



Building a Statutory Youth Service – LGA Labour Group response

The LGA Labour Group exists to provide a strong voice for Labour in local government, both within the cross-party LGA and within the wider Labour Party. We represent and support Labour councils and opposition Labour Groups in England and Wales, including political support, leadership training, and sector-led improvement. We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to Labour councils so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.

Our leadership, officers, and regional representatives are elected by Labour Groups on an annual basis, and our elected leader, Cllr Nick Forbes, is the de facto leader of Labour in local government.

Background and scene setting

Labour councils are on the frontline of fighting austerity, protecting the vulnerable and delivering services whilst the government slashes local authority budgets up and down the country. Over 31 million people in England and Wales live in an area served by a Labour council or Labour mayor. Since 2010, central government funding to local authorities has been slashed by 60%, and by 2025 there will be a funding gap of £7.8bn within local government to maintain services at current levels. The LGA estimates that funding for youth services has been cut by nearly 40% (£260 million) since 2010.

Labour councils have sought to protect youth services in their local areas despite austerity, and have innovated where funds have been cut to still deliver a youth provision. Barking and Dagenham is soon opening London's first "Youth Zone" which will offer a range of first class facilities to thousands of young people. Every year the borough holds a Youth Parade to celebrate the children and young people living in the borough. Despite a 25% reduction in budget, Bristol City Council is innovating to ensure that young people are still able to access youth services. A £350k per year fund has been created which can be applied for on a quarterly basis and the allocation of funds is decided by a panel of children and young people, and the city has launched the Bristol Children's Charter, bringing together around 50 organisations across the city as signatories to focus on key aims for children. However, with the government planning to cut yet more from local government budgets, and whilst councils are left with few real revenue raising powers, it is going to be an ever greater challenge for local authorities to innovate to provide these services.

Whilst we support the principle of a statutory Youth Service, it must be properly funded and resourced, so that local authorities are not put under yet more strain when delivering youth services under a Labour Government.

National Charter for Youth Work

- *What do you think should be the role of a statutory youth service?*

A youth service must be able to provide support and enrichment for young people. This may be in the form of cultural, sporting and other activities in the evenings, at weekends and in school holidays, ensuring that young people have meaningful activities when they are not at school that they otherwise may not be able to try. However, more importantly, youth services must be part of a

holistic approach that links up with public health, children's services, housing, education and community safety that supports young people practically and emotionally, and ensures that young people are able to fulfil their potential in life, regardless of their background.

- *What amendments, if any, should be made to the principles outlined in the draft National Charter for Youth Work?*

We do not have any amendments to suggest to the principles outlined in the draft National Charter for Youth Work.

Labour's vision

- *What amendments, if any, should be made to Labour's vision for delivering a statutory youth service?*

Whilst we would not suggest any amendments, we would emphasise that local authorities and their local partners must play a key role in shaping the statutory Youth Service, and in delivering youth services. This must be reflected in any official documents that incorporate the statutory Youth Service. It is important that this is a service delivered and directed locally and not dictated from Whitehall.

Service delivery

- *At what age should statutory youth services be available to young people?*

There are many differing views as to the age range that youth services should cover, with current provision largely being for the 13-19 age group. There are arguments for youth work to cover a wider age range – with some saying it should start as young as 5 years old, and others saying it should continue until the age of 25. Given the potential of the wide age range that the statutory Youth Service could cover, we would urge that there is flexibility of delivery around the age range. Local authorities and their partners are best placed to identify which age and demographic groups will benefit from different interventions, whether that is universal or targeted provision. If a core age range is specified for provision by the statutory Youth Service, then there must be flexibility for local areas to provide youth services for children and young people on either side of this age bracket.

- *What should the balance be between open access and targeted youth work?*

Again, this is an issue that will need to be decided locally. Local areas will have widely varying different needs and demographics. Universality and targeted provision will have different outcomes for different age ranges and demographic groups and it should be up to local councils and providers make an assessment of this.

- *What role should national programmes such as NCS, voluntary sector, community and faith groups, businesses, and commissioning play in supporting statutory youth services?*

National programmes play a valuable role in delivering youth services. However, the LGA believes that some of the money going to national programmes (for example, the NCS) should be devolved to councils to support year-round provision that meets the needs of young people locally. Time-limited programmes of work cannot provide the trusted, longer-term relationships that are a valued element of youth work, and that are needed by some young people to develop the self-esteem, confidence and skills to take part in such programmes. The LGA also has concerns about the level of support that these national programmes provide for those young people with additional needs or disabilities, or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

The work of national programmes should be welcomed, as are the efforts by national programmes such as the NCS to strengthen links with local authorities. However, nationally delivered programmes are understandably limited in scope for addressing all the key issues and challenges affecting young people in a locality. Devolving funding to support locally commissioned, long-term work with young people would allow councils to provide ongoing support where it is most needed.

Youth voice

- *How can we ensure that young people's voices are at the centre of a new statutory youth service?*

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) guarantees every child aged 17 and under the right to express their views on all matters that affect them. The London Borough of Hackney has put young people's voices at the heart of their youth service offer, as their participation is just as relevant to individual decision making (for example, relating to a young person's health or education) as it is to strategic decision making (for instance, shaping service delivery for young people). Practice should reflect the active involvement and participation of young people in assessments, plans, interventions and reviews. Young people's participation has an essential part to play in safeguarding young people, who if they feel listened to are more likely to speak up if they are being harmed. Done well, youth participation and engagement can bring significant benefits to services as they are more responsive to the identified needs of young people and become more productive as money is spent more wisely.

Youth participation programmes delivered through Young Hackney are primarily delivered through youth work methodology centred on voluntary engagement, empowerment and experiential learning. Peer-led approaches draw on the credibility that young people have with their peers and leverage the power of role modelling so that young people develop positive group attitudes, norms, knowledge, behaviours and health & achievement outcomes. Throughout their participation, young people develop their social and emotional capabilities alongside new skills that support their transition to independent adulthood; learning how to listen to others, articulating their views, making informed decisions and developing an appreciation of team work.

Since 2007, all youth engagement and participation activity has been underpinned by the Hackney Youth Charter. The Charter was developed by young people to support the active involvement of children and young people in decision making and was formally adopted by the Council and wider partnerships. It outlines young people's expectations, and provides organisations with a benchmark for good practice in working with children and young people and involving them in the development of policy, programmes and services. The Charter can also be used with young people to explore how they can get involved in decision making and what they can expect when they decide to participate in projects. It acknowledges the need to build trusted relationships and for practice to respond to the diversity of Hackney's communities and the range of ways through which young people may wish to participate. <https://www.younghackney.org/get-involved/hackney-youth-charter/>

Youth Participation of young people is embedded at a day-to-day and operational level with Young Hackney's practice. Young people have said that by being included in decision making within the service - be it funding decisions, involvement in recruitment of Young Hackney staff, service design or community impact projects - they feel valued because their voices are being heard. Additionally, they see evidence that their opinions are taken into account through the changes made as a result of their input. An example of this in action is the annual survey of children and young people to find out

what types of service provision they would like and to identify what issues they would like to be addressed within their community.

Hackney Youth Parliament represents the views of young people to decision-makers in the borough. They run regular campaigns on issues that matter to young people and hold regular events and consultations. There are 24 elected members of the Youth Parliament and four additional members from specialist forums: young people with disabilities, Young Carers and Looked-after Children. The age of the current cohort ranges from 12 to 18 and reflects the socio-economic and cultural diversity of Hackney. Hackney Youth Parliament select their own agenda of issues they feel are important for young people in the borough. They are then supported by Young Hackney Practitioners to turn their ideas into action.

The Hackney Young People's Survey requests that young people select which issues they feel Hackney Youth Parliament should address. The previous HYP cohort have addressed issues such as sexual health, childhood obesity and consulted with the Policy and Planning Team about the 20-year plan for Hackney. They have attended or facilitated over 40 steering and focus groups within the 2016-2018 Youth Parliament term. These have been with children and young people, professionals and service providers. Members of the Youth Parliament sit on the Hackney Council Child and Family Scrutiny Commission to ensure youth representation informs Councillors' decisions. The Hackney Youth Parliament is also directly linked to the UK Youth Parliament which campaigns on social change.

The Children in Care Council (Hackney Youth Care Council, HYCC) is made up of children and young people who are currently looked after. They were involved in the design of the Hackney Promise, which forms the basis of all aspects of the Council's Services and strategy for Looked after Children. This is a young people friendly, comic style leaflet outlining 16 promises around what to expect from the council when you are in care. The promises are derived from a former document (The Hackney Pledge) which was designed for the same purpose, however young people felt it was not young people friendly. In addition to this, young people were involved in the redesign of how Looked after Child reviews are run, making them more child-centred and engaging. HYCC will now also be involved in inspecting how effective these changes to LAC reviews have been. HYCC have also been involved in staff recruitment, the Skills to Foster training and various consultations to feedback on services, while some members had the opportunity to attend the European Youth Event in Strasbourg in May. They have said that through working in partnership with a wide range of adults or members of their community, they develop skills, increase confidence and feel a sense of ownership and belonging.

This best practice shows the importance of a youth voice in shaping and running youth services, and also shows the importance of listening to the youth voice on a local level, as young people in different areas will have differing views about what their area needs for young people.

Workforce

- *What support does the youth sector require to re-establish the workforce capacity needed to deliver a statutory youth service? For example:*
 - a) *Should we introduce a legally "protected title" for youth worker?*
 - b) *Should we introduce a statutory national register for youth workers?*

In principle, we would support a national register for youth workers, and the LGA is currently looking at this with the NYA. It would help to promote youth work as a distinct practice, provide CPD resources for staff and support the professionalism of the sector.

- *What role should the Joint Negotiating Committee and other national agreed pay scales and conditions play in supporting a statutory youth service?*

We would envisage the Joint Negotiating Committee continuing to determine pay and conditions for youth workers and to endorse qualifications approved by both the NYA and ETS Wales. It would have a role in supporting any introduction of a statutory Youth Service.

Evaluation

- *What is the most effective way to evidence the outcomes and impact of youth work?*

The LGA is currently in the process of developing a new outcomes framework for youth services. It will help local areas identify what outcomes they want to achieve for young people and support them to commission programmes to deliver these outcomes. We would recommend working with the LGA and other youth stakeholders once the outcomes framework has been published in 2019 in order to put this framework in place for the national youth service. Thus far, programmes have been very rarely evaluated over the long-term, and it is important to remember that evaluation is taking place at a time where young people are undergoing significant changes in their lives which may impact on outcomes.

Funding

Whilst this is not part of the formal questions of the consultation the creation of a statutory Youth Service, and the delivery of youth services on a local level therefore cannot be taken out of context of wider local government funding.

Between 2010 and 2020, councils will have lost 60p out of every £1 of government funding. In 2019/20, the government is going to cut another £1.3bn from the Revenue Support Grant, and LGA analysis shows that by 2025 there will be a £7.8bn funding gap across local government. There is already a severe funding pressure on adults and children's social care, as well as on public health and homelessness budgets. If the government fails to adequately fund local services then there is a real danger to the future viability of councils, putting vital services at risk.

Research by the National Children's Bureau shows that central government funding for children and young people's services has fallen by £2.4 billion since 2010, and the LGA's analysis shows that an additional £2 billion funding gap will have opened by 2020 just to maintain services at their current funding level. There has also been a significant drop in government funding for Youth Offending Teams since 2011, from £145 million in 2011/12 to £72 million in 2017/18, and councils are concerned that this reduction will undermine the progress that has been made by reducing the services available to the young people who need them. The Early Intervention Grant has been cut by almost £500 million since 2013, and is projected to drop by a further £183 million by 2020. And in addition to this, the government has confirmed a £331 million reduction to public health budgets between 2016/17 and 2020/21 – this is on top of the £200 million in-year reductions announced in October 2015.

These figures paint a stark picture for both local government and youth services funding. A statutory Youth Service needs to be fully funded as local government currently cannot bear any extra burden - local authorities do not have the space in their budget to fund any extra services. Raising council tax will raise different amounts of money in different areas – the poorest areas with a lower council tax base will be able to raise the least amount of money even though they have the greatest need, and the wealthiest areas with a higher council tax base will raise more money, despite having lower needs. Council tax cannot be relied upon to fund a statutory Youth Service as there will be other

budgetary pressures competing with any new youth provision, so we would recommend that the funding for this comes from elsewhere.

We would ask that as part of producing a funding model for the statutory Youth Service that an analysis is undertaken that looks at the money that is currently available for youth services, both nationally and locally, and how it is being used. This will ensure that any existing money is used properly under a new statutory Youth Service and that the funding model is as efficient as possible.

Consideration must also be given to additional funding for rural and deprived areas. Rural areas will bear extra costs because of how geographically dispersed their young people are. Deprived areas will have to meet more complex needs which will require additional funding.

Other issues to consider

Gender

It is important that girls and young women have access to services which are targeted specifically at them and their needs, and that they have a safe space to access these services. This may include have specific sessions just for girls and young women, and providing tailored advice for this group of young people. A statutory Youth Service could include a provision for supplying gender specific services where they are needed as part of the local youth services programme.

Capacity

Since the Conservatives came to power in 2010, capacity has been stripped away from local councils. This isn't just in terms of finance and workforce, which has been covered above, but also in terms of buildings. Many buildings that housed youth services will have been sold off, leased out or are now being used for something out, and it will take time to recover the space to run youth services – either by ending leases, changing use back to youth services, or building new centres. This will all depend on how youth services are delivered and whether they need dedicated spaces or not, and what provision is currently left in different areas. Using mixed use areas such as sports centres and community centres is an option that should be considered, but safeguarding issues and the suitability of the venue should also be considered when this decision is being made.

Conclusion

We support the creation of a statutory Youth Service. However, to work, it needs to be delivered locally rather than priorities and delivery being set in Whitehall, and it needs to be fully funded as current funding pressures mean that councils will not be able to fund youth provision by themselves.

For a statutory Youth Service to be successful, Labour in government must work with local government and youth service providers and charities to ensure that the service has the powers locally to ensure that it has the best effect and outcomes for young people. Consideration must also be given to funding, as well as workforce and infrastructure capacity. It is important to get all of these things right so that youth services can once again prosper to help young people succeed.