

~ Case Study ~

A voice for young people in the region

With support from Learning South West's Regional Youth Work Unit (RYWU) young people are helping to shape the future of the region with a pioneering seat on the powerful South West Regional Assembly.

As a member of the Regional Assembly Jayesh Rajyaguru, 19, from Bristol, is the only voice that young people have in decision making in the South West. There is no other local or regional decision making body giving young people a voice, and a vote, on an equal basis to adults.

Jayesh was elected by Members of the Youth Parliament to represent the views of young people in 2006. This year, the distribution of seats on the assembly has been reviewed, and there was a possibility that the direct representation of young people would be lost. However, Jayesh and his deputy Rosie Bailey, 19, from Torbay, made a strong case and their arguments won the day.

Jayesh said: "It's very important to have a voice. Our seat on the Regional Assembly ensures the interests of young people are at the forefront of any decisions made now and in the future when these decisions are going to directly effect young people.

"Youth today is a lot more informed - not like the stereotypes in the media with no knowledge of politics - we need the ability to speak out and say: "It's not going to work." "

The RYWU at Learning South West has supported young people's involvement in the South West Regional Assembly since 2004. The Unit's Youth Democracy Worker Sharon Adams initially worked with young people from the regional UK Youth Parliament and with Regional Assembly staff, on involving young people in consultation events on key South West strategies, including transport and housing.



Jayesh is pictured at Bristol docks

"Sharon has been amazing. She gives us a lot of support; organising transport, acting as a go between and helping with preparation and attending meetings. Without her support I would have to do everything myself, and with university, that would have been a little bit too hard."

Jayesh, who has just finished his first year studying mathematics with management and finance at King's College in London, has developed many skills in his role on the Assembly.

"Being a member of the Regional Assembly has given me a lot of confidence and opportunities.

"I've learnt about professional conduct and my communication skills have improved, working with all different ages and abilities. I'm also more organised!"

Regional Youth Work Advisor, Gill Millar, said: "The continued involvement of young people in the South West Regional Assembly is a testament to young people's own commitment to influencing decisions that affect their lives, and to the support they receive from the RYWU at Learning South West."