The Smith Institute
The Smith Institute is an independent think tank that has been set up to look at issues which flow from the changing relationship between social values and economic imperatives.

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Registered Charity No. 1062967
perspectives on aspiration and ambition

Edited by Hannah Brian
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Preface
Wilf Stevenson, Director of the Smith Institute

The Smith Institute is an independent think tank set up to undertake research and education in issues that flow from the changing relationship between social values and economic imperatives. In recent years the institute has centred its work on the policy implications arising from the interactions of equality, enterprise and equity.

One of the key barriers to young people fulfilling their potential is a lack of ambition and aspiration. Despite improvements in school results over the last decade, much more must be done to encourage the most disadvantaged.

As one of the following essays highlights, children's perception of their chances in the labour market affects their level of attainment at school. While children of professional parents have the importance of education instilled in them, too often the opposite is true of those from manual or non-skilled backgrounds. Apart from the benefits to the individual, improving the aspirations of the disadvantaged is crucial in meeting the challenges that Britain faces in a global age. This challenge also exists at a local level, where the economic performance of certain areas is often held back by a lack of skills.

What comes through clearly in these essays is the need for parents, schools and communities to inspire the young to realise their aspirations. The challenge is how to achieve this. Although the essays are from a Yorkshire & Humber perspective, the solutions ring true for every region. Throughout the essays there is an emphasis on role models and mentors as a way of nurturing belief so that young people can unlock their latent talent. In order to encourage aspiration and ambition in the young, we have to communicate their possibilities and empower them to achieve. If we can do this, then more young people can realise their potential and society as a whole can benefit from the economic results that this will bring.

The Smith Institute thanks Hannah Brian (senior governance manager at Yorkshire Forward) for agreeing to edit this collection of essays, and gratefully acknowledges the support of Yorkshire Forward towards this publication and the associated seminar.
Introduction
Hannah Brian, Senior Governance Manager at Yorkshire Forward

The purpose of this monograph is to consider ways of driving aspiration and ambition in young people. The simple premise is that for an economy to succeed in the long term, its young people need to be encouraged to think beyond the confines of the school gates or their local town; that young people should be enabled to take control of what they want to do in the future, to think big and enter adulthood confident and ambitious.

When politicians and policy makers talk about young people and education, the focus is on standards – standards of behaviour, learning and exam results. What these chapters try to do is to add another dimension to the debate: the importance of young people having aspirations and ambitions. This isn't a fundamental rethink of the education system, although perhaps it should be; rather, what it suggests is that if you want to achieve high standards you need to enable young people, not just teach them.

What I hope screams from these chapters is that this is a win-win situation. Young people become more confident, have greater self-belief and control over their lives. We get that much desired rise in standards and a generation willing and able to drive our future economic growth and success.

As ever, there is no silver bullet here, no one solution, but there are good ideas and good practice emerging.

I am grateful to those who have contributed their perspective: John Godber, Julie Kenny, Ruth Redfern, Shaun Weatherhead, FranklinCovey and Selga Speakman-Brown. Their range of views, ideas and solutions makes for challenging reading.

As you read these perspectives, three themes emerge. First, an economic argument that if you want a town, a region or a country to succeed economically, its people, particularly its young people, need to have high aspirations and ambitions that drive them and their area forward. The second theme is frustration – frustration that some communities are not encouraging their young people to be ambitious, that some parents are compressing the horizons of their children rather than enabling them to think big, and that schools are ill equipped to challenge community, parental and their own perceptions of what young people should aspire to.
The final theme, undoubtedly, is passion. What pours from this monograph is a passion for changing the situation, a passion for trying new things and a passionate belief in young people. The message is clear: if you enable young people to be confident and in control of their lives, there is no limit to their potential.

Although the focus of some of this monograph is on Yorkshire & Humber, I believe that both the challenges we face and our work to combat them have lessons for all regions. We are not exceptional in needing to raise levels of aspiration and ambition. I suspect that many of the things you will read will resonate with your own experiences and concerns.
Chapter 1

The economic role of aspiration and ambition

Hannah Brian, Senior Governance Manager at Yorkshire Forward
The economic role of aspiration and ambition

We live in challenging economic times. The pressures of competing in a global economy are significant; there are challenges and opportunities aplenty. It is one of the reasons regional development agencies were set up – to enable the English regions to meet the challenges and take the opportunities of the global economy, and build strong, sustainable economies of their own that feed into a strong UK economy.

In December 2005 the Treasury published *Globalisation & the UK – Strength & Opportunity to Meet the Economic Challenge*. It outlined key challenges for the UK in responding to globalisation. It is a blueprint of sorts for the key characteristics that the regions, such as Yorkshire & Humber, need to have in order to compete globally:

- enterprising businesses;
- a highly skilled workforce;
- investment in R&D and innovation; and
- an adaptable and flexible economy.

Yorkshire & Humber is in a good position to achieve all these characteristics, with a significant growth in the number of new businesses, a 13% increase in the number of businesses involved in R&D with our universities, strong and successful universities producing thousands of graduates, and a growing diversity of business rather than a dependence on particular sectors.

All these characteristics need a particular kind of people at their foundation. Enterprising businesses are run by ambitious people with a clear vision and a drive for success. A highly skilled workforce is one in which individuals have evolving skills sets that develop with their chosen work fields or careers. Investment in R&D and innovation requires people with first-class skills in maths and science, who can translate academic ideas into powerful business solutions. And an adaptable and flexible economy is one filled with people who have strong basic skills and the ability to translate their past experience into future opportunities.

We have a recipe of sorts, then – the key ingredients that will create a dynamic regional economy working as part of the global economy. It is a huge challenge. A huge challenge that the workforce of the future, the young people in our region’s schools today, have to meet. That raises a crucial question: are our young people being prepared to meet this
challenge, to be this skilled, focused, adaptable workforce? I hate the fact that the answer is, "Not really".

Attainment
What always smacks me right between the eyes when I look at Yorkshire & Humber is the low attainment, compared with other English regions, in key stages 2, 3 and 4. It is not that we have been getting worse; the opposite is true – we are improving, but we have yet to improve enough to overtake even our nearest region, two to three percentage points away.

At key stage 2, when young people are just about to leave primary education at 11, the region has consistently performed worst of all English regions in English and science (since 1999/2000). Yes, in 2005/06 there were only three percentage points between Yorkshire & Humber as the worst performing and the South East and South West as the best, but we know that poor attainment here only widens at 14 and 16.

Figure 1: Percentage attainment of level 4 at key stage 2 in 1999/2000 and 2005/06 among the English regions (ranked by regional attainment in 2005/06)

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Source: Department for Education & Skills LEA school performance tables 2006
At key stage 3 Yorkshire & Humber’s performance is once again poor in comparison with other regions, being joint last in English and maths and eighth of nine in science. Again there is a relatively small difference between the best region and the poorest, between four and eight percentage points depending on the subject, but it is a gap that is not closing. The region has only five of 15 local authority areas above the national average in each discipline, and most worrying, all four South Yorkshire local authorities are below national average in all disciplines.

Figure 2: Percentage attainment of level 5+ at key stage 3 in 2005/06 among the English regions (ranked by regional attainment)

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Source: Department for Education & Skills LEA school performance tables 2006

All this builds to a crescendo at key stage 4 and GCSE/GNVQ results. In 2005/06 the proportion of pupils in the region getting five or more GCSEs graded A*-C, or equivalent, was 54.5%, set against the England average of 59.2%. This was a significant improvement on the baseline in 1998/99, when 41.9% of pupils achieved the same, but other regions have not stood still and we remain ninth of nine.
There are two additional concerns. First, there are a large number of young people in the region aged 16 with no qualifications at all – 3.8%, compared with the England average of 3.3% – putting the region at the top of this table. This figure increased in 2005/06, with significant parts of the region having numbers far above the English average, the most significant in Hull at 7.3%, with Sheffield at 5.2%, Bradford at 5.1% – all increases – and Leeds at 4.7%. Second, in the past few years attainment between key stage 2 and key stage 4 has fallen; increasingly, what young people are getting at key stage 4 is lower than expected given their key stage 2 results.

Low attainment is not going to help our region achieve economic success. To put it bluntly, if you don’t have five GCSEs you are unlikely to be heading off to university to became a science graduate who will drive a company’s R&D work. But it is not as simple as our young people not having the academic skills necessary – you don’t need academic qualifications coming out of your ears to be a stunningly successful entrepreneur – it is more that there is something insidious behind the low attainment statistics.

Yorkshire Futures, the region’s intelligence network, commissioned some research in...
the light of the key stage 2-4 disparity. Hoshin, who produced the report, make some significant comments in its summary:

*What our research does suggest to us is that a pupil’s perception of their labour market chances impacts on their attainment (from a relatively early age), and that the balance within a school of those believing that they will successfully engage within the labour market and those who do not is a crucial factor affecting attainment (which provides schools with their “ethos”)…*

*We believe that attainment is strongly related to the level of social segregation in our schools… We believe that this is because those from managerial and professional backgrounds more often hold positive attitudes towards education (where it has been important in helping them in their career path) than those from manual backgrounds (as attainment is unlikely to be a prerequisite for obtaining such jobs). We hypothesise that it is important for schools that they have enough pupils with positive attitudes, hence our concern regarding social segregation.*

These remarks suggest that although first-class teaching is important, even with that, other factors are in play that drive down attainment – young people’s attitude to their life chances.

**Ambition and aspiration**

When you look back at the characteristics of a successful global economy and the characteristics of the people that work to achieve it, it screams ambition and aspiration – that passion to do better, to be better, a desire to move forward.

When I consider my own home town, or the former pit towns and villages around the region or the young people I’ve met in the last two years, there is a real lack of those characteristics. Rather, in many areas there is a culture of “compressed horizons”, where to have ambitions, to want to succeed, is viewed with genuine fear, seen as an insult – “What, my life not good enough for you?” – or as “getting above yourself”.

There is a bizarre inverted snobbery in some communities, where to succeed comes with the ultimate insult – being posh. For many outside Yorkshire & Humber, it appears in contrast to the stereotype of the chippy Northerner, fearless and persistent, and it is hard to describe how it comes about. It isn’t universal; we are not a region drowning in

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self-doubt and misery, not by any stretch, but there are areas and communities across the region where a certain malaise plays a very negative role.

The areas and communities I am talking about tend to be small towns and cities where the industry of the past (textiles, metals, coal) have long gone. They tend not to be the poorest in the region, nor to belong to the urban sprawl of the big cities, but rather are those places in between. They tend to be insular communities, where families have lived for several generations and the expectation is that, to put it simply, you marry a local lass/lad, have a couple of kids and settle down a few streets from your parents.

Wakefield could be seen as an example of this type of community. It is neither radically deprived nor radically wealthy; it has elements of both, as do a significant number of former pit towns and villages. It has a beautiful cathedral and has had significant regeneration money in the past few years. In 2005 I asked Opinion Leader Research to look at why Wakefield has such a large number of young people leaving full-time education at 16 (one of the highest in the UK). Their findings make depressing reading:

- The community mindset in Wakefield is predominately one of low motivation and aspiration with regard to work and lifestyle, which is perpetuated in the younger generation.
- Parents may have low aspirations and do not press their children to seek success; many do not even discuss their children’s options with them.
- This mindset is accepted as the norm by young people, who in turn fail to see the value of education in achieving their vision of their future.
- A lack of alternative role models or visions to their parents or others in the wider community means that these adults are plausible role models.
- Teachers and careers advisors see the attitudes of parents as a barrier to them being able to motivate young people into achieving more.²

When they spoke to young people, two important themes came through:

1) A simple lack of aspiration or ambition:

_ I just want a nice office job, a flat or rented house and enough money to get by with my boyfriend or husband._

Female school leaver

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² Opinion Leader Research _Early School Leavers in Wakefield_ (2005), p5
I want to be a photographer when I’m older, but I know I’ll probably end up working at TK Maxx like everyone else.
Gemma, aged 15

2) Parental attitudes:
My stepdad didn’t want me to go to college at all. He said that I had to stop education ’cos I wasn’t paying my board.
Female school leaver

My dad works for ... a trucking firm, and naturally I went into the same sort of business.
Male school leaver

Teachers backed this up, saying:

You have to be very careful as a teacher what you say in front of a child when you’re trying to encourage them, to start talking about aiming higher; you’ve got to be very careful ... you’ll upset the parents.

I have had the situation where the child has said: “I’m going to work with my dad, he’s an electrician; that’s what I’m going to do, I’m going to work with my dad.” I say: “Well actually, you’re really good at maths, would you like to try …”, then at parents’ evening I got: “What’s wrong with being an electrician? What’s wrong with it?” And I say: “There’s absolutely nothing wrong; I’m just trying to give your son a different path that he maybe would like to look at.” The parents are very defensive.

I confess that the temptation to bury my head in my hands is very strong at this point. I wish that these young people were exceptions, but such attitudes from parents and young people can be found in communities across the region; communities that our regional economy is going to rely on to source the workforce of the future. The workforce that can help us develop a region with the characteristics for long-term economic prosperity.

I think a lot of people hear “raising ambition and aspiration” and think of fluffy self-improvement with a group hug involved somewhere. That could not be further from the truth. It is an economic imperative, not just for this region but for many English regions.
Chapter 2

You have to keep surprising people

John Godber, Playwright
You have to keep surprising people

I think that there is no doubt that we live in a society that is obsessed with celebrity. I’m not much of a television watcher, but as my girls have got older I’ve had to witness endless game shows or quasi-sports contests where so-called celebrities battle it out to be the best dancer/singer/skater, delete where appropriate. Then on the other hand there are shows that make new celebrities: taking talented ordinary people and either humiliating them in the process of selection, or delivering their lottery-style dream by giving them stardom for a few years.

The fusion of these two ideas would be a programme where people who have been made famous on TV learn to skate/dance/sing, delete where appropriate, and we vote on their fate, since it was us, the great British public, who allegedly put them there in the first place. It is perhaps not surprising that even my girls have expressed more than a passing interest in the seductive power of celebrity, since they too believe that if you achieve this status your life will be better. Well, call me a saddo, but while you may well be better known, as for your life being better I’m not so sure.

I have always thought that there was something particularly hollow about being a celebrity, and in my line of work I’ve met one or two; both good and bad, as it happens. What usually impresses me is integrity, not celebrity, and if I ever had a motto that would be it.

All of us have dreams, and some of us are lucky enough to realise those dreams without the indignity of a public phone-in. I have to admit that as a teenager I had a desire to play inside left for Leeds United and as I got older and bigger I was convinced I would play Rugby Union at a high level. With this kind of dreaming, anyone might ask: “How the heck did you become a playwright?”

There is no single event that made me want to be a playwright. I think deep down I had always had an interest in storytelling; when my Dad came home from the pit he would entertain the family around the dinner table as he ate his way through Desperate Dan-sized meals, and as a family we would argue over everything: Why is the dog barking? Where’s the butter? What should we do about discrimination in South Africa? I realise now how important this was, because above all else we were communicating, and I’m bound to say that communication skills are crucial, if only to explain to another person how you feel about their daft ideas!
Of course as we go through life it is difficult to take stock of the events that shape our personalities, and for no good reason I'm reminded of an occasion in a maths class when the Head of Maths sent me out of the room because I hadn't completed my homework. Three others hadn't done their homework and he said that was fine, so I took it as read that it would be equally fine for me. Not so!

When he discovered I hadn't done my homework he sent me out, and I remember very clearly him telling me that he thought I had "some big ideas about myself". Well, I didn't think I had any big ideas about myself, but in a funny way he helped me crystallise dormant ideas. I felt sure that the time would come when I would get some sort of payback, since treating me like that just seemed unfair, and even now I can't stomach injustice.

I suppose on honest reflection I did have some big ideas about myself, but I didn't want him to spot them; he was a maths teacher, what would he know about wanting to be a playwright?

Several years later I met the same teacher in a pub when I was researching my PhD and I had taken up a new hobby, power lifting. My first instinct was to shove my PhD down his neck and then throw him through a window, but integrity got the better of me and I bought him half a pint of beer with the money I had just received from my first TV script. In a way I should have thanked him, because he had forced me to question myself. If I did have some big ideas about myself, what was I going to do about it? I realised I had something to prove. Not to him, but to myself!

It is this proving to yourself that is so crucial when it comes to motivation. Of course seeking the blessing of others is important, and winning awards is great, but ultimately what gets you out of bed in the morning is the desire to prove something to yourself. Can you do it? Are you actually as good as you think you are?

When I think back to those years, I can't remember anyone ever saying that I couldn't be a playwright! No one ever said I could be a playwright either – it wasn't on the radar. If your Dad was a miner and your Mam a dinner lady and you came from Upton and you'd failed your 11-plus, the chances of coming across other playwrights to motivate you were slim. Indeed, trips to the theatre were few and far between, and it was simply the enthusiasm of a number of drama teachers at Minsthorpe High School that made me realise that you could actually carve out a career “doing plays".
I was obsessed with reading plays. I thought that if I was going to make something of this lark then I would read as much as possible. I read a play every Saturday morning before I played rugby. It might have looked a bit odd me turning up to the rugby club with a playtext in my hand, but I had stumbled across David Storey’s work and he had played rugby and wrote plays and novels, so there was a kind of role model guide to me. Role models are crucial, but they have to be the right ones; and that brings me back to celebrity.

Even today I read around subjects when I’m researching a play, and no matter how many awards are in the trophy cabinet – Baftas, Olivier awards, Hollywood awards – I strongly believe that you are only as good as what you are doing today. I hope I never feel that I have reached my peak, or “made it”. I still have things to prove to myself, because unlike celebrity I don’t see any of this as an end in itself; it’s all part of the journey, part of the development of me and my ideas.

Of course there have been setbacks and disappointments but you have to take that with the territory. Every time you write a new piece of work you tempt some to say it’s not as good as this one or that one, but you have to accept that and keep doing what it is that you want to do.

Years ago, when I went for a school careers interview with my Dad, I told the teacher that I wanted to write plays. My Dad had no idea that I had even thought about a life in the arts. He went mad; he’d spent five years trying to convince me that I wasn’t good enough to play for Leeds United, and out of the blue I said I wanted to work in the theatre. Over time my Dad has eventually come to understand what it was that I wanted to do; after flying to LA to pick up awards and several West End openings, he now fully understands the desire to do something different. In fact the truth is that he has even started writing himself ... I’d better watch that!

He still says it came as a big surprise, though, when I just came out with the fact that I wanted to write plays. But I suppose that’s what you have to do, you have to keep surprising people ... especially yourself!
Chapter 3

Take each challenge a step at a time

Julie Kenny CBE DL, Managing Director of Pyronix Ltd
Take each challenge a step at a time

Julie Kenny CBE DL is the managing director of Pyronix, an electronic security equipment manufacturer. She is also a board member of Yorkshire Forward and director of Secure Holdings and Castle Care-Tech. On the national agenda, she is a UK Commissioner for Employment and Skills, sits on the Small Business Forum, is a member of the Better Regulation Stakeholder Group and the Administrative Burdens Advisory Board and a director of the British Security Industry Association. Locally, Julie Kenny is a member of the Creative Sheffield board and a director of Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber of Commerce. This chapter looks at what drives this successful woman.

Growing up
I was born in Hillsborough in South Yorkshire. My childhood was very poor, my parents were divorced and I found life very tough. One example of this was the first house I lived in as a child – my first home. The house was condemned, forcing us to move onto a council estate in Stannington about two-and-a-half miles away. School for me was a very large new comprehensive school, attended by children from all kinds of backgrounds and with a wide range of abilities. The school did not offer support with exams and career paths, as schools do today, but school life was okay. Academically I was in top sets for all subjects, although I only got average marks for my work.

Both my parents were under a lot of pressure financially, which dominated most of their thoughts, and as a result, I didn't get a lot of guidance from them on the decisions or life choices I should make. I don't think they expected me to achieve very much, or maybe they didn’t think I needed to. As a woman herself, my mother believed all I would be able to achieve was marriage and children. Her ambition for me was to work in a shop and she didn’t see the necessity for me to stay on at school.

The world of work
My childhood ambition was to become a secretary. The idea initially entered my head while I was still at school, where an intensive one-year secretarial course was available. I didn’t know anyone who was a secretary, but my belief was that it would be a glamorous career. Taking the course meant that I would have to stay on at school for an additional year, and I knew that this could cause my family continuing financial hardship as my mother wanted me to earn a living as soon as possible.

Even at that young age my determination and drive were strong and I resolved to find a
solution. So I went to the local education authority and obtained a grant that would enable me to stay at school for the extra year. I also asked my Dad to pay maintenance to Mum for an extra year to enable me to continue my education. I desperately wanted more from life than to work in a shop or settle down at such a young age and have a family.

After completing the secretarial course I worked as a junior secretary with a law firm. Enjoying the work, I soon found I had an aptitude for law. My employers picked up on this too and offered me the chance to train as a legal executive. I grasped the opportunity, and that is how my second career as a lawyer developed. As a successful lawyer I worked initially with local authorities and then moved into private practice.

My third career path developed from another opportunity, this time caused by circumstance. After just five weeks of marriage my husband lost his job. We were both still young and it was hard for us to come to terms with this, but we looked at the positive, and realised by losing his job my husband had also been given an opportunity. My husband wanted to design a PIR – a detector that monitors movement and is extensively used in burglar and security alarms. We had the idea to start our own business but had no money to do so. We did have one asset: I owned a house. So I sold my house and raised £28,500, which I invested in our new start-up business, Pyronix.

Over the past two decades Pyronix has achieved a lot. It has gone from being a single detector manufacturer to one of the world’s leading providers of quality security equipment. Our product portfolio is extensive and continually evolving to provide the security industry with innovative products utilising the latest developments and state-of-the-art manufacturing processes. We have two manufacturing sites, one in England and one in China, with two research and development sites in the UK and a distribution outlet. Internationally we have people working for us in mainland Europe, Asia, China and South America.

We are particularly proud to be the first company outside China (and only the fifth company worldwide) to have gained Chinese product approvals. This achievement was formally recognised at the Security Excellence Awards by the UK security industry, which awarded us the International Achievement Accolade.

In business I have learned that two-way communication is key, and by using this philosophy, I have created a successful business. I work in a male-dominated industry that has, in the past, found it difficult to accept women into the fold. However, as the first ever
female director of the British Security Industry Association, this barrier is now crumbling. People who were not used to a female point of view are becoming more accepting. By wanting to achieve, and with each achievement wanting to do even better, I have been able to move forward.

My journey
I am proud to say that personally I have achieved a lot, more than my mother would have ever imagined. I could have been held back by a lack of guidance from my school or my parents, by social stereotypes, or by my mother’s reluctance to let me stay on at school. As a woman I have had to work twice as hard as my male colleagues to achieve recognition, but my own determination and drive have always been an essential component in my success. I have found three principles vital to my journey: continuous learning; setting goals; and staying grounded.

One of the things that has helped me is my thirst for learning in every circumstance – not just in formal education. When opportunities have arisen I have grasped them and worked hard to make them successful. Every experience I have been through, good or bad, has been another opportunity for me to learn. By being focused and determined, you can look for good in every hardship. By being true to yourself, and having honesty and integrity, you can build success from adversity.

Setting goals has kept me focused and I have grown with everything I have done. We all make mistakes, but the key is learning from them, not making the same mistakes again and again. Not many people wake up and have the big dream right from the start. Setting small goals and making tiny steps will help you accomplish most things.

It is also important to stay grounded. By wanting to leave a mark on the world, and make a difference to help others in ways I would have benefited from as a child, I am able to stay driven. If you can, give something back to the community in which you live – be it schools, through the parent–teacher association or board of governors, local charities or hospitals. I have often thought that if everyone gave one hour each week, the impact on our own advancement as well as the community as a whole would be enormous. This will give you a different perspective and help you stay grounded, as well as developing you into a well-rounded individual.

What’s next?
There is still lots I want to achieve, both in business and personally. I still want to run a
business worth in excess of £100 million and to do this I need to keep learning from my experiences. You don’t have to be like me – business isn’t the only route to success, but by making incremental steps as I did, with each success you will find yourself spurred on to do more.

To young people who are in a similar position to me when I was young, I would say: take each challenge a step at a time. If you keep moving forward you will reach your goal. If you have difficult times, that’s okay. Learn to cope with them and keep focused. Take each opportunity that comes your way and work hard with honesty and integrity, and success will come your way. Do not judge yourself through the eyes of others, but focus only on what you want to achieve. Recognise success and be proud of your achievements, however small. They all add up.
Chapter 4

Bringing your own philosophy

Ruth Redfern, Assistant Chief Executive at Yorkshire Forward
Bringing your own philosophy

It was well over three years ago that my daughter arrived home from school with a flock of friends to dolefully announce (while raiding the fridge) that they had all failed their mock GCSE citizenship exam. Between them they had amassed a tragic selection of Es and Fs. As a passionate advocate of the notion that civic participation and civil responsibility begin once we can speak, I was crestfallen.

Persuading them I would tutor them on Thursday evenings took little effort; preparation and subornment of friends/colleagues as guest teachers took a little more. Several months and A grades later, this story serves not to give an impression that I am a supermum (as the teens would say – “You’re so not”); instead it tells a tale of lack of ambition and aspiration from the school and context or encouragement for the girls.

On the public-sector stage we hear much of place shaping, community cohesion, localism, accountability, leadership, partnerships and collaborative delivery mechanisms. All of them seem to me (and I admit I oversimplify by nature) to amount to the same thing: individual power within collective aspiration. In other words, the importance of the role we all play individually to create a collective vision or outcome. Maybe it's all blah, however we phrase it in public-sector speak, but I do know that those bright, intelligent and creative young women in our kitchen didn’t have much of it. They experienced limited self-belief, a lack of personal significance and no knowledge of what the state or the school envisioned from their participation.

Much is written about limiting self-belief, often described as “our little voice”. No, I am not talking about schizophrenia or mental illness, but the voice we all have in our heads that tells us we’re not good enough. As adults, we study, find a coach or mentor, invest in management and leadership training to obliterate the voice that constrains and belittles us. Who put the voice there? A teacher? A parent? A grandparent? The media?

Those moments in childhood when we were encouraged to aim low and so not be disappointed, those times when we had something important to say and no one listened because it was a childish importance, those times when we were simply not told what the hell was going on and didn’t know what part we had to play – those moments create the damage that blocks our brilliance as adults and limits our capacity for growth and creativity.
Please don’t get the impression that I am criticising teachers or parents – I was a teacher, I am a parent. I am criticising practices that discourage vision but are obsessed with test results; a structure that allows a reckless disregard of children’s views and ambitions in the pack ‘em, stack ‘em and count ‘em education system; a process that inhibits personal growth at the best time to realise it.

We know that young people who envision success tend to achieve it – but we only encourage that in sport. We know that if children are supported to write their own mission statement or values it helps them behave well, because they own their behaviour and outcomes. We know that kids who are properly listened to form better ideas and allow more intellectual challenge. It is also true of adults. Anyone who has studied any neuro-linguistic programming, read Stephen Covey’s *7 Habits* or even paused in the self-help/business section of Waterstone’s knows that this stuff works. And yet it is denied our young people. Because of our obsession with results, we get worse results. Just as in the workplace – aren’t results, efficiency and effectiveness really about people being happy and giving it their best shot? Attitude is all; skills you can learn.

Here at Yorkshire Forward we are telling Yorkshire & Humber that young people in our region are ambitious and have some fabulous aspirations. We have produced research, information, and statistics and we have held events, all of which demonstrate that the region has potentially a great future in the hands of our young people. But if the point of aspiration is attainment, then why are our GCSE results not as good as they might be? Why the gap?

If a student gets three or four A-Cs at GCSE level, it seems to me they are bright enough to get five. If only 2,000 more students did that in Yorkshire & Humber, we would be near as dammit at the top of the national league of the nine regions. Two thousand isn’t many in a region of 5 million. But how do we do it for these 2,000, and more?

In this country we typically look upon young people through a lens of misbehavior. We don’t communicate to them their potential. We don’t recognise that they could make a commitment and keep it, and even more importantly, if they don’t keep it, then it is their responsibility, not ours. As parents and teachers we take the responsibility from them, and in doing so become self-sacrificing and long-suffering, confirming in their eyes that they

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1 Shaping the Agenda 2008: The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers – held on Friday 8 February 2008
are irresponsible and there are no outcomes or results from their behaviour other than a frustrated and martyred adult. How different it might be if we gave our children the full responsibility for passing their exams, believed that they would and listened carefully to their concerns and issues at times of difficulty.

How many times did I say to my son, “We must do homework this afternoon, okay?” “Yes,” an unconvincing grunt in reply. Later I found myself at the kitchen table with the homework book I had collected from his bookbag and a pencil and rubber I had collected from the cupboard – I was alone and starting to feel miffed. Why did my son not take any responsibility for his homework? He didn’t have to, because I did.

I finally put this right, and it started with a conversation about whether he likes getting his homework completed on time. When he said that he did (I am at least smart enough to ask a question I know will precipitate the right answer), I asked him how I could support him to do that, because I knew that if he wanted to do this then he had the power to do it, but he had to decide how he wanted to do it and how I might help. It was a valuable lesson for us both. I was disempowering him and he was frustrating me, but we both changed and we both felt better, and the homework (most of the time) got completed.

There is a workplace parallel: a member of staff emails you with a problem that’s obviously worrying them. Do you (a) give them all the answers in your reply, (b) not reply because you can’t think of the answer, or (c) ask them what they think the answer is and how you might support them achieving it? It’s a no-brainer. We make this kind of call every day.

There is no doubt that young children have brilliant confidence. Ask any child under nine years if they’re good at something and mostly they’ll tell you they are. But what happens between nine and 18? They are slowly robbed of this self-assurance. Their buoyancy and self-belief are eroded, and with it their aspiration and ambition. As Stephen Covey says: “Every human being is precious in her or his own right, endowed with enormous, almost infinite potential and capacity.”

It is our challenge to ensure that the people around us, especially our children, enlarge that capacity. We can trust, respect and nourish young people and share a common vision with them of their unique and satisfying place in the world. We can reduce class sizes

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3 Stephen R Covey The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness (Simon & Schuster UK, 2004)
and bureaucracy to allow teachers to spend real time with children. We can turn off the TV and talk together as a family. We can listen to our children. We can go into a bookshop or library and give ourselves ideas for liberating the potential of young people. We can do things quite differently if we choose to – an incredible power! No one theory or philosophy is absolutely right, so I'm not pushing a particular methodology. But I do believe we can significantly improve the thought we give to young people and our approach to them.

You may well be asking what on earth this has to do with Yorkshire Forward, and you would be right to ask. I would say: everything – from the immutable fact that the economy can only thrive if the future workforce is ready for the challenge, through to the single most important task of a regional development agency: to influence. If regional development agencies “should” do anything it is to confront the way we do business in our region, test new ways of thinking, aspire for great places and great people and challenge the status quo if it is inadequate – and, let’s face it, our collective academic results are inadequate, and we are embarrassed, aren’t we? We cannot lay this at the door of teachers, though obviously they play their part. It is time we all thought harder, longer and meditatively about the part we play in the aspiration of young people.

I am a child of working-class parents damaged by the Second World War; they were children of parents damaged by the First World War, working-class parents whose object in life was survival, not philosophy. We are the generation that has the chance, as parents, teachers, mentors, aunts, uncles, friends, godparents and politicians, to do this differently. I think it’s time we did.
Chapter 5

Not the traditional model

Shaun Weatherhead, Founder of U Can Shine
Not the traditional model

In December 2007 Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, set out the government's vision for the Children’s Plan and its aims for building brighter futures. The plan sets out many ambitious goals for 2020 and recognises that schools, children’s services, the voluntary sector, government, external services and families can ensure that every child has the best start in life and can help unlock the talents of all young people ensuring that no child is left behind.

Personal experience: Selena, age 10

I'm Selena. Before U Can Shine came along to school I was a bit naughty and didn’t care about anyone else, and I had lots of arguments with my brother and sisters. I am a completely different person now and I try to work hard all the time. I am more confident at things now and I now know that if I try I will manage to succeed in things. I used to not say my manners and used to fall out with friends, now I say all my manners because my teacher Mrs Nicholson said all of the time manners go a long way!

I am extremely excellent in sports and when U Can Shine comes it helps me to never give up and work with my friends and encourage them so they can do well. PS You Can Shine!!!

What is U Can Shine?

U Can Shine is a personal motivational programme that engages children to set and achieve goals in five key areas, empowering them to achieve their full potential. Since September 2006 U Can Shine has worked with primary schools in some of the lowest socioeconomic groups and most challenging communities in the UK. Witnessing the changes children have made to their lives has been incredibly rewarding and truly inspirational.

My name is Shaun Weatherhead, I am the founder of U Can Shine. I’m not the traditional model of someone who works to instil ambition and aspiration in young people. I'm not a chief executive or a Nobel laureate; I think that’s why children and young people can relate to me. My life has not been one of easy success, nor of a traditional career path.

Growing up, my passion, like that of most boys, was football. My life totally revolved around kicking a ball about at playtime, at lunch, down the school corridor and when I wanted to avoid homework. Those were the days ...
I liked going to school. I had a great time. I just focused too much on what I thought was important to me, and didn’t realise until later how important my education could and should have been to me. It is a strange thing as I look back; I didn’t realise at the time, but some of my teachers played a major role and influenced my life for different reasons.

I was not the best academically, but I was able to channel and focus my abilities into sport. I left school and realised my boyhood dream: I became a professional footballer, only to have my career ended at 23 by an injury.

At that point it seemed I had landed on the scrap heap. It was a major blow to have my life ambition and dream shattered. I didn’t have a clue what I was going to do next and I experienced some of the lowest moments in my life. I lacked confidence or belief in myself, and was dreadfully unhappy. As a person, I was generally not a nice guy to be around at the time.

After drifting without direction, and several jobs later, I went back to college and studied for the first time. Almost two years later, more confident and better skilled, I began working as a personal trainer. The more I worked with people, the more I began to see links between motivating someone to be physically fit and motivating someone to be life fit. I began working with businesses and professional people in performance coaching and life achievement.

The final piece of the puzzle fell into place when I became a dad. The birth of my children, Leah (seven) and Rylee (four), has certainly been life-changing, and everyday life since continues to be the most rewarding, challenging, exciting, enjoyable, exhilarating and exhausting experience ever. My ambitions for my children, my concern for their future well-being, made me connect the dots between motivating adults to be successful and motivating children.

I began U Can Shine with a vision and tremendous passion, but I wasn’t sure where it was going to take me. The first U Can Shine session took place in an old tennis pavilion attended by six children. It has since grown, and over the past 18 months more than 2,000 children have participated in U Can Shine.

**How does U Can Shine work?**

The innovative coaching techniques we use in U Can Shine are tailored to how children learn, but they are similar to those a top athlete or business leader would experience to increase their focus, motivation and personal performance.
Much has been written and spoken about the huge benefits and impact that personal development programmes can have on people, all ultimately achieving the same aim: the empowerment and development of greater self-belief, inspiring individuals to make transformational changes in their life. So, quite simply, U Can Shine aims to do the same for children by encouraging them to embrace the same principles, values and beliefs through coaching. And as they learn these techniques they develop effective strategies for life.

The whole coaching process enables every child to make important steps in their life. It empowers them to take more responsibility for their choices and set goals in five key areas of life:

- physical well-being;
- confidence and self-esteem;
- collaboration and friendships;
- greater self-belief; and
- economic well-being – for life and the future.

Delivered by a U Can Shine coach and supported by a teacher, children work on these areas and participate together as a class once a week for one hour. They focus on the things that are most important to them and set clear, positive goals.

Each aspect individually and collectively reinforces and underpins school curriculum social and emotional aspects of learning, Every Child Matters, personal, social and health education and school sport partnerships. The changes children have achieved are:

- changes in behaviour towards school and their learning;
- gaining greater confidence to engage in classes and finding a voice;
- improvement in attainment;
- improvement in SAT results;
- improved morale and friendship in class towards peers and teachers; and
- improved relationships at home.

Personal experience: Kira

*My name is Kira. Before U Can Shine came to our school I wouldn’t put my hand up in class, I wouldn’t talk to anyone, I wouldn’t join in everything (especially PE) and most of all my attitude to learning was extremely bad. Now U Can Shine has come into school*
I always put my hand up in class. I am the most chatty person in the world. I love PE (especially rounders) and my attitude is so much better that I’m always in Mrs Hamilton’s office (for good work, as I’m not a naughty girl).

U Can Shine means the world to me because it makes me feel special and I really believe in myself. Now U Can Shine has been in, I’m confident at just about everything. U Can Shine is so much fun and everyone has fun doing it! 7, 8, 9 … U Can Shine.

**Ambition, aspiration and achievement**

In today’s society we often link ambition, aspiration and achievement to all aspects of our lives as we strive to achieve greater happiness, success and prosperity. “Attainment”, meaning “to reach or succeed in getting something; to achieve”, sums these three words up. It is regularly referred to in educational circles when working in the development and education of children. Raising children’s attainment is possibly the single biggest factor and motivator for people who teach, judge and measure children. It is a crucial part of their development as individuals and as learners and it affects the results they can achieve.

Children are the lifeblood of this country and are the key to our future prosperity. In schools teachers and pupils are already evaluated, tested and judged to achieve better results. But children must be at the core of understanding their own level of attainment and the aspirations they have for life so they can achieve greater personal happiness.

This is U Can Shine’s mission for every child in our sessions.

**Personal experience: Thomas, age 15**

*My name is Thomas Howard and I am a “normal” 15-year-old football-loving lad, with many great memories such as my favourite football team being promoted into league 1 or the time I met my favourite player Andy Booth. These might not sound much to you but they mean a lot to me, because my earliest memories of my childhood were family and friends comparing me with my older “brainy” sister.*

*She could read, write and spell better than me, wasn’t she good! Everyone compared me with her – “Why can’t you be as good as Hayley?” I was the dunce of the family and this continued when I followed her to the same school. Teachers always compared me with her. Okay, they said I was well behaved and that I knew how to play, but my sister was the one that shone – not me!*
I soon lost all confidence that I was any good at anything and it wasn’t long before I was placed on the school’s special needs register. Although I didn’t tell anyone how much this upset me, it did, and I felt a bit of a loser.

I carried my “special needs” title with me to high school, but suddenly I had teachers who didn’t know my sister and therefore they didn’t compare me to her. Every school report contained quotes like “Tom has the ability in this subject but lacks confidence”.

My parents heard about U Can Shine and they were holding a summer programme, so they booked me on a place and off I went. Thanks to my new-found confidence in myself from U Can Shine, I returned after the holidays with a fresh approach. My next reports were much better and the following summer I returned for a “confidence booster”.

Shortly after I returned to school that summer, I was taken off the special needs register. This I believe was down to the confidence and self-belief that U Can Shine had helped me gain. I wish that all children could have the opportunity to do U Can Shine and get the help it gave me.

Last summer I returned to U Can Shine, this time to assist the coach. I am now much more confident and I believe in myself. Okay, I’m not the “brains of Britain”, but I believe I have got qualities and my sister has her qualities. She will beat me in a maths test but I could beat her at a football match any day.

U Can Shine would like to say a huge thanks to those children for their permission for the use of their personal stories.

www.ucanshine.co.uk
Chapter 6

Truly ‘Shaping the Agenda’

Selga Speakman-Brown, Governance Manager at Yorkshire Forward
Truly ‘Shaping the Agenda’

Why is Shaping the Agenda important to Yorkshire & Humber? How has it affected the region? And what is its relevance to young people? The following chapter will answer these questions, examining how a supposed talking shop evolved to make a difference to young people’s lives.

Where did Shaping the Agenda come from?
Like many successful long-running events, the idea for Shaping the Agenda came from a gap in the market. The fledgling regional development agency, Yorkshire Forward, identified the need in Yorkshire & Humber for a large-scale discussion on the region’s development. It founded Shaping the Agenda in 2001, organised in partnership with the Smith Institute. Realising the positive impact of the event, Yorkshire Forward continued to run Shaping the Agenda annually as a regional policy forum, attended by 200 key players from business, public and voluntary sectors.

Each year a group convened to discuss a topic or agenda seen as vital to the economic growth of the region. Topics such as skills and diversity were discussed and dissected, introduced by top-level speakers including Rt Hon John Prescott MP, Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP and John Healey MP. The delegates were split into smaller workshop groups, depending on their area of interest or expertise, to analyse the finer points of the agenda.

However, after six years we wondered if the format had begun to look tired. We realised that for Shaping the Agenda to continue to push the region in new directions and remain relevant, it was necessary to rethink the current set-up. We needed to review the delegate list – were we really targeting those who needed to be listened to? Or had the event become another opportunity for the usual suspects to voice their usual gripes?

Young people and the future of the region
Since 2001/02, Yorkshire & Humber has consistently achieved the lowest GCSE pass rate in England, as detailed earlier in this monograph. This, coupled with the change from the traditional economic drivers in the region – industry and manufacturing – towards new, high-tech and innovative technologies, obviously has an impact on economic growth. To bring about change, we needed to start working more closely at a grassroots level, growing highly skilled and motivated individuals.
To ensure the future success of the region we needed to speak to the future residents, parents and workforce, those now at school. We had to engage them, to create an increased feeling of ownership over their "home" and try to prevent the brain drain to London. To really understand the needs of this group and their own vision for the future, we needed to find a way of listening to them. Hardly any of them would have heard of Yorkshire Forward, regional development agencies or our role in the region. So in 2007 we invited schools from across the region to attend Shaping the Agenda.

Braving snow, on 9 February 2007, 60 delegates aged 14-18 joined regional leaders to listen to John Healey MP talk about his vision for the region and participate in workshops based on the theme “The Future of the Region”. Inspired by workshop chairs such as Olympic silver medallist Leon Taylor, the then Prisons Minister Gerry Sutcliffe MP, and the then Minister for Women and Equality Meg Munn MP, our young delegates told us what they needed and wanted from their region.

To follow up on what they had learned from the day, each adult who attended was asked to make a pledge to the young people of the region. These included pledges to:

- create opportunities to listen to young people, broaden their horizons and inspire them;
- stop trying to “sell” adult visions to young people and allow them to “buy” the vision they want; and
- try to ensure that a positive message is given about young people, remembering that not all young people are part of one problem.

The working group for the 2007 event met immediately after the event had finished. Excited by its success and the inspiration it gave to all who attended, we decided to hold an event purely for this new, younger audience in 2008. We wanted to use the 2008 event to work on what we had learned in 2007, the continuing regional challenge to increase the numbers of young people achieving five GCSEs graded A*-C, and the goal of raising aspiration in the region. We started to look for ways forward.

Yorkshire Forward’s monograph

Between the 2007 and 2008 events, Yorkshire Forward launched a pamphlet called *The Ambitions & Aspirations of Young People in Yorkshire & Humber*. We had been involved in academic works in the past, working with organisations like the Smith Institute and the New Local Government Network on issues such as diversity and regional governance. This new pamphlet was to be a collaboration of statistics, information and opinions from
Yorkshire Forward, Yorkshire Futures and other key regional partners – most importantly our young people. It was intended to spark a debate on the issue, not provide solutions.

The original idea was to create a regional response to the government’s Youth Matters green paper. Gaining what we did from Shaping 2007, we wanted to pick up on and highlight the issues raised. Rt Hon Ed Balls MP states in the foreword:

*Crucial to targeting the way young people see themselves is changing the way they are seen by others, and we all need to work to remove the prejudice that so many young people suffer.*

This was one of the most important lessons we had learnt at Shaping 2007. While stereotypes regarding race, gender and sexuality are widely documented, this form of age discrimination tends to be relegated to tabloid headlines. The four important essays at the end of the pamphlet asked what young people really thought of their region. They were given the right to reply and an opportunity to talk about their ambitions, their dreams and what they thought of growing up in Yorkshire & Humber.

After disseminating the pamphlet to regional partners and stakeholders, we asked those who read it to tell us what inspired them as young people and about the journey they went through to get where they are today. People who had inspired included politicians Vaclav Havel and Margaret Thatcher, writer Albert Camus, North London drycleaner Harry Willcock, parents and countless teachers. Although on a few occasions a negative experience had spurred people on, most of those regarded as inspirational were those who had recognised something in someone and had worked with them, growing confidence and ambition:

*He made you think you were the most important person he knew.*

*He gave a small group of us a considerable amount of time.*

*They gave me confidence that I could achieve anything I wanted to.*

These are all descriptions of motivators.

With this kind of information, regarding both stereotypes and what motivates, we looked at what we could give to the region’s young people to provide them with the added extra
that would push them on to become the leaders they could be. After working with FranklinCovey in the past, using the internationally renowned *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* as a tool to build the personal development of employees at Yorkshire Forward, we started to work with them to explore their recent UK publication *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers*.

**The 7 Habits**

*By Sian Griffiths, Client Partner, and Janita Andersen, International PR Manager, at FranklinCovey*

**Why the 7 Habits?**

As families, communities, and schools feel the pressure of declining youth behaviour and morale, it is clear that we need a concerted strategy and plan of action to give our youth the education, training and skills, not only in academic terms but in interpersonal and career development terms. This will require the efforts of everyone involved in the life of a young person to teach, instruct, guide and inspire them to a new vision and path, as well as supporting those who may already have identified their ambition and are taking positive steps towards achieving it.

In the case of government, education and commerce, partnerships are forming to address these issues within their unique context. Schools are beginning to adopt more progressive teaching methods to accommodate students with differing learning styles and abilities. The new curriculum incorporates a focus on cultivating skills to help young people become responsible, productive individuals in their community. With the right programme, curriculum, skills and tools, our young people can be inspired to believe in themselves and realise their personal ambition and aspirations.

One such educational programme is The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers, which aims to provide the curriculum, tools, and skills critical for students to undo bad habits and adopt new effective habits for developing and reaching their highest potential. This programme is taken from the US book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* by Sean Covey, son of international bestselling author, Dr Stephen R Covey. Dr Covey is best known for *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, which continues to appear as an all-time bestselling book in several countries.

FranklinCovey, a global leader in effectiveness training and productivity tools, has for years delivered the 7 Habits programme to individuals and organisations throughout the UK
to improve personal leadership and interpersonal capabilities of individuals and teams. Now the same principles of the 7 Habits are being applied to children and young people globally to build self-confidence and interpersonal skills, elevate student achievement, reduce school-wide discipline problems and help them succeed at home, at school and in the community.

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers helps young people aged 14-19 to learn and apply personal leadership principles to the tough choices they face every day. Designed for teenagers, the programme uses language common to teenagers in a way that supports them and helps them address the challenges they face. As they progress through the 7 Habits learning modules and interactive exercises, students gain self-confidence and self-worth by learning how to:

- gain greater control of their lives;
- improve relationships with family and friends;
- define their values and what matters most to them;
- recognise and prioritise their goals;
- find balance between school, friends and work; and
- make smarter decisions,

The programme has recently been approved by the QCA as a level 2 certificate in personal effectiveness, awarded by FranklinCovey’s accreditation partner Qualifications Network, and is now listed on the national database of accredited qualifications. With the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers, students are given the means, understanding and tools for setting their goals for the future and defining their ambitions and aspirations.

What specific core competencies do the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers teach? The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers classes are designed to help young people achieve the following core competencies and outcomes:
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core competencies</th>
<th>Students will be able to:</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Habit 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;Be proactive:&lt;br&gt;&lt;i&gt;Take responsibility for your life&lt;/i&gt;</td>
<td>• Know the difference between reactive and proactive behaviour.&lt;br&gt;• Understand they have the power to choose their response in any given situation.&lt;br&gt;• Learn the skill to &quot;pause, think and do&quot;.&lt;br&gt;• Understand that their own self is the one thing they can control.</td>
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<td><strong>Habit 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;Begin with the end in mind:&lt;br&gt;&lt;i&gt;Define your mission and goals in life&lt;/i&gt;</td>
<td>• Define what’s important to them.&lt;br&gt;• Form a vision of where they want to be in the future.&lt;br&gt;• Create a personal mission statement.&lt;br&gt;• Set measurable academic and personal goals.</td>
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<td><strong>Habit 3</strong>&lt;br&gt;Put first things first:&lt;br&gt;&lt;i&gt;Prioritise, and do the most important things first&lt;/i&gt;</td>
<td>• Understand what their roles are.&lt;br&gt;• Learn how to identify and focus on important activities.&lt;br&gt;• Balance key priorities.&lt;br&gt;• Use planning tools effectively.</td>
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<td><strong>Habit 4</strong>&lt;br&gt;Think win-win:&lt;br&gt;&lt;i&gt;Have an &quot;everyone can win&quot; attitude&lt;/i&gt;</td>
<td>• Understand how to build relationships high in trust and confidence.&lt;br&gt;• Identify ways to build the current relationships in their own lives.&lt;br&gt;• Collaborate toward solutions that work for everyone.</td>
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<td><strong>Habit 5</strong>&lt;br&gt;Seek first to understand then to be understood:&lt;br&gt;&lt;i&gt;Listen to people sincerely and communicate clearly&lt;/i&gt;</td>
<td>• Overcome communication pitfalls.&lt;br&gt;• Apply effective listening skills.&lt;br&gt;• Understand others.&lt;br&gt;• Communicate viewpoints effectively.</td>
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<td><strong>Habit 6</strong>&lt;br&gt;Synergise:&lt;br&gt;&lt;i&gt;Work together to achieve more&lt;/i&gt;</td>
<td>• Celebrate and value the differences in others.&lt;br&gt;• Apply effective problem solving.&lt;br&gt;• Apply collaborative decision making.</td>
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<td><strong>Habit 7</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sharpen the saw:&lt;br&gt;&lt;i&gt;Renew yourself regularly&lt;/i&gt;</td>
<td>• Know how regularly strengthening their bodies through exercise, healthy eating and sleep will help them in life.&lt;br&gt;• Recognise that strengthening their minds through reading, writing and learning new skills will help them in life.&lt;br&gt;• Understand the importance of continually building relationships.</td>
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The case for success – how Guatemala is transforming its society with the 7 Habits

For 36 years Guatemala suffered through a painful civil war, with death squads, peasant massacres, and battles between government and guerrilla forces leaving 100,000 people dead and an economy in shambles. Poverty, corruption and distrust of institutions of authority were apparent everywhere. Finally, in 1996, in a peace process brokered by the United Nations, the warring factions laid down their arms, giving Guatemala a second chance for renewal and prosperity.

In the four decades of chaos and fear, the optimism of the youth was lost. In 2003, María del Carmen Aceña, newly appointed Minister of Education in the Óscar Berger Cabinet, began visiting schools. She interviewed teachers, students and parents, and came away alarmed that no one was talking about the future – not their own futures, not the future of Guatemala. With the average age of Guatemalans at just 18, and with more than 40% of the population under the age of 14, María del Carmen Aceña knew that if the youth had no hope, then Guatemala had no hope.

From a Brazilian teacher working in the countryside, Aceña learned of an innovative programme in which students were being taught to dream, to create and to establish mission statements for themselves and their country. She wanted to implement this programme nationwide, but how? How could she overcome the inertia and distrust of change in the teachers, the apathy of the students, and the unyielding infrastructure of the political process? How could she introduce new ideas to the school system of an entire nation?

Then, in June 2005, Aceña heard a speech by Dr Stephen R Covey, where she acquired the vision for establishing a “Dreams” programme for Guatemalan students based on *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Convinced that the 7 Habits was the tool she needed to overcome Guatemala’s obstacles, the minister and her staff began working with FranklinCovey consultants from Panama to empower the teachers to adopt new ways of teaching their students to dream and to aspire to achieve their dreams. By February of 2006, a core of teachers were trained as 7 Habits facilitators, and a plan was in place for these facilitators to teach and train the 7 Habits to all other teachers in Guatemala. A training academy was established with a full certification process and a process was created to measure the impact of training. Later supportive tools such as a website and newsletter were also created.

By autumn 2006, over 2,500 high-school teachers in all public and private schools in the
entire country were trained in the 7 Habits. By the end of the training, the teachers were motivated and empowered to launch the Minister of Education’s new “Dreams” programme for high-school seniors, which incorporated *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers* in its resources. The new programme was launched, and by the end of the 2006/07 school year, a total of 175,000 high-school students had developed meaningful “life plans” as well as high-quality plans for some kind of development in their communities. Students worked in teams to develop plans for:

- fighting against child abuse and AIDS;
- helping the elderly;
- building school libraries;
- restoring deforested lands;
- sustaining businesses in poor communities; and
- establishing peace over armed conflict as a national value.

Today, the youth of Guatemala, with the help of their teachers, the Minister of Education and the 7 Habits, are dreaming big. The youth are goal-oriented and have a vision not only for their personal success but for their community as well. As a result, Guatemala has a bright future ahead.

**The day – the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers, Yorkshire & Humber**

Shaping the Agenda 2008 was a showcase event for both Yorkshire Forward and the region. It was also the first large-scale rollout of the 7 Habits of Effective Teenagers in this country. It marked the start of a push towards recognising that while exam results are important, it is the calibre of the individual that forms a great leader, successful businessperson or well-rounded individual.

One hundred and fifty pupils and teachers attended on 8 February 2008 to work on the 7 Habits. The costs of the event were met entirely by Yorkshire Forward. To help facilitate the schools’ attendance, Yorkshire Forward supported schools with transport costs and other expenses where needed. The day was timed to avoid major exam periods or the lead-up to these, and the agenda of the day was designed to try to match that of a school day. Each delegate also received a copy of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers* and the accompanying workbook.

Hotels had been the traditional venue for Shaping the Agenda in the past, due to their events facilities and breakout space. However, to set the tone for the day – as an
inspirational day of learning – we needed somewhere that would provide an extra wow factor for our delegates. The Magna Science Adventure Centre in Rotherham was chosen as the venue. Although the South Yorkshire location was not the most central in the region, the facilities, space and type of venue made it the perfect location for our event. Magna is the UK’s first science adventure centre. The building is divided into seven parts, including four architecturally stunning and gadget-packed pavilions and two multimedia shows. The site was formerly the famous Templeborough steelworks, the workplace of 10,000 steelworkers, nicknamed “the anvil of South Yorkshire”.

Normanton MP Rt Hon Ed Balls opened the day with the statement: “Today can change your life – but only if you let it.” Gary McGuey and Lonnie Moore from FranklinCovey led the day, illustrating the 7 Habits through various pictures, films and stories. Tasks set throughout the day – such as trying to juggle balloons to demonstrate planning, filling a bowl with rocks of different sizes to show how to fit all the things you want into your life, and drafting personal mission statements – all helped give delegates new tools that they could use to achieve their aspirations.

Each school table worked with different regional VIPs throughout the day. These were made up of politicians and business and community leaders, including Rt Hon David Blunkett MP, Gerry Sutcliffe MP, John Healey MP, Linda McAvan MEP, Timothy Kirkhope MEP, Eric Illsley MP, Yorkshire Forward board member and businesswoman Julie Kenny CBE DL, chair Terry Hodgkinson and chief executive Tom Riordan.

However, VIP and young entrepreneur Hayley Edge really stole the show. She attends the sixth form at Wath Comprehensive and after being at last year’s event she wrote for Yorkshire Forward’s pamphlet *The Ambitions & Aspirations of Young People in Yorkshire & Humber*. Hayley Edge worked with school groups from across the region, inspiring them with her enthusiasm and as a result gained herself a work experience placement with fellow VIP guest Michelle Edgar-Parsons, managing director of Batley-based full service agency THINK.

Newly appointed Regional Minister Rt Hon Rosie Winterton MP also called in to offer her support throughout the course of the day. These regional VIPs really added to the impact of the day, as many delegates would not have had the opportunity to work with these people otherwise. Their support built on the ambience of the day, helping the delegates to feel special. Afterwards students commented that they felt very important and privileged that they had been chosen for the day.
Feedback and follow-up
The day received positive feedback from all involved. Feedback suggests that the 7 Habits are definitely useful for schools and could be especially beneficial to schools in challenging circumstances.

Here are some of the comments received:

*Without a doubt it raised the aspirations of our students, one of whom commented that it was “exciting to meet new people, especially the VIPs who we thought we would never meet”.*

*If significant numbers of students were active users of the 7 Habits we are certain that improvements in behaviour, standards and achievement across the whole school would follow.*

*Five of them [the students] have said that they have tried to sit down at the weekend to plan their week out. A couple said that they tried [on purpose] to engage in “win-win” conversations with their teachers. Many pupils cited that the course gave them self-confidence.*

*They enjoyed having the opportunity to have a say and join in some of the demonstrations. The atmosphere was amazing!*

*A lot of the students have come back to school and discussed the day with other pupils, what they did, who was involved etc.*

*Pupils have been using some of the techniques to plan and deliver the whole year group assembly.*

We are not suggesting that every young person at Shaping left with a changed outlook. We went into the event feeling that if we only reached 10% of those who had attended in some way, our intervention would have been justified. The feedback suggests that we did have a positive impact on more than 10% of those attending, but there were undoubtedly young people who attended who took nothing away from the day. Ed Balls was right! Only those who let it do so used the day to make a positive change.

We do not believe that holding such a day in isolation is enough. There are issues that need to be faced, and we will focus on these going forward. The group was very big and
this limited how much interaction could take place between the facilitators and the
delegates. If taken forward, the 7 Habits might be more effective if worked on in smaller
hands-on group activities. To begin to support work on the 7 Habits across schools, some
sort of external facilitation and work plan would be needed. Problems such as limitations
caused by lack of knowledge and insufficient funds would also need to be overcome.
However, by overcoming these issues, the benefits would not only be felt by pupils, as
teachers also expressed an interest in using some of the exercises with staff.

What next?
I now regularly receive calls and emails from individuals and groups who have heard about
Shaping the Agenda or the pamphlet and want to know more. They ask what we are going
to do next and whether we are keen to share best practice. Some are even irritated that
they haven't been involved. To me this highlights the passion that there is in this region
for driving this agenda forward. This is the kind of reaction we wanted – inspired, engaged
individuals eager to create change.

Yorkshire Forward’s pamphlet, Shaping the Agenda 2007 and 2008, even this monograph
are not documenting something that has already happened. They are not designed to
have all the answers or give an example of how things have to be done from now on.
These initiatives were set up as pilots, to see “What if?” Because that is the purpose of a
“development” agency: to take risks others can’t. Now we are creating a wide-scale
joined-up regional discussion, and for everyone involved the potential is enormous.

Without Yorkshire Forward’s intervention it is unclear whether this would have happened.
We have been proud to be a forerunner on this agenda in the region. These schemes,
although still small-scale, are making a difference. Working with several schools over
the duration, we have seen the young people we have worked with change. They have
developed, because we listened. They have gained confidence because we took them
seriously. And hopefully they will achieve, because of our support. But going forward, we
know we cannot continue to do this alone.

One thing is clear – the discussions have only just begun. The desire to change has been
ignited; I am excited about the prospect of this work going forward and invite you to
get involved. Yorkshire Forward is only one agency, and compared with the potential
investment available in the region, and the UK, our budget is small.

The region and our young people need you.
The Smith Institute
The Smith Institute is an independent think tank that has been set up to look at issues which flow from the changing relationship between social values and economic imperatives.

If you would like to know more about the Smith Institute please write to:

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