

British Youth Council
Manifesto
2010-12



Our vision for a better world



Foreword

The vision of the British Youth Council (BYC) is of a world where young people are respected and able to influence and inform decisions that affect their lives or on which they have strong opinions.



This new BYC Manifesto for 2010/11 outlines our beliefs and aspirations along the journey to achieving this vision.

Young people within our membership of over 130 youth organisations and local youth councils wrote this Manifesto together. They have debated and settled on these policies and priorities, demonstrating that their shared commitment to a better society fuels dialogue and consensus.

This Manifesto is undeniable proof that young people care about issues at a local, national and international level. The 51 calls for change address real issues that are affecting young people today. From tackling bullying

to giving 16 year olds the vote, from saving youth services to proposing electoral reform, all of the beliefs in this Manifesto are youth inspired. We want to offer solutions that will work for our communities and society.

We call on politicians and decision makers to be informed by this Manifesto. Join with us to discuss it and how we can work together to take action on these issues. Talk to us, not about us.

We also call on young people across the UK to use this Manifesto as a way to stimulate dialogue and debate. Take it to your local politician or your local newspaper as an example of what we believe and can propose.

Finally a big thank you to all the young local representatives from across the UK who have contributed to this document, through submitting your ideas for change, debating the latest issues at our BYC devolved Conventions and voting at our Annual Council Meeting. This Manifesto has been made by you.

If you are reading it for the first time and want to be a member – get in touch! The more of us there are the stronger our voice will be.

Young voices; stronger together.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Liam Preston', written in a cursive style.

**Liam Preston,
BYC Chair 2010-11**

Contents

How we make policy _____ 4

Our Community _____ 6

- Listen to local youth councils
- Support us to inspect local services
- End poverty in our communities
- Address the lack of affordable rural housing
- Provide safe and affordable public transport
- Support us to volunteer
- Believe in equality
- Support and promote good relations with the nations.

Our Democracy _____ 10

- Value our vote
- Lower the voting age to 16
- Lower the candidacy age to 16
- Listen to young people on electoral reform
- Change the voting system
- Limit the power of the Prime Minister
- Give voters the power of recall
- Open up the House of Lords to young people
- Support greater youth participation in charities.

Our Education _____ 12

- Inspire us to stay in education and training
- Defend and improve the Education Maintenance Allowance
- Support young disabled students
- Engage and inform us through political and citizenship education
- Provide high quality sex and relationship education
- Strengthen our student voice
- Value further education
- Improve access to higher education
- Ensure fair funding for higher education.

Our Employment _____ 16

- Strengthen our workplace rights
- Create a fair and equal National Minimum Wage
- Support cooperation in enterprise
- Listen to us about the economy and unemployment.

Our Environment _____ 18

- Defend the greenbelt
- Tackle climate change and support sustainable development.

Our Health _____ 20

- Create a youth-friendly National Health Service
- Empower us to make informed choices about sex and pregnancy
- Recognise that our minds matter
- Support bereaved young people
- Blood donations by all, for all
- Make it easier and cheaper to eat healthily
- Have an opt-out organ donation scheme.

Our Justice _____ 22

- Build good relationships between young people and the police
- Involve young people to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour
- Ban the Mosquito
- Look for alternatives to custody
- Protect children and young people from common assault
- Legalise same-sex marriage
- Recognise the rights of asylum seekers.

Our Leisure _____ 24

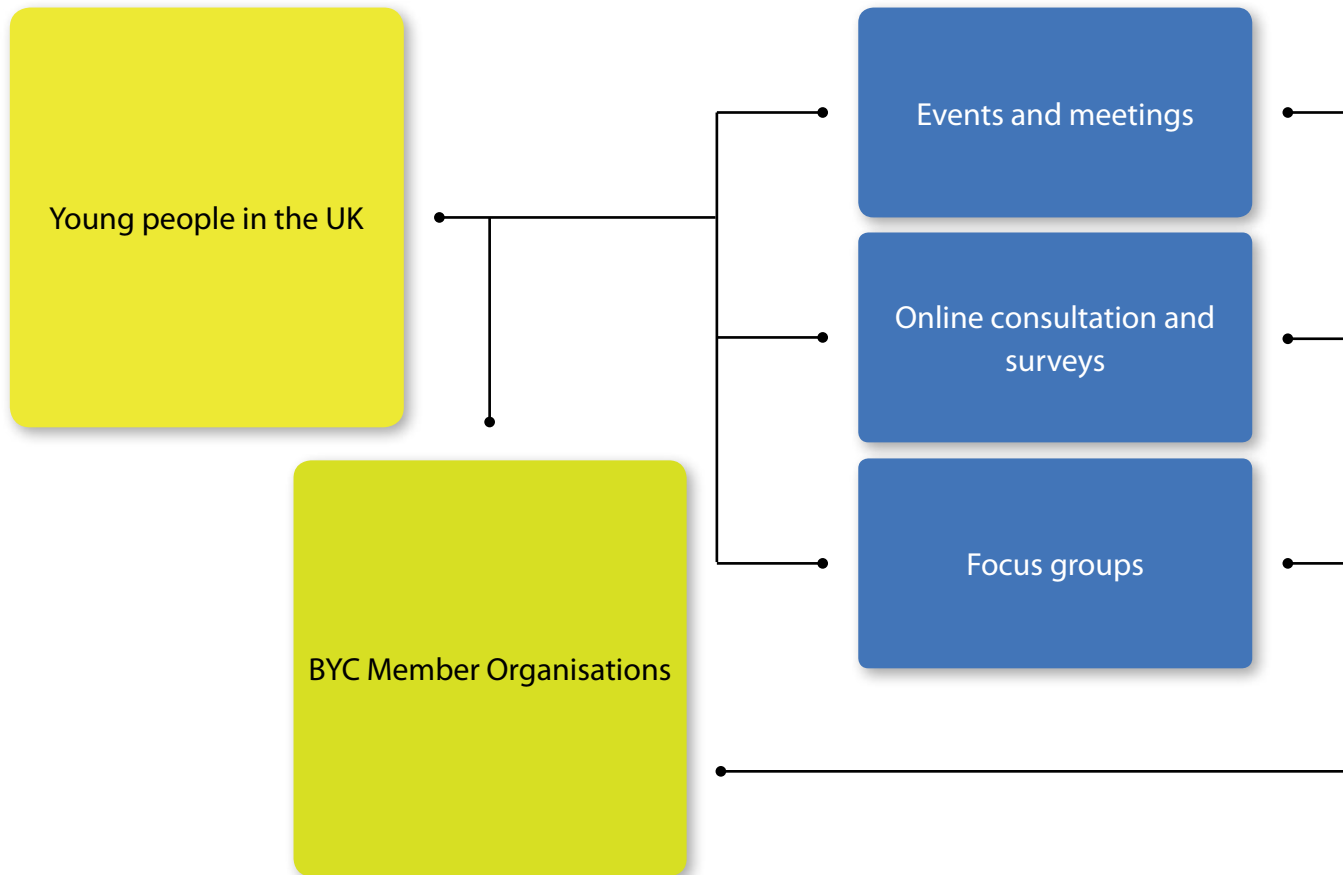
- Improve the quality and quantity of culture, leisure and sporting activities for young people
- Provide discount culture, leisure and sporting activities for young people
- Support special interest youth groups
- Support young people to take part in outdoor activities.

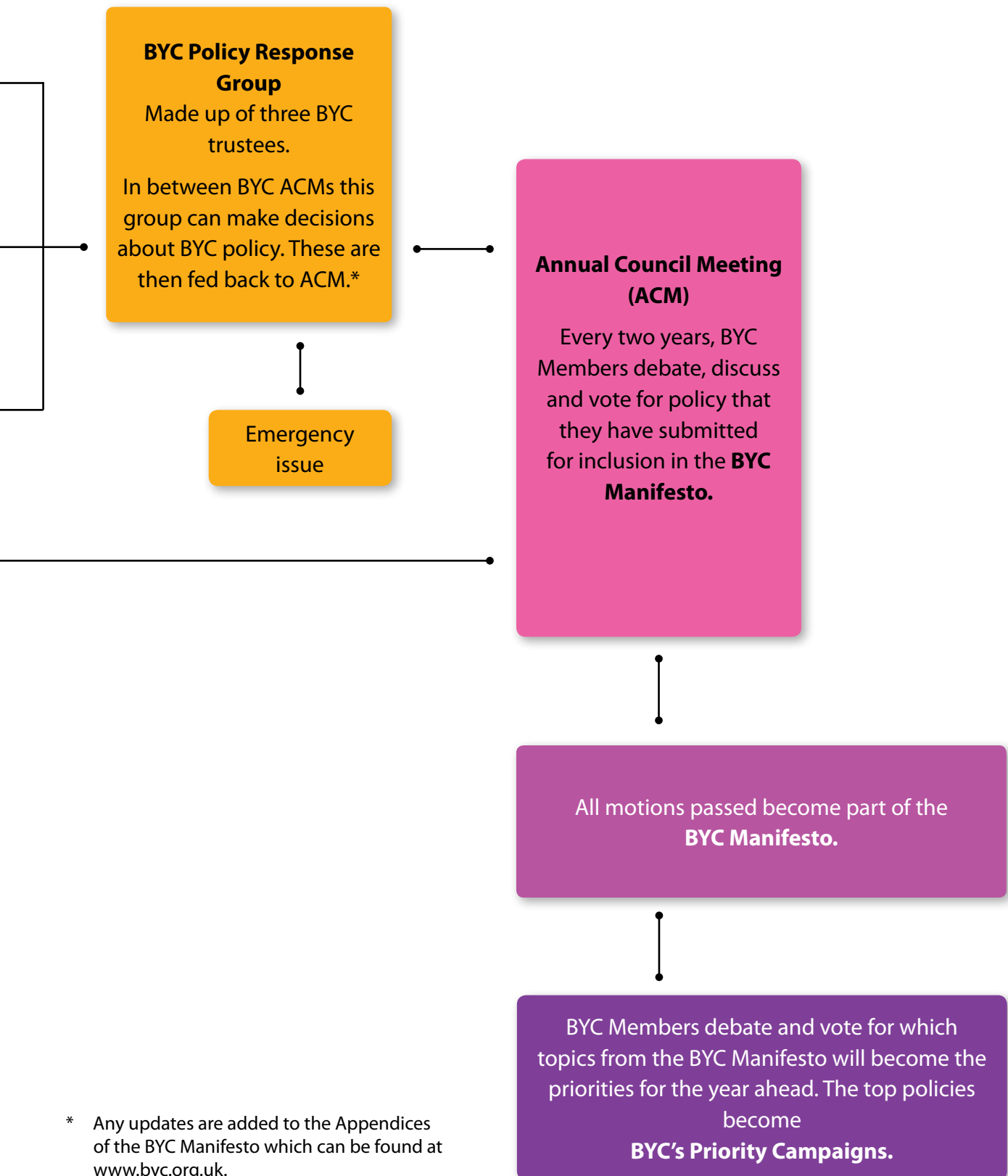
Our World _____ 26

- Give us a global voice
- Make trade fair
- Support fair international development
- Mark the UN International Year of Youth by strengthening youth rights.

How we make policy

This document is formed from motions submitted and debated at the BYC Annual Council Meeting (ACM) from young people across our membership. It represents a variety of young voices coming together; together we are stronger.





* Any updates are added to the Appendices of the BYC Manifesto which can be found at www.byc.org.uk.



Listen to local youth councils

We believe that all young people should have the right to be represented and get their voice heard through a local youth council. We believe that key decision-makers, such as Members of Parliament, Members of the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly Members and Members of the Legislative Authority in Northern Ireland and local councillors, need to engage with youth councils as they act as a hub for the youth voice in communities.

Youth councils should be respected and listened to by people in power.

We believe that all local youth councils should receive support to ensure that they have the resources to promote diversity in their councils reflective of their communities, develop links with other youth councils in their region, and run youth-led events in line with young people's agendas.



Save our services

We believe that as councils are asked to save more and more money, young people are increasingly feeling the brunt of these cuts. Thousands rely on services for young people. We are already called the lost generation and cuts to youth services will only make this worse. We believe youth services and agencies aid young people in their personal development and aim to ensure that young people form a functional part of society. Without them our only option is to hang around the streets. Young people need a platform to defend these services and explain to

others their life-changing work which often goes unrecognised.

We do not think that voluntary organisations should be left to pick up the pieces due to a lack of funding to support professional youth services. We believe that existing youth services should have funding priority over new initiatives to ensure that all young people's services are well funded and are beneficial.

Support us to inspect local services

We believe that young people must have the right to scrutinise service providers to ensure they get a fair deal, and that local youth councils play a valuable role in quality assurance and assessment of local services. We believe it is important that young people can inspect their local services, and tell the people in charge what they think, to ensure that services and facilities reflects their needs and those of other young people in their area.

End poverty in our communities

We believe that children and young people should not have to live in poverty in the UK; it is appalling and needs to be stopped as soon as possible. Every young person should have a decent standard of living, independent of their economic status. We believe that the UK Government must keep the promise to end child poverty in the UK by 2020.

The UK Government must support child benefit and increase the rate received for younger children to the same rate received for the oldest child. Larger families are more likely to be in poverty and raising the child benefit level for the younger children in a large family is a simple and direct way of increasing the support they need.

We believe that health care and nutrition are major factors for a young person living in poverty. All young people and students should be entitled to free health, dental care and prescriptions. There should be free school meals for all young people to give every young person at least one balanced meal.

Living in deprived neighbourhoods or being homeless can affect young people for life. We believe that all young people should have the right to a safe place to live. Young people are often most vulnerable as tenants. Young refugees and their families are often in the worst situation and there is a need to ensure that their basic rights are catered for.

Address the lack of affordable rural housing

We believe that there is a lack of affordable housing for young people in some rural areas; exacerbating the problems that young people face in remaining in or moving into rural areas to work and live. We believe that there is a need to look for sustainable solutions to rural housing problems.

Provide safe and affordable public transport

We believe that all young people across the UK should be able to access safe and affordable public transport. We believe that young people who can't access the public transport they need are being discriminated against. Access to public transport must not be a barrier to young people's use of services and opportunities, such as education and training or leisure facilities. There needs to be regular bus and rail services especially in areas away from big transport hubs, to avoid leaving young people in rural isolation. Young people

also need to be informed about public transport services in their areas, with published and accessible timetabling information and details of prices and concessions.

We believe that public transport must be safe, clean and accessible for all young people, including those with disabilities. We believe that transport operators (and their staff) should not be able to refuse to pick up a user due to discriminatory judgments made on age, gender, disability, race or sexual orientation.

We believe that young people should be empowered to choose public transport as their low-carbon way to travel. Many young people have to travel to get to work and often public transport is their only option. For many young people the prices of bus fares are so expensive that it can almost seem not worth working, as we spend all our wages on bus fare.

We believe that to tackle the barrier of cost there needs to be concessions for under 18s on public transport, flat fares and a free recognised travel card introduced where young people can get the return ride free or the fare at half price. A 'hot routes' discount should also be introduced so that a young person will receive a discount if they are travelling to a leisure centre, cinema or via a popular commuter route.

Support us to volunteer

We believe that volunteering provides numerous benefits for volunteers, employers and the community. We believe that young people should be empowered to positively contribute to our communities through volunteering and that their volunteering should be recognised and celebrated by communities.

We believe that employers in our communities should value volunteering undertaken by their young workers as it provides numerous benefits for volunteers, employers and the community. Volunteering gives young people the opportunity for personal development, training, and building relationships with local residents. We believe that employer-supported volunteering has benefits regardless of the type of employment or hours worked. We believe that employers should support volunteering through flexible hours, use of resources, time off in lieu, regular paid time off to volunteer and financial remuneration.

Volunteers and the training which they receive should be given more recognition within formal education. Employers should recognise the skills volunteers gain from volunteering and the social interaction that facilitates cohesion and a sense of community ownership. For example, the individual schemes in which some universities give students formal credits for volunteering could be expanded. Employers could be further encouraged to see the value of the skills that their employees learn through volunteering and then bring to the workplace.

We believe that young people should be supported to volunteer to contribute to the justice system; for example as special constables (members of the public who service as police) and lay magistrates – who are part of the decision-making process in Courts.

We believe that volunteering should never be made compulsory, but that volunteering should be encouraged. Volunteering opportunities should be accessible to all sectors of society to ensure that young people are

able to participate to strengthen the communities in which they live.

Support and promote good relations with the nations

We continue to support and promote the work of youth organisations from the nations of the United Kingdom. We continue to encourage good relations with the nations, which as a result, will highlight and promote BYC as a UK-wide organisation.

Equality

We believe that people of all cultures, religions, race and sexuality should be treated equally in our communities and society and that the law should ensure this is in the case.





Value our vote

We value voting as a principal way of being active in our democracy in the UK. We believe young people across the UK should be supported to register to vote and that key barriers to young people voting (such as a lack of information about why to vote, how to register to vote and how to vote in person, by post or by proxy) need to be tackled.

We believe it is too simplistic to label all young people as apathetic. We are just as passionate about the world

we live in as the rest of society but are often disillusioned or disengaged with the political system and politicians. We believe elected representatives should regularly meet with young people in their constituencies and work with their local youth councils to answer questions, listen to their opinions and represent their views. Politicians need to work to regain the trust of young people through being accountable to young people and opening up their expenses to public scrutiny; this should include information being presented online and in other formats that are accessible for all.



Lower the voting age to 16

We believe that 16 and 17 year olds should be given the vote in all public elections in the UK.

We believe that at 16 we are mature enough to engage in, and contribute to, our democracy through having the vote. 16 and 17 year olds can pay Income Tax, get married, have consenting sex and join the armed forces but they can't elect MPs whose decisions affect their lives and these

responsibilities. We believe that votes at 16 will ensure our views are better represented within UK politics.

We believe that votes at 16 should be partnered with the greater engagement of young people in decision-making in our communities, for example through the support of youth representation structures such as local youth councils, and accessible and informative political education. This means that when we turn 16 we can connect our interest in various issues with a formal political process and translate our knowledge and experience into practice at the ballot box.

Lower the candidacy age to 16

We believe that the age to stand as candidates for all public elections in the UK should be lowered to 16. At 16, we can apply to become the directors of charities and companies, which are positions of significant responsibility in our communities. We believe that the electorate should be able to decide whether they would like to elect 16 and 17 year olds to represent them.

We believe that it is vital that all age groups are represented in the UK Parliament and devolved administrations, including young people aged 25 and under. We welcome elected representatives of any age who will listen to young people and take action on the issues we care about, but see the value of having more young representatives to ensure a greater variety of life experiences and perspectives.

Listen to young people on electoral reform

We believe that the way we run our General Elections in the UK needs to be changed for the better. We believe parliamentarians need to listen to and recognise young people's views on

electoral reform to ensure that we, as voters of the future, are engaged in the process of reforming UK politics.

Change the voting system

We believe that there needs to be a change to the way we elect our Members of Parliament. We support a referendum being held on whether to change to the Alternative Vote system. We support changing to an Alternative Vote system, as opposed to staying with the current First Past the Post system. We believe that there needs to be a proportional voting system for our General Elections where seats are allocated to parties in proportion to the number of votes cast for them in the election. We use the Single Transferable Vote system in our elections and believe this is a fair and proportional electoral system.

Give voters the power of recall

We believe that voters should have the power to recall their MP (to force a by-election in between General Elections) if their MP has been found to have engaged in serious wrongdoing or a petition has been signed by 10% of constituents calling for a by-election. We believe that young people, as constituents, should also be aware and empowered to use this power of recall if they so wish.

Open up the House of Lords to young people

We believe that the poor representation of young people within the House of Lords needs to be rectified immediately, as well as the representation of women; black and minority ethnic citizens; openly gay, lesbian, bisexual; transgender people; people of all major faiths; and people with a disability.

We believe that Peers should be easier to lobby. We support all measures

to make the House of Lords more accountable and to remove the barriers for members of the public to execute the responsibilities of the position if appointed to the House of Lords.

Limit the power of the Prime Minister

We believe that the Prime Minister should not have the power to decide when the General Election should happen. We believe that the UK Parliament should have a fixed term of five years. We believe that MPs should be able to hold a vote of no confidence to dissolve Parliament (where Parliament can be dissolved if 50% of MPs plus one other agrees that they have no confidence in the current Government and no other party comes forward to form a new Government).



Support greater youth participation in charities

We believe that it is crucially important for charities, and especially organisations working with young people, to ensure that they are acting in the interests of all their membership. We believe that every charity and organisation whose work involves young people should pledge to make a firm commitment to include young people in decision-making. This can take the form of consultation, but ideally would extend to including young people in committees and management boards in roles that are suitable for their abilities.

We believe that enabling young people to be involved in decision-making processes is indispensable if more people are to become involved in voluntary organisations and charities in the future.



Inspire us to stay in education and training

We believe that learning should be personalised so that we are empowered to choose courses – both academic and vocational – that are most appropriate to our skills, needs and abilities. We must have the right to choose our courses with unbiased support and advice. We believe that all young people should have access to a valuable qualification based on their talents and aspirations from the age of 14. We believe that we need to tackle educational

prejudices to allow all young people to have opportunities to learn and succeed by creating a curriculum and qualification valued by society and more importantly, by young people.

It's important to inspire us to learn, not force us. We believe that young people aged 16 to 18 who do not participate in compulsory training or education (which will be compulsory until 17 in 2013 and until 18 in 2015) should not be fined. We believe legal coercion is the wrong approach to engage young people with learning; it could further isolate young people who are already struggling or fallen through gaps in the education system. Young people who are not in education, employment or training need additional support to identify and achieve their route back into learning.

Defend and improve the Education Maintenance Allowance

We believe that it is important to give us financial support to help us stay in further education, such as the Education Maintenance Allowance

(EMA). We also recognise that the EMA is a vital method of supporting young people in education although we believe that there are some key policy changes needed to make the system fairer to ensure that finance is never a barrier to learning.

We believe the EMA should be available up to NQF level 3 for students aged over 18. Clear information, advice and guidance must also be available about how to access financial support and how different financial systems interact; for example for students living independently who might have to rely on social security as well as learner support.

We believe there shouldn't be any cuts to EMA funding, which we feel will be counterproductive and will have devastating impact on participation and retention in post-16 education.

Support young disabled students

We believe that young people with special education needs and disabled young people have the same rights as non-disabled students to be inspired and supported to achieve qualifications and skills. Disabled learners face significant barriers in accessing specialist equipment and personal support.

We believe in the need for more accessible education institutions, but recognise the essential role of specialist services. For some young people a special school is more appropriate to meet their needs and maximise their potential and these schools should not be seen as second best to mainstream schools.

Engage and inform us through political and citizenship education

We believe it is important for young people to have a basic knowledge of the political process in the UK at a local, national and international

level. Education about rights and responsibilities, the law and democracy should be fundamental elements in every young person's education.

We believe our entitlement to high quality citizenship education should be strengthened and extended, in order to prepare us for taking part in our shared democratic life. We believe citizenship education should be better supported in the secondary curriculum and further extended into primary schools and post-16 settings.

Provide high quality sex and relationship education

We believe that young people need, and must be entitled to, high quality sex and relationship education that respects and promote equality and diversity in order to make their own informed decisions.

We believe that young people must be able to feel that their school is a safe space where they can: Talk openly, and if necessarily confidentially, with specialists about sex and relationships in an environment where there is equality, inclusion and acceptance of diversity; discuss how different choices can have different impacts on their lives; learn where they can access confidential information and support both inside and outside school.

We believe that often it can be hard for young people to put questions about sex and relationships topics to teachers who teach them other subjects. We value visits from health professionals and peer educators as teaching methods within sex and relationships education. These teaching methods give us real-life experiences we can relate to, expertise and give us messages in a more youth-friendly form.

Strengthen our student voice

We believe that children and young people have the right to be involved in the governance, design and decision-making process within their school, college or place of education.

We believe that students are currently uninformed about their rights and the scope for student involvement. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that children's views must be sought and given due weight in all matters affecting children.

We support and value the use of student voice initiatives, for example school/student councils, student unions, students as interviewers, or student governors.

We believe we have positive contributions to make to the education system that will make our learning experience more relevant and appropriate. There needs to be support, advice and resources available to students to ensure we can get actively involved in student voice initiatives.

We believe in the importance of representing students at every level within the structures of further education institutions. Student Unions are the learner voice in every aspect of college life. Representation should not just be a tick box procedure, instead the views of students should be placed at the heart of their institutions.

Value further education

We believe that the further education sector is valuably characterised by its social and educational inclusiveness as it provides for a wide range of socio-economic, age and ethnic groups. We believe that the structure of further education and its funding, curriculum, administration and culture should continue to reflect this. We believe

that the Government/devolved administrations should support further education colleges to provide sufficiently and equally for their diverse range of students.

Improve access to higher education

We believe in breaking down stereotypes and removing all real, perceived, intentional and unintentional barriers that form obstacles to young people entering higher education. We support measures to widen participation and address the under-representation of young people from certain social groups in higher education, for example young people from disadvantaged areas. We want to see equality of opportunity for all young people.

We believe it's important to raise the aspirations of young people who think going to university is "not for people like me" or would never consider the idea. We believe that we need to be able to access clear advice on what we need to do to gain access to the right university course for us and what financial support is available.



Ensure fair funding for higher education

We oppose any form of tuition fees because they act as a barrier and a deterrent to participation. We believe there should be a properly funded education system, free at the point of entry, funded by progressive taxation gathered via the income tax system. There should also be a student grant that properly reflects the cost of living. The higher education funding system should be based solely on students' ability and be independent of economic or social background – allowing free access to education.

We believe that attempts to lift the cap on tuition fees should be defeated. We believe that a single simple student support scheme would help to alleviate the inequalities in support given to students, and that student support should be based on what you need, rather than what or where you study.

We think that the coming year, 2010-11, will be crucial to the future of higher education, and it is important that we are at the centre of the debate. While we retain our principled commitment to the notion of free education, we believe that in order to secure a fairer funding system we need to campaign effectively against any rise in fees of potentially £5000, £7500 or even £10,000 per year.

We are committed to campaigning for a fairer higher education funding system which ensures that education continues to be based on ability, not the ability to pay. It will also combat the inequalities faced by part-time, international and postgraduate students.

We will join together with NUS to campaign for a fairer education funding system, focusing on defeating any lift to the cap, pushing for a fairer alternative, and opposing the marketisation of education.





Strengthen our workplace rights

We believe that there should be equal opportunities for people to get involved in work or employment no matter what race, age, gender or sexual orientation. Young people should know about their workplace rights and what to do if they are not being enforced. Effective advice and guidance on basic employee rights, for example wage rights, health and safety, harassment and discrimination and bullying, must be available to young people and introduced through the school curriculum.

Create a fair and equal National Minimum Wage

BYC believes that all young people aged 16 and over should be paid an equal hourly rate of the national minimum wage. Young workers should not be discriminated against because of their age and should receive equal pay for equal work.

BYC knows that young people shouldn't be stereotyped as only working for "pocket money". Many young people live independently, have a family of their own or are supplementing a low-income family, and need a living national minimum wage. Young people are entitled to a decent standard of living and should be able to achieve that through work.

Support cooperation in enterprise

We believe it's important for young people to be able to learn about and participate in enterprise. We believe that enterprise, in particular social enterprise and a co-operative approach

in enterprise, not only helps to build a good society but is also useful in developing both young people and the communities they live in. Cooperatives are more than just a shop or bank – they involve and promote principles such as democracy, voluntary participation and self determination. We therefore believe the UK Government should further support cooperative schools, education and enterprise.

Listen to us about the economy and unemployment

BYC believes that the level of youth unemployment in the UK is a tragedy. The level of Black youth unemployment is a tragedy and a scandal. Youth unemployment of this level is a grievous waste of talent, energy, and enthusiasm. It creates low expectations of the value of work amongst young people and is clearly being used to make young people pay disproportionately for the economic crisis caused by the bankers. It also increases the burden on our benefits system and public services.

We believe that decision-makers need to listen to young people, both during and after periods of recession and economic difficulties. Young people are on the frontline when it comes to dealing with the effects of recession and must be an important resource in shaping how they are helped through it.

Young people are experiencing disproportionate unemployment rates, and we believe these periods of unemployment can have a lasting affect on their future. We believe that young people need opportunities (such as additional job, training and apprenticeship placements) during times of recession to build up their employability skills so that they can

re-enter the labour market when it recovers. Measures to tackle youth unemployment need to be sustainable and not temporary. Young unemployed people also need sufficient access and entitlement to benefits to prevent them from entering poverty.

We call for greater recognition and awareness of the support young people who are being made redundant need, especially around the provision of easily accessible information and advice about benefits, as well as coordinated signposting to new work and training opportunities. Young people facing redundancy who are under 22 should also have an equal entitlement to the same redundancy payments as those 22 and over, at one week minimum per year of service. More attention needs to be paid to the mental health needs of young people associated with redundancy or a prolonged period of unemployment having left school or training, through greater investment in support and health services in both the statutory and third sector.

We believe that youth unemployment must be tackled as a matter of urgency through properly-resourced and managed programmes which support and sustain young people into fulfilling working lives, and which prioritise the plight of young Black people. Such programmes must provide for properly-paid work and high-quality training, and must not be used to provide a cheap labour force. In addition, bringing back apprenticeships will help provide skills for students who leave college, school or university to find full-time or part-time work placements.



Defend the greenbelt

We believe the greenbelt should be defended. We believe that young people need space for their future and that by building on greenfield sites you take their future away. There are currently many derelict brownfield sites that could be used for buildings meaning less damage to existing habitats and wildlife.

Tackle climate change and support sustainable development

We believe in the value of the UK having long term targets to reduce Carbon Dioxide emissions and tackle climate change. We support the Climate Change Act 2008 which made the UK the first country in the world to have a legally binding long-term framework to cut carbon emissions. We were encouraged when the 2050 target was raised to 80% from 60% in October 2008, as called for by BYC.

We believe the Government must make sure that young people are involved in ongoing discussion and monitoring around climate change so we get the clean, fair future we deserve. BYC calls upon the UK government to make spaces available for young people's representation on decision-making on climate change at all levels.





Create a youth-friendly National Health Service

We believe that all young people should be entitled to access the National Health Service care in a safe, suitable, and youth-friendly environment.

Services should be accessible by public transport, and at times outside school or college hours.

Health services should make sure that we know what their service offers, how to access the service, what will happen when we visit it and how to make suggestions or complaints about the service.

We believe that our entitlement to confidentiality, and any limitations to confidentiality because of child protection and the need for parental consent, should be made clear to us (for example, by information on display in the reception area or the waiting area).

Empower us to make informed choices about sex and pregnancy

We believe that we have the right to make informed choices about our sex lives. We should be empowered to protect ourselves against unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) through both quality 'sex and relationships' education and being able to access a range of youth-friendly sexual health services in our local area.

Sexual health services should offer appropriate information and advice to help us develop our ability to make safe, informed choices. Sexual health services should offer a range of services including STI screening, contraception – including long-acting reversible

methods and free condoms, pregnancy testing and the opportunity to obtain accurate and unbiased information about pregnancy options, including referral to abortion or adoption services.

We understand that some people chose to become parents at a young age but also recognise the massive impact that parenthood has on young peoples' lives. We believe that inclusive education which respects and recognises the additional needs and difficulties faced by young parents should be promoted.

Recognise that our minds matter

We believe that mental health problems among young people are still not being adequately addressed by the Government. We believe that help and advice is often scarce and hard to obtain and the stigma surrounding mental health issues prevents many young people from seeking support. We believe that the NHS and the wider health and education sectors do not currently recognise the importance of good mental health.

We believe that young people in the UK face barriers to getting support and advice about mental health problems. We believe that there needs to be investment in accessible, age-appropriate, youth-friendly care and support for 16 to 25 year olds with mental health problems. We believe that young people should be supported to access and benefit from a range of preventative and responsive mental health services and treatment. Services need to be joined up and continue to help young people during transitions from child and adolescent services to adult services.

Support bereaved young people

Bereavement and the grieving process can dramatically affect young people.

We believe it is important to recognise that each individual will grieve and deal with their feelings in their own way and that often bereavement is of significance to young people for a long time. Since death often affects whole families or friendship groups, the young person's existing support network will often be insufficient.

We believe all young people should be able to access a choice of high-quality local and national information, guidance and support services to enable them to manage the impact of death on their lives. All young people should be able to speak to someone about their experiences.

Blood donations by all, for all

We believe that the blanket, and lifetime, ban on blood donations from gay and bisexual men should be removed. We believe that discriminating against a group of society based on a stereotype is wrong. We believe that the current policy of the NHS Blood and Transplant Service is unscientific and unjust, as it is based on the presumption that all men who have sex with men are at 'high risk' for HIV, regardless of their individual sexual behaviour.

Make it easier and cheaper to eat healthily

We believe that from a young age we should be given the information and encouragement to make healthy choices about what we eat.

We believe that it should be easy and cheaper for us to make healthy choices about food rather than unhealthy ones. There should be fewer adverts for unhealthy food on TV, particularly in programmes targeted at younger children.

Have an opt-out organ donation scheme

We believe that everyone should be an organ donor on their death unless they have taken the step to opt-out. Everyone should have the opportunity to carry a card, or make it otherwise make it known they have opted out.

Help young people to feel safe from bullying

We believe that young people should feel safe from bullying and the fear of bullying in all areas of their lives. We urge decision-makers to listen to young people and to take immediate action to ensure that all organisations and services that work with young people take steps to reduce the risk of bullying. We believe that all adults working with young people should be offered training on how to identify and deal with bullying. We want organisations to share good practice on supporting bullies and victims, and to provide opportunities for young people to socialise with other ages and social groups.



Build good relationships between young people and the police

We believe that our society needs to recognise that young people are often the victims of crime, and should not always be seen as the problem.

We believe that young people need to feel that when they and their peers report crimes they are taken seriously and valued as much as reports from all other age groups. Young people feel that the police often make huge assumptions about them

and their activities. We believe that it needs to be recognised that young people are often stopped and searched for no apparent reason or because of a discriminatory judgement on age or other factors, and this can mean that we feel victimised by the police.

We believe that young people and police need to work together to ensure we have good relationships and that young people understand the law and justice system. We believe young people should be supported to take part in community-centred initiatives led by the police.

Involve young people to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour

We believe that young people need to be empowered to be part of the solution to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in their communities, not just seen as the problem. We believe that young people are too often unfairly and disproportionately stereotyped as criminal and anti-social by the media, which means that they are feared by other groups in society.

We believe that the best way to tackle youth crime is to stop it from happening in the first place. We believe that investment in measures to prevent young people getting involved in crime and anti-social behaviour is more effective in reducing offending and re-offending rates. We believe that with the right support even the most vulnerable young people can avoid the dangers of getting involved with criminal behaviour, and build bright futures for themselves and their communities. We believe that properly funded community and youth services help to include young people in their communities and foster mutual respect. Investment in accessible and high-quality support services for young people with mental health, drug, alcohol or other social problems can also address many of the underlying causes of an individual's anti-social or criminal behaviour.

Ban the Mosquito

We believe that the Mosquito (a device that emits a very high frequency buzzing sound which cannot be heard by people over the age of 25 and is used to disperse groups of people) should not be used against young people. We believe that Mosquitoes indiscriminately target all young people regardless of their behaviour and whether problems may also be caused by adults. Using the Mosquito is not a proportionate response to loitering and moving groups can just move the problem elsewhere. We believe that the Mosquito can expose children and young people to extreme discomfort, particularly those who might not be able to explain to others why they are in discomfort.

Look for alternatives to custody

We believe that putting young offenders under custody (in prison or young offender institutions) should not always be seen as the answer or relevant result of a conviction.

Furthermore, when custodial sentences are given they need to be fair and standardised.

We believe that custody does not always rehabilitate young people and prepare them for release back into the community; instead it can be a training ground for criminal activity and give them 'street cred' on their release. We believe there needs to be more relevant education and training opportunities for young offenders while they are in custody.

We believe that too often on their release from custody, many young people have nowhere to go, nothing to do and no one to rely on; in particular many employers won't employ them and this can lead to reoffending. We believe that there needs to be more support for young people leaving prison.

Protect children and young people from common assault

We believe that the law on common assault should give children the same protection as adults. Smacking is already banned for all people except children. We believe that the law shouldn't allow parents and others to justify common assault of children in the home as 'reasonable punishment'.

Legalise same-sex marriage

We believe that all people in the UK should have equal rights to marriage. We believe that same-sex marriage should be legal in the UK and should give equal rights and benefits attributed to marriage's legal status in

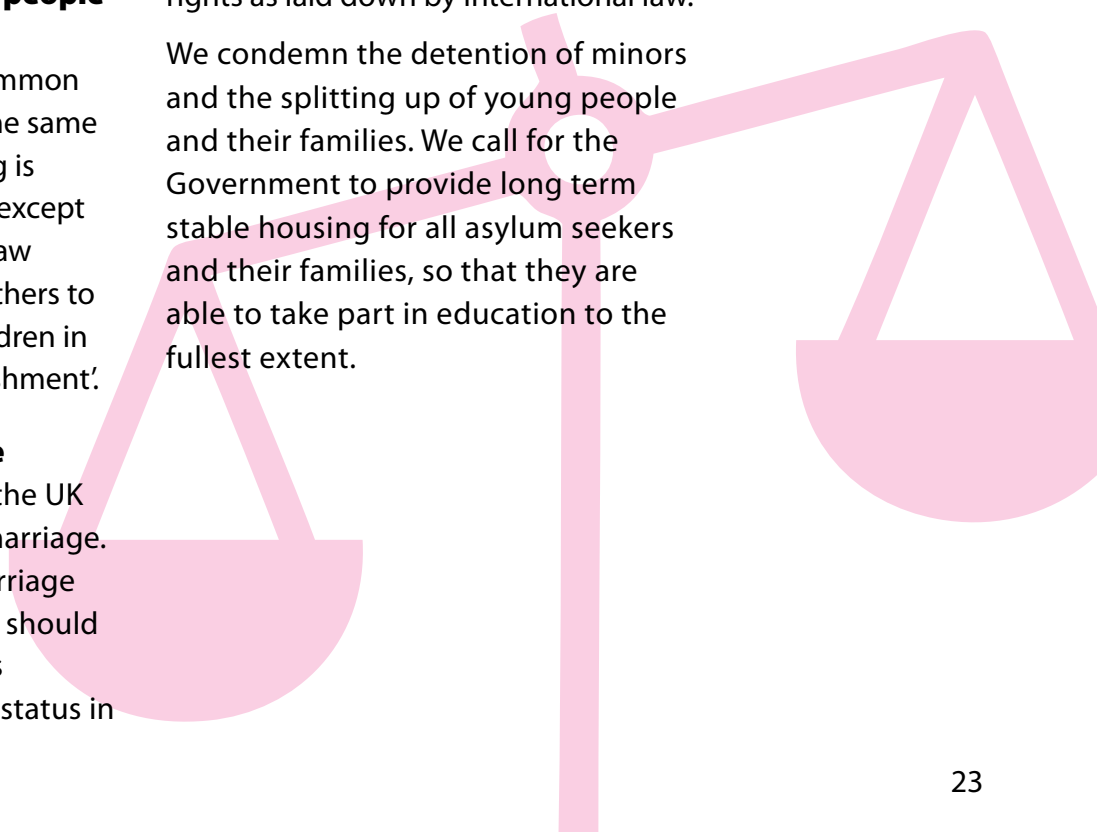
society. We believe civil partnerships are a positive step that should be opened up to all people but are currently a second-class system that does not bring equality.

Recognise the rights of asylum seekers

We are increasingly concerned at the treatment and opportunities afforded to all asylum seekers in the UK, particularly those who are children and young people. There are many reasons why children and young people may need to seek asylum in the UK, and this right of all people must not be made more difficult than it already is.

We note the Government's plans to open up a centre in Kabal, Afghanistan, to deport under 18 year olds as a growing trend of treating asylum seekers as criminals. We particularly condemn the forceful removal of young people and demand that the government only acts in children and young people's best interests. We call for all actions to be according to the UN Convention of the Rights of a Child as well as other human and asylum seeker rights as laid down by international law.

We condemn the detention of minors and the splitting up of young people and their families. We call for the Government to provide long term stable housing for all asylum seekers and their families, so that they are able to take part in education to the fullest extent.





Improve the quality and quantity of culture, leisure and sporting activities for young people

We believe that every young person should have the right to access consistent and affordable positive activities that meet local young people's needs. We should all be able to go to exciting and safe places in our free time where we can get involved in a range of positive culture, leisure and sporting activities. These help us develop skills, confidence and do something constructive with our time.

To ensure that activities in our local areas are relevant and engage us, we need to be able to influence what is available and when. We need facilities that we will use, and for these to be open at times when we will use them. We believe that transport companies should work with providers of positive activities to ensure timetables coincide with opening times.

We should be empowered to have our say in the design, delivery, promotion and evaluation of leisure, culture and sporting services. Involving young people ensures these services continue to reflect our needs and that barriers to young people's participation, such as low awareness about available activities or lack of public transport to activities, are noted and tackled.

We believe that we deserve culture, leisure and sporting services that are of an excellent quality, delivered by a diverse and suitably qualified workforce in safe spaces.

Spaces that we use in our leisure time, such as youth shelters and skate parks, should be places where we can go without fear of intimidation, and should be incorporated into the wider community to promote community cohesion. We support facilities along the lines of the Barcode Youth Café in Wolverhampton; an alcohol free facility for 11 to 18 year olds run by the Town Council and supported by the Youth Council, which offers a range of different entertainment from live band nights to cooking workshops. Young people deserve safe and secure environments which offer them plenty to do.

Discount culture, leisure and sporting activities for young people

Culture, leisure and sport facilities and activities need to ensure they are accessible and affordable to young people.

We believe that discounts will encourage more young people to try out and take part in positive activities as cost is a barrier.

Many young people aged 25 and under are not in full-time employment and the cost of travel, membership and equipment for activities can restrict our ability to take part. Financial support from our parents and carers enables many of us to take part, but this is not an option for young people who are independent or from low-income households.

We believe that discounts for culture, leisure and sport facilities should be available for young people aged up to 25. We also need local authorities to involve young people to ensure that their promotion of free and low-cost leisure activities works.

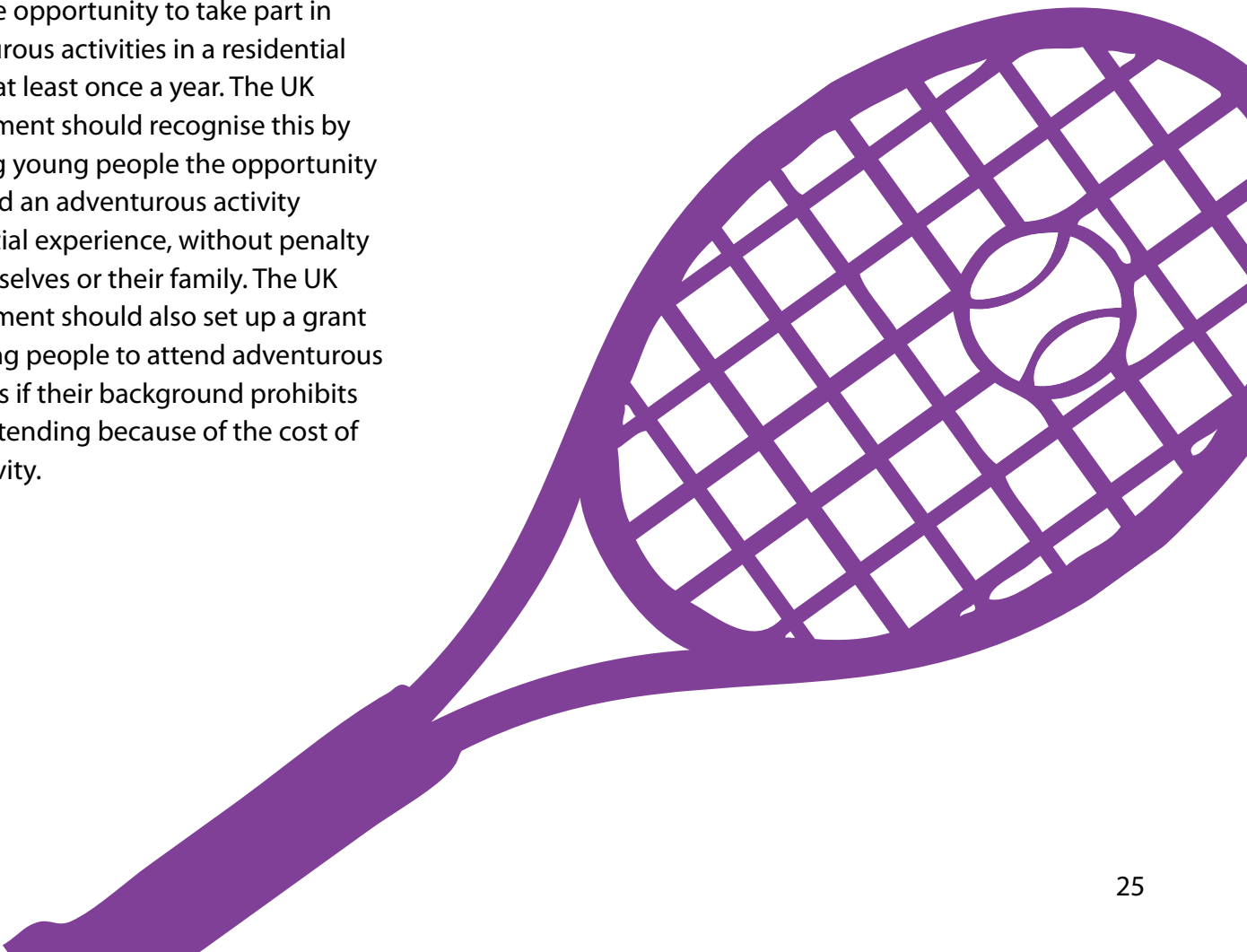
Support special interest youth groups

We people believe in the value of youth groups with special interests; for example: young disabled people, cultural groups, LGBT, single gender, and religious groups. We believe specific interest groups should be available, accessible and be safe places for young people to meet.

Support young people to take part in outdoor activities

More support is needed to help more young people access outdoor and adventurous activities. Physical activity can help all of us to lead healthier and even happier lives. All young people should have the opportunity to take part in and continue to excel in a number of outdoor activities without feeling forced into the activity, or that they have to take part at a competitive level.

We believe all young people should have the opportunity to take part in adventurous activities in a residential setting at least once a year. The UK Government should recognise this by allowing young people the opportunity to attend an adventurous activity residential experience, without penalty to themselves or their family. The UK Government should also set up a grant for young people to attend adventurous activities if their background prohibits them attending because of the cost of the activity.





Give us a global voice

Decisions that affect young people in the UK are made at European and international levels, for example about education, employment and the economy. Young people also care about global issues such as poverty, climate change and security, and they want to get involved and take positive action.

We believe that young people have a right to have a voice in and influence the decisions that affect them, no matter where those decisions are made around the world. Young people

should also have a say on the issues that are important to them.

We believe that international youth representation should be more inclusive by widening participation in consultation and representation through local networks in the UK. We believe it should also be more effective through adequate training, support and facilitation for young representatives, and by working with decision-makers to make more opportunities for international youth representation more accessible and participatory.

We believe that the UK Government should fully fund and support a United Nations (UN) youth delegate to all UN conferences, as was agreed by the UN in 1995 and reaffirmed again in 2009. All youth representatives should be recruited through a democratic and transparent selection process, representative of young people in the UK through links to formal representative structures and those that represent all four nations, and held by young people for a fixed term

to enable other young people to take up the post.

Make trade fair

We believe that current international trade rules and practices, and the processes for agreeing them, are fundamentally unfair towards poorer countries. We believe that the UK Government should work to dismantle trade policies and practices that increase global inequalities.

We believe in fair trade that helps producers in economically developing countries obtain better trading conditions and promote sustainability. We believe that fair trade should be supported by the Government through, for example, removing VAT on all fair trade goods to support their development and promotion.

We believe that local youth councils should be supported to get involved in making their schools, youth centres and clubs or towns fair trade.

Support fair international development

We believe that the international economic and political system is biased against poorer countries. We believe that all countries should be treated as equal partners in development and that all governments have an obligation to ensure that all citizens can enjoy minimum standards of living as set out in the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals.

We believe that the UK government should fulfil its commitment to spending the UN agreed target of 0.7% of national income on development assistance.

We believe there should be a Tobin tax (which is also known as a Robin Hood tax), which would tax foreign currency

transactions. This tax would involve taking a percentage of all international financial transactions across country borders, which is mostly carried out these between financial institutions such as banks and hedge funds. This would help stabilise currencies and give countries more control over their own economies, and the huge amounts of money raised would generate additional sustainable funds for use on urgent international priorities such as poverty and HIV/AIDS.

We believe that young people should have the opportunity to gain an understanding of the underlying causes of poverty, international development issues and what action can be taken to support change for a more just and sustainable world.

Mark the UN International Year of Youth by strengthening youth rights

The UN Year of Youth starts in August 2010, and we call on the UK Government and other agencies to recognise this year. Young people are the future, and are often disproportionately affected by unemployment, education provision, healthcare and other priorities that were set out in the World Programme of Action for Youth. We call on the government to reaffirm the commitment to the 10 areas on the World Programme. We note with disappointment that the minister declined the invitation to the World Conference for Youth in Mexico and call on them to take part in the UN conference on Youth at the end of the year.

We call for the UK Government to coordinate youth organisations through BYC as a national organisation committee for the UN Year of Youth,

as called for by UN Youth and the General Assembly, and ask for the UK Government to resource this work. We also call on the UK Government to fulfil the UN general assembly call that youth delegates be supported and funded as part of government delegations to the UN.

We note that the World Programme for youth outlines areas of work, but feel that this commitment is weak. We support the growing moves for regional youth rights charters to enshrine youth rights in law. We support youth rights and a Council of Europe charter on youth rights.

We call for the UK Government to support youth rights as part of the rights and responsibilities of young people growing up in the UK today.



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To find out more, please contact BYC:

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