



Unite response to Labour Party Consultation 2018 - Building a Statutory Youth Service

This submission is made by Unite, the UK's largest trade union with over 1.4 million members across all sectors of the economy including manufacturing, financial services, transport, food and agriculture, construction, energy and utilities, information technology, service industries, health, local government and the not for profit sector. Unite also organises in the community, enabling those who are not in employment to be part of our union.

Unite is a leading trade union for community, youth and playworkers, with thousands of members across the United Kingdom. The union has a specific section for Community, Youth and Playworkers entitled the CYPW section. We work tirelessly to campaign for an end to the destruction of youth and play services, for a high-quality universal youth and play service for all, for a statutory supported youth service and JNC Pink book pay and terms and condition for all our members underpinned by continuous professional development and training.

Unite is also a member of the ChooseYouth campaign¹ and has contributed to its submission to this consultation.

Statutory Youth Service

Unite strongly welcomes the Labour commitment to introduce a statutory youth service and end the cuts to youth services. This has been a long running campaign for Unite members and Unite sincerely hopes that we get a Labour government as soon as possible in order to make this crucial policy a reality.

Recent figures show that local authorities have made £123m cuts to youth services over the two financial years 2014/15 and 2015/16. This has resulted in the loss of almost 98,000 youth service places for young people between 2014 and 2016, in addition to the 41,000 that had gone between 2012 and 2014 and the closure of 244 youth centres, on top of the 359 that were closed in the previous two years. The study by Sian Berry on the GLA also powerfully highlights the scale of cuts across London Boroughs².

The scale of the cuts has now been further highlighted by the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) on youth affairs, a cross party committee headed up by Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP and with input from the National Youth Agency (NYA). The report recommendations³ call on government to address the severe challenges that youth services face as a result of major financial cuts to services over the past decade which have seen universal youth work disappearing in some areas, with funding often being diverted to short-term and targeted provision.

¹ <https://www.chooseyouth.org/>

² https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_lost_youth_services_sian_berry_jan2017.pdf

³ <https://nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/APPG-Summary-and-Recommendations-FINAL.pdf>

The government's onslaught on local authorities and their failure to protect youth services underlines how vital it is to have a Statutory Youth Service underlined by legislation. Since 2006, under the Education and Inspections Act, local authorities have had a responsibility to provide 'sufficient activities' for youth services but this duty is open to interpretation and has been largely ignored. Unite believes this obligation must be strengthened to reflect every young person's right to the opportunity to take part in high quality universal youth services. Unite therefore supports the ChooseYouth campaign for the introduction of a Young People and Youth Service Bill which is currently being considered by Parliament as a private members Bill⁴.

a) National Charter for Youth Work

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

Unite believes that the role of a statutory youth service must be to support and develop the social and personal development of young people. It must be a flexible but universal service that is led by young people themselves. Youth work achieves the best outcomes through structured, informal educational activities that combine enjoyment, challenge and learning in safe, supportive and flexible environments with the ultimate aim of developing young people into adult citizens. These environments support personal development, provide personal advice and guidance and support young people in developing their own identity.

Youth work as a professional educational practice uniquely inspires, educates, empowers, takes the side of and amplifies the voice of young people and, unlike other interventions, it combines these elements in a relationship that young people freely choose to engage with.

It is therefore crucial that youth services remain independent and complementary to other services such as education and schools, social services and the NHS.

That said youth work strongly contributes towards many wider social goals⁵. These include:

- supporting young people to become adult citizens
- improved engagement with school and education;
- improving physical and mental health outcomes
- reducing the incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour amongst young people;
- improvement in the wider learning and social skills of young people and helps to keep young people safe
- build bridges between different diverse communities
- create safe spaces and empowerment for socially excluded or stigmatised minorities

In other words a universal open access youth service can and does strongly support many other acute public services, primarily through its capacity for prevention. One lead activist in Unite explained youth work as *"a service that can help deal with the symptoms of social problems but it is far better at dealing with the causes"*.

We have included some comments from young people and youth workers in the appendix of this submission.

⁴ Details of the Bill can be found here: <https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/youthservicesandprovisions.html>

⁵ <http://www.nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Commission-into-the-role-of-youth-work-in-formal-education.pdf>

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

Unite strongly supports the content in Labour’s National draft Charter for Youth Work. These are a firm basis for developing a statutory youth service going forward.

Unite members believe the key principles of youth work must be that young people choose to be involved, not least because they want to relax, meet friends and have fun. It is a service that is concerned with how young people feel and not just with what they know and can do. It seeks to facilitate and empower the voice of young people and ensure that young people can influence the environment within which they live. It also respects and values individual differences by supporting and strengthening young people’s belief in themselves and their capacity to grow and change.

In Unite’s view the charter could put greater emphasis on the need for a youth service that is open to young people based on the sole criteria of being young. This is important to challenge the vision of youth work as something only available to young people with a specific need or that are in some way categorised as deviant (excluded from school, involved with crime etc.)

This principle should also reinforce the fact that youth services accepts and starts where young people are – with their view of the world and their interests. At the same time youth work seeks to broaden horizons for young people, in particular by encouraging them to be critical and creative in their responses to their experience and the world around them and supporting their exploration of new ideas, interests and creative ability.

Unite members also would like to see the principle of encouraging diversity, community cohesion and inclusion expanded, while respecting different needs. The youth service should support opportunities to build bridges between different groups of young people within a town, city, region and nationally. Youth work recognises, respects and is actively responsive to the wider networks of peers, communities and cultures which are important to young people. Through these networks it seeks to help young people achieve stronger relationships and nurture collective identities through the promotion of inclusivity, particularly for vulnerable communities. It would also include the principle of supporting groups with specific identities, such as young LGBT people, young people with special needs, young women, or specific religious communities.

b) Labour’s vision

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

Unite strongly welcomes Labour’s vision for delivering a statutory youth service. This is a firm basis for setting in place a statutory youth service.

Unite would stress that this must be a priority to set in place in the first year of a Labour government if the benefits are going to be seen within the first term in office.

Unite recently supported a major study of the issues affecting the youth work profession - ‘Youth Work: Professionals Valued’⁶ - and we urge Labour to look at the conclusions.

Crucially the report called for a specific Minister for Youth Affairs to be an advocate for young people in government. The role would straddle Whitehall departments and assess government policy on the

⁶ https://www.uniteforoursociety.org/assets/8064_CYNfP1report1Final_5.pdf

aspirations and lives of young people. This view was echoed in the from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs, Youth Work Inquiry recommendations published in October⁷.

c) Service delivery

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

Unite believes that youth and play services should be available to all from school age of 5 up to 25, with a priority emphasis of funding for the core teenage years of 10-19. As has been discussed a universal youth services must have the flexibility to offer services where there is a demand and need for them outside of this core age group too, for example with primary school age children or adults with special needs.

The youth service must also dovetail with playwork services that work with younger children and community services that would also work with young adults outside of school age.

While community workers are covered by the professional standards for youth and community workers within the JNC Pink book national agreement, playworkers are not.

Unite believes that playworkers would also gain from an increased recognition of their professional skills especially since September 2014, when the Government removed the statutory requirement for out of school clubs and holiday play schemes registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register to employ staff with 'full and relevant' childcare or playwork qualifications. Providers who only take children over 8 years, or which are open access, have never been required to register (although they may do so voluntarily if they wish).

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

Unite believes that the majority of youth work should be open access as a rule. Youth services must be based on the sole principle that it works with young people because they are young. To that end the service must be flexible to demand, while making sure that it is accessible for all and proactively open to communities and young people who may not find it easy to access services in order to reach the full diversity of young people within their local community

It is crucial that youth work is not stigmatised or treated as solely a target driven service for those people who are struggling at school, NEETs or those at risk of gang violence. Youth work can play an important role in supporting the targets of other services through multidisciplinary teams but youth work must continue to be independent of other agencies to protect the core ethos of youth workers. Youth services must be voluntary activities for if and when youth need it. Youth work is not simply a service to pick up the pieces. These same concerns are similarly echoed by the NYA⁸.

That said there is a role for targeted youth work in specific circumstances and there are many examples of youth workers doing excellent targeted work as the universal service has contracted. There are examples of vital work with young people at risk of gang violence, or LGBT groups where targeted services have made a huge difference. Unite members stress though that targeted youth work must not be the primary function of the statutory service and must fall within the overarching aims of an open access universal youth service.

⁷ <https://nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/APPG-Summary-and-Recommendations-FINAL.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Commission-into-the-role-of-youth-work-in-formal-education.pdf>

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

Unite believes that the statutory service must be based on effective partnership with all sectors within a community. Unite believes that a universal public service such as youth services is more efficient and sustainable when overseen by the local authorities. That said given the flexible nature of youth work and the range of factors that may support inclusion within a community there will always be elements that involve the not for profit sector and particularly community and faith groups.

Unite is calling for a service that is statutorily funded with universal standards, protected by the national collective agreement (JNC pink book) and community youth work qualifications framework.

Unite believes that services must be delivered on a not for profit basis and services delivered by non-statutory organisations should be funded by grants as a norm rather than competitive tendering and commissioning. Services should be designed and delivered in partnership with youth organisations and young people must have a central voice in shaping the design and funding of any projects.

Unite has also raised concerns about the value for money of the NCS and the relative cost of delivering compared to universal youth service provision. These concerns have been echoed by MPs and others⁹. Unite believes that to fund a universal youth service based on the ratio of 1 to 300 (building on the Resourcing Excellent Youth Services (REYS) report recommendation in 2002 of 1 to 400¹⁰) would cost around £1 billion with additional spending needed to for capital programmes and the replacement of community spaces.

d) Youth voice

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

Unite members tell us that young people must be at the centre of youth services. The service must make sure that it is about empowering young people to take control over the services and make sure that they are given real power to shape their services. That includes involvement with all project planning and activities as well as how funding is applied for and distributed.

While adults will need to be involved at one level they must not have all the power. Unite believes that sadly pressures for target and outcome driven accountability of funding mean that this approach has become more and more difficult.

Labour must look to develop funding and accountability measures that allow for this youth empowerment approach and that enabling this should fall within the role of a newly created Minister for Youth Affairs.

e) Workforce

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

⁹ <https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/cost-national-citizen-service-unjustified-says-mps-report/policy-and-politics/article/1427327>

¹⁰ <http://www.mywf.org.uk/uploads/policy/REYSDec2002.pdf>

Sadly the destruction of much of the youth service over the last decade has meant that Labour will need to reinvest in the service, skills and qualifications needed for a statutory youth service.

Unite is advocating the introduction of a register and revocable Licence to Practice, for qualified youth workers and the 'protection of title'. Unite believes that professionally qualified youth workers should be registered, as with other sections of the children and young people's workforce. This register should sit within the Ministry for Youth Affairs.

Without this regulation, anybody can claim they are a 'youth worker' and this is putting children and young people at risk. It is an imperative that a legally protected title should be introduced and only available to those with approved qualifications and experience. Opportunity should also be made available for youth support workers and voluntary youth workers to become participants in the scheme at an appropriate level.

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

Unite is firmly behind the continuation of *The Joint Negotiating Committee (Pink Book)* agreement as the national agreement that applies to youth support workers and professional youth workers, across all employers, statutory and voluntary.

The JNC agreement is a set of terms and conditions developed to suit the specific working patterns required to deliver good value, high quality youth services to local communities. It ensures that pay, terms and conditions are aligned with the requirements of delivering youth services and achieving positive outcomes for young people. The JNC also contains the National Occupational Standards, training and qualifications framework which is crucial to maintaining the high-quality staffing of services.

f) Evaluation

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

Unite believes that to underpin the development of high-quality youth services proper data is required to ensure that minimum standards are being met and exceeded. This requires the return of the National Youth Audit, previously carried out by the National Youth Agency.

Unite also believes that funding should be provided for greater academic research into youth work. This would maintain an up to date evidence base for the effectiveness of youth work and help in spreading best practice. Youth work enables young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential. But youth workers are under growing pressure to demonstrate and quantify its impact to make the case for future sustainable funding by demonstrating how youth work improves young people's wellbeing, life chances and outcomes. Unite believes that clear arrangements need to be re-established for internal quality assurance complemented by regular external inspection and reporting by Ofsted.

Unite will seek to promote this vision across the youth service sector and is willing to work with other stakeholders across society who share our broad vision for a sustainable youth service providing informal education to young people on their terms and enhancing their physical and psychological wellbeing.

Government has a vital role to play in ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to access good quality universal youth services and this can be best achieved by placing the youth service on a statutory footing. It must be the responsibility of the Secretary of State and the newly created Minister for Youth Affairs to promote, secure and provide, in partnership with local authorities and voluntary bodies, a sufficient youth service whose primary purpose shall be the personal and social development of young people.

A well-funded youth service promotes social inclusion, encourages partnership working, assists young people at risk, gives young people hope and aspiration and is cost effective. The lobbying organisation ChooseYouth estimates, along with all previous professional calculations of resource requirements, that for just £350 a year per young person, all young people could have access to youth work services in their immediate locality.

We believe the government needs to take this radical approach in order to deliver the youth work offer that young people in England deserve. A statutory youth service, with dedicated ring-fenced funding, provided by a core of JNC qualified youth workers from the statutory and voluntary sector, working with trained and supported volunteers with one full time nationally qualified youth worker for every 400 young people.

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Appendix – Voice from the Youth Service

Quotes from young people:

- *“Youth workers prepared me for life's challenges”*
- *“Youth workers were my trusted adults whenever I needed someone to chat with”*
- *“Youth workers give me a voice.”*
- *“Youth work exposed me to experiences that I would never have been able to afford. If it wasn't for the youth workers and the youth centre then I would not be having these experiences.”*
- *“I first attended my local youth centre when I was 15. I was sceptical at first but I'm glad I went. I learnt so much about myself and developed so many personal social and professional skills. I had an extraordinary time at the youth centre. Being available out of school hours and weekends really had a positive impact on everyone who attended. At a young age, the youth centre was the only place I could truly be myself and it definitely had a big play in helping me become the woman I am today!”*
- *“I remember the detached youth work team coming onto our estate. It was great as they used to listen to what we had to say. They also took us on trips and days out. It's only when you look back that you realise how much you learnt from engaging in all of that”*
- *“If it wasn't for my youth worker when I was a young person then I would still be in a life of being groomed and sexually exploited.”*
- *“In my life I started to go down a bad path, I started doing drugs and ended up in some very bad situations. If it wasn't for the help I got from youth workers then I don't think I would be here today.”*
- *“It's given me the confidence to speak out like in school and I love being in this place (youth centre)”*
- *“Being at the youth centre and working with the youth workers has been really beneficial to me as I have built up my confidence and my social skills to a point where I am fully confident in the workplace”.*

Quotes from Youth Workers:

“Local authorities are abandoning the profession and changing many of the underpinning values of the work. It is a slow erosion so nobody notices rather than a quick cut. This also allows them to use terms such as 'service transformation' and 'evolution of practice'. This 'evolution' is budget driven not based on the changing needs of young people. Models of work are designed around how measurements will show best impact and improvement not on what will actually have the greatest benefit. Measurement is the driver, not young people.”

Youth worker, South West

"[Our] youth services have been decimated although targeted work with NEETS has increased. The consequence will probably be that we have more NEETS in the future as youth workers are not there for early intervention work."

Youth worker, Wales

"Youth work funding needs to be publicly funded on an equal footing with education and it needs to be ring fenced."

Youth worker, North East, Yorkshire and Humberside

"We are all so demoralised. The future holds for young people looks very bleak and not what i want for our future generations"

Youth worker, West Midlands

"We need a whole community response to youth issues. Government needs to fund and supply more Qualified Youth Workers Lots of so called outsourced providers are cutting corners and not using qualified workers. This creates massive safety issues for young people and staff who are not trained to deal with potential violent and aggressive situations. One Qualified Youth Worker per team is not a safe option; it is utterly short sighted and dangerous for the worker and the young people."

Youth worker, North West

"[I am] concerned that youth work will be privatised and only undertaken for profit when it should be about helping young people to reach their potential."

Youth worker, North West

"The loss of to many youth clubs and youth workers, throughout the UK, is showing an increase in young people being anti-social and venerable. Putting a stickie plaster over it by introducing early intervention at schools does not support our young people outside the educational environment, the banking concept."

Youth worker, South West

"Bring back the JNC regulations and register youth work as a profession. Youth workers need more recognition instead of derailment of the profession and having to have a social work qualification to work in youth work."

Youth worker, East Midlands

"I despair of the total desolation and degradation of youth work and rights and services for young people, by the previous and current government. The impact of this total disregard for young lives and rights will cast a shadow over us for many years to come. Youth workers 'listen', to young people and treat them with respect and empowerment, in a way that does not happen with other professionals. I have watched as my life's work has been ripped from under me, and we have lost some truly talented professionals. I no longer feel that the services that I am now part of offer a good service or hope to young people. I am truly worried for the future."

Youth worker, West Midlands