



YMCA
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Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
The security of a home	6
Ready to tackle the world	10
Positive mind and body	14
Activities that develop character	18
Empower and invest in the next generation	22
Notes	26

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Foreword

YMCA reaches its landmark 175th year during the next parliament and our mission today is as relevant as it was in 1844. From humble beginnings in the shadows of St. Paul's Cathedral, YMCA has grown to be the largest and oldest youth charity in the world while still remaining true to the principles of why Sir George Williams founded the charity - the desire to love, support and develop those around us.

Over this time, YMCA has become one of the cornerstones of civil society across Great Britain and continues to support young people every day. As cities, towns and villages have expanded, YMCA has responded accordingly to the growing needs of the people it serves.

When people need support with homelessness, YMCA provides a roof over their head. When they want to gain new skills and qualifications for employment, our experts and professionals equip them. And when they want support with health concerns or someone to talk to confidentially, YMCA is there.

YMCA is an organisation that is there for all young people, regardless of need, and as such our work reaches across the entirety of England, Scotland and Wales and impacts on all ages, abilities, faiths, races, genders and sexualities.

However, regardless of these differences, the same key facts remain. For a young person to progress in the world they need **the security of a home**, so they are **ready to tackle the world**, with a **positive mind and body**, that is enhanced by **activities that develop character**. But this requires all of us to **empower and invest in the next generation**.

From the outset YMCA wanted to present a manifesto which truly reflected the feelings of the young people we serve. While some of the issues are devolved to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, they remain important challenges for young people across the UK.

Contained within this manifesto are messages of change for the next government; not always ones which are easily achievable but ones which are necessary if we want to live in a society that truly supports and develops young people in our communities. One message that is absolutely clear is that YMCA today - like every other day for the past 173 years - stands ready, willing and able to deliver this change with government, society and young people.

Chief Executive
YMCA England &
Wales

Chief Executive
YMCA Scotland

Introduction

YMCA is one of the largest and oldest charities working with young people in the world. Across Great Britain there are 146 YMCAs. Each one a thriving and active community – a community that seeks to change the lives of young people and their families.

YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, YMCA creates supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

YMCA works with all young people regardless of their background. Through our youth-minded community approach, we tailor our services to meet the needs of all local people. This can be anything from nurseries to after-school clubs, performing arts centres to community cafes, and counselling schemes to apprenticeships.

YMCA is at the very heart of the communities it serves and as such this manifesto seeks to highlight their challenges and opportunities.

As the United Kingdom traverses an uncertain period in its history, the next government will be faced with tough choices and taking difficult decisions that will undoubtedly impact on generations to come.

As an organisation with a history of empowering young people, YMCA wants to ensure that young people's lives, which are often forgotten in our society, are not disproportionately affected by those decisions.

The world may be a different place to what it was when YMCA began but the aspirations of the young people that YMCA works with are no different - to be educated; to work; to have a purpose and to have a place to call home. However, the world we live in is one where access to meaningful employment is limited for some, the services our communities depend on have been reduced and the economic realities in which YMCAs must operate are increasingly challenging.

All of the recommendations made within this manifesto will help many young people to play active and fulfilling roles within their communities.

YMCA hopes our elected representatives in the next parliament will share our vision. Our young people are great – let's celebrate their achievements and empower them to achieve their full potential.



The security of home...

One of the fundamental requirements for a young person to develop and flourish is the security of a home. However, for far too many young people the idea of a stable, secure and loving home is not a reality but a distant fantasy. For those facing this hardship, growing up in poor housing increases the risk of a young person suffering from ill health, lower educational attainment, unemployment and poverty. The start to life no one would wish for.

For many young people the family home provides a safe and loving place where they grow into young adults keen to make their own way in the world. However, even for these young people the opportunities to do so are becoming more challenging, particularly where financial support and help is not available from parents and others.

It is recognised that not enough new homes have been built over the past generation and this has contributed to a lack of low-cost housing available for first time buyers. As such, there are now more than 10 million households in the UK living in rented accommodation.¹

Such is the demand and increasing cost of housing it is critical the next government takes bold decisions to address the supply of housing.

The next government needs to promote and invest in the development of alternative models of housing to solve the current housing crisis in this country.

YMCAs, recognising this as a need, have already developed their own alternative models such as *Y:Cube*.

As well as taking measures to increase supply, it is also important immediate action is taken to reduce the financial barriers that many young people face when looking to find somewhere to call home.

The introduction of a *Help to Rent* scheme nationally would give people who are not in a position to be able to save the initial deposit an important helping hand in moving into the private rented sector. There are excellent examples of these already being run by local authorities, housing associations and charities, but we urge the next government to be at the forefront of introducing a national scheme, similar to the concept of the *Help to Buy* scheme.

In addition to a large deposit, young people identified high charges by letting agents as a significant barrier to individuals being able to access the private rented sector.

When young people are able to overcome the barriers of availability and cost to finally find somewhere to rent, too often this is on insecure and short-term tenancies, leaving them under the threat of their stay coming to an abrupt end or facing regular rent increases.

For others the family home does not provide a safe and loving place and they find themselves needing help from organisations like YMCA.

These young people rely on the social security system to access this supported housing, and for many it is the difference between sleeping rough or receiving the help they need. However, this lifeline is under threat due to changes embarked upon by the previous government.

Firstly, YMCA welcomes the many exemptions put in place to protect more vulnerable people when changing eligibility for housing support for 18 to 21-year-olds. However, it is estimated that some 9,000 young people will have difficulty in accessing housing support under the new regulations.

Secondly, proposals put forward by the last government to reform funding are likely to mean less supported housing provision for young people being available, potentially resulting in increases in the number of young people sleeping rough on the streets.

Without a system that properly reflects the true cost of delivering supported housing, many providers, including YMCA, have already said that they will have to either reduce or close altogether a number of housing projects.

YMCA welcomes the recent homelessness legislative changes and the new duties they introduce. However, YMCA believes that without adequate resource behind these, local authorities and other organisations will be unable to fully deliver on its provisions. We therefore want to see the next government take steps to address the resourcing issue at the earliest opportunity in the new parliament.

Recommendations

- ▶ Look again at proposals to reform the supported housing sector to ensure that any new funding mechanism properly reflects the true cost of delivering supported housing
- ▶ Abolish the regulations that remove automatic entitlement to housing support for 18 to 21-year-olds
- ▶ Exempt all young people moving out of supported housing from the Shared Accommodation Rate
- ▶ Promote and invest in the development and supply of alternative models of low-cost housing such as *Y:Cube*
- ▶ Introduce a national *Help to Rent* scheme to support young people to pay for a rental deposit
- ▶ Ban unreasonable letting agent fees in the private rented sector
- ▶ Introduce a rental cap to limit the amount landlords can increase rents annually
- ▶ Legislate to increase the length of tenancies in the private rented sector
- ▶ Extend funding available to local authorities to enable them to deliver their homelessness duties



Y:Cube

“As the rent is affordable I can stay for up to five years, and be able to save money for a deposit. Basically, when the time comes to move on from Y:Cube, I will be in a far better situation than today.”

Y:Cube resident

The *Y:Cube* project is an initiative that addresses the demand for affordable, self-contained accommodation for single people in need.

Individual *Y:Cubes* are high quality, one-bedroom self-contained flats clustered in small attractive complexes. Because of the innovative way in which they are built, they are significantly cheaper to create than traditional homes, and this saving is passed on to the end user courtesy of lower rents coming in at 65% of the market rate.

The primary achievement of *Y:Cube* housing has been to provide accommodation for residents who didn't have the savings, wages or salaries to move on from YMCA supported housing. Not only does this slow down their development but it also prevents other homeless individuals at the very greatest need from moving into YMCA supported housing.

The first *Y:Cube* housing project opened as YMCA Mitcham in September 2015. It became home to 36 residents, mostly aged under 30, who had previously been housed at YMCA's hostels in Surbiton and Wimbledon, or who has been nominated as being in housing need by Merton Council. Each of YMCA Mitcham's new tenants got their independence back and a place to call their own.

These tenants had the security and the breathing space to earn a living, learn a trade or profession and make plans for the future.

YMCA London South West is now working with partners to introduce more *Y:Cube* housing projects across the country in order to make good quality private housing available to more people in need.

Ready to tackle the world...

For many young people the education system works perfectly for their needs, providing them with a solid grounding on which to embark on a successful future. However, for those who do not necessarily fit this mould, it can be a daunting and unhelpful period in a young person's life, causing them to leave education with few qualifications and little or no experience of the workplace.

To ensure that no young person is left behind, specialist funding should be made available to schools to target marginalised groups, such as those with poor engagement in school and those at risk of leaving with no qualifications, to raise their attainment levels and give them equal opportunities to succeed. However, the continued push for academic improvement needs to be set against the general wellbeing of young people to ensure they do not face undue stress and pressure.²

Young people and employers frequently report a generation ill-equipped for the transition into independence and employment. As such, it is also important that in the drive to improve academic attainment, the broader skills young people need to succeed are not forgotten.

Regardless of ability and qualifications, it is difficult to make the right educational and career choices without being fully informed of the raft of options available. Despite this, the quality of careers information, advice and guidance has traditionally been patchy at best.

While improvements have been made, there is evidence to suggest it is not being treated as a specialist service and is being delivered by teachers rather than professional advisors.³

As such, young people are not being made aware of the different pathways available, especially vocational training and apprenticeships. The inclusion of employers and businesses in the classroom and introducing work experience as a compulsory element of secondary school education would also aid the widening of a young person's level of understanding prior to making decisions about their future.

The previous government's attempts to increase the number of people undertaking apprenticeships is welcome. However it is important that quality is not sacrificed.

YMCA research has found that the study element of an apprenticeship has been side-lined and that being able to maintain participation on an apprenticeship on low-levels of income is challenging.⁴

At the heart of YMCA's beliefs is that young people should always have the opportunity to better themselves. However despite having the opportunities in front of them, for some young people the traditional journey through the education system can be disrupted by having to deal with difficult personal circumstances that prohibit them from progressing the first time around.

It is for these young people that accessing training and education at a later stage is vital. However, a barrier to this is the removal of entitlement to full-time education for those over 19-years-old.⁵

When struggling to find employment, young people will naturally reach out to the job centre for support. However, they have told us that Jobcentre Plus is merely dehumanising many of those who access its services, damaging their confidence and in some cases even setting back their journey into employment.⁶ For this reason, the next government should replace it with a system designed to support the complexities of a young person's early career, bringing together a range of local organisations, who would be ideally placed to help them find meaningful employment.

Finally, many of the job opportunities currently available can be limited and a young person can quickly find themselves in a succession of short-term, part time, zero-hour contract based jobs with periods in and out of benefits. The next government needs to examine ways to ensure the employment opportunities available to young people are meaningful and protect their rights.

Recommendations

- ▶ Ensure all students in school or college have access to careers information, advice and guidance delivered by professional advisors
- ▶ Develop a non-formal *Skills for Life* curriculum to sit alongside the school's formal academic curriculum
- ▶ Extend the upper age limit for funding of education and training from 19 to 21-years-old
- ▶ Guarantee all students in Years 10 and 11 have access to at least three weeks of meaningful workplace experience
- ▶ Embed designated and structured study time within all apprenticeships
- ▶ Provide free or heavily discounted travel to those studying on an apprenticeship or participating on a Jobcentre Plus assigned training course
- ▶ Replace Jobcentre Plus with a *Youth Transitions Service* giving young people access to tailored support to find meaningful and sustained employment
- ▶ Provide schools with specialist funding to target those pupils who are marginalised from mainstream education
- ▶ Protect the employment rights of young people entering the workforce
- ▶ Offer more support within schools for young people suffering with exam stress



Positive Placements

“It’s absolutely great having a mentor. You know you’ve got someone next to you, supporting you, and it’s not just you by yourself. She guides me and I follow the path on my own.”

Positive Placements participant

Positive Placements is an initiative by YMCA Downlink Group, with projects set up across South East England. It sets out to support disadvantaged young people aged 16–25 to obtain education, employment or training. The programme connects young people with mentors in their communities, providing the support necessary for them to overcome their barriers and achieve their goals.

This is achieved by recruiting and training volunteer mentors from the local community and matching them with a young person who needs support. The mentor and young person meet at least once a week for a minimum of one hour to identify goals and formulate step-by-step action plans to achieve them.

Mentors come from a wide range of relevant backgrounds including education, social work and business. They are volunteers and each young person understands from the outset of the relationship that they are committed to the project because they want to support a local young person.

Positive Placements is particularly innovative because it unites YMCA’s priorities of transforming communities and tackling youth unemployment. In addition, the support is tailored to a young person’s individual needs. Not only can it support a young person’s readiness for work but can also enable them to:

- ▶ Build confidence and self-belief
- ▶ Develop and recognise their potential
- ▶ Gain new experiences
- ▶ Develop an understanding of their responsibility to their community
- ▶ Develop social skills
- ▶ Build work-related skills

Positive mind and body...

Having a positive physical, social and mental state is key to individuals achieving their personal goals and participating fully in society. This is why at YMCA we take a holistic approach, encouraging and supporting people to lead active and healthy lives from an early age, right through to adulthood.

Staying healthy is often about the lifestyle choices we make and cost is seen by many as one of the biggest barriers to being healthy and active. Where previously cost would not be such a significant factor, the reduction in community spaces in which young people can be physically active has resulted in the only options available being the ones that have a financial cost associated with them.

A common influence on a young person's health is their relationship with alcohol and drugs. Although there has been a recent decline in the amount of time young people drink during the week they are now more prone to heavy episodic or binge drinking when they do.⁷

From speaking to young people we know that limiting access to drugs and alcohol is the most effective way to stop usage. However, achieving this is remarkably difficult. What is needed instead is an effective young person led awareness campaign in schools and youth settings which tackles the dangers of using alcohol and drugs irresponsibly.

Likewise, when young people do reach out for support it is essential that they are able to access specialist advice and peer-support to ensure young people are able to get help when and where they need it.

As well as focussing on physical health, YMCA believes that the next government needs to prioritise children and young people's mental health. One in 10 children and young people are thought to have a diagnosed mental health difficulty.⁸

While these figures alone are significant, recent YMCA research showed that they may only be scratching the surface when it comes to the numbers of children and young people actually experiencing difficulties with their mental health.⁹

However, despite increased public awareness and recognition of mental health, three quarters of children and young people still believe that there is a stigma associated with experiencing mental health difficulties, something that stops them speaking out and seeking help.¹⁰ Education and awareness lie at the heart of normalising mental health difficulties and overcoming this stigma experienced by young people.

When young people do seek help, it is important the services they need are readily available. However, challenges within the National Health Service (NHS) still remain as those young people seeking support from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are finding it increasingly difficult to access.

It is estimated that only a quarter of those in need are currently able to access mental health services, and those able to do so face increasingly long waiting lists before they are able to access support.¹¹

With the NHS unable to meet the needs of young people, early intervention strategies that work within schools and communities to relieve pressure are required. This needs to include peer-to-peer schemes, placing more nurses and practitioners in schools, as well as requiring all professionals working or frequently interacting with young people to be provided with mental health training.

We know that what it means to be healthy is of importance to young people and the way their body and image is perceived matters immensely. More than half the UK population suffers from body image anxiety, a leading cause of depression, low self-esteem and poor participation at school. It particularly affects young people, with more than half of 11 to 16-year-olds saying they often worry about the way they look and 30% agreeing that they sometimes avoided taking part in certain activities because they were worried about the way they look.¹²

Tackling body image anxiety requires the responsible portrayal of body image by the advertising, fashion, media and music industries, as well as teaching young people about body image in school to critically evaluate the messages they receive, and to enable them to feel more confident about themselves.

Recommendations

- ▶ Invest in early intervention mental health services for young people in schools and communities, including targeted campaigns that addresses the lack of knowledge and stigma surrounding mental health difficulties
- ▶ Ensure all professionals working or frequently interacting with young people are provided with mental health training
- ▶ Cut waiting times for young people accessing mental health services
- ▶ Encourage organisations to sign up to the *Be Real* Body Image Pledge
- ▶ Encourage schools to become settings that promote and foster body confidence among young people
- ▶ Commit to protect and enhance investment in community sport initiatives which engage young people in physical activity
- ▶ Maintain and enhance free or low-cost spaces where young people can participate in sports and physical activity
- ▶ Deliver a coordinated awareness campaign in schools and youth settings which tackles the dangers of using alcohol and drugs irresponsibly
- ▶ Equip drug and alcohol support teams with training in how to help young people when and where they need it, in particularly in relation to new psychoactive substances



Mental Health Champions

“We have relied heavily on the service from YMCA, and have received nothing but unfailing support for our students when they most needed it.”

Student Welfare Coordinator

Mental Health Champions is currently delivered across a number of YMCAs and works to increase awareness and destigmatise mental health difficulties among 11 to 21-year-olds.

The project operates a peer-to-peer approach to encourage young people to start discussing and sharing the issues they are concerned about, and offers a counselling service to ease current pressure on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

The young champions are able to provide support, mentoring and buddying to help guide their peers to access services, which can be a frightening and isolating process.

The project uses peer education as a way for young people to pass on key mental health messages to other young people and to signpost to existing services. By training the young champions in key areas surrounding mental health and resilience they can then act as peer support, including directly signposting them to the correct available health service already in place, or an activity the champions have created themselves.

YMCA’s counselling service, part of *Mental Health Champions* provides early stage, individual support for young people. Qualified counsellors are trained in a variety of approaches and work to the ethical framework for good practice of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Furthermore, YMCA hosts workshops to provide young people, teachers and parents with practical tools for building resilience, self-esteem, confidence and good mental health. The sessions help to raise awareness and challenge stigma, breaking down barriers for young people to talk about mental health issues and access the help they need.

Enhanced by activities that develop character...

The right start in life is crucial for the long-term development of a young person. It is for this reason that YMCA works with young people from birth through to adulthood – maintaining support for them both as individuals but also within a family unit.

In our last manifesto we urged government to extend the number of hours of free childcare available to parents and were pleased to see this adopted. However, YMCA still believes that the 15 hours of free childcare should be extended to all two year olds and not just the most disadvantaged.

As one of the largest voluntary sector providers of childcare in the country YMCA knows the true cost of delivering an excellent service to children and families. We are, therefore, concerned that the full and true cost of providing free childcare to providers will not be met under the current arrangements.

Without a national strategy and realistic funding model we may see many providers unable to offer free places, denying young people the right start in life. Furthermore, there is little incentive in the system for organisations to invest the considerable sums necessary to develop additional capacity in the nursery sector. We believe that the next government should provide further incentives via the tax system to help organisations deliver these much needed additional facilities.

The provision and role of health visitors should also be at the centre of targeted support for all families in the UK.

Health visitors are in a unique position to offer and coordinate practical family-centred support, but investment in recruitment, training and organisation is necessary. The next government should look at how this and other family support provision can be extended.

The development of a young person is not just confined to schools, parents and carers as there are many other influencing actors in their lives.

The youth service is an example of one which often plays a positive role. However, over recent years this has diminished significantly as local authorities have had to operate under reduced budgets.¹³

While a statutory youth service would be ideally placed to be a third pillar in supporting the development of young people it must be done within the context of the economic climate.

There is significant scope for areas of non-formal learning and pastoral care, which are often part of a youth service, to be delivered within and in conjunction with schools by qualified youth workers – supplementing the reduction in funding from local authorities to be driven back into positive activities for young people.

The negative effects of problem debt are significant, impacting on an individual's physical and mental health as well as housing, employment and relationships.

It is important that people begin learning money management and budgeting skills at a young age.

Accordingly, YMCA is calling on the next government to help individuals and families manage and fight the threat of problem debt by incentivising credit unions to offer saving schemes and training, particularly, targeted at young people.

YMCA knows that children and young people who are at risk of offending come from a range of social backgrounds and cultures. Many of them have personal difficulties and individual circumstances that require a flexible response and a range of interventions.

The absence of a positive role model in a young person's life increases the chance of them offending. YMCA believes that a mentor or youth worker can be that role model and provide the support a young person needs to reach their full potential.

Young carers, day in and day out, provide a lifeline and vital care for those closest around them. They do so during periods of their lives where they should be focussing on growing up, learning and developing themselves. *The Children and Families Act 2014* placed a duty on local authorities to perform a needs assessment for young carers and their families. It is imperative that these are comprehensive and that the resulting recommendations are fully implemented to enable young carers to have the same opportunities as their peers.

Recommendations

- ▶ Reclassify youth services as a statutory service, requiring each local authority to have in a place a youth services strategy
- ▶ Introduce a framework to inspect the scope, quality and impact of a local youth service offer
- ▶ Implement a national strategy on childcare to address the failure of the current system to meet parental requirements
- ▶ Pass the full and true cost of providing free childcare to providers in order to create a fair and sustainable system for all
- ▶ Extend the 15 hours of free childcare to all two-year-olds
- ▶ Provide greater support to young offenders to help them reintegrate into their communities
- ▶ Ensure all young carers get a full needs assessment and the support they need to have the same opportunity as their peers
- ▶ Provide favourable VAT exemptions to organisations investing in new nursery facilities
- ▶ Increase the number of health visitors operating across the UK
- ▶ Incentivise credit unions to offer saving schemes and initiatives targeted at primary and secondary children



Plusone Mentoring

"I have changed my friends. I have stopped smoking and drinking. I am going to school more. A very great experience, that has helped me a lot"

Plusone mentee

Plusone Mentoring is an early intervention programme designed by YMCA Scotland to offer vulnerable young people an effective diversion away from the criminal justice system.

The programme engages with young people between the ages of eight and 14-years-old who show a cluster of risk factors, such as poor education at school, aggressive, anti-social or offending behaviour and conflict in the family.

The young people are matched with a volunteer mentor from the community who is screened, trained and supported for a year-long relationship.

The programme places the young person at the centre of changing behaviour and increasing aspiration to construct positive pathways to realising their fullest potential. The overarching aim is to provide a positive role model who builds a trusting relationship, introduces the young person to new activities, encourages them to build their confidence, and to develop new skills across different settings at home and in the community.

The Plusone Mentoring programme, launched in 2009, has received rapid and widespread recognition as a very successful model.

- ▶ 85% increased their attendance at school
- ▶ 86% significantly improved their behaviour and changed their attitudes towards offending
- ▶ 64% significantly improved their skills, talents or positive relationships
- ▶ 100% improved their relationships at home

In an evaluation of the programme, Plusone Mentoring was found to have generated social value of over £1.05 million for an investment of just under £108,000. Over half the value created accrues to the statutory sector stakeholders, with a quarter of the value belonging to the criminal justice system.

Empower and invest in the next generation...

YMCA is committed to young people's access and participation in democratic life and civil society. We believe that all young people should have a voice and be engaged fully in local and national democracy.

The young people that interact with our services are passionate, articulate and active within their communities. As such, YMCA remains a long standing partner in the *Votes at 16 Coalition* and continues to advocate for young people both voting in elections from this age and standing as candidates.

As the Scottish Referendum has demonstrated, when enfranchised and engaged in the debate young people will participate in democracy.¹⁴ On the whole, however, this still has a tendency to be those who are well educated or who are motivated by a particular topic. Young people from marginalised groups are often the ones furthest from the democratic process but for whom engagement would have the biggest impact.

There is little doubt that the business of the next parliament will be dominated by the negotiations around the decision of the UK to leave the European Union (EU). While the country as a whole voted to leave the EU, it should not be forgotten that the significant majority of young people voted to remain in the EU.

When the UK exits the EU many of the opportunities funded through EU bodies will potentially disappear for young people. The *Erasmus+* programme has enabled thousands of young people to study abroad, learning different languages within new cultures.

Likewise, funding from EU institutions has provided opportunities for organisations to run exchange programmes or intervention work within the UK. Some of the most challenging and deprived communities within the UK have benefitted from EU funding over the years and this has had a positive impact upon the lives of many young people.

YMCA believes that, whether in or out of the EU, these opportunities and benefits should not be lost to our young people. YMCA therefore calls on the next government to ensure that the interests of young people are properly reflected in the negotiations leading to the UK's exit from the EU.

Recommendations

- ▶ Ensure that, as part of the 'Brexit' negotiating process, the needs and aspirations of young people, are considered and protected
- ▶ Work to ensure that Europe wide, exchange, travel and educational programmes such as *Erasmus+*, continue to be available to UK citizens
- ▶ Preserve the ability of young people to access jobs within other EU countries
- ▶ Commission young people and representative organisations to produce a new 'post-Brexit' national *Youth Offer*
- ▶ Legislate that the voting and candidate age for all elections is lowered to 16
- ▶ Support community-based initiatives that engage marginalised groups in the democratic process





GoodVibes

“Before I started coming to the group my confidence was rock bottom and I barely interacted with other people. But now, my confidence has soared. GoodVibes has given me and the other young LGBT people in the community a safe place to access support and share our experiences.”

GoodVibes Member

GoodVibes is a holistic Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) youth group at YMCA Swansea and the only one of its kind in the area. It runs for two hours each week on Thursday evenings where one-to-one support and assistance is delivered to young people, other groups and organisations.

GoodVibes is youth driven and led with staff support, where young people choose session topics and frequently take on board roles to deliver sessions themselves.

Sessions often focus on health, sexual health, relationships and issue-awareness. It is widely understood that young LGBT people are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety and self-harm due to social isolation and/or bullying. Strong social support is a protective factor against this, which is what *GoodVibes* provides the young people of Swansea. *GoodVibes* aims to help young people learn about their rights and to be proud of who they are; fostering confidence and self-esteem.

GoodVibes has worked with the local health board in response to consultation on equality objectives to help create a more equal health service for LGBT people; and has spoken up for health inequalities specifically for the trans-community in Wales. They also contributed to the Welsh Government Equality Objectives 2016-20 and, most recently, a consultation with Y Care International in helping to break down barriers for young LGBT people hoping to volunteer overseas.

The group continues to work hard to ensure young LGBT people are looked after and taken care of, and aims to raise standards for all young LGBT people in all aspects of life.

Notes

- ¹ Department for Communities and Local Government, *Live tables on dwelling stock*, April 2017
- ² YMCA England & Wales, *What Matters Most*, March 2016
- ³ Barnardo's, *Helping the inbetweeners – Ensuring careers advice improves the options for all young people*, August 2013
- ⁴ YMCA England & Wales, *Work in Progress*, April 2017
- ⁵ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Department for Education, *Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report*, March 2011
- ⁶ YMCA England & Wales, *Springboard or Safety Net?*, October 2015
- ⁷ Office for National Statistics, *General Lifestyle Survey*, March 2013
- ⁸ Green, H, McGinnity, A, Meltzer, H, et al, *Mental health of children and young people in Great Britain 2004*, August 2005
- ⁹ YMCA England & Wales, *I AM WHOLE*, October 2016
- ¹⁰ YMCA England & Wales, *I AM WHOLE*, October 2016
- ¹¹ National Audit Office, *Mental health services: preparations for improving access*, April 2016
- ¹² YMCA England & Wales, *Somebody Like Me*, January 2017
- ¹³ UNISON, *The Damage*, August 2014
- ¹⁴ The Electoral Commission, *Scottish Independence Referendum: Report on the referendum held on 18 September 2014*, December 2014

Photographs used within this manifesto are not necessarily attached to the specific programmes referenced



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YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

SUPPORT & ADVICE

ACCOMMODATION

FAMILY WORK

HEALTH & WELLBEING

TRAINING & EDUCATION