



**Labour's
Policy
Review**

Services for Young People

Labour's Policy Review: Services for Young People

Today's young people are not growing up in an easy world.

The Government's failed economic policies have left a million young people unemployed. The hopes that all young people should be able to aspire to - affordable access to education or training after school, a job, a home and a life that is at least as good as that their parents enjoyed - seem painfully precarious.

The ladder of opportunity for the next generation is being kicked away, with no plan for jobs and growth, and cuts that go too far too fast leaving many of the services that support young people - including the most vulnerable - at risk. What are tough challenges for almost all young people may seem overwhelming for a substantial minority: those from the lowest income families or from troubled families; black and minority ethnic young people; those with special needs.

The value for young people in having 'somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to' is beyond doubt, and we also know the long-term cost to the public purse of youth crime and anti-social behaviour, educational underachievement and poor physical and mental health in adolescence and early adulthood. We know too that this is something adult society understands - 'teenagers hanging around' is top of the list of concerns in many communities, especially more disadvantaged ones.

Despite this fact, youth services have taken a disproportionate cut as the public spending cuts bite, with diminishing availability of careers advice, and many Connexions centres and youth clubs closing or under threat of closure.

Youth work and youth services have been undermined not only by a lack of funding and protection but by a history of short term and piecemeal funding which has often made it impossible to develop the consistency of relationships that are crucial to success.

Too many youth clubs are not up to scratch. Poorly funded, not open at the right time, and not used by enough young people. Many youth centres do a fantastic job. But in the worst cases, they can be a target for gangs or those committing antisocial behaviour.

Labour wants that to change. Youth centres should be safe havens for young people.

We want to examine the case for locating youth clubs in schools. This could save money, as well as encouraging a wider diversity of young people to attend. Schools can often be the only safe haven for young people. They can have a greater social mix than many youth clubs, encouraging more social mixing.

Education can be a great lever to help young people achieve, and prevent them falling into criminality and anti-social behaviour. Drawing an artificial distinction between schools and youth services isn't the best way to tackle issues which are caused by a mix of factors.

Good youth work and services should focus on people not problems, facilitating personal development, encouraging young people to take responsibility, developing young people's ability to act independently, and are especially strong when locally-led and trusted, structured and skilfully facilitated. Good youth work and youth services can be delivered within the public, privately-funded and not-for profit sectors, and there are examples of good and bad practice in each.

Labour's plans for services for young people will help improve the quality of youth services, by doing more with less, allowing young people to take control of services, and ensuring services are accountable to the young people they serve.

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Stephen Twigg, Labour's Shadow Education Secretary:

"In tough times, with less money available, we need to find solutions which are both effective and deliver value for money, with public resources utilised to their full potential. One of the key ways of achieving this may be through co-location - maximising the use of facilities by making them available to other uses outside of the times of their core use.

"As we work to identify those solutions, we will encourage young people, parents and other adults to come forward with their ideas. We want to hear examples of good and bad practice across the country."

Karen Buck, Labour's Shadow Minister for Young People:

"Early intervention is not a concept exclusive to the early years, but means an approach designed to support the early identification of problems and the use of tailored support to resolve them.

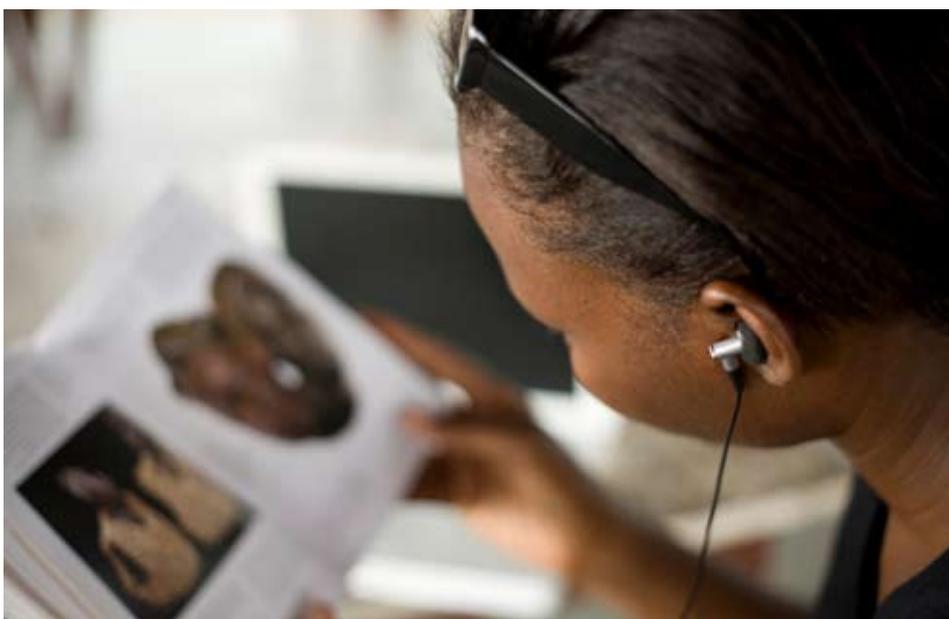
"Labour is rightly proud of our achievements with Sure Start and Children's centres. We want to build on that approach, to ensure that the child who falters later in their young life has an equal promise of the 'early intervention' which can help turn their life around."

Co-location: Making the most of local facilities

Across the country, school buildings benefited greatly from Building Schools for the Future and other investment programmes during Labour's time in office. Meanwhile, in many communities there remain quality, dedicated facilities for youth provision. But the reality is often high quality infrastructure standing unused for much of the time, including evenings and weekends when young people need access to safe and stimulating activities.

At the same time, youth services and clubs are suffering disproportionately from the Tory-led Government's cuts. In tough times and with little money around, there is a need to think more creatively about how we can maintain provision and ensure we squeeze maximum value out of every Pound of public spending.

We need to be sure we have a proper local balance between buildings - some of which are massively under-utilised-and the people and activities which are more important to young people. Co-location of youth activities in schools could be one way to get better value for money, while ensuring our young people get a fair deal.



Some innovative schools - like Quintin Kynaston in Westminster and Hellesdon in Norfolk - have opened their own youth clubs, distinct from the more common after-school sports and homework clubs. Such schemes can allow a more joined up and holistic approach to youth work- with a greater personal connection between young people, their surroundings and the staff.

A comprehensive approach to services for young people would offer as many young people as possible opportunities for enrichment and activity, possibly in facilities that bear a specific 'youth service' label, but often via after-school clubs and activities, sports, organisations such as the Scouts and Guides, access to the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme and so on.

The last Labour Government supported such provision, for example through Extended Schools funding and Schools Sports Partnerships (SSPs), and we will be monitoring closely to see what emerges out of the removal of dedicated funding in schools and the potential loss of SSPs.

Labour will further explore the potential for youth centres to be hosted in schools as a way to deliver good services while saving money, potentially freeing up millions to be spent on providing activities and support for young people, rather than just on buildings.

Case Studies: innovation in practice

Quintin Kynaston School

QK is an outstanding school with a pioneering approach to youth provision. An alternative to the model of youth work being delivered through a traditional youth club, the school provides a youth club every weeknight, and employs youth workers who do outreach work in deprived local estates. They are able to mentor pupils in a way that separate youth services often can't as they have far more young people attend, and are able to track the children through school as well.

Services users have access to all the school's dance, music and sports facilities, and new teachers have to spend at least one night a week in the centre.

At times, external youth clubs have been targeted by gangs. But young people in the area feel safer using the school, as they are familiar with the facilities and staff.

Hellesdon High School

Hellesdon High School hosts a youth club from their sixth form centre on a Friday evening. The service is run by trained volunteers from the local community.

The previous youth club, the Big H, shut in May last year, after Conservative run Norfolk County Council cut its budget for youth services.

Since then, a group of organisations including the school, the police, the parish council and a local charity, Momentum, helped get the service back up and running, open to young people aged 11 to 16 and offering a range of facilities including computer games, a pool table and snacks.

Making youth services youth-led

Young people are often well-placed to make judgements about what works for them- in terms of people and of programmes. Evidence suggests that 'youth-driven' activities lead to a stronger sense of ownership and empowerment, and develop new skills in planning and leadership. Involving young people in designing their own services should promote realism rather than an unrealistic view of what is possible. There are many options for such involvement and control.

We will examine how best we can give young people more control over the services they use, while maintaining structure and guidance. We will in particular examine schemes which offer young people points, in return for participation, which they can then exchange for services or activities.

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Defining and maintaining youth services

What most people understand by 'youth services' is something fairly specific: youth work and youth 'clubs', whether run by local councils or voluntary organisations, offering activities, guidance and support for young people out of school. Even this is hard to define precisely, as any attempt to measure exactly who is providing what, to whom and with what purpose, demonstrates. Good youth work is and should continue to be a feature of youth services, although it too can apply to many different types of work in different settings. Developing a more useful definition of youth work and youth services, backed by measures of outcome will be vital if an 'in-principle' commitment to a statutory youth offer is to have any meaning.

We are considering how best to ensure sufficiency in youth services, youth work and provision beyond 2015, and what measures of outcome could be applied in light of the on-going reduction in spending on youth services and the long term pressure on local authority budgets. We are also interested in how national and local government might map, facilitate and maximise the benefit of private and corporate investment in youth services.