the time to talk to you. (EMT member)

It has taken time and considerable effort, patience and courage to deliver the aims of the project, and much has been learned along the way about the what and how of effective participation by this group of vulnerable and silenced young people. Giving them a voice that proved to be articulate and engaging revealed how policy makers and practitioners can make changes in the criminal justice system, some large, some small, that can make young people's experiences less demeaning and improve their chances of successful reintegration. But as the funding for this work has ended what future is there for this sort of work? This question will be considered in the next section.

5. What next?

The end of a large grant such as that received from the Big Lottery always presents an organisation with challenges. In this case the challenge for the Howard League was further complicated by the end of substantial investment from a legacy and (at the time) a lack of clarity regarding the future of the legal service given cuts to legal aid. This meant the ending of the U R Boss funding inevitably tied in to the consideration of larger strategic questions for the Howard League. In light of the significant reduction in funding available, towards the end of 2013 the EMT spent time agreeing priorities and considering options for future funding. The EMT recognised they were unlikely to receive another grant of this size and so a reduction in the scope of the project was inevitable. The young advisors identified the legal service as their priority when less funding became available. The EMT sought to secure funding for this vital service, and at the same time sought additional funding for the other aspects of the project. To this end in December 2013 a Stage 1 proposal was submitted to the BIG Lotteries Reaching Communities fund.

When the data collection for this evaluation was completed no final decisions were reported to have been made about the future of U R Boss, and a range of options were being considered. Just six months before the ending of the funding stream, there was no clear exit strategy articulated. This was a strategic decision on the part of trustees and the EMT as the uncertainty of the landscape meant that staff hopes could have been falsely raised and it was judged more important to keep up morale while the Howard League endeavored to clarify matters, including a challenge in the courts to the Ministry of Justice's legal aid cuts. When interviewed in February 2014 the CEO and members of EMT said no decisions had been made and that 'we are at the stage of forming questions, will we be able to keep some formal structure, will we be able to keep contact with individuals?'. While the final evaluation interviews were being undertaken a range of options were being written for consideration by the EMT and the trustees. It is perhaps surprising that such decisions were being left to the final months of the project given the universal recognition of the significance of the project and its impact on the campaigning power of the organisation.

In April 2014, after the successful Stage 1 bid, a Stage 2 bid was being prepared for the BIG Lotteries Reaching Communities fund, but a final decision would not be made by the Lottery for several months. The grants given from this fund are considerably smaller than the original grant received, so the project would be reduced in scope. A decision about this funding would not be known until autumn 2014, meaning that because of the Big Lottery timescales for this funding, even if the Stage 2 bid were successful, the work would not be a direct continuation of U R Boss, but would to some degree have to start again: staff, and their knowledge and expertise would have been lost.

*It will shrink back and have to restart, there will be a gap.
(EMT member)*

The ending of the initial Big Lottery funding had a significant impact on the work of the Howard League and the support it is able to offer young people via the legal and participation work. The Howard League does not receive money from government

contracts and the work of U R Boss was seen by a member of the EMT to be unattractive to funding in the sector, 'where it's all about how have you cut reoffending, by what percent'. At the same time as the U R Boss funding was coming to an end, there were also radical changes to the legal aid funding that supports much of the legal work. The cuts are detailed and numerous and affect all the children and young people represented by the legal team. The Howard League have campaigned to challenge these cuts and made submissions to government consultations. The enhanced legal service will continue and has weathered the recent cuts to legal aid funding, while continuing with an attempt to appeal on aspects of the cuts to prison law funding. The charity intends to continue to support legal work with young people in custody for the foreseeable future. However, as one EMT member pointed out the charity only had a finite pot of money and with changes to legal aid as well as the ending of funding streams it was a challenging time for the organisation.

It comes down to the trustees as to whether or not they think the work is important enough to use the donations and the strategic funding for. Now we only have a certain amount of strategic funding, our donations only amount to x amount ...
(EMT member)

It was hoped that many of the young advisors would want to stay involved for a while at least, but whether they will have a role in the future was unclear. The CEO expressed a level of commitment to the current group of young people, should they want to stay involved in some way.

I think there is an obligation, but they might not feel that ... we will keep them on a database and invite them to things and maybe they will turn up. What we are asking is how is it possible, without resources to keep some of the relationship[s] going?
(CEO)

Other members of EMT felt an obligation to the young advisors and to their continued support whilst being clear about the limits of what can actually be offered

I think there is a lot of goodwill and desire to keep young people's voices though the advisory group or whatever else we can manage but how we will actually manage that without funding will be interesting.
(EMT)

Others pointed out that the current young advisors should, at some point, be ready to move on as they should not be defined by their pasts forever.

It is hard to see how the scope and range of the work of U R Boss can be sustained without the funding to continue the work. Despite the expressed appreciation of the value that young people's participation has brought to the work of U R Boss and the Howard League more generally, and an interest in exploring how to do this in the future, it is likely that the current expertise and body of knowledge, contacts and importantly relationships with young people will be lost. This is recognised in this statement from an EMT member:

Given the scale of the original project and potential funding opportunities going forward, the exit strategy for U R Boss has been predicated on the reality that resources for participation will be more limited in future. Individual conversations with all the young people engaged with the project have emphasised that the level of support and engagement currently provided through U R Boss will not be available in the same way going forward. But the Howard League remains committed to youth participation and has been actively seeking continuation funding for this work.

In the immediate term, funding has been secured from Barrow Cadbury to do a discrete piece of work on the issue of maturity, for the Transition2Adulthood Alliance. This will involve participation work with young adults in the criminal justice system and the production of a policy report in early 2015.

In the longer term, the Howard League is applying for further funding from the Big Lottery Fund. This bid has focused on the two pillars of the original U R Boss project: supporting the legal work, in particular developing the legal helpline which is the conduit for young people in custody to reach the Howard League, and supporting youth participation with those young people working with the legal team. It is intended that the bid will be structured around the young people's manifesto, so that the legacy of the original U R Boss will [be] built in at the foundation level. If successful, this funding would run for three years from early 2015 and would allow the Howard League to further develop its unique marriage of legal support and youth participation. (May 2014)

People were keen to ensure the learning from U R Boss would be incorporated in the work of the remaining staff at the Howard League. Many thought the legacy of U R Boss could continue in the organisation for a while at least through the resources and materials the young people had contributed.

The case studies, for example, in terms of their value to our understanding of the issues and problems they are invaluable. The things they talk about; family breakdown, domestic violence, are very prevalent and are not going to go away very soon ... so we will be able to draw on them for a while to come.

(Howard League worker)

I think these case studies will really come in handy when a radio calls up and says can we speak with a young person, we can say we cannot let you speak with a young person, but we have their words and you could get an actor to read them out.

(Howard League worker)

However a number of people recognised that no longer having access to a group of young people would severely limit their work and its credibility.

I think we would be the poorer for it, it is important for people to see that as a campaigning organisation we also actually work with the people affected. (Legal team member)

The legacy of U R Boss was not only seen in the contributions of the young people, but in the way of working as well. Several members of the EMT spoke of the need to get the lessons of how to work with young people out to a wider

audience, particularly sharing their knowledge about young people's participation with the Youth Justice Board and government departments. One way to do this in the future is through the work with T2A (Transition to Adulthood, Barrow Cadbury). In June 2014 the Howard League received funding from T2A to work with young people exploring the notion of maturity with them. This work will take place between July 2014 and January 2015. It is a new project and has a funder-led focus, but it will involve one of the participation officers and many of the young people, particularly young advisors from U R Boss who are interested in being part of the project.

T2A has not worked on exploring the issue of maturity with young people before, and approached the Howard League because they were impressed with the genuine voice of young people and the level of debate they contributed to through U R Boss. In the seven months of this work the participation officer will work with young people exploring problems around personal development and relationships with family and professionals from their perspective, which places the issue of maturity in stark relief. So as the five year grant from the Big Lottery comes to an end the Howard League has attracted funding from another funder to utilise the experience gained through U R Boss and develop the approach into a new area, and has also been successful in the first round of seeking 'continuation' funding from the original funders.

One manager felt the experience of managing the U R Boss project had changed the organisation for the better.

Overall U R Boss has brought many benefits to the Howard League, I think the organisation is a better organisation, it [has] grown with the growth. And our experience of managing a project like UR Boss that stays and certainly from my perspective as a manager I have learnt a huge amount. And that enables us, it's not just me but others as well, to be well placed to do things in the future and not make the same mistakes again because you have learnt from them. Try new things out because you have done what you have done and now you can try something else. I think that is all to the good in terms of future funding for work like U R Boss.

(EMT member)

Whilst young advisors were not specifically asked about the future of U R Boss in the evaluation, many were aware of the funding coming to an end and of these all expressed concern about what would happen. Some were anxious for the loss of support they would experience if the participation officers were no longer in post; others expressed concern about boredom and lack of direction, particularly if in prison without the stimulation of U R Boss, but their main concern was for the loss of a vehicle for young people's experience to be harnessed in effective campaigning for change in the justice system.

If the people running the system were doing their jobs properly we wouldn't have to do what we do. If we weren't here how would you know what's right or wrong from a young person's point of view, that's what we're providing. If U R Boss is stopped it should be a criminal offence and they should be sent to jail. You've done all that work, you can't just end it like that.

(Young Advisor in custody)

6. Conclusions

As noted earlier, the expressed aims of the U R Boss project at its inception were:

- *to enhance the legal service being provided by the Howard League for Penal Reform to children and young people in the penal system;*
- *to campaign to change national and local policy and practice in the statutory and voluntary sectors working with children and young people;*
- *to change public attitudes to children and young people in the penal system; and to come up with new ideas about children and young people in the penal system.*

The views and experiences of young people are seen to be fundamental to achieving these aims and the reason for having a range of activities focusing on 'participation'.

These aspirations were broad and ambitious, and the emphasis on promoting participation as a vehicle for achieving them added another dimension, both in terms of challenging embedded attitudes and practices in the justice system, and in terms of the practical demands of giving substance to this principle in the course of project implementation. The project was groundbreaking and innovatory in two ways: first by aiming to work in such a deep and detailed participatory way with young people in the criminal justice system, and second by involving young people directly in campaigning work to change policy and practice. Other organisations had experience of participatory work at a range of levels, but none sought to do so with this group of young people and with a campaigning rather than a service delivery objective.

The challenges facing the project at the outset were unsurprisingly considerable, and this was reflected in the early stages in uncertain and uneven progress across its different elements. Organisational and strategic difficulties appeared to affect the participation and policy elements of the overall task to a greater extent than the legal service, which clearly benefitted from being an already established service that had demonstrated discernible impact. Unfortunately the systems and practice of working in partnership between the legal service and U R Boss took some time to establish, perhaps in part due to the 'natural caution' of the legal team and the lack of initial synergy between that team and the new U R Boss team. In addition, staff turnover slowed this process. This variability in progress could also be attributable to the greater degree of difficulty in developing genuinely participatory approaches to engaging with often very vulnerable young people in the justice system. However, as this way of working became more firmly understood, established and accepted, then demonstrable achievements could be identified across all the areas initially targeted. In sum, the evaluation team concluded that the project can reasonably claim to have achieved significant impact which will have a direct and beneficial effect on the treatment of young people in the justice system.

U R Boss has demonstrated that young people with experience of the criminal justice system have very valuable things to say about the inadequacies of the

system and how it could be improved. It has also shown that when dialogue is facilitated between young people and policy makers that policy makers and practitioners will listen and act on the voice of young people.

Edwards and Davies (2004) identify a number of key points to ensure participation by children and young people is transformative not tokenistic:

- *Participation involves being heard and something changing for the better as a result*
- *Participation is best promoted through opportunities for engagement in dialogue, not oppositional or confrontational processes between young people and decision makers*
- *Participation needs to be rooted in the lived lives of children and young people and address tangible issues of concern and importance to them.*
- *Participation is political and is about enfranchisement of a disenfranchised group in society to ensure effective action to make change happen*
- *Participation needs to be inclusive through opportunities for the young to take part on their own terms and on their own issues and not just through adult initiated or established models and processes.*

(Badham and Davies, 2007: 84, adapted from Edwards and Davies, 2004: 103)

This evaluation shows that U R Boss ultimately did achieve this level of participation and was never tokenistic. This had three major benefits. First young people in the criminal justice system, a disenfranchised group, gained influence and were part of achieving positive change for many of their peers in the system, and at the same time young people gained increasing recognition as acceptable actors in the policy world. Second, many young people benefited from the multiple opportunities this provided for personal development. Third, the Howard League became more accountable to young people, was better able to respond to the issues faced by young people, and was able to campaign more effectively for change.

The partnership between the legal and the participation work was crucial to the achievements of U R Boss. The legal service worked to protect children's rights and to ensure they understood the legal system and how it could support them to achieve their rights. This holistic service, supported by access to the welfare fund if required, enabled solicitors to take the time to get to know young people, which meant that relationships were built that enabled a number of young legal clients to become young advisors. The close relationship between the two specialisms meant that young people – some of whom had committed serious offences and had little previous constructive engagement with adults – when they were ready, were able to contribute to the project and to changing policy and practice. It took time and patience to develop the level of trust needed for participation to take place. Relationships needed to be built and maintained by the participation officers and safeguarding had to be taken very seriously. All participation staff

showed passion and commitment to promoting the rights of children and young people and used considerable thought, care, creativity and skill to support the young people, including young people in custody, enabling them to talk about their experiences and develop the skills to become effective campaigners. The combined expertise of the legal and participation staff supported the development of a variety of approaches for inclusive participation. This enabled young people in diverse situations, including those with long sentences, serious offences and complex license conditions, to be part of U R Boss.

Participation was at times painful for the Howard League, and it took commitment and time to adjust and establish the necessary systems and support. Flexibility and adaptability both organisationally and in the work with young people were crucial. Ultimately the right organisational support in terms of leadership, workers, policies, structures and resources developed. Through this new opportunities for campaigning and new ways of seeing and talking about the issues, based on the lived lives of young people in contact with the criminal justice system, were developed and the 'real stories' had an impact on campaigning.

The Big Lottery funding finished at the end of June 2014. With the funding from Barrow Cadbury for work with the T2A alliance some of the skills and knowledge developed through U R Boss will continue to be utilised by the Howard League, though in a reduced manner. A decision about the further funding from the Big Lottery will not be made until autumn 2014. The Howard League has expressed a desire to share the learning from U R Boss with others working with young people in contact with the criminal justice system, and a commitment to ensuring that the legacy is enhanced and maintained. The organisation is actively seeking funding to take this legacy into new areas.

It is perhaps a moot point about the extent to which other organisations could or should develop similar participatory approaches. The success of this project ultimately depended on a particular mix of circumstances: an organisation committed to the ideals and values of participation; a willingness and ability to take the risks; flexibility to address the substantial issues which emerged; an established participatory legal service from which to springboard the project; and perhaps most importantly, an established reputation for being a principled, if somewhat maverick, organisation.

The project has demonstrated that with the right level of support and guidance even the most disenfranchised individuals and groups can be enabled to constructively engage with processes of change. When they do engage the lessons which can be learned from their experience are invaluable to practitioners and policy makers. That contribution does not come easily or cheaply, but it is well worth the price paid, both for the improvements in policy and practice which can emerge, and for the benefits to the individuals enabled to participate. These messages are best summed up in quotes from three contributors to this evaluation:

*That mutual respect for being able to break out of the cycle and having the Howard League there to offer support is why it works so well.
(Young Advisor in community)*

People seem to be more and more turning to us as the voice of young people in the criminal justice system. Even though we are a challenging voice they recognise the quality of the voice.

(Howard League staff)

The young people were widely knowledgeable. The personalisation of the issues was powerful. The detail of how things play out, the impact they have on young people and how this limits their ability to move on, was really useful to me in my role.

(Rob Fieello when Shadow Minister for Justice)

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8. Appendices:

i. Data sources for the evaluation

The evaluation included all sources in the analysis, and drew on this and many individual sources in the creation of the report. In total, throughout the period of the evaluation the team has undertaken:

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Review meetings with staff</i> | 13 |
| <i>U R Boss team meetings attended</i> | 5 |
| <i>Interviews with staff on specific aspects of the evaluation</i> | 61 |
| <i>Interviews with trustees</i> | 1 |
| <i>Group discussions with young advisors</i> | 3 |
| <i>Individual interviews with young advisors</i> | 26 |
| <i>Telephone interviews with legal clients</i> | 4 |
| <i>Evaluation forms completed by young people in custody</i> | 4 |
| <i>Legal client feedback forms</i> | 159 |
| <i>Interviews (face to face and on the telephone) with people from other agencies</i> | 30 |
| <i>Surveys completed by people from other organisations</i> | 54 |
| <i>Observations of work</i> | 15 |
| <i>Anonymised records reviewed</i> | 14 |
| <i>Events (e.g. publication launch, conference) attended</i> | 6 |

In addition we reviewed a wide range of documents (e.g. annual reports to BIG, policy documents, minutes of meetings, written contributions from young advisors in custody, materials produced for young people etc.), materials produced by young people (e.g. videos) and regularly visited the project's website, Facebook page and Twitter account.

ii. U R Boss data

| | New Legal Cases | Calls to Helpline |
|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| <i>Year 1</i> | 152 | N/A |
| <i>Year 2</i> | 144 | 568 |
| <i>Year 3</i> | 126 | 538 |
| <i>Year 4</i> | 195 | 700 |
| <i>Year 5</i> | 170 | 857 |
| Total | 787 | 2663 |

There has been a lack of routinely available consistent statistical data about the work of the project. Some reports to BIG have contained very detailed data, particularly about the legal work, but the detail varies between reports meaning that trends over time cannot be tracked.

Detailed data about individual pieces of work, individuals involved in the legal and participation work, the use of the Welfare Fund, etc., are maintained and could be used in this way, but this was not within the remit of this evaluation.

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