



UK Youth Parliament Manifesto

2020/2021



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Foreword

The UK Youth Parliament Manifesto brings together a wide range of issues affecting young people across the United Kingdom.

Although this year our process looked a little bit different, each issue started its' journey at a local level; affecting young people in local authorities, constituencies and communities. Members of Youth Parliament can then propose a motion on behalf of young people in their local areas, showing how they want to see these issues addressed. These motions are then debated by Members of Youth Parliament from all four corners of the country at our Annual Conference, where each motion is voted upon. If the motion passes, it enters the UK Youth Parliament Manifesto as an issue we believe must be tackled to make a positive impact on the lives of young people.

Every issue in our Manifesto has a mandate from young people, but this mandate is further secured by our annual Make Your Mark campaign in which young people from across the UK have their say on the issues.

The aim of our Manifesto is to shape the national debate by highlighting the issues that matter to young people as we seek to influence local and national decision makers, ensuring those in positions of power are aware of the needs of young people. We believe young people should be shaping local and national policy, everything from the actions of a local council to the manifestos of major political parties.

Each issue in our Manifesto will be marked as either devolved or reserved. This is because decisions that affect things like education, healthcare and transport are made by different groups of people, depending on where you live in the UK. The power to make some decisions is shared between the UK Parliament in Westminster, the Scottish Parliament, and the National Assembly for Wales, the Northern Ireland Assembly and some Mayors in England (Devolved issues). However, other decisions that affect all of the UK can only be made by the UK Parliament in Westminster (Reserved issues).

Our Manifesto demonstrates the issues that are important to young people. It shows decision makers how their decisions affect the lives of young people and makes them aware of the work young people are already doing to address these issues. You can help us achieve this by raising awareness of these issues and supporting our campaigns for youth-led change.

The breadth of issues included in our Manifesto demonstrates that today's generation of young people is far from apathetic about the world in which they live. They are taking a leading role in shaping their world for the future.

Please direct any enquiries regarding our Manifesto or its contents to info@ukyouthparliament.org.uk.

**On behalf of the
UK Youth Parliament Steering Group**

Our Community

Tackle Discrimination and Hate Crime in the UK (Reserved)

We believe that for too long discrimination of all kinds has been allowed to flourish in our society without being acted upon. In recent months, this long standing discrimination and inequality has been highlighted by the Black Lives Matter protests. However, this injustice has been prevalent for a long time with nothing being done about it. For example, young black men in Britain face an unemployment rate of 35% in comparison to 14% among young white men and 5.2% among the general population.

The ideals of equality should be instilled in our young people from an early age and should continue to be promoted throughout their education, in the hope that future generations will work to break down all systems which unfairly discriminate against those with protected characteristics including, but not limited to, the institutionalised racism, xenophobia, ableism and homophobia which are so prevalent in our country. The education system should include a range of historical events and figures, to strive to be more representative of the young people it educates. We want to ensure that discrimination of any kind is no longer socially acceptable within our communities.

We call on the government to address how the education system privileges certain people and groups and to ensure that young people who are experiencing discrimination in their schools or communities are given work experience days and skills and confidence classes, extending into extra-curricular activities. Those in lower socio-economic backgrounds are far more likely to suffer from an education that systematically benefits the most privileged. Those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are half as likely to achieve a pass in GCSE English and Maths, so schemes must be put in place to target these people and encourage better educational and career prospects. By doing this, we teach young people from minority groups to strive for the top jobs and have the same goals as their more privileged peers. For example, If you are from a black Caribbean background, you are three times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than other children. It's self-evident how much this can affect not only a young person's career prospects, but also the UK economy as a whole, as resource cost to public finance for young people not in education, employment and training is nearly £21 billion, reflecting the mass loss of productivity in society. Initiatives such as the Green Tick in the workplace for people with SEND should be furthered to support those from other minority or discriminated-against groups.

We also call on the government to ensure that punishment for hate crime and bullying is appropriate, fair and consistent across the board. The government should raise awareness on what hate crime is, how it is best reported and how we can intervene as bystanders by teaching lessons on protected characteristics. Teachers should also be trained on ensuring that their own practice is not discriminatory. The government should ensure that the National Curriculum is fit for purpose in creating a sense of inclusion and belonging for all so that young people feel comfortable in challenging hate crime and to ensure that the UK is a place where all people regardless of their race, sexuality, ability or background feel comfortable and proud to make their home.

Tackle Child Poverty (Devolved)

We believe that no young person should have their potential limited by the income of their families. We have a moral responsibility to end the postcode lottery that traps over 1 in 4 young people in poverty. Issues such as a lack of access to a decent meal, lack of opportunity, poor clothing and heating, negative impacts on education as well as facing societal stigmas, all stem from austerity that young people face on a daily basis. Young people are the future innovators, scientists and leaders, and yet if they're in poverty, research has shown they could be up to 18 months behind their peers in high school education. They are fed the belief that they can escape the never-ending trap of poverty, and yet so many are set up for failure because of a lack of resources, and so we believe that now is the time to take action. We believe that this is an essential time to do so, as Covid 19 has worsened the situations

of many low-income families, and more young people are expected to find themselves in the coming months due to the potentially catastrophic economic recession.

We have the power to end these inequalities through a package of innovative solutions, such as ensuring access to free school meals all year round, so that no child has to worry about going hungry, whilst ensuring healthy food is accessible and cheap for all so every child can afford to be healthy. We must bring back the Education Maintenance Allowance so that young people can focus on their education and have a financial safety net to fall back on. We need to ensure that families can afford ever increasing uniform costs by increasing accessible grants and keeping prices low. We vehemently believe we need a new and fully-resourced anti-poverty strategy that will look at tackling other aspects of poverty, by increasing funding for youth and social services, increasing employment opportunities, scrapping the antediluvian two child limit for benefits on Universal Credit and providing more support to help young people to find adequate accommodation so that they aren't forced to live in squalor conditions. These solutions should involve constant consultation with young people, so that our voices are heard, and should have regular intervals which ensure that the solutions are being implemented effectively. We strongly believe that such solutions are desperately needed, considering that this year over 4,000,000 young people are living in poverty.

After Covid 19, we have the opportunity to forge a better, fairer system with a level playing field where all young people are allowed the chance to thrive. We need a society where you are rewarded for your hard work and determination rather than income alone. We believe every child should have the ability to realise their dreams and aspirations because no child has caused poverty.

Change the Approach to Tackling Knife Crime and Gang Violence (Our Community)

We believe that the government has listened to our call to tackle knife crime. However, in the past year, knife crime has risen on a nationwide scale despite the government's approach to increase stop and search powers to police. There are concerns about its efficacy: stop and search has been shown to tackle mainly drug-related offences instead and is known currently to be an ineffective deterrent.

We must address this given the discrimination young, mainly black men face as a result of these searches too. Statistics have shown that they are more likely to be searched but less likely to be arrested compared with other ethnicities, highlighting the discriminatory nature of this policy. Given how widespread knife crime is, not only do young people suffer the fear of confrontation with someone carrying a knife, but also unfairly with the police, especially for those in ethnic minorities. Consequently, this erodes the public's trust in the police force.

We call on the government to reduce stop and search altogether. Alternatively, we ask it to reform the 'reasonable grounds' upon which a police officer conducts a stop and search to be more objective and to clarify this to the public. Finally, we call on the government to address knife crime as a public health issue to address the root causes of knife crime, particularly gang culture.

This approach would firstly entail more education in schools on knife crime: this will help change gang culture by educating students of the impact it has on their futures; their community; and of the opportunities to find a way out. The approach would then involve creating these opportunities for young people in gangs to escape the streets by focusing more on housing, counselling, investing in community projects, employment opportunities etc.

Eradicate Homelessness (Devolved)

We believe that it is immoral for a society, let alone one in a developed country such as the UK, to let its citizens live and sleep on streets. Article 25 of UN Charter for human rights says, everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing for themselves and for their family,

including food, clothing, housing, and medical care. Homeless people do not just suffer from extreme weather conditions, but they are subjected to violence, physical and mental abuse as well. We call on the local and central governments to allocate better funding to build shelter and provide basic services for homeless. Along with shelter they should also be provided with education and vocational skills to be part of the society and rid themselves of this problem for once and all.

Our Democracy

Include Young People in the Plan for Covid-19 Recovery (Reserved)

We believe that young people must be involved in producing the government's plan to support young people following the Covid-19 pandemic. This plan must ensure that we:

- Support young people's mental health services.
- Invest in a green recovery from the pandemic.
- Protect our education.
- Safeguard our employment.

The Royal Society for Public Health has found that during lockdown 70% of young people have experienced heightened anxiety and that 62% have felt lonelier than before lockdown. Many young people are feeling anxious because they have faced increased pressure and uncertainty in their education and work life. The mental health impact has been even greater on young people who have been shielding. We believe that funding should be set aside to research and countermand the impact of lockdown on shielding young people specifically.

Research from the Resolution Foundation found that young people were more likely to be furloughed or made redundant than any other group. Many young people have lost access to the quality education they had before lockdown and many have faced huge uncertainty over their futures due to the events surrounding exam results. Many young people with exams in 2021 feel they have missed vital education and preparation for next year. The government must act to ensure these young people are supported in the year to come.

During lockdown young people have continued to be aware that our planet is in a crisis of its own. In many ways the pandemic has encouraged people to give up habits that were harmful for the environment. We call on the government to ensure that, as we enter the recovery stage of the pandemic, we take this opportunity to reform society in greener and more sustainable ways. For example, those in receipt of government investment in housing, business and employment should be encouraged to use this for a green recovery. .

It is young people who have first-hand experience of these issues and so it is young people who are best placed to form a plan for recovery. The government must speak directly to young people and work with us to create and publish a strategic plan to support young people which focuses on the issues outlined above as we recover from the pandemic.

Votes at 16 (Reserved)

We believe that the voting age must be lowered to 16 for all elections and referenda in the United Kingdom.

The issues which are at play in general elections and referenda will have the greatest impact on young people, and yet we currently don't have access to the main democratic means by which we could affect them. For example, climate change will have a huge impact on young people and we are at the forefront of campaigning for climate action. However, we can't vote for those who we believe will take action on our concerns.

The government must provide apolitical and impartial resources to ensure that young people understand how their vote will affect the issues they are passionate about. The government should work with young people to ensure this material is easily accessible and easily understood. Young people must be given opportunities to learn about the political system to ensure that they will be inspired to get involved in politics and use their vote.

16 and 17 year olds can join the army, pay taxes and can get married. We should be allowed to elect those who make decisions on our behalf.

We have seen that when 16 and 17 year olds in Scotland and Wales have been given the right to vote, they have become more engaged in their democracies and have demonstrated their commitment to their areas and their countries. This is seen in that 75% of 16 and 17 year olds voted in the Scottish Independence Referendum. We call on the Northern Irish Executive and the UK Government to implement votes for 16 and 17 year olds in all elections now.

Give Passionate Young People the Resources and Financial Aid to Pursue Political Careers and Make the House of Commons Truly Representative (Reserved)

We believe that there is currently a systematic fault in government due to a lack of representation. Social and financial barriers are shielding passionate young people from aspiring to a career in politics; 1/3 of MPs are privately educated compared to the 7% national average. How can we truly meet the needs of the most vulnerable in society if they are not represented?

While many young people are keen to promote change and are heavily engaged in politics many are discouraged from pursuing political careers due to having certain socio-economic backgrounds. By creating an accurate cross section of society in governmental decisions, we do not only improve the aspirations of many young people but are also able to implement more effective policy. We demand change so that nobody is simply talked about in government but instead have the opportunity to do the talking. Give passionate young people the resources and the financial aid to pursue their dream political careers and make The Commons a place for all.

Give Immigrants Under the Settlement Scheme the Right to Vote in General Elections (Reserved)

We believe that immigrants under the settlement scheme should be given the right to vote. Immigrants make up 15% of the UK population, that's 9.5 million people and only 3.3 million can actually vote in the general election making the general election an inaccurate representation of the actual population of the UK. To vote in the general election you need to be a British citizen but British citizenship requires you to pass a test which most British people wouldn't be able to pass. It costs anywhere upwards of £1206 and the cost keeps rising. Not only is not allowing immigrants to vote inaccurate, it's also extremely classist since many immigrants come to this country to work, but a lot of these jobs are minimum wage and they simply can't afford British citizenship since they are working class. This system is extremely unfair and needs reform. We call on the government to allow immigrants to vote in general elections.

Establish stronger relationships between young people and the Government (Reserved)

Young people are the future – there is simply no denying this. We believe that young people's voices should not be neglected and especially during the Coronavirus, we have seen young people being left behind, so much so that we are now being called 'The Forgotten Generation'. During the peak of the first wave, when daily press briefings occurred, anyone over the age of 18 could submit a question to be put forward or answered by Governmental officials - this meant anyone under 18 was voiceless,

leaving a whole generation out the conversation, despite the virus affecting their lives as well - this is a breach of UNCRC Article 12 - the right to express an opinion and be heard.

Now although it seems that young people are starting to be listened to by decision-makers, it wasn't always and still isn't the case. The Government needs to consult with young people so that they are involved in the conversations that revolve around them so therefore, we call on the Government to establish an empowering forum in which they feel satisfied that their voices have been acknowledged and taken on board. In this situation, we aren't asking for Votes at 16, we are simply asking for our voices to be heard - the fact that we have the ability to sit at the table, means that we have the right to be able to speak at the table and not be silenced due to our age. The Government needs to do all that they can because of young people's ability to enhance policy and service delivery. The UK Youth Parliament should actively promote the voices of young people and ensure that they are heard.

Our Education

Increase Racial Awareness in the Curriculum (Devolved)

We believe that in order to build a better future together we need to teach our young people the truth about our past. The current education system is failing black and minority ethnic students by failing to teach the full diversity of British history. Impact of Omission statistics show that 72.6% of people learnt about the Great Fire of London but only 7.6% of people learnt about the British colonisation of Africa.

Currently, Black history is often misrepresented and taught in a negative light. Young people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds should be able to see themselves reflected in the history curriculum in an ethical, objective and positive manner. Teaching should not only be applied to the history curriculum, but all aspects of the curriculum including young people learning about black literature, black culture in Art, black scientists i.e. Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughn and Mary Jackson.

For many young people, school is the main place where they encounter other young people who are different from them. Ensuring that students learn about Black history in a positive light is vital for students who might not hear anti-racist narratives from any other source. In many cases, people of colour are only included in the curriculum in comparison to white people. For example, Mary Seacole is included simply in comparison to Florence Nightingale. We wholeheartedly believe that people from minority groups deserve to be included in our history lessons in their own right and on the merit of their own lives and work.

We call on the government to:

1. Teach young people the truth about racism in Britain, Britain's colonial legacy and how both of these impact our lives today.
2. Recognising intersectionality, include 5 people of colour, 5 LGBTQ+ individuals and 5 women in the History curriculum before GCSEs so that all young people are aware of the role these groups have played in history.
3. Provide training to all teaching staff on anti-racism and unconscious bias.
4. To provide opportunities for young black people to have work experience days, career insight days and classes where they are taught the skills which will enable them to work their way up to high management positions, becoming entrepreneurs and being successful.

This is important because we cannot pursue equality if we do not understand the origins of inequality.

Curriculum for Life (Devolved)

We believe that young people currently leave education without the skills they require to navigate the wider world. This is why we need a Curriculum for Life to ensure young people have the skills they need to navigate their education and to equip them for the world beyond it.

We call on the government to introduce a minimum of one hour of personal, social, health and economic education per week to give students time away from exam preparation in order to prepare themselves for life after education, to improve their skills and to learn to keep themselves safe.

In many cases, young people from privileged backgrounds are able to pick up some of these skills in informal ways, for example through their families and social connections. This means that the current lack of a proper Curriculum for Life disproportionately disadvantages those who already face discrimination and poverty.

We ask the Department for Education and devolved authorities across the UK to ensure young people are equipped in all of the following areas before they reach the age of 16:

- Health (including mental health)
- Money management and employability
- Protecting the environment
- Democracy and politics
- Relationships
- Diversity and inclusion

These lessons are what helps mould young people into well-rounded individuals and equip them for the world once they are outside of education. We call on the government to make a Curriculum for Life mandatory for all young people.

Better Mental Health Education for Pupils and Better Training for Staff (Devolved)

We believe that pupils should be taught how to spot the five main mental health disorders (eating disorders, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and OCD) and their symptoms. Teachers should also distribute resources from which pupils can get help if they notice signs of the disorders in themselves. In addition, to help from others, pupils should also be taught coping strategies to help themselves to deal with these conditions, E.G. breathing techniques, mindfulness ETC. In addition to education for pupils, it should be compulsory for all teachers to receive training in mental health first aid to better identify pupils who may need help.

End E-ducation Inequality (Devolved)

We believe that education is the most important issue that faces young people. It determines their quality of life in adulthood. The COVID lockdown necessitated that education be undertaken online however not every school has ensured good quality education.

Education across the UK varies hugely and the pandemic's effects on the quality of education has deteriorated which will have a long lasting impact on young people's current academics. In the lockdown, 71% of state school students received less than one daily online lesson and 1 million young people do not have adequate access to a device or internet connection. This is a worry to all. By not having access to a device your chances of being successful in your future and employment are limited especially by not having the skills to work with IT. Access to the internet is now crucial to maintain a good education and unfortunately not all families can provide the equipment and/or the internet with the capacity to do the learning that's required. It's not guaranteed that their children are receiving the education they rightly deserve. We call on the government to improve provisions for online education

through the development of a nation-wide online learning platform and to distribute necessary digital equipment to all schools and effectively target the necessary young people. The long term consequences of this are dire if we do not act now.

Rethinking Education (Devolved)

Education is the process of facilitating learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, habits, and growth. Education has the task of preparing people as an active element of social life. To us, education means something more than acquiring knowledge and skills, it means also being able to develop ourselves personally, to realize what type of person we want to be. School should be teaching us how to adapt to situations, how to problem solve, and be independent, how to talk about our emotions, and control them.

How will memorisation of a textbook help us acquire the skills we need? Memorizing is not knowledge! We will forget memorisation because it is forced. You are forced to memorise in order to pass the exam, to get the grade you want so badly. For what? To forget in 2-3 months what you focused so hard on? How will you ever speak up about your issues, if emotional intelligence is not taught in schools, or is overlooked?

Digitisation is beginning to become relevant (as we saw during the pandemic) and will be part of the education system, but to do this well, we need to be inclusive, not limited, and given the opportunity to study in the best learning environment for us.

We propose a team be brought into each school in order to help students develop their life skills, this will include emotional intelligence and communication skills. This staff will be available to all students and can offer support in any form, emotional or academic.

Informed decision-making, creative problem solving, and adaptability are things that need to be introduced into modern education systems. This means ideas to be open to debate and discussion and will encourage young people to think for themselves and form their own opinions on certain subjects. An education system based around free-thinking, open debate, and critical analysis will promote greater innovation and healthy competition.

The time that secondary schools start lessons does not fit with the way the teenage body works. Young people are meant to go to bed later and start work later, this means starting schools early in the morning seriously affects moods and performance. By reversing lessons and teacher preparation times this would allow for a productive school day and a better outlook on school.

By rethinking education, we are actively asking the government to change the aims and purposes 'of the education system. Having an open-minded approach, with youth input, as well as making learning individualized, puts a focus on personal development and resilience. We believe that young people deserve a reform of education that is adapted to current requirements because the classroom hasn't changed since 1945!

We urge the Government to rethink the education system and it must become a priority for the Government.

Teach the Future (Devolved)

We believe that we must mitigate the effects of the climate emergency and ecological crisis to preserve our planet for future generations, ending the suffering currently being caused to many people across the globe whilst addressing how our education system continuously fails to educate, prepare and equip us, as students, for this climate catastrophe we are inheriting.

Subsequently, the education system must be rapidly reformed, in a fashion whereby the climate crisis is at the forefront of the curriculum, as well as the entirety of the system, through direct collaboration with

exam boards, education literature distribution companies and Multi Academy Trusts for example. The topics of sustainability and advocacy must be woven through every available subject, like a golden thread, as we know that this emergency is indiscriminate and will affect every industry, community, and nation.

We implore the Government to reform our country's education system to not only construct a comprehensive climate curriculum but also to introduce new policies, such as the English Climate Emergency Education Act, which aims to intertwine green concepts and ideas throughout education structures through the enablement of youth social action and minimisation of carbon output in teaching facilities.

Education on Democracy and UK Politics (Devolved)

We believe that to ensure our future generations are prepared to vote and are able to engage fully in our civic life, we must include political and civic education in the secondary school curriculum and provide opportunities to learn about democracy further at GCSE. Young people should be educated on how the political system works and where parties stand in order to allow them to form their own opinions.

Since the 1990s, turnout in UK elections has been broadly falling. Ipsos Mori found that in the 2019 General Election turnout amongst 18-24 year olds was only 47%, as compared to 74% amongst those over 65. Young people are often released from their formal education without knowledge of where they stand in regards to politics causing them to feel disengaged. If we do not do something to address this it is likely that turnout amongst young people will only continue to fall.

Young people are incredibly passionate about the issues they are facing from the climate crisis to knife crime. However, many currently do not see democracy as a means of acting on these issues. By incorporating political education into the curriculum we could give young people a deeper understanding of how everything that is going on around them is affected by our democratic system. In this way, many more young people will engage with our political systems and our political institutions will become more reflective of our population as a whole.

We demand that the government includes political education in the National Curriculum and introduces a GCSE in Citizenship, Democracy and Government as an option for all students.

Ethical Catering in Schools (Devolved)

We believe that catering plays an important role in schools and is one of the most crucial parts of daily school life. We believe Ethical Catering is a moral obligation which needs to be introduced to help mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Wasting food has a huge environmental impact; if we avoided throwing away all our good/edible food, it would save the equivalent carbon dioxide as taking one in every four cars off our roads. Food waste in schools needs to be reduced and managed to save unnecessary spending whilst overall Ethical Catering will improve the quality of catering in schools.

We call upon Education Institutions to help Increase Ethical Catering in Schools by tackling the reduction of Food Waste and introducing Eco-Friendly Packaging.

LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Schools (Devolved)

We believe that there is a lack of inclusivity and support for LGBTQ+ young people in schools. Most students still feel excluded compared to non-LGBTQ+ students, having a hugely negative affect on their mental health. We ask that all teachers are trained on how to deal with LGBTQ+ issues and that schools have a specific point of contact for LGBTQ+ young people.

Schools should also be encouraged to promote equality throughout the curriculum by utilising and sharing resources written by LGBTQ+ authors and teaching LGBTQ+ history.

Teach Secondary School Students Self-Defence (Devolved)

We believe that self-defence encourages respect, self-confidence and discipline. School students should be given the opportunity to learn how to diffuse a confrontational situation and how to protect themselves in the event of physical conflict. It is vital that we equip young people with these useful techniques that could reduce instances of bullying, save the lives of others or themselves in the wider world. We call on the Government to give students the opportunity to be taught self-defence by a qualified instructor in either PE, an extra-curricular activity or any other method seen feasible for the individual school.

Trousers for All (Devolved)

We believe every student despite their gender should have the right to wear trousers in school. In a modern day world, we must ask ourselves how we allow outdated stereotypes to find their way into our society? Why haven't we eradicated outdated stereotypes? Why are students forced into skirts because of what society believes they should look like? Following the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's advice we believe schools have a responsibility to not discriminate against pupils on the protected grounds of sex. We must free our female students from sexist ideals to ensure every student can feel comfortable in school. Furthermore, trans young people can feel invalidated by being forced into a stereotype of a gender they do not identify with, they are then forced to come out and fight for a chance to wear trousers in school. We must put our trans young people in a safe position where they are not forced to come out and risk backlash at home in order to feel comfortable in school, especially when attendance in school is mandatory. We must reaffirm that the Youth Parliament is not willing to compromise on health and safety concerns for any young person, especially in order to fulfil a sexist stereotype. We call for an official response from our governments stating whether they are opposed to gender discrimination in schools or whether they are in favour of injustice in a school setting. We also call for legislation to be put in place against gender discrimination to ensure no school can enforce sexism on their students through lack of trouser rights.

Free University (Reserved)

We believe that university is a gateway to success in life and should be freely available to all. The government should invest in the young people of today by providing free university tuition and access to grants and scholarships. The alternative is that young people will suffer financial hardship and not reach their full potential.

Maintaining Further Education in Rural Communities (Devolved)

We believe that all young people, especially those in rural areas, should be given opportunities in further education. Not all young people want to continue an academic education after year 11. It is vital that we support our young people in the choices they want to make post 16. Rural colleges require funding and need help to continue vital courses like agriculture and hospitality. Many local colleges across the country have had to close, crippling opportunities for young people in rural areas in getting

the grades they want or onto the courses they wish to join. We believe that rural further education colleges require greater funding and support from government to ensure young people in rural areas have greater opportunities.

Equality of Sports Education (Devolved)

We believe that we have grown up seeing the epitome of gender inequality in high schools for generations; not being allowed access to equal sports education due to our gender. In a world where so much effort has been put in to eliminate gender based inequality, the teaching of physical education is letting us down. Boys and girls are not given the opportunity to participate in the same sports during their core PE lessons across the nation. We can never be truly equal as a society until we end this injustice or else we will continue to believe that participation in sport is defined by gender. We demand that girls and boys alike partake in the same sports and activities during Physical Education lessons across all schools in the UK.

Budget for Special Education Needs and Disability Within Schools (Devolved)

We believe that within schools the funding into facilities for people with special educational needs hasn't been enough. There are schools for these students, but they don't accommodate people if they don't need as much help, due to a lack of funding. Mainstream schools can't accommodate the needs of those students, again due to a lack of funding. These students deserve a good quality education. We call upon the Government to put more funding into the special educational needs departments within schools, and schools for special educational needs students, so that they can accommodate all students, no matter how much help they may need.

Make BSL More Accessible to Learn (Devolved)

We believe that British Sign Language should be made affordable and accessible to learn. British Sign Language is an accepted form of communication in the UK however it is nowhere near accepted as much as a modern foreign language. This is mainly due to the issue of cost to learn - the official regulated BSL qualifications (signature) start at around £200 and increase as fluency increases. Around 150,000 people use BSL as their first language and preferred method of communication - we shouldn't be excluding them from society due to the fact the language is expensive to learn. The UK Youth Parliament calls on the government to ensure that all forms of communication are accessible and available to all.

A Relationship and Sexual Curriculum for the 21st Century (Devolved)

We believe that the issue of Relationship & Sexuality Education (RSE) across the UK, but in Northern Ireland particularly, is one which has huge negative effects on the mental and physical health of young people. A number of results from a recent survey about the experiences of RSE for young people in Belfast make for startling reading.

An eye watering 52% of young people felt that their right to RSE was not being met and the four most common words used to describe the RSE received were "basic, unhelpful, useless and biased."

This lack of adequate education leads to a higher rate of teen pregnancy and abortion in the UK, according to the FDA sexual health agency, “the UK had the highest teenage birth and abortion rate in Western Europe.”

With the vast majority of young people feeling that school is the best place to receive RSE, we call upon the UK Government and devolved institutions to;

- Adopt a rights-based and proactive approach to RSE based on public health, education and supporting the needs of our young people. It should help young people understand sexual rights, consent, sexuality and sexual behaviours and feel equipped for the future.
- Co-produce a curriculum programme and relevant interventions with young people. Young people should be involved in the development of age-appropriate, relevant and inclusive RSE programme for schools
- Fund specialist staff to deliver RSE so that the co-produced education programmes to be delivered by specialised, qualified, and trained staff who fully respect the rights of young people to privacy and non-discrimination.

Protect Black Students in the Education System (Reserved)

We believe that black students experience discrimination and racism in the education system which puts their lives in danger. They must be protected.

The curriculum fails to teach the impact that British colonisation has had on the world and how it presently informs the systems we interact with today. This allows for ignorance and inhibits racial progress; we cannot pursue equality if we do not understand the origins of inequality.

In Hackney, it was found that being excluded from school increases your likelihood of being involved in knife crime by 33%. Further to this, many young black people are punished for wearing their natural hair in school.

We call on the government to protect afro textured hair under the Equality Act 2010, to implement black and colonial history and to begin to work immediately to address the race disparity in exclusions in the UK.

Mandatory Water Safety Lessons for All Young People - Regardless of Age (Devolved)

We believe that water safety should be made mandatory in the national curriculum so that all young people - regardless of age- are made aware of the effects of cold water shock. We believe that such lessons are needed to prevent more needless deaths due to drowning.

Our Employment

Protect and Employ the Future (Reserved)

We believe that we must not allow the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic consequences to continue to negatively impact youth employment and youth opportunities.

We know that the current generation of young people will be the future of our country and they will be the driving force of the British economy in upcoming years. We recognise that unemployment while young is linked to long-term reductions in wages and poorer health of individuals. Youth unemployment is predicted to cost the government £28 billion over the next decade, thus we believe we have a duty to make sure that there is more support for young people regarding their employment.

88% of employers believe that school leavers are not ready for the world of work therefore we call on the Government to provide more information on opportunities that are accessible to young people as these opportunities could strengthen the career prospects of each young person.

We call on the Government to offer more support such as improved access to skills and training such as internships, apprenticeships and funded schemes for young people who are facing challenges in the job market. We believe that the Government should deliver more information about youth opportunities. We also call on the Government to make sure that all workplaces are safer so all workers' rights are protected and all workers have the new resources they need.

Our Environment

Take Action on the Climate Emergency (Reserved)

We believe that in order to act upon the climate emergency and the ecological crisis, we must transform our economy and our society so they are more green and sustainable.

Climate change is the biggest threat our planet has ever faced and it is young people and the generations to come who will face the consequences of it the most. As young people, our voices are not listened to enough. Current decision makers will not be around to suffer the consequences of their lack of action. They are determining what is going to happen to our future without us.

On the 1st of May 2019 the House of Commons declared a climate emergency, but not enough has been done since to protect the future for young people. We shouldn't have to live with the fear of daily floods because of rising sea levels, or wildfires in our beautiful forests. Or even the end of civilisation because of rising temperatures.

If we do not take action now, these drastic consequences could become irreversible. The top 10 warmest years globally have all occurred since 1998 and every year since 2014 has made it into the top 10. We must address the climate and ecological crisis now to protect the world for future generations.

As we transition into recovery from Covid-19 we believe this gives the government an opportunity to:

- Invest in Green infrastructure by legislating to reduce the environmental impact of new buildings, encourage rooftop green spaces and improve the efficiency of recycling and public transport.
- Increase subsidies for renewable energy and invest in green industries to create new and sustainable jobs to ensure businesses play their part and to support them in doing so.
- Consult young people on how they believe we can best protect the environment.

Stop Plastic Pollution (Devolved)

We believe that plastic pollution will have a serious impact on our current and future generations more than any other before. If we do not take action now, it is predicted that waste plastics will outweigh fish in our oceans by 2050. Globally, we purchase and dispose of over 1,000,000 plastic bottles per minute - that is the equivalent of filling Wembley Stadium nearly one and a half times a day.

Not only does this destroy the natural beauty of the world, but the production and disposal of plastics produce toxic gases and release almost double the CO2 emissions of the entire aviation sector, further accelerating the effects of climate change. Research suggests that plastic pollution kills wildlife and impacts biodiversity as well as having adverse effects on our health through micro-plastics getting into many of the food chains. We feel that this problem is not being addressed with sufficient urgency and with ocean plastics having a life expectancy of 200-800 years, the accumulation of plastic will only get worse over time. We have a moral duty to preserve our world for future generations. We call on the Government to put pressure on businesses to reduce growth in single-use plastic production and support a new law to phase out non-essential plastics.

Our Health

Provide Better Access to Mental Health Support (Devolved)

Young people are facing a mental health crisis. 1 in 10 young people are suffering from a mental health issue; and the problem is only getting worse. The percentage of young people suffering from diagnosable mental health problems has doubled in the last year alone, and the percentage of adults who are struggling with depression, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide, has nearly tripled over the past two decades. Health services are failing to provide accessible and effective mental health services for young people, and failing to recognise the equal urgency of mental and physical illness.

Young people have always faced a great degree of uncertainty about their future as they navigate the transition to the adult world. However, in these unprecedented times where young people face existential threats, ranging from coronavirus to climate change, this anxiety has been made much worse.

Early intervention is essential to tackling the mental health crisis; 50% of mental health issues experienced in adulthood develop before the age of 15, and 75% before the age of 18. As things stand, only 30% of young people who experience mental health issues receive the help they need. This is not good enough. By providing high quality mental health services at an early age we can stop these problems from developing and provide support where support is needed.

Young people have reported that they find it impossible to access the services they need; much of this lack of help is because of the consistent underfunding of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Currently only 6.7% of mental health spending goes to CAMHS, leaving young people with waiting times of up to 200 days. This increases the likelihood of mental health crises among young people and places further pressure on the NHS.

We call on the government to:

1. Protect the budget for CAMHS, committing to greater investment in the Health and Social Care budget, and ensure that services which target specific issues are funded proportionally to their usage. This means that a sufficient amount of resources can be provided to mental health services. This will allow the government to provide high quality and accessible mental health services for all young people.
2. Provide sufficient in-school counselling services for all young people to ensure that everyone, regardless of background or financial situation, has access to the support they need. This should be supplemented by in-school campaign groups which encourage self-care and can signpost young people to other services which are available to them within the NHS.
3. Young people should be provided with an accessible and easy to use reporting system so that they can report malpractice and ensure young people's voices are included in shaping CAMHS services in future.

It is time for the government to ensure that all young people have access to the care and support they need so that young people no longer have to suffer in silence.

Improve Accessibility to Healthy Food (Devolved)

We believe that for too long parents have been forced to choose between providing 3 meals a day for their family, or getting the healthy alternatives, which they often simply cannot afford. Providing cheaper healthy food would provide an incentive to combat health problems in the poorest areas, and also help contribute towards a greener planet. We call on the Government to work to ensure that healthy alternatives are made affordable for all families so that they no longer have to choose between going hungry and making healthy choices.

Ban Conversion Therapy (Devolved)

We are calling for the Secretary of State for Health and his counterparts in the devolved nations to ban conversion therapy. Conversion Therapy, otherwise known as reparative therapy, is a dangerous and harmful practice that aims to "cure" LGBT+ people of their identity. The Ban Conversion Therapy

Campaign recently wrote an open letter to the UK Government, signed by LGBT organisations, politicians, activists, and health professionals, calling for the UK Government to legislate for a UK wide ban. However, as Health is devolved in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, we are calling on their respective Health Ministers to legislate for a ban in their nation.

This Youth Parliament calls on the Health Ministers to:

- Make running conversion therapy in the UK a criminal offence.
- Make forcing people to attend said conversion therapies a criminal offence.
- Make sending people abroad in order to try to convert them a criminal offence.
- Protect individuals from conversion therapy.

Ensure No Students Go Hungry in the School Holidays (Devolved)

We believe that to ensure all students have the right conditions to succeed and thrive in their education, they must not have the fear of not receiving food at any time in their childhood including during the summer holidays. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, around 1.3 million students received free school meals just in England which was 15.4% of all students. This was the highest level since 2014. In Primary schools this number was even higher at 15.8% where nutrition is critical for the right growth and brain development. The impact of the pandemic is likely to increase the need for free school meals for even more families, potentially for years to come. This could affect a generation of students who were not able to reach their potential and could affect their future careers due to reasons no child should ever have to worry about. Over the lockdown period and the summer holidays in 2020, the government issued online vouchers valued at £15 per child per week to compensate for the lack of free school meals. Therefore, we call on the government to ensure the voucher scheme is continued for every school holiday in the future so that no child is left hungry.

Tackle Cigarette and Drug Use Among Young People (Devolved)

We believe that cigarette and drug use among young people needs to be tackled so that all young people can be safe. In many areas around the UK the levels of drug and cigarette use among young people is very high. Cigarettes and drugs can be addictive, can cause a shorter life span and can damage the body in many ways. We call on the government to make it illegal to possess drugs or cigarettes under the age of 18.

Improve Cancer Care for Young People (Devolved)

We believe that cancer care must be improved for young people. Recent statistics show that 82% of young people and parents did not think the government listened to the experiences of young people with cancer and their families enough. Improving cancer care in young people is vital, with 64% of patients not believing enough was being done to create a positive experience for young people with cancer. We believe that there should be an increase in specialised nursing care and support for young people with cancer including a push to update teenage cancer wards and make them a happier place for young people with cancer to be. In addition, we believe that compulsory lessons in secondary schools on spotting the signs of cancer will raise awareness and help create a more open conversation about cancer among young people.

Our Justice

The Support for Domestic Violence Begins With You (Devolved)

We believe that domestic violence is widespread and can seriously harm young people, both by being victims of it and by witnessing it. Domestic violence is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behavior between people in a relationship.

It's important to remember domestic abuse and violence:

- Can happen inside and outside the home
- Can happen over the phone, on the internet, and social networking sites
- Can happen in any relationship and can continue even after the relationship has ended
- Both men and women can be abused or abusers.

Many cases of domestic violence go unreported and cases are increasing every year. Figures from West Sussex County Council for the year 2019 – 2020 show that there were 3682 cases reported for adults and 109 cases for under 18s.

Many young people experience and witness mental and physical abuse without realising they are victims. This can increase feelings of loneliness, especially when they don't know where to turn for help. This can increase the vulnerability of young people and affect their mental health.

We believe teachers should receive training to identify a young person who is experiencing abuse and to help them overcome their problems. Education and awareness of domestic violence should also be added to the National Curriculum to ensure all young people are educated on it. Young people should be empowered to run campaigns and workshops to help raise awareness about domestic violence so that students can identify and support those in need.

Legalise Marijuana (Devolved)

We believe that the illegality of marijuana contributes to many issues in our society. When drugs like marijuana are made illegal and when their sale is pushed into the underground black market, young people, by the forces of the market, are always involved. Criminal gangs prey on young people to move and sell drugs due to the lack of regulation that makes exploitation possible.

Children growing up in households where drugs are used are often trapped by their parents putting fear of being arrested over seeking helpful constructive change. Because marijuana is illegal, in theory, anyone with basic communicative skills can get their hands on it, even young teenagers. Ironically, marijuana being illegal means young people can procure it easier than if it was openly and legally sold in pharmacies.

Only if marijuana is legal, can it be regulated and sold to the right people. If marijuana were to be legalised, young people would be at a much lesser risk of being imprisoned or punished and having their lives ruined if the gangs they are involved in cannot operate due to marijuana revenues being shifted from the pockets of criminal organisations to legitimate pharmacies. If legalised marijuana would lose its character of being a gateway drug. This is because pharmacies will only have marijuana to sell, so to keep customers on that one legal drug bought from them will be paramount, it will be against the pharmacies' interest to move them up the ladder onto drugs the pharmacy cannot sell. On the other hand, gangs now have the incentive to hook customers onto marijuana and to move them up the ladder of drugs (heroin, cocaine).

For these above reasons it is obvious we are putting all people, including young people, at more risk by keeping marijuana illegal and in the hands of criminal gangs. One of the lessons of the early 20th century was that the American prohibition of alcohol was a failed experiment. Alcohol was readily available and the illegality inspired waves of gang violence. For decades we have lived through the same scenario but this time the taboo of drugs has meant no serious conversation can be had about regulating and ending the criminal violence, exploitation and suffering around illegal marijuana. Legalising marijuana will have a better effect on society than many think.

Protect Our Right to Freedom of Speech (Reserved)

We believe that freedom of speech is one of the most fundamental human rights; it enables progress and change to occur. Without this basic principle, the free exchange of ideas that we enjoy in our roles as Members of Youth Parliament would not be available to us. By extension, it would be impossible for us to discuss and campaign for change regarding all of the issues that we care dearly about. Whether that be mental health issues, hate crime or protecting our environment: we would not be able to have any of these discussions without freedom of speech.

In an era of the exchange of ideas and content predominantly taking place on social media, it is vital that we ensure that this principle is upheld on these platforms. Moreover, with over 90% of young people using some form of social media in the UK, this issue could not be more relevant to the very people that we represent. If we truly want our world to progress, then we need to ensure that the current monopolies on information that exist through the biases of large social media platforms are eradicated. This attitude also extends to academic institutions deplatforming individuals who hold 'unpopular opinions', by disallowing them the opportunity to speak at events.

All ideas deserve to be debated, however much we may disagree with them. There have been times in the past when certain proposals of ideas, that we now consider to be indispensable for the functioning of our society, were censored. A prime example of this is the idea of democracy, or the abolishment of slavery, or the idea of equal voting rights between genders and races. These ideas were once considered too radical and unpopular to even debate in our country. Therefore, it is paramount that we do not make the same mistakes as the past, and we enable the free exchange of all ideas and content that do not directly incite violence or cause national security threats.

We call on the government to ensure, provided there is no direct incitement of violence or national security threat posed, that all speech and content is treated equally (enforced in good faith) by social media platforms and 'Big Tech' companies. We call on the government to ensure that all of such content is made freely accessible, and free from the bias of social media platforms. We call on the government to protect our right to freedom of speech.

Our Services

Introduce a Body to Assess and Regulate the Level of Bereavement Support in Each Constituency (Reserved)

According to Child Bereavement UK, a parent of a child under 18 dies every 22 minutes in the UK, which equates to approximately 111 children being bereaved of a parent each day. Given the number of new bereavements there are every day, the UK Youth Parliament believes that there should be a non-ministerial department - like Ofsted - which has the responsibility to assess the effectiveness of bereavement support systems. Those systems responsible for providing bereavement support have been regularly underfunded in each constituency, leading to drastically fluctuating levels of support depending on where someone lives. Introducing a body to assess this support would ensure young people everywhere get the support they need, regardless of where they live.

End Period Poverty (Devolved)

We believe that period poverty is a widespread issue in the UK with one in ten girls aged 14-21 not being able to afford sanitary products and one in seven girls struggling to afford sanitary products. A further 49% of girls have admitted to missing school because of their period. These statistics are appalling, especially when considering the impact that period poverty has on girls. Not having access to sanitary products is a violation of girls' human rights to dignity, adequate healthcare and an education. Girls who have suffered from period poverty are more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression and often stay home from school during their monthly cycle as they fear bleeding through their uniform. By the end of their time at school, those 140,000 girls who miss school monthly will be 145 days behind the rest of their classmates, making it more difficult for them to reach higher levels of education and employment. Period poverty detrimentally affects such a wide proportion of society yet little has been done to combat it we call on the government to address this crisis.

Our Transport

Improve Public Transport for Young People (Devolved)

We believe that a well-serviced and affordable public transport system is vital for a more green, equal and inclusive society and is central to young people having freedom and independence.

Between 2005 and 2018 there was a 71% increase in bus fares in the UK, making public transport unaffordable for those who need it most. Young people are often in full time education and are one of the groups most likely to be in insecure and low paid jobs. This rise in the cost of public transport has exacerbated a social-economic divide in this country by preventing some young people from accessing further education and work.

Alongside this, a high level of private car usage has led to illegal levels of pollution on many of our roads. This is dangerous for the young people who grow up near these roads and navigate them regularly. It also damages our environment and puts the lives of those with asthma and other health conditions at risk.

Public transport is often the only means by which young people can access employment, education, extra-curricular activities and hobbies. A lack of public transport leads to young people becoming isolated from their peers and unable to learn to be part of society, to work as part of a team and to achieve their goals and passions. This is especially the case for young people living in rural areas where services can be less frequent and less reliable.

We call on the government to improve public transport routes making them more regular and more reliable, especially for young people living in rural communities. As part of this process we would ask the government to investigate the feasibility of re-nationalising the railways. Further to this, we ask the Department for Transport to make public transport genuinely affordable for all young people under 18 to ensure that they are given every possible opportunity to invest in their future.

Improve the Safety of Pupils Travelling to and From School (Devolved)

We believe that a school's main purpose is to provide safety for the children that attend it, however, many children cannot access school without a degree of risk, especially those who walk or cycle. Young people often have to encounter precarious conditions while they are travelling, often due to having to face roads without a visible speed limit and dangerous drivers. This is not a singular issue,

this has been going on for years, and there is no sign of this letting up any time in the future. Many young people report experiencing close shaves, each close shave is one too many, and is a considerable risk on the wellbeing of a child or young person. Traffic speed is a key determinant in road casualty rate and severity, so we call on the government to set minimum safety standards, such as strict speed limits, and safe crossing points, and traffic calming measures that should be in place on common routes students travel on, and in the vicinity of each school.

Our World

Protection of Dual-Citizenship Rights in Northern Ireland (Reserved)

We acknowledge the rights of the people of Northern Ireland to hold Irish citizenship, UK citizenship or both, as outlined in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, and therefore recognise their subsequent entitlement to European citizenship. We believe that this provision for dual-citizenship has been integral to the regional peace process and that this status must be protected throughout the process of the UK leaving the European Union, including in all future international agreements.

Remain a Signatory of the European Convention on Human Rights and Protect the Human Rights Act 1998 (Reserved)

We believe it is in the interests of all young people in the UK to ensure their human rights are protected. Now the UK has left the European Union it has made a pivotal new decision. According to Michael Barnier (Chief negotiator for the EU for Brexit) the UK does not wish to commit formally to applying the European Convention on Human Rights, meanwhile the government's response to this has been unclear and worrying. The UK would be the only country in Europe (apart from Belarus) to not be a signatory of a convention it helped write. This coupled with sustained promises from the Conservative Party to repeal the Human Rights Act 1998 (the only statute which formally recognises and safeguards our human rights) is deeply concerning as it impedes upon the basic human rights of every British resident including young people. To put this into perspective, such an action would allow the government to censor parts of the media more and would allow the government to build secret courts and secret jails not unlike the USA's Guantanamo Bay (PM Blair had tried to bring such jails in the UK in 2001 but was prevented by the European Court of Human Rights) amongst other worrying actions it could take. Therefore, we believe it is in the best interests of young people and of all British residents that their basic human rights are not threatened and made more precarious and that the UK maintains a strong record on human rights by staying a member of the European Convention of Human Rights and not repealing the Human Rights Act 1998.