

# YOUTH MATTERS

**Your National  
Youth STRATEGY**

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# HOW HAVE THE LAST FEW YEARS FELT?

If things have been tough, you're not the only one.

You've lived through a pandemic, you're growing up in a digital world that's somehow both amazing and exhausting, and with prices going up, the future can feel like one big question mark.

Lots of you have felt unheard and ignored by the people making all the decisions.

We're here to change that.

We've listened to you. We've heard that you have big hopes for the future, that you are ambitious and that you know you can change things for the better. But we've also heard that you feel disconnected from your communities, concerned about your safety and your health, and frustrated by the lack of opportunities available to you.

You're not alone. Thousands of young people across the country have told us they feel the same way.

You deserve better, and it's time that we did something about it.

Together with young people, we've built a plan for the future.

## *Our vision is simple:*

Every young person – no matter where they're from – should have a safe place to go, someone who cares for them and a community they feel a part of.

We know that is not easy and it won't happen over night but we want you to:

- Feel safe, online and offline.
- Feel connected to people your own age and a part of your wider community.
- Build skills and have opportunities at school, at work and in your free time.
- Have support for your health, both physical and mental.

We surveyed over 14,000 young people and then created 'Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy' to make sure every young person can thrive.

# CHANGING HOW WE WORK

We know that change needs to start with us. We're making three big shifts over the next 10 years to put young people like you at the heart of decisions, services and support. Those shifts will change how we work, across all of our work with this Strategy.

## **1. FROM NATIONAL TO LOCAL:**

Decisions are often made far from the people they affect. That's changing. Funding will move closer to where you live, so the people working with you can deliver what you need, where you need it.

- Local authorities will work with you to design youth services.
- We will fund places and activities near you, so you can have spaces to go to and fun things to engage with.
- Local people, including those like you, will help decide how funding is spent – which could support youth centres, after-school clubs or better transport.

## **2. FROM FRAGMENTED TO COLLABORATIVE:**

Too often, services don't talk to each other, and young people fall through the cracks. We're fixing that.

- You will access activities and support for your mental health and guidance for your education and career in Young Futures Hubs, so you won't need to go to five different places for support.
- Schools, colleges, councils, youth clubs and others will form stronger partnerships – working together to help you thrive.

## **3. FROM EXCLUDED TO EMPOWERED:**

For too long, decisions have been made about you, without you. That's not good enough. From now on, your voice will shape new policies, and you'll have more tools and chances to shape your community.

- You'll be able to vote as soon as you hit 16. This will give you a say in who runs the country.
- We will design as many of our programmes as possible with you. You won't just see new initiatives delivered to you – you'll help us shape them.

# SECURING THE FOUNDATIONS

But first things first – it’s hard to think about your future when your present doesn’t feel secure. If your basic needs aren’t met – things like having enough money, a safe place to live, and access to food – it’s really hard to focus on school, friendships, or your goals. And with the cost of living rising and housing feeling out of reach, it’s no wonder many of you feel worried, unstable, and unsure about what’s next.

We hear you. And we’re working with the rest of the government to get the basics right. That means:

- Helping families in poverty and making sure that more young people can access free school meals.
- Building more affordable homes and doing more to prevent youth homelessness.
- Giving younger children the best start in life, with good health services and providing support to their parents.
- Improving schools with an expanded curriculum and more access to creative subjects, so you can have a good education and opportunities to develop your skills in different ways.

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# YOU SAID IT. WE'RE DOING IT.

Everything we've described up until now sets the scene for the changes we want to make moving forward. But that's just the start.

We're committed to doing 10 key things over the next 10 years to make real changes in your lives. Each of these 10 things has come directly from what you've told us; we've listened, and we want to make things better for you.

## **ACTION 1: TRUSTED ADULTS**

Everyone deserves someone they can trust.

Whether it's a parent, carer, youth worker, teacher or coach – having an adult who listens, understands and supports you can make all the difference. **But nearly 1 in 5 of you say you don't have a trusted adult in your life outside of home.** That's something we need to change.

We're making sure there are more adults around you who are ready to listen – and who understand what you're going through. In 10 years, **we want half a million more of you to have access to an adult you trust outside your home.**

### *Changes you'll see:*

- **More trusted adults in your community.** We will make sure there are adults in your schools, clubs and youth centres ready to guide you through the challenges you face – whether it's online misogyny, mental health or something else.
- **More support for families.** Schools will also work more closely with parents to make sure you're getting joined-up support at home and at school.

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## ACTION 2: STRENGTHENING THE WORKFORCE

Right now, too many services are disconnected. That means they can't keep up with what you need, especially in parts of the country where youth services have been cut back.

We're changing that – by helping services join up and making sure support is easier to find, closer to home, and shaped around you.

And the people who support you matter. When youth workers, coaches or mentors are well-trained and well-supported, you get the help you need to grow, feel safe and thrive.

We know how important these people are so we're backing them.

### *Changes you'll see:*

- **Local offers.** We're helping councils and organisations create better services in your area – supporting them to understand what you want, plan better things for you to do, and let you know when and where they are on.

- **Young Futures Hubs.** You'll see 50 safe, inclusive centres across the country, offering support for everything from careers to mental health – led by trained adults who are there for you.

- **More youth workers with access to better training.** We're investing in increasing the number of youth workers, with more money for training so youth workers have the skills to support you – whether it's with mental health, careers advice or navigating life online.

- **More pathways into youth work.** There'll be new, clearer ways into the youth sector. You'll see more apprenticeships and qualifications for careers in youth work.

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### ACTION 3: FRIENDS AND RELATIONSHIPS

You're the most connected generation – but also one of the loneliest.

With social media everywhere, it's easy to feel like everyone else is surrounded by friends. But too many of you feel lonely. That's not okay.

You deserve to feel like you belong. In your school, your community, and your online world.

We're making sure you have more chances to connect with others, build friendships and feel part of something real.

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#### *Changes you'll see:*

- **A safer internet.** You're the first generation to grow up fully online. Adults don't always understand it. There are some bad things online but also a lot of good. The **Online Safety Act** means platforms must protect you from harmful content. You'll also get more support to spot fake news, misinformation and risks to develop good relationships online.
- **More belonging at school.** A new framework will support schools to help you belong, feel included and improve your overall experience particularly for those of you who have extra needs.
- **Support when you feel lonely.** Everyone feels lonely sometimes, but it's not always easy to talk about. We're helping adults spot the signs and offer support. There'll be help to tackle specific problems experienced by boys and girls – as well as those with extra needs or disabilities – to build strong, lasting friendships through things like sports programmes or mentoring.

## ACTION 4: RICHER LIVES

Some of the best moments happen when you're doing something you love – especially with other people.

Whether it's sport, music, art or volunteering, these activities help you build confidence, make friends and feel part of something. But **less than half of you feel happy with what's available in your local area** – and even when great things exist, they're often hard to find or access.

We want to change that. Not just by offering more activities, but by making sure they're **high-quality, inclusive and built around what you actually want**. Right now, young people whose families have more money do more of those fun and meaningful things. That's not fair. So **in 10 years, we want to have halved the gap in who gets to do activities between richer and poorer families.**

### *Changes you'll see:*

- **More high-quality activities in and out of your classroom.** You'll see more chances to get involved in sport, art, music, outdoor adventures and volunteering – through your school, college and local community. This includes more fun things to do, more chances to get active, and free holiday activities for those who need them. We'll ask for your input to make sure what's on offer is right for you and we will make clear to schools and colleges what activities they should deliver and how.
- **Clearer information.** You can't join in if you don't know what's out there – or can't get there. We'll make sure local organisations promote opportunities properly, and that councils share clear information to help you find what's available.

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## ACTION 5: GOOD WORK

Thinking about life after school can feel overwhelming. What job should you do? What path should you take? And how do you even get started?

You've told us you want clearer advice, more real-world experience, and support that helps you feel ready – not just academically, but emotionally and practically.

We're making sure you get the guidance, opportunities and skills you need to step into your future with confidence.

### *Changes you'll see:*

- **More career preparation.** You'll get better advice at school or college with refreshed standards for good career guidance, helping you to understand the different options available to you once you leave. There'll be more of these options too, like new training or apprenticeships. And you're also going to get more access to work experience to help you understand what the world of work is really like and be inspired by different careers.

- **More support to come to school.** We know it's not always easy to show up. Schools and colleges will be supported to become safer, more inclusive and welcoming – so you can keep building the knowledge and skills you need to thrive.

- **Help to find a job.** We're delivering a **Youth Guarantee** and expanding the number of **Employment Hubs** to make sure every young person can access high-quality career advice and learning and earning opportunities. We'll work with employers and Jobcentres to help you get the training and support you need.

- **New skills for a changing world.** As AI and climate change reshape the future, we're creating more chances for you to learn the skills needed to work in these fast-growing areas, including through a better curriculum.

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## ACTION 6: KEEPING YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

There is so much to gain from social connections. But to make those connections, you have to feel safe. In recent years, this hasn't always been the case. You've told us you're worried about being a victim of crime, and that you want people to be more educated on how to look after each other.

### *Changes you'll see:*

- **More policing in your neighbourhood.** With named, contactable officers in your community – not just to respond to crime, but to build trust, prevent harm and keep you safe.
- **Support for vulnerable young people.** We're launching Young Futures Panels to support young people before problems get really bad. You'll see more help outside school to build healthy attitudes and behaviours.
- **Better RSHE lessons.** Your teachers will talk more about issues like knife crime and respectful relationships. These lessons will help protect you and prevent others from being drawn into risky behaviour.

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## ACTION 7: PLACES TO GO

You've told us it's hard to find somewhere to go.

There aren't enough good spaces that are welcoming to you and where you can just spend time with friends and have fun. And when those spaces do exist, they're often expensive – or you feel judged for being there.

That's not fair. You deserve places in your community where you feel safe, valued and free to connect with others.

We're making sure those spaces exist – and that you can actually get to them.

### *Changes you'll see:*

- **More places to go.** We're investing in spaces you actually want to spend time in – from youth centres to sports facilities and libraries. We'll work with you and local organisations to make sure they feel welcoming, affordable and offer what you need.
- **More time in nature.** Being outside is good for your body and mind. We're making sure you can reach a green or blue space – like a park or lake – within a 15-minute trip from home. You'll also see more chances to learn outdoors.
- **Better transport.** There's no point having great spaces if you can't get to them. We are working with the right people to improve your local bus services, making them safer and more accessible, with a limit on the price of bus fares until March 2027.

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## **ACTION 8: HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

Staying healthy isn't always easy.

You've told us that life can feel overwhelming, and that getting help often takes too long. You shouldn't have to be in crisis to get support. We're making sure wellbeing support is a part of your everyday life – not just something you reach for when things go wrong.

### *Changes you'll see:*

- **More mental health support.** Long wait times aren't okay. We're bringing support to where you are – with **Mental Health Support Teams** in schools and colleges and wellbeing advice in **Young Futures Hubs**.
- **Targeted support for those who need it.** We're working with schools, colleges and councils to better support young people with extra needs or disabilities and boys and young men – helping everyone build healthier habits and access the help they need.

## **ACTION 9: DELIVERING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

You've told us loud and clear: you want to be heard.

Only **1 in 4 young people** feel like their voices matter. That's not good enough.

It's your **right** to be part of shaping the solutions. You shouldn't have to fix everything yourself, but your ideas, experiences and needs should be at the centre of every decision that affects you.

### *Changes you'll see:*

- **Votes at 16.** By the next elections, you'll be able to vote at 16. Schools and youth organisations will help you get informed, so you can make your voice count.
- **More ways to engage with your communities.** We will support you to get involved in community projects, like campaigns and community events, or to connect with other young people in your local area.
- **New ways to get involved.** Whether it's through local youth ambassador networks or co-designing programmes with us, your voice won't just be heard – it'll help shape the future.

## **ACTION 10: HOLDING US TO ACCOUNT**

'Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy' is all about you, and what we're doing to make things better for you. It's really important that these aren't just words.

We're working across the government to make sure the changes we've promised actually happen over the next 10 years.

But this isn't just about us. We want you to hold us to account

You'll have regular chances to get involved – helping shape programmes and policies, and seeing updates online to track what we're doing.

You might be invited to take part in a national hearing, where you can tell us what's working and what needs to change.

And in a couple of years, you'll help shape a report – showing what's been done, what's improved, and what still needs work.

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# DELIVERING CHANGE TOGETHER

## **This strategy is just the beginning.**

We want it to spark a conversation that lasts – one where you help shape the future, not just watch it unfold.

We're asking you to bring your voice, ideas and energy to this and make change for yourselves and within your communities. Whether it's looking after your wellbeing, exploring local activities and encouraging

your friends to do the same, or speaking up about what matters – you have the power to build a future you're proud of.

You don't have to do this alone. Supporting you is everyone's job – your family, teachers, youth workers, government, businesses and more.

Together, we can create a future where every young person, no matter their background, can truly thrive.

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