

UK Youth Review submission to DCMS consultation on out of school support for young people

In February 2021, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) launched an engagement exercise seeking views from young people and the sector on out of school support for young people, which concluded last week. UK Youth with support of the views of the UK Youth Movement and young people have produced a submission outlining our recommendations for government to take. Please read the full submission [here](#) and our recommendations below.

Recommendations

We believe that across all these recommended actions, government must take an inclusive and diverse approach to ensure that those from under-represented groups are heard and that services and support deliver for all young people. Young people must be included in the development and implementation of any new ideas following the principle of “no decision about young people, without young people”.

Vision and outcomes

Create an ambitious, holistic, cross sector strategy for young people, that's co-created with young people

- To guarantee young people are given the necessary prominence and attention they deserve, ensure there is a minister appointed with the responsibility for youth issues, who attends Cabinet, and collaborates across departments to drive improvements in youth outcomes by leading a cross-sector strategy.
- Ensure that regardless of where a young person lives or what background they come from; they have access to the support and opportunities they need to thrive including regular access to accessible outdoor learning opportunities. Government must play a strategic oversight role, including mapping youth service provision and quality across the country and identifying gaps. Areas which have faced the most severe cuts and have the lowest levels of provision should be targeted with access to the sustained funding needed, as part of the 'levelling up' agenda.
- Carry out an assessment of how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected young people's lives, the services they have access to and work with the youth sector and young people to respond effectively.
- Recognise the value of and invest in safe spaces in every community so supportive relationships can develop between young people and trusted youth work professionals.
- Ensure there is increased collaboration between all government departments that engage in youth issues, including formal (DfE) and informal (DCMS) education. As well as collaboration with local government, civil society, young people, and corporate partners, to establish a shared set of long-term outcomes around education, health, housing, social care, employment, and justice with clear accountability to ensure clarity of ambition.
- Support that is known to improve young people's wellbeing and mental health should be prioritised and funded considering the increased needs following the pandemic,

this includes outdoor learning and social action which have demonstrated benefits in these areas

- All government funding and policies should undergo equality impact assessments and should be monitored to ensure that any barriers faced by groups of young people are noticed and resolved.

Ensure young people lead and participate in all decision-making processes

- Involve young people in all policy decisions that are made at local and national level that impact them and implement mechanisms to ensure that young people's views, experience and ideas are fed in at all stages of the policy development process from inception and design to evaluation. This also means building in trust and accountability into processes, such as using a 'you-said-we-did' model of engagement in all policy development processes. This is vital as many government departments will be creating policies to address the issues coming out of the pandemic.
- Support infrastructure to enable this to happen including the development of youth social action and volunteering infrastructure and commit to funding this work, this is shown to have significant positive benefits for young people as well as their wider communities.
- Encourage all government departments to sign the #iwill Power of Youth Charter

Invest in and champion youth work and the workforce

- Reinforce and champion the critical role of youth workers and provide investment to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of staff to support the needs of young people in each local area, in a way that does not lead to staff burnout. All staff and volunteers should have access to a clear pathway for professional development that enables them to develop their skills competencies which will enable them to deliver a quality service to young people.
- Continue to invest in the infrastructure that enables youth social action including the broader voluntary sector as well as the #iwill movement
- Invest in the development of a qualified, diverse workforce. Ensure the sector has salaried youth workers on long-term contracts, who have access to training to ensure they are equipped to support the needs of all the young people they reach, as well as adapt to changing circumstances and needs i.e. providing services digitally during the pandemic.

Funding models and partnerships

- Immediately release the £500 million of new funding committed to the Youth Investment Fund. The need for funding is urgent and considerable, many youth organisations face closure in the next 12 months unless they receive support and investment.
- Invest in connectivity, digital equipment, and technology infrastructure so that the youth sector and young people have the option to access services remotely.

- Provide funding for youth organisations to enable them to invest in digital infrastructure and digital skills to facilitate ongoing youth service provision remotely during this pandemic.
- Provide long term, year on year unrestricted investment streams to youth organisations to ensure that they can plan ahead, have the power and flexibility to adapt their work in line with changing local/national demands and pressures and ensure young people have confidence that they can rely on ongoing support.
- Ensure sufficient funding is available to provide sufficient support for young people to access services and overcome barriers that they may face to accessing opportunities.
- Invest in local, grass roots youth organisations and the infrastructure needed at a regional and national level to ensure quality, training, support, and sustainability at a local level.

Data and evaluation

- Improve the quality and quantity of data on access to youth services. There is currently no accurate figure of the number of youth groups in the UK nor the number of young people benefiting from youth provision. The priority should be for the standardisation and centralisation of youth sector data across funders, government, and youth providers. As part of this work, an accurate understanding of the youth workforce is also required. It is vital that data can be accessed across sectors, i.e. healthcare, social care, and education, which support young people to understand the collective impacts of services and support on a young person's life.
- Fund longitudinal studies of youth work to better understand the long-term impacts of this support on young people's lives and to support effective government policy making and funding decisions.
- Provide youth organisations with the investment so they have the systems and capacity to evaluate and learn from their work as well as share their data and best practise across the youth sector to encourage joined up working
- Invest in digital platforms and innovations that will deliver live and quality data and insights to understand what the national, regional, and local picture is for youth services and invest in quality research to understand where there are gaps in provision and what outcomes are being achieved for young people.
- When designing impact reporting measures, recognise the importance of the journey of the young person including their qualitative experience of youth work rather than only looking for specific quantitative outcomes