

British Youth Council

Manifesto 2016-17

Our vision for a better world

British Youth Council



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Our Community

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.

Involvement in local level politics

We call on councils to ensure they get the views of young people on issues in smaller communities.

Save our services

The British Youth Council believes that all young people should have access to youth services, regardless of where they live. We believe properly funded youth services and agencies aid young people in their personal development and their ability to function in society. We believe that youth services should have funding priority to ensure they meet the needs of young people. We believe that youth services need to be recognised for their value.

We call on local councils to not cut the budgets of such invaluable services, and to ensure adequate financial and organisational provision is given to local council-run youth organisations. This will allow for a fairer, safer and stronger environment for young people.

We also recognise the importance of joint working as key to saving youth services, through The British Youth Council and its partners to continuing to foster youth leadership within the sector and to work with youth services coalitions and advocacy groups, including Choose Youth, to ensure that The British Youth Council is working with and enabling young people and other key stakeholders to proactively campaign for quality youth services and against further cuts.

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 18's 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.

Introduction of Audio-Visual Information Systems to all local bus services throughout the United Kingdom

The British Youth Council believes that Audio-Visual Information Systems should be introduced to all local bus services across the UK in order to allow people who are blind or partially-sighted to use buses with confidence, as well as improve the experience of bus travel for all passengers.

The lack of transport in rural areas and its impact on young people

Lack of transport in rural areas can produce difficulties for young people accessing services, education, training, employment and pursuing active social lives. Getting to see friends or going out at night are significant problems for young people without their own transport. Often there are no other young people living locally, so seeing friends outside school or college is dependent on the availability of transport. Even if friends do live nearby, there is often nowhere to meet outside the home, except the village pub, the playing field or perhaps a bus shelter. When young people do meet friends locally, their public presence within a village is high profile so that they feel that whatever they do is open to scrutiny and comment. Young Farmers and other youth organisations operating in rural communities go some way to combat this issue but many young people not involved in youth provision can feel isolated. We would like local authorities to investigate the infrastructure that exists to support young people living in rural areas.

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 serve 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 The British Youth Council as a UK wide organisation.

Believe in 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 the case.

The vital nature of our public services

We believe that our public services are a vital and valued part of our society. Our public services are essential for our day-to-day lives, and also offer a wide-range of essential support services to those in most need.

Cutting money from our public services will severely reduce or close many services, increase the level of unemployment, and deny young people many of the services they rely on.

End Fuel Poverty

We believe that the UK Government should keep their promise to eradicate fuel poverty by 2016. Fuel poverty affects young people's health and educational development; no children, young people or their families should have to choose between heating their homes and eating.

We believe that the Government should support all families to have the information they need to make informed decisions about their energy provision. We believe the Big Six energy companies should have to provide clear information about their cheapest tariffs and should offer a social tariff to customers based on eligibility criteria which includes those on low-incomes and with young families.

We believe that the UK Government should ensure that support is available to low-income families to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, and that UK Government programmes to support families to make efficiency improvements should be accessible to the poorest families, enabling them to benefit from lower fuel bills as a result.

Olympics

We believe in the Olympics ideal that individuals from different nations should be brought together to take part in the peaceful practice of competitive sport, without the burden discrimination or prejudice. We believe that every individual has a right to practice sport in the spirit of mutual understanding, friendship, solidarity and fair play.

We welcome the opportunity that the young volunteers and young ambassadors have to promote the message of Olympic values, act as role models, and showcase the positive contributions that young people in particular make in their communities across the UK and around the world.

We also note that staging the event is a huge cost and that therefore the Olympics legacy must be sustained across the UK to benefit all communities - especially where we face increasing child poverty and poor health – where investment in facilities and youth participation in sport could make a difference.

Social Action for All

The British Youth Council believes that the campaign for social action in local communities across the UK should just not be a passing phase, but rather have a lasting impact for young people to benefit the chances they have in their own lives, as well as that of other people who will be positively impacted because of their activities and the time that they have voluntarily given. The 'Step Up To Serve' campaign is currently aiming to double the number of young people participating in some form of social action to at least 50% by 2020 and we are willing to support this objective alongside partner organisations, in conjunction with our value that every young person has the right to participate in the issues they are most passionate about.

The British Youth Council believes that the current and successive governments must maintain a consistent line to ensure the good that young people are doing in their communities is not undermined by ideological party politics. We feel that social action should be universally recognised as a force for good in whatever way young people choose to participate and make a difference.

Public Service Engagement

The British Youth Council believes that our public services must make an effort to listen and respond to us all, regardless of our age. Whether that may be Clinical Commissioning Groups for local health services, crime prevention forums or local government consultations to important reforms on our local services, these groups have to reach out to the younger generation in their communities and create a space in which young people become active stakeholders within their local communities. With vital issues such as youth services, 'stop and search' policies and healthcare as some of the areas which impact young people in diverse ways on a regional and local level, we can only have a better democracy if decision making starts on a grassroots level.

Young people have the right to have a say on the services which will eventually become their responsibility to manage in the future and all groups concerned must make a more concerted effort to engage and act upon, in order to support the wellbeing of themselves and their peers.

Equal Opportunities for Looked After Young People

The British Youth Council believes that all looked after young people should have the same standard of welfare as non-looked after children. This means everything from ensuring access to a computer and other educational resources, to enabling young people to take part in a range of sporting, leisure, play and other physical activities.

Rights for Young Europeans

The British Youth Council believes that the rights of young European citizens living in the UK should be upheld in wake of the Brexit vote as they contribute so much to the UK. We call on the government to ensure that the rights of young EU citizens, that have lived in the UK for over a year, to live work and study in the UK remain unchanged by negotiations with the EU and anyone who does not meet this year criteria should also be assessed on how settled they are in the UK. We call on the government to also ensure all affected children both over and under 13 are treated fairly and equally in these negotiations. Finally, we call on the government to take into account under the 'connections to the UK' requirement in any applications for citizenship that restrictions to migration were not in place when these young Europeans moved here

Reclaim the Internet – Tackling online abuse

The British Youth Council supports the Reclaim the Internet campaign, and calls for an end to online harassment and abuse. We call for all organisations, charities, the government and schools to work together to tackle online threats and abusive behaviour, particularly that which silences underrepresented groups. We believe that social media and the internet can and should provide opportunities for empowerment, free speech and public debate.

Gender Equality in Schools and Youth Services

The British Youth Council believes that all gender identities should be equally respected in youth services and educational establishments.

The period of time when you are in education is the most confusing and complicating time of your life, and when you aren't respected on the basis of your gender, it will be made more complicated.

Non-binary gender identities are not currently respected in schools which makes life even more confusing. Parliament accepts the use of the Mx. gender-neutral title, so why don't schools provide a gender neutral option? Be it toilets, uniform and in some cases lessons, many aspects of school life are segregated by gender.

This causes many problems for non-binary pupils. Why do these outdated principles still exist? They are no longer relevant. Let's change the lives of many young people who currently feel like they have been hung out to dry by

their education system or youth service, and make them feel integrated and respected.

Therefore, we call on the government and department of education to make school uniforms gender-neutral with one uniform code for everybody regardless of gender, to make schools obligated to provide a gender-neutral option for bathrooms, to desegregate lessons, and to make sure every gender identity, both binary and non-binary, is treated fairly and equally in schools and youth services.

Corporate Sustainability

The British Youth Council believes that large companies should all have more specific targets and reports on sustainability that the public have access to. Good practise in sustainability should take a central place in the strategic concerns of companies.

It is important that tackling climate change is not something that is looked upon as 'just a social responsibility' and can therefore be left out of strategic planning but as something corporations must focus on legally.

We call on the government to make these specific targets legally binding in order to reduce global warming. Systematic social reporting must play a crucial role in organisational accountability.

Our Democracy

Lower the voting age to 16 in all public elections and referenda

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.

Voting right for 16- and 17-year olds in the EU referendum

Following the General Election in the UK and the official announcement of an in-out referendum, the British Youth Council asks British citizens and politicians not to jeopardise their future but to give their youth a say in the referendum. British membership of the European Union gives young people in the UK unequalled opportunities in terms of education, employment and cultural exchanges. We ask every British citizen to reflect on how the EU has improved their rights and therefore their lives as citizens, to get involved in the debate and to cast their vote wisely in the referendum. The British Youth Council does not want to see British youth being isolated from the great benefits that come with Erasmus, freedom of movement and European citizenship. Considering how seriously our future is now at stake, we call for young people to have the right to vote from age 16 upwards in the upcoming referendum on EU membership.

Supporting youth representation and consideration at all levels of governance

In order to ensure a fairer deal for this country's youth, The British Youth Council believes:

There should be a requirement for youth representation at all levels of governance; in local and regional councils, in national assemblies, in the Houses of Parliament, and every other law-making body across the country.

- There should be a legislative requirement for consideration of the impact of new and existing policies on young people, and where possible, the greatest practicable measures taken to avoid disproportionate negative consequences on them.
- There should be a requirement for every policy that has a measurable impact on persons under 25 to have undergone real, accountable consultation with a body of young people. This could be achieved either with a specifically dedicated board of young people, across local councils, national assemblies and the UK government, or by utilising youth organisations already in place, like the British Youth Council and UK Youth Parliament.
- There should be an introduction of a Minister for Young People, and the introduction of Young Peers to sit in the House of Lords (with a maximum age limit of 25). As well as being responsible for issues that solely affect children and young people, their remit would also cover the representation of this country's youth, and the continuing effort to ensure all policy has taken into consideration the effect on young people (as detailed above) and their representation across government.

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 current voting system to the proportional voting system

We believe that there needs to be a change to the way we elect our Members of Parliament. 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.

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.

Support greater participation by black young people in charities.

We believe charities, and organisation working with young people, in particular need to do more, and have governance plans, of how to ensure more young black people get involved in the running of their organisations.

The importance of engaging young people in devolved politics

In 2016, all three devolved nations will elect the representatives of their devolved governments. Across the nations, devolved governments have varying degrees of devolved power, but all legislate on areas directly affecting young people.

The British Youth Council believes that changes to the electoral registration process by Westminster have significantly impacted on young people, and where the devolved nations don't have devolved power over their electoral processes, these effects are being felt hardest as the rolled out changes clash with devolved elections. A lack of understanding and education as to the structure and importance of devolution means the engagement of young people in the devolved assembly/parliamentary elections is often low, despite those governments having the greatest impact on their day-to-day life. We have the opportunity and duty to support the devolved nations to increase the turnout of young people in their elections, and ensure that young people are at the forefront of political decisions being made.

The British Youth Council therefore believes that every effort should be made to engage young people with politics and politicians with young people, to protect young people's opportunity to engage in democracy. As the electoral spotlight is turned off by other national organisations following the end of the

general election, The British Youth Council must ensure it supports Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland in promoting and campaigning around the assembly elections. Through this we can ensure that young people continue to be a force for change across the UK. The British Youth Council should lobby the Welsh Assembly, calling on them to re-create the now closed Funky Dragon organisation or a similar yet improved independent organisation lead by young people for young people, and lobby local authorities to ring-fence funding to fund local youth councils in Wales.

EU Referendum

We believe in light of the referendum result, that the views and voices of young people need to be represented in post- referendum negotiations on issues such as free movement and opportunities. The British Youth Council believes that following a campaign of two opposite views and the resulting split vote, we now need to emphasise what unites us in the UK and Europe, that we call for a more civil dialogue between politicians with the public and young people to underline this. We believe that The British Youth Council should call on the Government to allow votes at 16 in all elections, to invest in citizenship education, and ongoing voter registration as part of a curriculum for life, and to appoint a Youth Minister to inform and influence our relationship with Europe and other nations.

Our Education

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.

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.

Make High Quality citizenship and sex and relationship (SRE) education a statutory entitlement for all young people

The British Youth Council believes the Government should introduce statutory and compulsory high quality citizenship and sex and relationship (SRE) education to pupils in Key Stage two, three, four and post 16 education. The British Youth Council believes that students should leave our education systems equipped with the skills, knowledge and experience to become active, well-informed and confident members of their local, national and global communities. This means making sure that education covers politics and democratic life, as well as social issues such as sex and relationship education (SRE).

Many students feel that the current citizenship education and SRE curriculum provisions are inadequate and that they are being denied a better understanding of themselves, relationships, society and politics. The British Youth Council believes the current scope of the citizenship curriculum is too narrow and should encompass wider political and constitutional rights, as well

as social issues including global citizenship and sustainability, legal rights and financial literacy, human rights, liberation, diversity and information regarding mental health.

Education around sexual consent, sexual violence and partner abuse should form be a central component of the SRE curriculum and also should be offered to students in post 16 settings. The British Youth Council urges the Government to prioritise SRE and citizenship education ensuring it is embedded as far as possible across the whole school curriculum. The British Youth Council believes that Government should ensure there is sufficient and appropriate training, development and specialist support for teachers in the potentially complex and sensitive issues of citizenship education and SRE. This training must ensure that those delivering these programmes are confident, competent, impartial, consistent and professional and the information and training provided on consent, abuse, and sexual violence should be inclusive of all gender and sexual identities.

Tackling Sexual Harassment in Schools

The British Youth Council believes that sexual harassment and sexual bullying in schools should be recognised as a specific type of peer abuse.

The British Youth Council demands schools take a zero-tolerance approach to sexual bullying and sexual harassment and that the Government promise to introduce guidance that all schools must follow to tackle this issue. We support this call as part of a whole school approach to addressing violence against women and girls.

We believe that by doing this the government will ensure that young people are safe from harm whilst at school and that young people trust their schools to deal appropriately with sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women.

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 socioeconomic, 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.

Better access to training for young people

We believe that young people should have better access to training outside of formal education that will help them to build their skills and be more employable. Currently training can be very expensive and it can be difficult for young people to travel to locations where the training is held if it is in a different part of the county or country.

Training such as food hygiene, first aid and more specific careers training like trailer driving or IT and business courses can be difficult to access but are often a requirement to attend further courses or enter into employment in that sector.

Support skills from informal learning

The British Youth Council believes that there should be greater encouragement for informal skills, such as leadership, confidence and team work that whilst immeasurable, are also essential in all careers and life paths. Organisations that provide informal skills constantly struggle with low availability of money, volunteers and facilities in order to provide the best possible development opportunities for young people. Awards such as the Queens Scout Award and the Duke of Edinburgh awards consistently deliver these positive qualities in young people, without the need for pressured exams. These awards deliver far beyond the literal requirements of the award, encouraging the holistic education of young people as they move through adulthood.

The British Youth Council believes that there is currently too much focus on certified learning, mostly exams based, and thinks the government should do more to encourage a holistic development of young people.

Teach first aid in primary & secondary schools

First aiders can be the difference between life and death. Every year thousands of people die due to a lack of receiving basic first aid; yet fewer than 1 in 10 people have been trained in first aid.

The British Youth Council believes that every young person should have the chance to learn first aid. It should be as much a part of growing up as learning the alphabet. We believe that the compulsory teaching of first aid as part of primary and secondary education would equip young people with a knowledge of life-saving procedures, and the power to act in an emergency situation. It is currently up to individual schools to offer pupils the chance to learn first aid and while most young people say they would like to, only a small proportion get the opportunity to do so. Teaching first aid in schools should be supported to ensure that pupils learn first aid to a high standard and at a level appropriate to their ability.

Ultimately, no one should die because they needed first aid and didn't get it. Equipping young people with the first aid skills to save lives will empower them to become active citizens in their communities.

Recognise non-accredited informal learning and Continued Professional Development

Many young people choose to undertake personal and social developmental learning through their participation in voluntary youth provision. In some rural areas where access to accredited learning opportunities may be limited, young people are able to build their portfolio by undertaking a variety of opportunities available to them. For example from undertaking leadership roles within their local community to organising and undertaking informal training which is of benefit to them and their local community. The British Youth Council should champion for better recognition of Continuing Professional Development, non-accredited learning and vocational courses.

Have zero tolerance to bullying

We believe that all educational institutions should have a zero tolerance policy to any kind of discrimination against, or bullying, of students or staff and should have a responsibility to promote and celebrate diversity.

Schools, colleges and universities need to have strategies, developed with students, to prevent and respond to bullying.

We believe preventing and responding to homophobic bullying should be a priority for school, colleges and universities when ensuring a zero tolerance approach to bullying. They need to clearly say that homophobic bullying is wrong and that they believe in an inclusive learning environment for all.

Young people often feel that homophobic bullying is not taken as seriously by teachers and staff as other types of bullying. Schools, colleges and universities need to record and report all incidents of homophobic bullying, and teachers and staff need training on how to effectively prevent or respond to homophobic bullying. We believe that people working in external agencies (such as lesbian and gay charities, youth workers or local telephone help lines) can often offer valuable support, both outside and inside the classroom, in addressing homophobic bullying.

We support the 'It Gets Better' worldwide movement that remind teenagers in the LGBT community that homophobic bullying is wrong, that it should not be tolerated, and that they deserve support to become openly LGBT young adults.

Recognise our speech, language and communication needs

We believe that all young people deserve to have their speech, language and communication needs recognised, and that young people need to be empowered to communicate with everyone in our society.

We recognise that speech, language and communication needs can include difficulties with fluency, forming sounds and words, formulating sentences, understanding what others say, and using language socially. Other young people might have communication needs because they have sensory loss or have a disability that affects their communication. Often young people feel that communication needs are not noted as they are not a visible impairment.

We believe that people who work with young people should be trained to identify and support young people with speech, language and communication needs, and know how to use other types of learning methods when needed. Young people should also be able to study British Sign Language and Braille as a modern language in schools.

Keep funding Care to Learn

We believe that the Care to Learn funding that helps with the cost of childcare for young parents while they are learning, is critical in allowing young parents to access and attend further education.

We believe there shouldn't be any cuts to the Care to Learn funding. If it is removed from any one group, or reduced for all, it is highly likely that many

young parents will be unable to participate in learning, with all the negative impact on outcomes that might be expected. These cuts will also have a disproportionate effect on young women, who are more likely to claim Care to Learn.

Ensure all school meals meet nutritional standards

The British Youth Council believes it is important that all young people are able to have healthy school meals. Central to achieving this are schools meeting the national nutritional standards, which make sure young people have a balanced and healthy diet. We believe all schools, including academies and free schools, should comply with these standards to ensure that all pupils can have access to healthy food. Failure to do so could potentially affect many young people, for who at least one-third of their daily nutritional intake comes from school meals.

Compulsory and Well Resourced Field to Fork Education in Schools

The British Youth Council believes that all primary school children should have the opportunity to understand where their food comes from and visit a farm. Many children and some adults currently believe that food comes from the supermarket and don't think about the actual producers of the food they eat every day.

The British Youth Council believe that from an early age field to fork education should be a part of the national curriculum as a fundamental part of a child's learning. This should involve trips to see farmers and growers, understanding how food gets from the farm to their plate, the nutritional values of food and benefits of a healthy diet and a chance to experience growing plants and caring for animals.

The British Youth Council believe that practical outdoor learning will enhance children's education experience on physical academic and social levels. We believe that children require an understanding of food production in order to make positive eating and shopping choices in later life. Equally, children with a respect for food instilled at an early age we feel are less likely to waste food.

Reinstate University Maintenance Grants

The British Youth Council believes all should have access to higher education, regardless of their financial background and thus calls upon Government to reinstate University Maintenance Grants.

University Maintenance Grants are vital in ensuring that working class young people can sustain life at University and without these grants, many working class young people will be unable to attend University and fulfil their potentials.

Recognition of Non-Formal Education Awards by HE and FE Institutions

The British Youth Council believes that Higher Education and Further Education Institutions should formally recognise awards, offered by major national charities and youth organisations, which are achieved through non-formal education as being of equal value/importance as formally recognised educational awards/qualifications, in order to more equally recognise all young people and their achievements.

To ensure that agricultural and countryside career options are presented within school careers guidance information

Currently within mainstream education the careers information and guidance on routes into agriculture and countryside careers is very poor.

NFYFC members recently attended the Big Bang careers fair to promote the many careers in agriculture that can be accessed via science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects taught in schools. The #Morethantractors slogan was used to promote the fact that there are more careers in agriculture than being a farmer. The stand was extremely popular and in many cases careers in agriculture was an option that students had not considered or been given information about.

We would like to see agricultural careers advice offered in schools along with information on specialist course providers.

Make learning first aid a compulsory part of obtaining a UK driving licence

First aiders can be the difference between life and death. Currently, fewer than 1 in 10 people have the skills to save a life. 41% of adults do not feel that they are confident enough to help in the event of an emergency. In 2014, 8,695 young people aged 17-19 were involved in reported accidents on the roads. In 56% of these accidents young people were hurt, seriously injured or killed. In the last 12 months, 1,780 people have been killed on British roads. Every second counts in an emergency situation as 50% of deaths from road collisions occur within a few minutes of a crash.

We call on the Government to make learning first aid a compulsory part of obtaining the UK driving license for all new drivers. This would equip young people, who make up a large majority of new drivers, with knowledge of life-saving procedures, and the power to act in an emergency situation particularly on the roads.

Ultimately, no one should die because they needed first aid and didn't get it. Equipping young people with the first aid skills to save lives on our roads will make a huge difference in communities across the UK.

Mandatory LGBTQ Education in Schools

The British Youth Council believes that all schools should provide education to young people about LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning and other) issues.

The fact that some schools do not teach about LGBT issues is putting young people up and down the country at higher risk of mental and physical health issues. If a school does not tell their pupils that gay men still need to use condoms and lesbians still need to use protection, these young people won't necessarily know how to keep themselves protected and put themselves at risk of contracting STIs. If a school doesn't tell their pupils that gender identity and biological sex are not always consistent, then transgender and non-binary pupils may feel ashamed of themselves.

They also may not know how to go about expressing their gender identity in school if they decide to take that step. If all schools would tell such things to their pupils, they reduce this risk, which is part of their duty to keep their pupils safe and give them the best possible start in life.

We call on the government and department of education to make LGBTQ Education mandatory in all schools, and we call on OFSTED to make sure homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying is treated every bit as seriously as racial bullying. This institutionalised discrimination can be brought to an end.

Global awareness and citizenship

The British Youth Council believes that global citizenship should play a bigger part in the national curriculum and should be compulsory for all students throughout their education.

Building friendships that stretch across the globe benefits everybody. Children from a young age should learn to respect different people and cultures around the world. Children can change the world and having weekly global citizenship lessons, with specially trained teachers will interest children and capture their imaginations. It would help develop good citizens who take responsibility for their actions, young people who care and understand and who are non judgemental.

We believe in:

- Spending time learning about the wider world. News/papers/tv/internet
- Talking to friends and teachers about issues affecting school, the community, our country and other countries
- Regular lessons in world politics, culture, technology and the environment
- Becoming multilingual
- Creating exciting opportunities for school exchanges and work experience
- Building links and contacts locally, nationally and internationally so that we are ready to work in the international workplace.

We believe that all children should be active in their own community and have every opportunity to participate in the global community too.

We call on the government to provide extra resources to teach the subject. We would like specially trained teachers to visit schools. We need extra funding to set up exchange programmes and equipment to maintain regular contact with students across the globe.

Our Employment

Unemployment and the Economy

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. We believe that measures to tackle youth unemployment should 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.

Restore face to face Careers Advice

The British Youth Council believes that all young people should have the right to access face-to-face high quality, impartial careers advice delivered by qualified staff so they can raise their aspirations and achieve their potential. The British Youth Council is concerned about the reduction in Connexions services in many areas of the country. Ensuring that all young people under 25, including those who are NEET, can access high quality, independent careers advice is vital to prevent long-term youth unemployment. The British Youth Council backs the Centrepoint Parliament's campaign on this issue, and calls on members and the public to support the Centrepoint Parliament's campaign and sign their petition to persuade government to guarantee face-to-face high quality, impartial careers advice delivered by qualified staff for all young people.

Internships – Fair opportunities and the Living Wage

Internships are often invaluable opportunities for young people to gain knowledge, skills and experience that enable them to further their careers and develop as individuals. Unpaid internships are ways for employers to reap the benefits of the young creative minds of today, without any cost. Young people from lower income families would have more of an ability to take on

internships if receiving some form of financial support. We believe that all internships should be required by law to pay the Living Wage.

Living Wage

The British Youth Council believes that work must at the very least provide a route out of poverty, and that a real Living Wage, as calculated by THE Centre for Research in Social Policy is therefore necessary. We believe that the national minimum and the Government's National living wage still enshrines age-related discrimination with lower rates for younger workers, and a separate, even lower, rate for apprentices. Calculations for the current Living Wage would set a single rate of £8.25 per hour for the UK, and 9.40 for London, with no age discrimination.

The British Youth Council believes that anybody in work should be paid the 'rate for the job' – not different rates which are based on the ages of those involved. The British Youth Council also believes that a Living Wage is vital to (i) reward work adequately; (ii) ensure that workers are not dependent on benefits to live; (iii) stop employers' profits being subsidised by taxpayers; (iv) ensure young people are able to choose to live independent lives.

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.

Support young people to actively participate in trade union membership

The British Youth Council believes that acting collectively is the best way for working people to improve their pay, terms and conditions, their working lives, and the world around them. The British Youth Council believes that membership of, and active participation in, Trade Unions is the most effective way for workers to act collectively to win improvements at the workplace. It also offers the opportunity to act collectively to campaign for improvements in the wider world.

Active trade union membership also offers many opportunities for young people to acquire a wide range of skills and knowledge which will enable them to become leaders in the trade union movement, and which will also support them in becoming active citizens.

Close the gender pay gap

We believe more needs to be done to close the pay gap between male and female employees. Many women working full time earn much less than men in the same jobs. For ethnic minority women the pay gap is often higher and they face double discrimination.

We believe there are a number of causes in the persistent pay gap between males and females. These include stereotyping about women's capabilities

and skills, and a long working hours' culture which does not recognise the need for time for parenting and caring responsibilities.

We believe pay in the UK needs to be transparent and fair. Employers need to measure their pay gap and take steps to resolve it. There should be mandatory pay audits for all organisations, more flexible working so that part-time work doesn't need to mean low-paid work, and restrictions on working hours so those with caring responsibilities can balance work and home.

We want our Government to create a society in which women and men are fairly rewarded for their work and able to choose how they divide earning and caring responsibilities. We believe the Government should set dates for finally closing the pay gap.

Public procurement contracts should create more apprenticeships

We believe that public procurement contracts of a determined worth let by public authorities should include an obligation on the contractor to provide apprenticeships, skills and training in the local and surrounding areas, particularly to young people.

Protecting Young People in Work Experience and Internships

The British Youth Council believes that levels of youth unemployment are unacceptable and that Government, employers and young people's representatives should be working together on a coordinated strategy to get those least responsible for the situation motivated, supported and prepared for the world of work. We welcome measures to get young people working and believe that work experience and internships allow young people the opportunity to learn about working life and the working environment and to gain experience in particular jobs.

We are concerned that some employers may be using work experience and internships to replace jobs for young people. We believe that companies and businesses need to comply with Living Wage and that young people should be supported to know that they can seek confidential help and advice when their Living Wage rights are not being met. In order to tackle these concerns, we believe that the UK Government should work with young people to establish a code of conduct for all work experience and internships. We believe that this should contain the following points:

- Placements must be entirely voluntary - where a young person may leave at reasonable notice, to take up work, training or return to Jobseeker's Allowance without sanction;
- Guarantee that placements are in addition to existing or planned vacancies and that no-one has been dismissed or made redundant so the placement can be offered;
- That volunteer work experience placements are not jobs that would otherwise be done by paid employee;
- Allow participants to carry out reasonable job search activity and attend

interviews with prospective employers and fortnightly job search reviews at Jobcentre Plus

- Provide participants with a reference at the end of the placement;
- Have a written placement role description with duties and responsibilities, an induction and named person to report to;
- Young person is not to be out of pocket as a result of their placement through provision of travel to work expenses and childcare;
- Assign each participant a supervisor who has sufficient time to coach them, provide regular feedback and be a point of contact for any concerns.
- We call on work experience and internship providers and public decision-makers to adopt and support such a code of conduct

Create Green Jobs to build a low carbon economy

The British Youth Council believes that government schemes to deal with high levels of youth unemployment should be linked to creating jobs, and supporting associated skills, which are environmentally sustainable. As the UK seeks to cut our rate of carbon emissions to 80% by 2050, creating green jobs for young people is an important way to help the UK successfully become a low carbon economy

To raise awareness of workplace safety in particularly in the farming and agriculture industry

Sadly, whilst farming accounts for just 1.5 per cent of the UK's workforce, farmers account for 15-20 per cent of all workplace fatalities. As one of the Country's most hazardous industries, agriculture has persistently high rates of fatal and life changing incidents.

In the 2013/14 reporting period -

- There have been 27 fatal injuries to workers - the worker fatality rate in agriculture is higher than any other industry section
- Almost half (48%) of the workers who were fatally injured were farmers, while about one in seven were farm or forestry workers
- There have also been four fatal injuries to members of the public due to incidents in agricultural settings

Statistics taken from the Health and Safety Executive

The British Youth Council believes that peoples' attitudes to farm safety needs to change and there needs to be a greater awareness amongst young people about the risks present in farming landscapes.

We call for youth organisations to support the Farm Safety Foundation and NFYFC to engage with the farmers of the future, change their behaviour and also to help educate the general public to remain safe in the countryside.

Employ Autism

The British Youth Council believes that all young people with additional needs and neurological conditions, such as autism, are given an equal opportunity to develop their skills and participate whenever possible to enable them to seek

employment opportunities. We will support all initiatives led by other groups and organisations who seek to bring about this change and help ensure there is a fundamental shift in how that young people of any ability are given a fair and equal chance as they move into adulthood.

Our Environment

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 The British Youth Council.

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. The British Youth Council calls upon the UK government to make spaces available for young people's representation on decision-making on climate change at all levels.

Fossil Free Energy

The British Youth Council believes the worst effects of climate change can be avoided - but only with much greater political will, urgent action to cut carbon emissions, and a rapid transition from fossil fuels to renewables. At COP21 – the UN climate talks of December 2015 – an agreement was reached to limit average warming to below 2 degrees. But if you add up all the commitments made by world governments, we reach an average warming of between 3 and 4 degrees.

The British Youth Council believes that to stop disastrous climate change, we must leave four fifths of all existing fossil fuels in the ground. Young people have the power to affect change, by petitioning universities, local authorities and faith groups to divest from fossil fuels and reinvesting the money in community renewables projects, ethical equity funds and green bonds. Moving money from fossil fuels to renewables can give organisations a more financially secure investment portfolio, and it can make a huge positive impact on the transition to renewable energy we need to see.

Education also has to play a huge role in a societal response to climate change. The British Youth Council calls on Government to ensure that education for sustainable development is embedded into primary, secondary and tertiary education. Students should leave their time in education as part of the solution to our sustainability problems, and Government should look at countries like Japan to explore what a joined up approach to education for sustainability might look like.

The British Youth Council also urges the Government to create a space for young people to input into UK policy on climate change and sustainable development at local, national and international levels, as well as urging

Government to take stronger action in supporting the transition to renewables, and leaving four fifths of fossil fuels in the ground.

Outlaw Conversion/Reparative therapy for gender and sexuality throughout the United Kingdom

The British Youth Council believes that any and all forms of Conversion/Reparative therapy should be outlawed across the UK in order to protect the health, wellbeing, and development of LGBTQ people in society.

The British Youth Council further believes that members should contact their local MP and attempt to secure support, no matter which party, for the immediate ban on Conversion/Reparative therapy being offered within the UK.

Our Health

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).

Recognise Our Minds Matter and Improve Our Mental Health Service

The British Youth Council believes that there should be more awareness of mental health issues and more work done to challenge the stigma surrounding mental health issues, so that young people know where to get help.

We believe that the Government needs to do more to address mental health challenges faced by young people. We also believe that stigma surrounding mental health prevents many young people from seeking support; and that help and advice are often scarce. Greater investments need to be made to ensure that support and care is; age-appropriate, youth-friendly and accessible both locally and nationally for 16-25 year olds.

The British Youth Council believes that the following measures would support the increase in quality and quantity of Youth Mental Health provision across the UK:

- All Child Adolescent and Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Mental Health Access points should be youth friendly.
- CAMHS literature should be youth proofed and should be tailored to suit all learning needs.
- Peer education projects should be run in schools and youth projects to raise awareness of mental health issues and to reduce the stigma associated with mental health.
- Development of a national mental health policy website
- A CAMHS open door policy offered in every borough or district.
- Development of a list of 10 national indicators of poor mental health common amongst young people

Improving young people’s wellbeing

The British Youth Council believes that it is important to listen and engage with young people to better understand the issues affecting their mental wellbeing and what they need to have good mental health.

Good mental health should be promoted by building young people’s resilience so that they can develop positive coping strategies to deal with everyday pressure. This should include peer education and support such as that of the Government’s peer support initiative. There is also a need to challenge gender inequality that is negatively impacting on girls and young women’s wellbeing.

We believe that all schools should provide mental wellbeing support and enable children and young people to build resilience. Teachers and other school staff should be trained to offer support or provide information about services available to young people.

Blood donations by all, for all

We believe that the NHS’ criterion which means that sexually active gay and bisexual men cannot give blood 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’ of 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.

Supporting “Project Wild Thing” and reconnecting children with nature

The British Youth Council believes that playing outside is an essential part of the development of every child and it is paramount that all children are given

the opportunity to enjoy nature free from harm and the pressures of the modern world.

Engagement in physical activity

The British Youth Council believes that young women’s engagement in physical activity will be enhanced by the involvement of friends and peers and should be fun, not always competitive, accessible, affordable and locally published.

Our Justice

Young People and 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.

The British Youth Council believes that Police and Community Safety teams offer a lot to their community. We recognise that they are governed and held accountable by national and regional decision making bodies. The British Youth Council believes the following measures would build better relationships between the Police, Community Safety Teams and Young People in the UK:

- A national Police Youth Think Tank resourced and supported by the Metropolitan Police should be set up.
- Crime Prevention and Street Wise workshops should be run in all schools and youth centres across the UK.
- There should be a measurable increase in the quantity and quality of monitoring on the sale of weaponry.
- Keep the language used when talking about policing plain and simple; and where relevant, for young people to youth proof Police policies and help social media campaigns.
- A positive youth perception campaign should be run to help reduce the fear and stigma that adults have of young people.
- Workshops for senior Police Officers should be run by young people; to give Police Officers a better understanding of what life is really like for young people.
- Have young people involved in local policing and community safety decisions that affect them and for these impacts to be evidenced.
- For local Police and Community Safety teams to take part in the Children's Commissioner Takeover Day.
- Youth Voice Vehicles to run district or borough wide campaigns on the negative side to crime, gang culture and drugs.
- For local Youth Voice Vehicles to support other young people to attend ward panel meetings; and to evaluate police services

We also believe that the dangerous to sell off of Police services vital to local communities has happened by stealth, without any proper consultation with the public; the people who have most to lose. If police privatisation goes ahead unchallenged the face of UK policing will change forever. The British

Youth Council believes that the Government's privatisation of police services should not go ahead.

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 antisocial 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. It therefore threatens their fundamental human rights, and should be prohibited. 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 and that children and young people should be protected from businesses and public authorities which conspire to keep them away from public spaces and facilities.

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'.

Support Equal 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 Northern Ireland and should give equal rights and benefits attributed to marriage's legal status in society. We believe that marriage and civil partnerships in Northern Ireland should be opened to both same sex and mixed sex couples, and that religious organisations should be given the opportunity to perform these ceremonies if they wish to.

Civil Partnerships do not go far enough as denying same-sex couples to marry is a form of discrimination and is denying basic human rights. Homosexual couples should have a right to marry the same as everyone else.

We believe that equal marriage will improve lives for young LGBT citizens of the United Kingdom especially as more young people are entering civil partnerships at a young age. We believe if we campaign for equal marriage, rates for depression and suicide for young LGBT people will come down. We also believe that if we campaign for equal marriage, then society will start to accept homosexuality resulting in less homophobic attacks towards young LGBT people and fewer Homophobic attacks in schools/colleges.

We believe that establishing equal marriage in Northern Ireland will become a beacon of hope for young LGBT people in countries which don't have any basic rights from discrimination and homophobia. We urge that The British Youth Council actively campaign for equal marriage to continue equality and diversity for young LGBT people.

Stop and Search Rights

The British Youth Council believes that, in order to maintain a good relationship between young people and the police, young people should be made aware of their rights in case of being stopped and searched. This would prevent false information being circulated and would give young people the feeling of safety and also understanding. Without awareness of these rights it can lead to mistrust and confusion.

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 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 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.

Stand up against sexual harassment

We believe that all young people should be empowered to stand up against sexual harassment, which is any unwanted contact of a sexual nature either, physically, verbally or non-verbally. Sexual harassment can have a devastating effect upon the health, confidence, morale and performance of those affected by it.

Young people need to be told by employers and organisations that they are protected by law against sexual harassment, that their claims will be taken seriously and that there is support available to help report sexual harassment.

Believe in freedom of expression

We believe in freedom of expression as a fundamental human right and will campaign against attempts to diminish its effect. We believe that this right should only be subject to such restrictions as are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary. The British Youth Council will not provide a platform for those: i) who fail to comply with the right to freedom of expression; or ii) fail to abide by The British Youth Council's Equal Opportunities policy.

Elected Police and Crime Commissioners need to engage with young people

The British Youth Council believes that the voice of young people should be heard on policing services in their community, so they are empowered to have a say on how crime is tackled and prevented in their area. The election of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) represent an opportunity for young people to hold the police to account. Actively engaging young people in the elections, and ensuring candidates listen to the concerns of young constituents, will help to build greater trust and confidence between young people and the police.

Legal recognition by UK Government of Non Binary Gender Identities

The British Youth Council Believes that the UK Government should legally recognise Non Binary Gender Identities in order to create a more inclusive and accessible society

Our Leisure

Improve the Access, Quality and Quantity of Culture, Leisure and Sporting Activities for Young People

We believe that every young person should have the right to access positive activities that meet local young people's needs. Culture, leisure and sport facilities and activities need to ensure they are high quality, accessible and affordable to young people. 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.

We need facilities that we will use, and for these to be open at times when we will use them. We should be empowered to have our say in the design, delivery, promotion and evaluation of leisure, culture and sporting services.

We believe that discounts will encourage more young people to try out and take part in positive activities as cost is a barrier. We believe that the UK Government should develop a grant for young people to attend adventurous activities if their background prohibits them attending because of the cost of the activity.

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.

Help us get young people outdoors

The British Youth Council believes that outdoor education is extremely important, both when provided through formal education routes and when provided through Third Sector organisations which focus on non-formal education. The British Youth Council believes that all young people should have the opportunity to take part in adventurous activities outdoors; such opportunities should include, but not be limited to, providing young people with the opportunity to take part in adventurous activities in a residential setting at least once a year.

The importance of outdoor play for children

Outdoor play is an extremely importance part of child development. In a society that has become increasingly digitalised, time spent outdoors is often overlooked. The outdoors is the best place for children to practice and master physical skills. It is in the outdoors that children can fully and freely experience motor skills like running, leaping, and jumping. It is also the most appropriate area for the practice of ball-handling skills, like throwing and catching. It's only when they have mastered these that they will be able to control their fine motor skills, such as using a knife and fork or holding a pencil. A child having the opportunity to playing outside plays a vital part in their long term development. The British Youth Council calls on schools and youth groups to ensure adequate time is given to outdoor play, and to encourage children and young people to enjoy time spent outdoors.

Our World

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.

Refugees in Europe

We believe that the answer to the desperation of refugees seeking sanctuary cannot be about blaming each other or about building fences. Instead we must work together quickly and in solidarity to find an overall solution that includes shared responsibilities within the whole of Europe, whether UK is a member of the EU or not.

The British Youth Council will campaign for a coordinated human rights response to asylum seekers and calls on the responsible institutions and governments :

- For a common policy on asylum, including long-term distribution mechanisms for asylum seekers and refugees.
- For improvements in bilateral agreements and partnerships between EU and non-EU countries, located in Europe, regarding the reception of refugees, with immediate attention to the relationship between the UK and mainland Europe.
- For improvements in the asylum procedure (duration, quality, service)
- For the creation of legal channels for refugees and migrants to ensure the right of asylum (e.g. at consulates or embassies) as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and guaranteed in the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights. Until this is fulfilled we call for the decriminalisation of refugees crossing borders.

Post 2015 International Development

We believe that inclusive governance and the protection of freedoms and rights should underpin all development initiatives and be a key part of any future development framework. Young people should be supported to claim their rights and participate in local and national decision-making, where necessary taking special measures to enable marginalised young people to part in democratic processes.

We believe that there needs to be more and better data collected and made available on civic and civil participation, including on the participation of young people. We believe that all global development data, including the data to be collected in post 2015 development goals, should be disaggregated by age and that there should be data available for different age groups, for example 18 – 24, 16 – 18 and 14-16. This data will ensure that we can effectively monitor youth development across all development goals, including health, education, rights, participation and inclusion, poverty, and employment.

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.

Youth In Action - Europe

The British Youth Council believes in the value and importance of youth specific programmes at European level, across all EU institutions and in the Council of Europe, to support quality youth work, youth participation in decision making and targeted and effective youth policy.

“Specifically, The British Youth Council believes that an independent European youth programme is the best guarantee of quality support to young people as a specific target group, focussing on the inclusion of all young people and a youth-centred approach, and underpinned by the principles of participation and non-formal education. We believe that the European Union should continue to provide targeted support to young people, non-formal education and youth work, ensuring that significant, and much needed, financial resources directly reach and benefit young people. A specific programme for youth is also the best approach to keep the EU close to the reality of young people and accessible for all young people in the UK. With this in mind, we believe that Youth in Action, or equivalent, should remain an independent programme with a dedicated budget and support structures.

Support Participation in Europe and the Commonwealth

The British Youth Council believes that young people should be supported through specific programmes to participate in discussions on the future of EU-UK Relations, European Union reform; and enabled to hold member governments of the Commonwealth to account in relation to the Commonwealth Charter.

European and global citizenship should be a core part of school curricula. There should also be more support for and recognition of European and global youth work in the UK, particularly support for local initiatives that connect European affairs and young people’s everyday lives.

We believe that young people are key to developing the Commonwealth in line with the Commonwealth Charter, which promotes democracy, human rights and good governance. We also believe that 16 and 17 year olds should be able to vote in any European referenda in the UK. Young people are the future of Europe and should be engaged in all negotiations.

Protect the Rights of Girls and Young Women Internationally

The British Youth Council believes that women and girls of all ages should have their rights promoted and protected. They should receive an education equal to that of their male counterparts, be protected from forced and child marriage, any violations of their internationally recognised rights, including through Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and from being used as weapons in areas of conflict.

We believe in the value of organisations promoting women and young girls’ rights internationally and seek to bring these issues to an international forum.

Defend, promote, and advocate for the rights of the LGBTQ community in the UK and internationally

The British Youth Council believes in defending, promoting, and advocating for the rights of the LGBTQ Community in the UK and Internationally.

Global awareness and citizenship

The British Youth Council believes that global citizenship should play a bigger part in the national curriculum and should be compulsory for all students throughout their education.

Building friendships that stretch across the globe benefits everybody. Children from a young age should learn to respect different people and cultures around the world. Children can change the world and having weekly global citizenship lessons, with specially trained teachers will interest children and capture their imaginations. It would help develop good citizens who take responsibility for their actions, young people who care and understand and who are non judgemental.

We believe in:

- Spending time learning about the wider world. News/papers/tv/internet
- Talking to friends and teachers about issues affecting school, the community, our country and other countries
- Regular lessons in world politics, culture, technology and the environment
- Becoming multilingual
- Creating exciting opportunities for school exchanges and work experience
- Building links and contacts locally, nationally and internationally so that we are ready to work in the international workplace.

We believe that all children should be active in their own community and have every opportunity to participate in the global community too.

We call on the government to provide extra resources to teach the subject. We would like specially trained teachers to visit schools. We need extra funding to set up exchange programmes and equipment to maintain regular contact with students across the globe.

Having these lessons will help children to understand what they are seeing in the news and make sense of it. Oxfam have some resources for schools and there is a website called global kids connect. There are some organisations that run schemes, like CIVS, but it should be available to all children in all schools.