



Y7 2020 Impact Report

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Y7 2020 Delegation
United Kingdom

1 Introduction and Context of the Y7 Summit 2020

Striving to represent the UK youth amidst Covid-19

A month into our tenure as the UK delegation to the Y7 Summit, Covid-19 reached Europe and later the UK, fundamentally changing the way the 2020 Summit would be conducted and how we'd run our consultations and youth engagement. We had met face-to-face in February for a 1-day Base Camp organised by the Future Leaders Network (FLN), where, along with the Y20 delegation, we'd plotted out the coming months, agreed objectives and timeframes - unaware of how much things would change. We held just one in-person youth consultation and had one opportunity to meet former UK delegates, before the world went into lockdown and we moved to virtual ways of working.

This had some advantages over previous years' summits: our consultations were geographically more inclusive as we could more easily reach young people right across all 4 countries of the UK; and we collaborated and bonded with our Y7 counterparts sooner and more intensely than we would have otherwise. It also posed some major challenges: we couldn't attend a summit in person in Washington DC; so the Y7 negotiations were instead held virtually and spread out over a 2-month period.

This Impact Report will explain how we successfully achieved our objectives at the Y7 Summit 2020 despite all the barriers of Covid-19, and it will show how we adapted to the evolving circumstances and international crisis encircling us all.

It demanded resilience, commitment, flexibility, digital negotiation skills, and a lot of hard work to represent the youth of our country. Despite this, we knew that the outcomes of the Y7 Summit in 2020 were more important for young people than possibly ever before, at the height of the pandemic and in the midst of drastic and far-reaching policy decisions, many taken in too much haste without adequate consideration, which will affect young people in the UK and right across the globe for years, if not decades.

2 Pre-summit

A. COVID-19 statement

Shortly after the Covid-19 lockdown was announced in the UK and the US, the G7 Heads of State issued [a joint statement](#) on the pandemic on the 16th March. We noted that it was produced at immense speed and without input from a diverse range of stakeholders, effectively excluding the youth voice. It also seemed at odds with the disjointed and unilateral decisions being taken by individual G7 leaders, without due consideration for the policy repercussions on citizens' lives.

So we jumped into action with the other Y7 delegations to virtually negotiate and publish a 3-page Y7 statement on Covid-19. This entailed each country's delegation collating 1-page of key proposals. At this point we hadn't yet conducted consultations with UK youth, but we later dedicated a whole youth focus group to Covid-19 specific proposals.

The Head Delegates then reviewed all delegation's proposals, debated and refined them via a series of virtual calls over 48 hours. A Sherpa from YFPF set the parameters and structure/style, but the Head Delegates directly edited and refined the proposals into 6 distinct but coherent policy requests:

1. Involve young people in tackling Covid-19
2. Provide universal healthcare & protect healthcare workers
3. Protect democracy & human rights
4. Provide quality education through technology
5. Mitigate the economic impacts on young & vulnerable people
6. Fight misinformation & make digital services accessible to all

[Read the Y7 Covid-19 statement here](#)

B. Pre-summit track negotiations

The track negotiations include the process of discussing and agreeing within our respective policy tracks which policy recommendations would appear in our final communique section of the final document. This was 1.5 pages for each of the 4 tracks; Peace & Security, Global Connectivity & Trade, Energy and Education & Jobs.

The transition to a virtual summit resulted in a change of format from the typical summit experience of track negotiations. The organising committee made the decision to front-load the negotiation process to ensure that we arrived at the summit with an

already agreed document within our tracks. This was done over a two-month period leading up to the summit through;

- A series of multilateral negotiations over the two-months leading up to the summit. Hosted over Zoom and navigating a 16 hour time difference.
- Country-by-country policy proposals, with each nation presenting for 20 minutes on their position and outlining policy positions followed by questions.
- Slack groups to share research/articles and discuss and agree on certain topics
- Whatsapp groups to share updates on logistics and build rapport between delegations

The process was laborious but fruitful. Negotiations over Zoom and later Webex presented challenges, however we managed to overcome these as delegations and produce strong and agreed upon sections, albeit with some hurdles to overcome along the way.

3 The Summit

A. The Format

The summit activities took place over 5 days, from 1st-5th June 2020, with the public-facing summit itself taking place on the 3rd, 4th and 5th June. On the first two days, each track went in having already negotiated and drafted their portions of the communique in accordance to a set format that was provided by the organising party, Young Professionals in Foreign Policy (YFPF). The purpose of the first two days was to establish unanimous voting in favour of each of the communique portions by **all** 32 delegates. They were shared prior to the beginning of the week and the 1st day provided opportunities for delegates from all tracks to share any concerns they may have with the policy proposals. This opened the door to many conversations, some quite testing, to finalise and agree on the fully drafted communique.

Once these were over, a vote was taken on each track's set of recommendations in order to formally agree on their inclusion, and they were then inserted into the final document. The voting process was mostly smooth, with a couple of revisions required afterwards, following resolution via urgent bilateral negotiations between two head delegates to find a compromise.

Over the following three days, each track presented their communique, the process that they took to negotiate and reach their and explained any clarifying points. Additionally, as we were presenting over 750 people, there were live Q&A sessions where attendees were able to ask questions on the communiques. These were tense moments behind the scenes for the delegates as answering questions well and in good time while being dotted around the world is a difficult task, but thankfully everyone managed to do so successfully. In the midst of this, we were joined by Ambassadors, Ministers of State and White House officials to hear from them the impact that youth can and should have in guiding national and foreign policy.

B. The UK's impact and influence

As the UK Delegation we managed to cement our influence and position within the other nations as well-organised and structured from the start. We think this was helped by the close contact and communication we kept within our delegation throughout the process. We were able to share resources and offer advice on consultations, surveys, communications, etc, to build alliances within our track negotiations.

Speaking English as a mother tongue and as the language of the summit of course naturally lends to benefits when it comes to final drafting and writing of the communique and, alongside the anglophone delegations of the US and Canada, this furthered our influence again.

C. Communique key messages

The communique produced as a result of the Y7 summit in June 2020 set out a very comprehensive call for action to G7 leaders. All four tracks identified pressing issues and formed policy proposals to ensure the youth's voices were heard. Some key policy themes from the G7 Youth Summit were:

- Climate change, climate security and sustainability in the Covid-19 recovery: commitments to mitigate climate change with policies that prioritise the climate and sustainability (both fiscal and energy policy) while adapting to the new economic realities of Covid-19.
- Youth unemployment and disruption to education following Covid-19: Policies that address the detrimental impact of the Covid-19 response on young people's educational and future opportunities going into an economic downturn and challenging labour market.
- Security threats and global polarisation as a result of Covid-19: Policies to tackle mis- and dis-information; hostile cyber-attacks (eg. election interference); structural inequalities; divisive and xenophobic rhetoric that see states move away from globalisation and multilateralism, much of which have been exacerbated by Covid-19.
- A more cohesive multilateral effort to improve the lives of people all over the world is needed, through our interconnected finance, technology and trade.

[Read the final Y7 2020 Communique here](#)

D. Black Lives Matter statement

The shooting of George Floyd happened a week before the summit was due to commence. As such, the delegates unanimously agreed that it was appropriate for us as youth representing G7 nations to publish a statement that would address the atrocities in the US policing system at the time. Delegates who were comfortable with doing so were asked to attend a Zoom call in order to discuss what we wanted to say, and draft an impactful statement to get across everything that we wanted in a coherent manner. The delegates also all pushed, numerous times, to get the statement submitted before the summit but, more importantly, for the statement to be the first thing that was read at the summit after initial introductions were made. We felt that it was important to be the first thing that was presented on our behalf, given how pressing it was.

[Read the BLM Statement here](#)

E. Reflections on the Summit

The summit itself was a once in a lifetime experience and a brilliant effort put in by all organising parties and delegates given the circumstances. The year of 2020 will be remembered for adaptability and resilience in times of uncertainty and this was extended by FLN, YFPF, our UK delegation and the other nations around the world.

The summit itself was well organised and without any technical issues. The schedule of ambassadors, White House staff and other high profile individuals was well put together and a real treat for all delegates. The negotiations were done as well as could have been at such short notice via a virtual format, however you did feel that a lot of the in person relationship building and negotiating was lost due to Covid-19. The summit week itself did feel more like a right of passage in many ways, with the bulk of the work going on behind the scenes in the weeks and months prior. Hopefully in a world post pandemic we will be able to meet our fellow delegates and reflect on what a crazy year we all had with an international summit thrown into the mix.

[Read the Y7 Summit Diary in full](#) and [post-summit reflections](#)

4 Conclusions and Reflections

Following our summit the Y7 cohort continued to meet bi-weekly to update each other on our actions and initiatives following the summit. The Y7 met with Cabinet Office officials from the G7 Taskforce, including the PM's G7 Sherpa, to present our policies and proposals following the Y7 summit, we have also attended an impact session with their Y20 cohort to reflect on the journey that we have been on this year.

Alongside the pre-, during and post- summit activities, we as the Y7 cohort have grown an immensely strong bond, likely even stronger than in a non-pandemic world, and we are now a close group of youth leaders within our respective fields. It is fair to say that nobody reading this will ever be able to forget the year that was 2020. We too will never forget this unprecedented year, especially as within it we also had an international summit, in our bedrooms.



The 2020 Y7 Delegation: Zoe, Virginia, Mohamed & James
(clockwise from top-left)

Appendices

Bios

Virginia Stuart-Taylor (Head Delegate, Peace & Security track)



Virginia is a UK Civil Servant working as the UK-EU Negotiations Lead on Intellectual Property and Geographical Indications at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), with previous experience in the Department for International Trade and Department for Exiting the EU. She's also a Digital Ambassador for global children's charity Plan International, and an Ambassador from two One Young World summits in Johannesburg and Dublin. She currently lives and works in London, but has lived in 6 other countries across Europe, South America and Asia, has visited over 65 countries, and is an award-winning travel writer at TheWell-TravelledPostcard.com.

Mohamed Abdelrhman (Global Connectivity & Trade track)



Mohamed is pursuing an MPhil in Development Studies at the University of Cambridge, having previously been a Management Consultant for a boutique consultancy, specialising in Digital Transformation, moving companies forward parallel to technological advancements. He also has experience at the Ministry of Justice, Bank of England, Lloyds of London and the Institute of Economic Affairs. He has sat on campaign committees for numerous charitable efforts on behalf of Human Appeal, Muslim Aid, Human Aid and Islamic Relief, amounting to in excess of £100,000. He holds a First-Class degree in Economics from SOAS, University of London.

James Forsey (Energy track)



James is an adaptable and technically capable consultant with a varied background in detailed engineering design, consultancy and project economics experience. Vast experience in the Infrastructure sector, trained Civil Engineer with proven technical ability in design and analysis of systems, led on many major Infrastructure developments in the UK and overseas. James is passionate about implementing the principles of the circular economy in the world economy, particularly with a focus on construction, this has formed most of his work and research in his current role in Africa.

Zoe Martin (Education & Jobs track)

Zoe is a first year apprentice economist in the Government Economic Service, currently working in the Ministry of Justice. She works within Youth Justice and is driven to provide young people across the country with the best opportunities, regardless of their background. Previously playing football full time, alongside her studies, showed her determination and resilience when overcoming knee reconstruction surgery to bring this opportunity to an end. Now on a mission to make a difference to society and create opportunities to become a future leader, Zoe's passion lies within making sure no young voice is overlooked when implementing policy to make change to current economic and social issues.



Links to more information

- Find out more on the [Future Leaders Network website about the Y7](#)
- **3x Blog posts about the Y7 2020 written by UK Head Delegate Virginia Stuart-Taylor:**
 - [Exciting news: I'll be representing the UK at the G7 Youth Summit 2020 in Washington DC!](#) (February 2020)
 - [My Journey to the G7 Youth Summit 2020: 1 month to go](#) (April 2020)
 - [7 Lessons from the G7 Youth Summit 2020](#) (June 2020)