

# British Youth Council Manifesto 2018

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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 local communities.

### **Save our services**

We believe 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 maintain 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 collaborative work as key to saving youth services, through the British Youth Council and its partners ongoing commitment to fostering youth leadership within the sector and to working with youth services coalitions and advocacy groups, including Choose Youth, thereby ensuring 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.

## **Statutory Youth Voice**

We believe that young people's voice can improve and support decision making in local authorities. We call on the Government to make provision of, and meaningful consultation with, a top tier youth voice vehicle compulsory for all local authorities.

## **End poverty in our communities**

We believe that children and young people should not have to live in poverty in the UK - every young person should have a decent standard of living, independent of their economic status. We believe that the UK Government must keep their promise to end child poverty in the UK by 2020.

In support of this, the UK Government must support child benefits 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 vital support.

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 ensure that every young person receives at least one balanced meal per day.

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 the lack of affordable rural housing remains an issue for rural young people. Young people in rural areas are still struggling with the lack of affordable rural housing. Many young people would like to live and work in the villages that they grew up in but are often unable to do so. Many young people are forced to migrate to the towns in order to access more affordable housing to rent or buy.

Due to the basic cost of living and the increased cost of living in a rural area in terms of transport it is often more difficult to save for a deposit. The shared ownership schemes offer lower deposits but even these amounts are unaffordable. Although the government have tried to combat the issue, property developers only have to provide 'affordable' rural homes when building more than ten properties, so deciding to build 8 expensive houses becomes a more attractive option.

The culture of 'second homes' and holiday let ownership is further reducing rural property availability. Urban migration is a huge issue in rural areas and is exacerbating the issue of the aging population in the countryside and reduction of much needed services for young people as they are seen as not required. Many young people that move to towns do not return to their

'homes' in villages until later in life when they have built up the housing capital to get on the rural property ladder and unfortunately many never get the chance to return.

We call on local parish councils and land registries to encourage more rural residents to place cautions on their deeds or an agricultural occupancy restriction which restricts who can buy their properties for the sustainability of the rural villages. Also for the government to look at new incentives for developers to build more affordable rural housing with more attractive help to buy schemes.

### **End Period Poverty**

The British Youth Council supports the work that is being done to tackle period poverty but believes that more can be done.

One way this should be tackled is through Governments across the UK providing dedicated funding for schools, colleges and universities to provide period products to pupils and students who need them.

The British Youth Council believes in encouraging everyone including youth organisations, decisions makers and influencers to pledge to tackle period stigma by talking openly about periods, so that no one feels embarrassed talking about them. Through this we want more people to have open conversations and change the negative language we use when talking about periods.

The British Youth Council believes that all pupils should receive the same information about periods in schools, and what to expect in puberty must be part of the new comprehensive relationships and sex education (RSE) school curriculum in England. The British Youth Council seeks to influence the parliaments in devolved nations to improve young people's information and knowledge about periods.

### **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 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.

### **Media Representation**

The British Youth Council calls for journalists and media outlets to have a sense of individual responsibility for their outputs, and commit to contributing positive images and representations of women, to the same standards as men.

We ask that they begin by committing to eliminating content reinforcing damaging stereotypes, demeaning or victim-blaming language, and appearance focussed images. This should be done alongside the inclusion of more women expert contributors (particularly in fields typically more male-dominated such as engineering or technology).

In doing this, young people will have more opportunities to see positive female role models outside of their everyday lives, providing alternative ambitions they may not have considered before, in a way that places equal value on men and women.

The British Youth Council also calls for companies to consider how the media outlets they advertise with choose to represent women, and whether they want their adverts alongside damaging messages.

### **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. 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.

## **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**

We believe that our public services must make an effort to listen and respond to us all, regardless of our age. Whether that may be through Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) 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 have a better democracy if decision making starts on a grassroots level.

We believe that young people have the right to have a say on the services which will eventually become their responsibility to manage in the future. 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.

### **Transport Equality**

We believe that there should be equality in public services across the UK. Public transport is particularly important, as this is one of the most inconsistent and biased services in the country. Everybody deserves a safe, affordable, reliable service, but at the moment that is not the case.

It is imperative that the Government tackles this issue and supplies everyone with access to opportunities and other services, regardless of their wealth, physical ability or geographical position. We believe that every part of the country should have a proportionally equal public transport service to that of London: rural areas should be well connected to major cities and towns, cities should be linked together, young people should be supported with accessing public transport, and everyone should have access to transport that can benefit them in their everyday lives. We believe that young people, or anyone for that matter, can not access affordable transport that can connect them to important hubs, they are being discriminated against; everyone should have equal access to and equal quality of public transport.

## **Rights for Young Europeans**

We believe 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**

We support 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**

We believe 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, the experience only grows in difficulty.

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, uniforms, 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 for Education to make school uniforms gender-neutral, to mandate that schools 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.

## **Gender Stereotyping**

We believe that gender stereotyping through products, advertising, books and films that are marketed in a gendered way can have negative impacts on the aspirations, mental health, and beliefs of young people, affecting their future opportunities and ambitions.

We believe that all products, marketed at children should not be done on the basis of gender and that all children should be treated equally in the interests and skills that they are able to develop.

We believe that all children and young people should be able to fulfil their potential and be able to follow their dreams, regardless of gender. We believe that by reducing, not reinforcing the gender stereotypes being forced upon young people this will help improve the lives of young people.

## **Corporate Sustainability**

We believe 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.

## **Supporting youth representation and consideration at all levels of governance**

In order to ensure a fairer deal for this country's youth, we believe:

- 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.

## **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.

## **Campaigning for a People's Vote on the final Brexit Deal**

In 2016, young people voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU referendum. Many organisations were mandated by their young members to campaign to remain, with main reasons being the concern about employability prospects, opportunities for young people, threats to our education system and concerns about rising racism and fascism within our society.

Since the referendum, many have campaigned for the Brexit deal to be the 'best deal for young people', focussing on maintaining human rights for the

LGBT+ community, preventing a destructive hard border on the island of Ireland, and ensuring the employability and educational prospects of young people aren't damaged by our withdrawal from the EU.

Over two years have now passed since the referendum and none of the above wishes of young people have been met through the negotiations. Potential job losses for apprentices and young workers are already plummeting, no solution to the difficulties of the Irish border have been found, whilst racism and fascism all across the UK has risen exponentially. In addition to this, approximately 1.5million young people have turned 18 since June 2016, none of whom had a say during the referendum and many of whom deserve a voice on the biggest decision facing our country since the second world war.

We believe that young people are the key to an outward looking, prosperous and welcoming United Kingdom; we also believe that the voices and wishes of young people in particular have not reflected in Brexit negotiations up to this point. Therefore, we believe the best way to give young people a clear say on their future is to join the growing campaign, calling on the Government to deliver a People's Vote on the final Brexit Deal.

### **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.

We believe, therefore, 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.

### **Stop Disenfranchising Young Voters, Stop Demanding Voter ID**

The British Youth Council believes that the right of young people, and other marginalised communities, to vote must be protected. We encourage the Government to take the concerns of said communities into account, to reconsider further implementation of the voter ID scheme, and look at different solutions that are proportionate to the actual risk of electoral fraud.

We call on the Electoral Commission to examine the impact of the voter ID pilots on marginalised communities, and those already disenfranchised from the electoral process to ensure that the impact of introducing a voter ID requirement does not disproportionately exclude those communities.

### **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.

### **Stop Disenfranchising Young Voters, Stop Demanding Voter ID**

The British Youth Council believes that the right of young people, and other marginalised communities, to vote must be protected. We encourage the Government to take the concerns of said communities into account, to reconsider further implementation of the voter ID scheme, and look at different solutions that are proportionate to the actual risk of electoral fraud.

We call on the Electoral Commission to examine the impact of the voter ID pilots on marginalised communities, and those already disenfranchised from the electoral process to ensure that the impact of introducing a voter ID requirement does not disproportionately exclude those communities.

## **Our Economy**

### **Tampon Tax**

We believe that sanitary products are essential for people who menstruate and therefore should not be taxed as a luxury product. We recognise that this tax shows a disregard for the needs of girls and young women and has a detrimental impact on their lives. We call on the Government to remove the luxury tax on these products, and to continue to commit to this following Brexit.

We also believe that in addition to the tampon tax being removed, sanitary products (as an essential item for females) should be free to purchase for all those deemed to be living under the poverty line

### **The importance of Buying British produce**

We want to highlight the many benefits of buying British produce and encourage young people as consumers to support local industry and allow small businesses to thrive.

By purchasing British produce, consumers can be proud of the industry that supplies the food they eat. They can be confident that it complies to our strict food hygiene and safety standards, that animal welfare is a high priority, that their food is traceable back to source and that the environmental impacts of producing food have been considered and minimised.

Choosing British food to eat means that young people can help to shape and secure the future of our food industry. This will help the nation make informed choices about the food they purchase and consume.

## **Our Education**

### **Inspire us to stay in education and training**

We believe that learning should be personalised so that individuals are empowered to choose courses – both academic and vocational – that are most appropriate to their skills, needs and abilities. They must have the right to choose 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 in the 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 is compulsory until 18 since 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 have fallen through gaps in the education system. Young people who are not in education, employment or training need additional support to identify and achieve routes 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**

We believe 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 relationship and sex education.

We welcome the Government's decision to make relationship and sex education compulsory in schools and to update the guidance for this teaching. We believe 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 a central component of the RSE curriculum and also should be offered to students in post 16 settings. We urge the Government to prioritise RSE and citizenship education and ensure that it is embedded as far as possible across the whole school curriculum. We believe that the Government should ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate training, including 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 that the information and training provided on consent, abuse, and sexual violence should be inclusive of all gender and sexual identities.

### **Make Feminism Lessons Compulsory**

We believe that intersectional feminism should be incorporated into PSHE. It is vital we achieve equality for all genders, especially those that face further discrimination due to race, sexuality, religion, disability, class and groups

within society. Through this implementation, we will be shaping the next generation of proud feminists. We call on the Government to pass a law, making it compulsory of feminism to be taught in schools. It is important to break down the potential negative stereotypes within society. Society should allow us to be whoever we want to be, not make us hide away following others.

### **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**

We believe that there should be greater encouragement of informal skills, such as leadership, confidence and team work which, though immeasurable, are also essential in all careers and life paths. Organisations that provide

informal skills constantly struggle with the low availability of money, volunteers and facilities in order to provide the best possible development opportunities for young people. Awards such as the Queen's Scout Award and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards consistently reward these positive qualities in young people, without the need for pressured exams. These awards encourage the holistic education of young people as they move through adulthood.

We believe that there is currently too much focus on certified learning, mostly exams based, and think 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.

We believe 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.

### **Body Confidence**

We believe body confidence needs to be promoted to ensure that young people are not held back by body confidence issues. We also believe that the government should support the inclusion of body confidence in RSE/PSHE and ensure that teachers are trained on how to provide help and support for pupils.

We support peer education so young people can learn from and talk with their peers about body confidence. For example, the BYC supports peer education programmes such as Girlguiding's programme 'Free Being Me' in which girls aged between 14-25 deliver sessions that help girls recognise beauty myths, grow in confidence and be happy in their own skin.

### **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 believes there should be better recognition of Continuing Professional Development, non-accredited learning and vocational courses.

### **To ensure that agricultural and countryside career options are promoted within school careers guidance**

We believe that young people are missing out on the opportunity to develop a fulfilling career in a rural setting. In our experience, students looking at potential careers are not considering a career in agriculture because they are not being given the information to be able to make informed choices at the right time.

This could be as easy as explaining that there is more on offer in agriculture than being a farmer, highlighting the variety of rural business and start-up opportunities to those who have little or no connection to the countryside or farming.

If schools used STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) subjects to highlight the agricultural application of these topics then more young people could discover a little more about the opportunities which are readily available in Britain.

Additionally, mainstream education often lacks connections to rural employers and therefore positive working examples to offer young people considering their options. We believe that more work experience opportunities in rural and agricultural business would provide much needed education about the variety of jobs available to suit a range of education levels, interests and skills.

We want to see more substantial information to be provided in schools careers advice sessions which highlight the options in agriculture and rural business. Links with land based Universities and routes into apprenticeships also need to be developed.

### **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.

### **Education on disabilities**

With many people in society having a disability in some way, shape or form, the lack of teaching and growing stigma must be addressed. The British Youth Council believes that in schools, people should be learning about the different kinds of autism and disabilities, and how to help someone with autism if they have it. Therefore, to reduce the discrimination and ignorance that surrounds being disabled, in any way shape or form, we must raise awareness.

## **Make learning first aid a compulsory part of obtaining a UK driving license**

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**

We believe that all schools should provide education to young people about LGBT+ (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 LGBT+ 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.

## **Basic first aid training should be more available to people under 21**

The British Youth Council believes that First aid training is a useful skill, which is valued amongst employees. We believe that that such skills should be brought to the attention of more people, and more schools be encouraged to have lessons around first aid training. We also believe that for those students that wish to do more first aid training beyond the basic practices that the

option, should be made available and should be widely publicised. We believe that funding should be allocated for more projects on this, and possibly other health related work, as we feel that it is not only useful for job applications, but in the case of needing to know who to possibly save someone's life.

## **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 frontlines when it comes to dealing with the effects of recession and must be an important resource in shaping a response to it. We believe that measures to tackle youth unemployment should be sustainable and ongoing. 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, Asian and Minority Ethnic 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, we believe that apprenticeships should be made available to students who leave college and university to help develop their skills.

### **Restore face to face Careers Advice**

We believe 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. 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.

### **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**

We believe that work must at the very least provide a route out of poverty, and that a real Living Wage, as calculated by the Resolution Foundation 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.

We believe that anybody in work should be paid the 'rate for the job' – not different rates which are based on the ages of those involved. We also believe 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 necessary skills for 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**

We believe 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. We believe 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. We welcome decision to make all big firms publish their gender pay gaps from 2018. 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 necessarily equate to 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.. 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**

We believe 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**

We believe 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**

We believe that peoples' attitudes to farm safety need 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**

We believe that all young people with additional needs and neurological conditions, such as autism, must be 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 that there is a fundamental shift in how young people of all ability levels 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, their future is imperiled. There are currently many derelict brownfield sites that could be used for building, resulting in 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 to produce the clean, fair future that is deserved. 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.

### **Zero-Waste Lifestyle as part of the national curriculum**

The British Youth Council believe that teachings of recycling and zero-waste lifestyle choices should become a compulsory part of the national PHSE curriculum so that young people are taught how to better look after our planet and dispose of waste in an environmentally friendly way.

### **Fossil Free Energy**

We believe that 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.

We believe 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 reinvest the money in community renewable 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. Education also has to play a huge role in a societal response to climate change. We call on the 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 the Government should look to countries like Japan to explore what an approach to education for sustainability might look like.

We also urge the Government to create a space for young people to have input into UK policy on climate change and sustainable development at local, national and international levels, as well as urging the Government to take stronger action in supporting the transition to renewables, and support leaving four fifths of fossil fuels in the ground.

### **Plastic and Environmental Impact**

The British Youth Council believes that young people should not have to face an increasing risk to their human health, or the possibility of species becoming extinct, due to our use and ineffective disposal of plastic.

The British Youth Council supports the Government in their efforts to reduce plastic use, and encourage the re-use and recycling of plastic products where possible. The British Youth Council also supports the production and promotion of sustainable alternatives to plastic products, and the proposed introduction of the 'plastic tax'. However, we also call on the Government to take into account the affordability of these products, and the potential negative impacts on people with disabilities (such as those people who need to use plastic straws to drink, but cannot use metal or paper alternatives safely). We call for all organisations, charities and schools to also work internally, and in collaboration with the government and other organisations, to tackle this issue.

## **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 entitlement to confidentiality, and any limitations to confidentiality because of child protection and the need for parental consent, should be made clear to young people (for example, by information on display in the reception area or the waiting area).

### **Improving young people's wellbeing – Self Harm**

We believe that self harm is a very serious and concerning matter. Issues with mental health, particularly self harm, can go unnoticed and awareness of such issues should be raised to young people to help them recognise when they or their friends may need help. It is also important that parents and carers are educated on this topic so that they can offer support for young people experiencing difficulties with their mental health. We believe that education on good mental health should be implemented in schools so that young people are able to practice good techniques for handling and coping with stress/their emotions.

We call on the Government to implement these strategies early into the curriculum so that any young people vulnerable to poor mental health can get help early on and to provide more help for those who suffer with the illness as self harm can lead to bigger consequences in the future if not stopped.

We also believe that staff within schools should receive quality mental health first aid training in order to fully support their pupils. This would compliment the implementation of education to pupils on good mental health practices, which we believe all young people should have access to, and offer young people a choice of support that meets their needs.

### **Recognise Our Minds Matter and Improve Our Mental Health Service**

We believe 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.

We believe that the following measures would support the increase in quality and quantity of Youth Mental Health provision across the UK:

- All Child and Adolescent 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

We believe that mental health and people's resilience to coping with everyday life is a huge issue. Young people in rural areas often have the added difficulties of accessing real social networks, education, employment, transport and basic services. In some cases, these issues can lead to a feeling of rural isolation and social exclusion.

It is often it is recommend that people suffering with mental health issues 'go for a walk in the countryside' unfortunately for those residing there the realities can be very different. Although idyllic in many ways rural areas present unique challenges. For young people living in rural area it can feel like they are living in a goldfish bowl. Despite the benefits of living within a close and supportive community it can present a challenge when you don't conform to peoples expected norms or when you expect a level of confidentiality that is not adhered to or achievable due to the nature of the community. Rural areas can often feel suffocating and the desire to be 'unknown' by young people can put additional pressure on young people.

The lack of services within rural areas has been aided by the internet support options, where internet connection is reliable but to physically access services it usually involves a referral through a GP which may not be an option for a young person if they know the GP personally and don't feel comfortable discussing it with them.

We would like the issue of rural mental health to be highlighted as it presents different issues to those young people living in more urban areas. Young Farmers Club provides workshops on positive mental health to support their members in partnership with the Farming Community network but those people that are not a member of the organisation may not be aware these local services exist. We need to raise awareness of the mental health issues in rurally isolated areas and highlight the 'rural element' to mental health organisations to ensure that young people in rural areas have someone to talk

to and to identify ways in which they can access the necessary support if required.

### **Improving young people's wellbeing**

We believe 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 in the UK 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.

## 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 legal and justice system. We believe young people should be supported to take part in community-centred initiatives led by the police.

We believe 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. We believe that 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 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. We believe 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. 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 welcome the changes to law in Scotland and Wales which makes smacking children illegal. We believe that the law shouldn't allow parents and others in England 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 the right 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 decrease. 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 basic protections from discrimination and homophobia. We urge that the British Youth Council actively campaign for equal marriage to achieve equality for young LGBT+ people.

### **Stop and Search Rights**

We believe 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, mistrust and confusion can result.

## **Recognise the rights of asylum seekers**

We are increasingly concerned at the treatment and lack of opportunities afforded to 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 acts in the best interests of children and young people. We call for all actions to adhere to UN Convention of the Rights of a Child as well as other human and asylum seeker rights as delineated 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**

We believe 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**

We believe that the UK Government should legally recognise Non Binary Gender Identities in order to create a more inclusive and accessible society.

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

We believe 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 LGBT+ people in society.

We further believe 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 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 be 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 provide constructive activities for our free time.

We need facilities that are accessible.. 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 often a barrier. We believe that the UK Government should develop a grant for young people to attend such activities if costs prove prohibitive.

### **Support special interest youth groups**

We 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.

### **The importance of outdoors for young people's development**

We believe 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.

We believe that outdoor play is an extremely important part of child development, both when provided through formal education routes and through non-formal education. 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 children will be able to control their fine motor skills, such as using a knife and fork or holding a pencil. Having the opportunity to play outside plays a vital part in children's long term development. We call 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. We believe also 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.

## **Our World**

### **Give us a global voice**

Decisions that affect young people in the UK are made at European and international levels, in areas such as 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 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.

We will campaign for a coordinated human rights response to asylum seekers and call 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.

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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 Participation in Europe and the Commonwealth**

We believe 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. Young people are the future of Europe and should be engaged in all negotiations.

## **Protect the Rights of Girls and Young Women Internationally**

We believe 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**

We believe in defending, promoting, and advocating for the rights of the LGBT+ Community in the UK and Internationally.

## **Global awareness and citizenship**

We believe 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.

### **Ensure water and sanitation are at the heart of international development**

We believe that the UK Government should show global leadership on water and sanitation, ensuring that it is at the heart of the UK's international development policy. This includes upholding their commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG6, ensuring that everyone, everywhere has access to water and sanitation by 2030.

### **Emphasise the need for sustainable living practices**

We call on the UK Government to introduce compulsory education in all schools concerning the ways in which we grow, process and consume our food, and the ways in which our current means of doing so harm our planet. We further encourage the Government to create and uphold stronger environmental protection laws, and become a global leader in food sustainability, encouraging other nations to do the same.