

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Building
Great Smith Street
Westminster
SW1P 3BT

8th February 2013

Dear Secretary of State,

As young people who attend, work or volunteer with local youth projects across the UK, we are writing in response to the comments that you made in your evidence to the Education Select Committee, stating that “*youth policy is a priority for local government and not central government*”. This is alarming for all of us, as not only could it put our futures at risk, but also those of younger generations.

To support our letter, we conducted a survey asking young people their views: 92% of young people feel that the government doesn’t do enough to show they care about young people in the UK and their futures. 95% of young people also think that youth policy should be a key priority for national government, much like health, policing, and other areas that government deals with.

We agree that all sections of society need to work together to support young people to achieve, but for this to happen we need the Government to recognise the importance of youth services. Removing responsibility from central government would be hugely damaging to both the quality and quantity of youth support on offer. Good youth organisations and community projects are pillars of their communities, offering support in safe and stimulating environments, which we actively choose to go to. Good community leaders are trusted, supportive, and positive role models – for some young people, this may be their only opportunity to find an inspirational adult.

We are not saying that schools aren’t important. But young people need both, and for some of us, our centres and projects have offered a lifeline.

In January you said that your main concern was that “*every child arrives at and spends their time in school fulfilled, happy and learning*”. The fact is that not everyone enjoys their time at school, whether it is because they’re being bullied, or because their preferred learning style does not match that set out by the National Curriculum. DfE data shows that in 2010/11 only 34.6% of pupils on free school meals obtained five A*-C grades, including English and maths; and overall only 58.6% of pupils achieved this. Learning outside of school enables all young people, especially those of us not doing so well at school, to learn what we’re good at. We want more investment in and outside of the classroom for young people so that we can all get the best chances in life.

The country spends 11 times more locking young people up than we do preventing youth crime (ippr, 2008). A survey in America found that for every \$1 invested in young people, \$17 is saved further down the line in the criminal justice system. In addition, a strong link has been found between employability skills – communication, confidence, professionalism, entrepreneurship, and independence – all skills that the youth sector supports young people to develop. Investing in us now will make us far more likely to contribute to society in the future.

We would like to invite you to come along and see a youth project in action. Recent data shows that you have in fact not been out to visit such a project since your appointment in 2010. We hope to help you understand why we and so many other young people need our youth projects; what they mean to us, and how they help us feel a part of our communities.

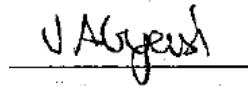
Appreciating the fact that you have a busy schedule, we'd really like to share our views with you at a place and time that suits.

We look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,



Michael Adams, on behalf of London Youth, its youth advisory board, Dare London, and 75,000 young people across the capital



Juliet Amponsa-Gyasi, on behalf of YouthNet and its network of 200 volunteers (of which 150 are young people aged 16-25)



Joelle Bradly, on behalf of Prymface and 95 young parents



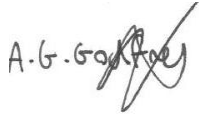
Richard Cullen, on behalf of UK Youth, its steering group, UK Youth Voice, and its network of 790,000 young people



Natalie Dent, on behalf of the Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade (JLGB) National Youth Forum and 4,000 young people



Fi Durrant, youth trustee of The Scout Association, a movement of over 400,000 young people in the UK



Alex Godfrey, on behalf of the Street League Academy programme and its 1,200 participants



Natalie Grant, NCVYS Young Trustee, on behalf of 340 young people



Steve Hughes, vInspired Youth Advisory Board member, on behalf of a network of 130,000 young people



Shiza Khan, on behalf of Brook and 100 young volunteers



Kareem Maizi, on behalf of Leap Confronting Conflict and 905 young people



Rebecca Murgatroyd, on behalf of the National Youth Agency and over 100 young people



Hannah Pollard, on behalf of Artswork and the 5000 members of the English National Youth Arts Network (Enyan) who work with young people across England



Rosina St-James, on behalf of the British Youth Council, and 7 million young people in its member network



Tom Williams, young volunteer, on behalf of StreetGames and its network of 1,700 active young volunteers aged 16-25 years old