



# Transforming the offer for young people in the UK

## Summary of findings and recommendations

**The Make Space Youth Review was an independent, one year body established to consider the lives of young people in the UK today and the support we offer them as a society. We set out to find out what the future holds for young people and what kind of support they need to fulfil their potential.**

A guiding principle of the Youth Review has been that every one of its conclusions is rooted in the views of young people themselves. We set out to give teenagers a voice and to tell us what life is like for them, what support they are currently getting and how that compares to the level of support they need. Importantly, we looked together at how things could be improved. To do this, we toured the country – undertaking the biggest ever debate with over 16,000 young people as well as parents, teachers, youth workers and others concerned with the lives of young people.

Young people represent both the present and the future for all of us – they give us a sense of how strong Britain can be in years to come, representing the next generation of people who will make decisions about all of our lives. Their future is indeed ours too.

However, young people live in a world that is radically different from that experienced by their parents and grandparents. Dramatic changes in work patterns, family structures and mobility have changed beyond recognition patterns of caring within the family, the make up of communities and the way that children grow up.

The rise of divorce means that more young people are living with lone parents or step families, giving way to a revolution in the diversity of family structures. At the same time there has been a major rise in the numbers of mothers working, with 80% of mothers of young people now out at work. This increased maternal employment, coupled with increased mobility, means that traditional caring arrangements of extended family and the wider support of the community are no longer available for many.

Life outside the family home is also changing. The teenage years are a crucial point of development, during which long-lasting attitudes and capabilities begin to form. They are a period of experimentation, of identity-formation and

learning. Yet young people were overwhelming in the view that they often feel bored, with the sharpest effects of boredom being felt in the hours directly after the end of the school day. 34% of 11 – 16 year olds reported that they regularly return home to an empty house, usually because their parents are at work.

Research carried out in 2004 suggested that teenagers in the UK are much more likely to spend time ‘with friends’ on four or more evenings a week than those in other countries. One of the results of an increasing amount of unsupervised time has been a rise in the number of gangs, estimated during 2006 to involve 6% of 10 – 19 year olds and 12% of 14 – 16 year olds.

And we know that many young people face challenges – including those vulnerable young people who are not getting help quickly enough and those teenagers who cannot rely on their parents for the support that others take for granted. We know that many young people experience problems with bullying and peer pressure. For all young people, growing up is more complicated than in the past, with a faster paced and more frenetic world meaning that growing up has become more complex. Many young people, as well as their parents, struggle to keep up.

### **A number of golden threads run through the Youth Review recommendations:**

The needs of children, young people and families are all interlinked

Young people are the concern of all of us

A continuum of support throughout childhood 0–19 years and into adulthood is crucial

Increasing aspirations and expectations is crucial

All young people test boundaries, but some young people cannot cope and get involved in more extreme risky behaviour

Early intervention is vital to stop problems escalating and getting out of hand

Young people gain most if support offered is joined up

Young people must be able to shape their own future



Unfortunately, for some, the growing influences of drugs and the impact of living in communities with high unemployment and poverty means that young people have few positive influences in their lives. The lack of places to socialize and take part in activities deny young people the opportunity to develop and fulfil their potential. Teenagers are taking in new experiences at a vast rate, every day. For many, positive contact with trusted older people with whom to reflect on and share these experiences is now lacking. Choices and flexibilities have also led to an increasingly complex environment with young people needing to navigate their way through a highly sophisticated world of education, study, transport, communication, housing and support on a daily basis.

***“80% of young people say they have nowhere to go”***

Changing lifestyles and technologies can mean that, for many, daily life can feel busier than in the past. For more vulnerable young people and families it can also mean that the escape from poverty and under achievement becomes ever more elusive. Whilst the majority of young people and their families meet the challenges that the modern day world throws at them head on, a deeply concerning minority are unable to fully respond with damaging and often high profile consequences as a result. For some young people the complexity of the world and the necessity to navigate these changes is simply too much. Despite being one of the most affluent countries in the world, indicators of emotional health and statistics relating to risky behaviour demonstrate that levels of well-being and happiness are in many cases unacceptably low. There is a systematic edge to inequality that is played out through children born in poverty having a much higher chance of living in poverty as adults, with their children then suffering similar levels of disadvantage in turn. Strengthening the resolve to tackle child poverty is the Youth Review’s first and overarching recommendation.

However, it is in the area of youth crime and justice that we can be seen to be failing most, with a system skewed to intervention only when things reach crisis point and skewed towards punishment and imprisonment when trouble occurs. The move to a more preventative approach to provide support to young people and families at the first sign of problems to prevent difficulties escalating is at the heart of our proposals and core to all aspects of what we recommend.

For too long we have let these issues drift – shocked when they reach the courtrooms and media front pages but lacking the foresight to have intervened earlier to prevent these difficulties escalating. The statistics speak for themselves – these young people are the 2.5% of every generation caught in cycle of disadvantage referred to by the recent Social Exclusion Taskforce report; they are the 10% of 16 – 18 year olds not in education, employment or training, which has remained doggedly

static for over 10 years. They are the 7,500 families with complex needs identified by the Government Respect Task Force and the 60,000 children in Local Authority care at any given time. Action is needed to offer these young people something more.

Throughout the Review we have found examples of great services for young people, from youth centres to community programmes and intensive support. These services are truly changing the lives of teenagers across the country and show what can be achieved. But we also found examples of areas where much more needs to be done – both to support vulnerable young people who are not getting the help they need quickly enough and also for others who are eager for activity and challenge. Other young people told us how they felt excluded from their communities – as if they didn’t belong. Having nowhere to go and nothing to do was the most common complaint of teenagers in every part of the country limiting potential. Concerns for their life chances are concerns for all of us. Their ambitions, and the opportunities to realise them, give a sense of the reality of the social and economic foundations of the future. Their skills, aptitude and well-being together form a series of indicators for the future health of our society, economy and culture.

We have sought to take the debate forward from the lives and experiences of young people, families and their communities today. The challenge that young people have set for us through this Review is to understand their needs and aspirations. Fears about personal safety, including gangs and gun crimes, are real. So too is an overwhelming confidence and ambition for the future and an optimism and understanding about what should and could be done to make things better – for all of us.

***“70% of 11 – 16 year olds said they have witnessed an incident of anti-social behaviour in the last year”***

Young people have a powerful message for us all – they need and deserve a better deal. From more places, opportunities and centres in their communities to better help when things go wrong. From more involvement in what goes on in their community to better protection for their own safety, young people are offering us the answers to some of the most important questions of the day.

Our recommendations imply major new investment and a major new focus for public policy – not just for young people but for all of us. There will be a cost to Government in achieving this, quite rightly, if these services are to offer the high quality and inspirational support that young people deserve. But there is also a cost in not taking action – a cost that we are paying right now at this minute through the cost of policing and the justice system, through the NHS and the benefits system and also the wider cost for the economy.

There is also an even bigger price we pay by not acting – that is the loss of individual opportunity and potential forever.

# An integrated offer for young people

A new and revolutionary offer for young people is likely to have a number of key elements. At its heart is a vision and commitment from Government and wider society to offer a new deal to support young people to reach their potential. The Make Space Youth Review is therefore proposing the development of an integrated offer for young people.

- **An inspirational Young People's Centre in every community.** Young people have told us that they want places to go that are exciting, full of interest and opportunity and staffed by inspirational people in their community. Young People's Centres would provide dedicated spaces for young people to meet, to have access to music, creative arts, sports, and classes that are both enriching and challenging. But the Centre would also go wider, offering access to information and specialist support for teenagers in difficulty. Inspirational and gifted young people's workers would lead these Centres and coordinate and link in with other activity for young people in the area.
- **Support for parents of teenagers.** As well as excellent opportunities and support for young people, we know that many parents want more support at times of difficulty and more choices about how they balance home and work. The right to request flexible working arrangements is crucial in enabling parents to spend more time with their teenagers. More intensive involvement and support is also crucial for parents of troubled teenagers, including specialist parenting intervention and the involvement of parents through Family Group Conferences in creating solutions at the first sign of difficulty.
- **Intensive support for troubled young people and outreach teams.** Preventing young people from reaching crisis point is essential. Based around the Young People's Centres, specialists will offer troubled young people positive support and intervention as difficulties occur, with Mobile Intervention Teams created to work in areas of high deprivation and unrest. Reform of the judicial system to create a strong statutory presumption against the imprisonment of young offenders, reserving prison for only the most serious violent offences will be an essential element of the new system.
- **Action on bullying and a new Victim Support Scheme.** Personal safety was the number one concern for young people, many of whom have been the victims of crime themselves. The Youth Review is proposing strengthened action to eradicate bullying in schools and other services and a new Victim Support scheme for young people.
- **The involvement of young people in their community through volunteering, mentoring and Youth Mayors schemes.** Many young people told us that they feel left out and neglected in their community which is often seen as reflecting the needs of adults. A new system of Youth Mayors is proposed to give teenagers representation and a say in their community. A youth volunteering scheme, complemented by a mentoring scheme, will encourage community involvement and intergenerational understanding.
- **Free public transport and leisure for all young people under 18.** Poor transport and high costs were seen as real barriers to many young people getting access to leisure facilities and activities. The Youth Review is proposing that public transport and leisure centres are made free to ensure access for all young people.

## Stepping up action on child poverty

Government has made a commitment to end child poverty by 2020 but statistics show that the target is far from being reached, with only a quarter of the target having been met by 2006.

A wide-ranging review is recommended with key measures put in place, including both redistributive policies and support to better enable parents to work. Additional steps might include:

- Reform of the tax credit system, to halve rates of non take-up by 2010
- Improve access to income support and benefits for working parents
- Increase affordable childcare for 11–14 year olds to increase the number of places and ensure sustainability
- Encourage and support parents to take up training and gain qualifications



# Key findings and recommendations

## Health, lifestyles and the impact of inequalities

Teenagers today face challenges in all aspects of their well-being. Whilst these do not always escalate into immediate problems, risky behaviour often relating to alcohol, drugs and personal relationships during the teenage years can form a marker for vulnerability in later life. A 2006 comparison of EU states across 50 indicators of well-being found that the UK was 21st out of 25 states for overall child health and well-being, making it the lowest ranked of the rich western states of the European Union. This was reinforced by figures released in 2007 by UNICEF that placed the UK at the bottom of the league table for child well-being across 21 industrialised countries. Many teenagers encounter sources of stress, including exam pressure, family problems and depression.

## Supporting parents and families in raising young people

Parents have a crucial role to play but many parents face new challenges in bringing up their teenagers. More young people than ever are living in one parent households, whilst long working hours create challenges for some parents in balancing work and home life with little support from outside the immediate family in providing care for their children once they grow beyond the very early years. A perceived 'atomisation' of communities and reduced reliance on extended families and neighbours have compounded a sense of isolation in parenthood for many. Little support is available until a crisis occurs.

## Young people and crime: Risks, offending and victims

Concerns about young people and crime are not unfounded. We have seen a 26% increase in the number of children and young people being drawn into the criminal justice system in the last three years. 68% of 11–16 year olds involved in the Youth Review commented that young people in their local area are more likely to cause disruption when they are bored. However, young people's needs as the biggest group of victims of crime largely go unnoticed. Figures demonstrate that teenage boys are at the greatest risk: 70% of 11–16 year olds involved in the Youth Review reported that they had been a victim of some form of anti-social behaviour over the previous year, whilst bullying was the number one concern.

## Recommendations

**Provide an advice and support point for young people in every community** to ensure health, well-being and emotional support is widely available and accessible.

**All secondary schools to provide breakfast for pupils** to provide a good, nutritionally sound breakfast for all pupils who choose to have it.

**Free access to leisure services and school leisure facilities after school and during holidays** to tackle obesity and support positive choices and healthy lifestyles.

**Introduce nutrition and food preparation on the National Curriculum for Key Stage 3 within Design and Technology teaching** to increase awareness of food and healthy eating choices.

**A fashion industry ban on size 0 models** to reduce pressure on young girls to conform to an unhealthy self-image.

**Greater financial support for young people living independently from parents** to raise income levels and to better enable them to meet the cost of living.

## Recommendations

**Flexible working hours for parents of teenagers** to enable parents to spend more time at home at key times in the day and in key parts of the year.

**Parent support sessions and surgeries in every area** to offer advice and support on bringing up teenagers.

**Intensive support programmes available for parents whose children are in difficulty** to provide the tools, skills and confidence to support their children. Young parents themselves need special attention.

**Provide affordable and flexible childcare for children up to 14 to help parents work** particularly for lone parents.

**Introduce a legal right to Family Group Conferencing** to provide a role for the whole family in providing elements of support to troubled young people, increasing sources of help and relieving the burden on parents.

## Recommendations

**A new victim support scheme for young people who have been victims of crime** to offer advice, guidance and a confidential service offering someone to talk to for victims of crime.

**A consensus to redouble efforts and eradicate bullying** to create a concerted national effort to reduce bullying in schools and other services.

**Align the underpinning principles of the Criminal and Civil Law** to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years old.

**A new community 'Turn Around' programme for young offenders to replace imprisonment for less serious crimes with a mix of challenge, contribution to the community and a process of identifying and reaching personal goals.**

**Specific strategies for young people with mental health needs to ensure** young adults with mental health problems get the support they need and can be identified and diverted away from custody where possible.

**Rapid Intervention Teams in areas of trouble** to provide speedy interventions in areas of disruption, whilst protecting the safety of the community at large and other young people.

## Cohesive communities

Inequalities give rise to challenges to community cohesion and stunt the potential of individuals, with worrying evidence that poverty varies according to communities. There is a wide range of evidence to show a growing disengagement between generations with many older people feeling ill at ease when young people gather in groups. Young people often feel disengaged from their own community and those who live in it.

## Education, development, skills and employment

There is now more opportunity than ever before in respect of pathways into training and jobs. However, this has resulted in transitions into adulthood becoming much more complicated than in the past, with young people often finding the maze of options available to them bewildering and hard to navigate. Personal and social skills have a particularly important impact on life chances and in avoiding dangerous and anti-social behaviour. High expectations and aspirations are key.

## Access to local services

Opportunities to raise outcomes for young people through positive opportunities and activity are being missed with 70% of young people saying they are bored and do not have enough safe places to go after school, in the evenings or during the holidays. 34% of 11–16 year olds report that they regularly return home to an empty house, usually as their parents are at work with many young people hanging around the streets as a result. Where facilities do exist they are often too costly to afford or difficult to reach. Temptation into petty crime is a major worry. Young people said they wanted contemporary places designed for them in the community – somewhere that was visibly theirs and known and where activities and support would be available. Early and regular opening times were a particular concern for younger children and teenagers.

## Young people, government and citizenship

Teenagers' involvement in online communities is not mirrored in real life – with a worrying disengagement of young people from conversing in the real world. Young people have reported a sense of exclusion from communities and a feeling that services are imposed on them by adults. Too often teenagers' positive contributions to the community are ignored in favour of stories about anti-social behaviour and crime.

## Recommendations

**New intergenerational programmes for every community** to increase understanding and build shared experiences in the local community.

**Powerful steps to promote integration between communities** to tackle tension between young people of different communities.

**Increased use of Public Service Agreements (PSAs) to promote integration and achievement** to close the divide between communities.

**Intense training for workers on the needs of young asylum seekers** to reduce barriers to integration.

**A national youth volunteering programme** to provide volunteering opportunities for every young person by the age of 18.

## Recommendations

**All secondary schools to become learning centres** to reflect the wider range of activities and services now located around the school.

**A national mentoring scheme to motivate and support, backed up by learning and careers coaches** to raise aspirations, ensure engagement and widen choices.

**A new 'Young People in Work' programme** to improve understanding of work, raise expectations and open up access to new professions.

**A review of support for young people excluded from school** to engage and re-motivate excluded and truanting young people.

**Parents and teachers online** to keep parents in contact with progress and issues at school.

## Recommendations

**Create 2,000 Young People's Centres** to offer fun, structured activities, social space and support after school, on weekends and during school holidays for all young people.

**A new young people's workforce** to lead and coordinate the offer to young people around the new Young People's Centres.

**Entitlement to a recognised and inspirational Young Person's Curriculum** to offer wide ranging and high-quality activities in their area.

**Free public transport for all young people under 18** to enable children and young people to access the services they need, whether they are living in inner city, urban or rural communities.



## Recommendations

**Young People impact assessments to be required in all public policy decision making by law** to involve young people in shaping design of policy and the local environment.

**The right to vote from 16** to raise participation and promote involvement.

**A Youth Mayor in every area** to give young people a say over their area as well as experience of voting and decision making.

**A Youth Fund for every area** to offer young people the opportunity to shape and influence contributions to the communities around them.

**Youth Manifestos for candidates** for political office to ensure relevance to the issues that concern teenagers.

# How did the Make Space Youth Review work?

**Submissions:** These were taken in writing, electronically or verbally

**Review meetings:** These meetings considered written evidence and heard presentations and verbal submissions from key individuals and agencies

**Research:** The Youth Review mapped UK and international evidence and best practice examples

**Young people's involvement:** 16,000 young people took part in consultation events and submissions around the country

**Specialist seminars:** Specialist seminars on key issues of education, vulnerability and inequalities and youth services were held throughout the year

## Who is the Make Space Youth Review?

**Oona King, Co-Chair**

Writer, broadcaster and campaigner

**Wilf Petherbridge, Co-Chair**

Former Young Mayor of Lewisham

**Yasmin Ali**

Young MP

**Flo Armstrong**

Head of Barnet Youth & Connexions Service

**Graeme Cooke**

Public Policy Researcher, IPPR

**Charlotte Edwards**

Make Space Youth Cabinet member

**Isatou Faal**

Make Space Youth Cabinet member

**Leon Feinstein**

Reader in the Economics of Education, Institute of Education

**Professor Helen Haste**

Professor of Psychology, University of Bath

**Anne Longfield OBE**

Chief Executive, 4Children

**Viv McKee**

Director of Policy and Development, National Youth Agency

**Mary McLeod**

Chief Executive, National Parenting Institute

**Lord Northbourne**

Chair, Associate Parliamentary Group for Parents and Families

**Pip O'Byrne**

Chair, 4Children

**Ian Rayson**

Corporate Affairs and Internal Communications Director, Nestlé UK Ltd.

- 70% of media coverage of young people is negative
- 68% of young people say that boredom leads to crime
- 70% of young people have been victims of anti-social behaviour in their community
- More than 70% of 11 – 16 year olds said that they have witnessed anti-social behaviour over the last year, whilst 12% of young people belong to a gang
- 62% said that they did not know where to go to get help or information if they needed it
- Youth crime costs up to £13 billion per year compared to £1.6 billion spent by government on positive prevention and youth programmes. It costs £35,000 to put a young person in a detention centre for a year
- 79% of 11 – 16 year olds said they would be more likely to access a 'one stop shop' for support than if they were in different places

The Make Space Youth Review would like to thank all those organisations and individuals who have submitted information and evidence to the Youth Review. In particular, we would like to thank all the schools, youth clubs and centres who hosted consultation sessions and the thousands of young people who took part in our inquiry consultations. The Make Space Youth Review has been made possible through support from Nestlé, as an element of its partnership with 4Children's Make Space Campaign.

Copies of the full report are available from 4Children.  
For more information call the 4Children Information Line on 020 7512 2100.



Make Space

[www.makespace.org.uk](http://www.makespace.org.uk)

Summary report

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