

Make Your Mark



**What should your UK Youth
Parliament campaign on?**

**Briefing for House of Commons
2011**

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Introduction

Welcome to your Make your Mark: What should your UK Youth Parliament campaign on? - briefing.

The aim of this guide is to make sure you have all the information in getting a massive turnout out in the public vote for what gets discussed in the House of Commons debate. The winning debate will then be the national campaign for UKYP for the forthcoming year.

We are aiming to get 50,000 votes from young people across the UK. They will select the 5 topics that get debated at the House of Commons. Last year we got 2502 votes, this year, we need even more! Rather than just using an online poll we have had printed 100,000 ballot papers for you to take to young people in your constituency and get them to fill it in. This will help you speak to young people you represent, and back up your campaigns with national statistics and support.

The topics on the ballot paper were all decided by Members of Youth Parliament at the Annual Sitting in July 2011. You can read the full text behind each statement at the end of this briefing.

What do I need to do? 5 easy steps

At your regional meeting you will be given ballot papers for you to take away and get fill in, follow these 5 easy steps to making sure it happens

1. Write your name and region on each of your colour ballot papers
2. Talk to young people at your school, college, youth centre or voluntary group about the issues on the ballot paper
3. Get them to vote and fill in their details at the bottom of the form
4. Collect them all together
5. Send them back or enter the details on line using the special UKYP link rather than the general public one. This must be done by 16th October 2011

Where do I post them?

If you are sending them back you need to send them to

UK Youth Parliament
c/o British Youth Council
CAN Mezzanine
49-51 East Road
London
N1 6AH

We will reimburse postage costs if your Local Authority will not cover them

Make your Mark! What should your UK Youth Parliament campaign on?

UK Youth Parliament Manifesto – full statements

1. No to tuition fees, Yes to graduate tax

We don't support the system of university tuition fees. We instead support a graduate contribution, in which a graduate would pay a percentage of their salary after they finish higher education (depending on how much they are earning) for a set period of time. This would mean that the total contribution a person makes is linked to the benefit they obtain from higher education. This system would ensure young people are not leaving university saddled with a lifetime of debt.

2. A diverse range of Further Education courses

We believe that institutions providing further education should offer a wider range of courses and different qualifications, which are both academic and vocational. Students must have the right to impartial information and advice, given in their best interest, about further education.

3. Making the transition between education stages better

Students should receive more support for the transitions between different stages of their education. Information on how to apply to higher education through UCAS, (the Universities & Colleges Admissions Service), needs to be given when students first start further education. Advice on UCAS applications also needs to be clearer and more accessible to young people.

4. A curriculum to prepare us for life

We believe that the place of citizenship education in the curriculum should be radically overhauled through a youth-led UK-wide review. Teaching staff should be specifically trained to a national standard to deliver citizenship education following this review. The review should explore the meaning and scope of "citizenship" along the following lines:

Political education: Young people should be taught the basics of democracy and their rights and roles in society through an impartial political education.

Sex and Relationships education (SRE): Every young person across the UK should receive the same high-level standard of sex and relationship education in schools. Young people should get SRE from either teachers qualified in this specific field or health professionals. We encourage third party organisations to deliver relevant sessions in schools and colleges. SRE should have a weekly place in the lesson timetable. SRE needs to include information on both the physical and emotional aspects of relationships.

Cultural awareness: The curriculum should aim to promote equality, diversity, and an awareness and understanding of special educational needs. The syllabus should include basic sign language skills.

Community cohesion: The curriculum should encourage young people to make a positive difference within our communities through volunteering.

Finance skills: There needs to be compulsory financial education within the curriculum. This should give young people practical advice on managing their money, for example information on the processes involved in opening bank accounts and applying for a mortgage. This will help students prepare for later life.

Sustainable living: There needs to be a place within the curriculum for young people to learn about how they can live sustainably, and adapt their lifestyle in order to conserve natural resources and look after the planet.

Citizenship Education Test: We believe there should be a standard citizenship test in schools within the citizenship curriculum. This would reflect the test that non UK Citizens have to complete in order to receive British citizenship.

5. Spontaneous school inspections

We believe that the UK Government and Parliament need to carefully consider the underlying reasons behind schools' underachievement, for behaviour, school leadership, and teaching methods, and, where appropriate, offer advice, solutions and increase investment. There should be spontaneous schools inspections by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) to get a view of what a school is really like, and inspectors should offer support and solutions. Students should be involved in these inspections and any accompanying consultations.

6. Independent health clinics in schools

We need health clinics available in every school to provide free and confidential care, treatment, and advice for students. These clinics should promote ways to help keep students healthy such as healthy eating.

We believe it must be made clear to young people that it is their legal right to be able to use these services 'in confidence', which means the nurse or health worker will not talk about what students have said to other people such as teachers, without permission unless they feel that the young person or others need safeguarding from danger.

7. Individualised learning for all

We believe that learning should be personalised for all young people. Young people should be able to take courses that are most appropriate to their skills, needs and abilities. In order to achieve this we believe that class sizes should be significantly reduced. Local authorities also need to provide a wide range of curriculum opportunities to meet the needs of all young people, in particular vocational routes and applied academic courses. The provision of alternative skills training, such as modern apprenticeships, will help combat the UK's current skills shortage. Schools need to prioritise individualised learning over meeting government targets for GCSE and A-level exams. Young people not in education, employment or training also need to be given additional support to identify and achieve their aspirations.

8. A coordinated examination timetable

Examination boards need to work more closely together to coordinate course specifications and exam timetables in order to minimise clashes that cause worry and disruption to students. Examination boards also need to ensure clarity in the setting of exam questions.

9. Better work experience and careers advice

We believe that all young people, between the ages of 13 and 18, should have the opportunity to participate in work experience, in an external working environment, for a minimum of one week in a field of their choice.

Each school should ensure all students can access a professionally trained careers adviser, or make use of external services such as Connexions, for impartial and personalised careers

advice. Careers advice services should also do targeted work to engage those not in education, employment or training.

10. Advertising volunteering opportunities in accessible places

We believe that a broad range of volunteering opportunities for young people need to be more widely advertised both online and offline so young people can positively contribute to their communities.

11. Zero tolerance towards bullying in schools

Schools should have a zero tolerance policy to bullying. The policies and guidance about preventing, and dealing with bullying, should be written by students in consultation with teachers and relevant professionals. We believe that schools need to have professional advice and peer support for both the victim and the bully, better training for staff about bullying, and improved information and advice for students about bullying.

12. Young people in control of all youth budgets

There should be more information and advice about ways that young people can get involved in youth budgets to ensure money is spent on the things young people want and need. Decisions made about spending youth budgets should be youth-led.

13. A greener future for Britain

We believe that to create a greener future for Britain there needs to be:

A national co-ordination of recycling: A national scheme should be implemented so each local region plays the same part in protecting our environment. Shops across the UK should also increase their use of recyclable bags and packaging.

A focus on renewable energy: We believe that there should be a greater use of renewable energy sources, like wind-power or tidal-power. This will reduce our carbon footprint and make us less reliant upon imported fossil fuels.

A reduction of our energy usage: The Government needs to support households and schools in embracing energy efficient technologies, such as power saving televisions, and promote the production of renewable energy.

14. Make public transport cheaper, better and accessible for all

We believe there needs to be cheaper, subsidised public transport for young people who are in full time education or under the age of eighteen. These young people should not pay more than half of the adult fare for buses.

We believe a national code of practice for public transport should be introduced to ensure consistency in the cleanliness, frequency, reliability, and treatment of young people, across the UK. We believe that the punctuality of public transport needs to be improved and that systems need to be put in place to penalise, scrutinise and challenge transport companies who have a poor punctuality record.

We believe that that the local authorities and the UK government should look into providing community transport for rural areas that currently have little or no public transport services.

We believe that public transport providers need to ensure that young people with disabilities can access their services by providing fully accessible vehicles and adequate space for wheelchair users, raising staff awareness of the needs of young people with disabilities - both visible and invisible disabilities, and providing travel at a reduced cost for support workers.

15. Our minds matter – better mental health services for young people

We believe that mental health education should be made compulsory in our curriculum. This should provide information about common clinical conditions including depression and challenge stereotypes and taboos surrounding mental health issues.

We believe the UK Government should increase provision of mental health services for young people and improve the existing facilities by making them accessible, free of charge and age appropriate. Young people with mental health conditions should receive treatment in mental health services that work exclusively with young people.

16. A youth-friendly National Health Service

We believe that all services provided by the National Health Service should be available at times which are appropriate for young people. We also believe that if support and guidance that young people need is not available in their local area through the NHS then the NHS should provide the funds to allow those individuals access the private health sector.

17. No change to EU relationship without a referendum

We believe in the principle of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union. We believe the European Union should open up to more democratic and transparent practices. Any future changes in the relationship between the UK and the European Union, including the adoption of the Euro, should be approved through a referendum.

18. Support our troops and their families

We believe our troops, and their families, should be supplied with adequate equipment, and the healthcare and specific support services they need.

19. Reduction of nuclear weapons

We support the reduction of nuclear weapons across the globe via the use of diplomacy and international relations.

20. Make military intervention a last resort

We believe that the UK Parliament and Government should only use military intervention as a last resort. We believe that this approach to military intervention is imperative to solving delicate and potentially volatile situations.

21. Fund an education programme to reduce Gun and Knife Crime

We believe that gun and knife crime in the UK has become a growing problem in the UK which needs to be tackled. We believe that more funding needs to go into raising awareness of the consequences of gun and knife crime amongst young people and their communities, particularly within areas affected by this type of crime. Such education programmes need to be focused on informing young people about the dangers of gun and knife crime at a younger age.

22. Tackle Gang Culture

We believe that we need to involve schools, youth services and the local police, to address gang culture in the UK and also tackle 'postcode wars' between youths of different postcodes.

We believe there is clarification needed within the current legislation for 'Gangbos' - civil injunctions that can be granted by the civil courts if the local council or the police can show there is a 50/50 chance that a person has engaged in, encouraged or assisted gang-related violence. What constitutes a "gang" needs further definition, and a 'Gangbo' may be used on young people who have only been stereotyped as being involved in gang activity.

We believe that we need to stop the use dogs as weapons in the UK. These dangerous dogs are not intended to be kept as pets, but solely to intimidate and injure others. They are used as an alternative to carrying either a gun or knife. We need to do more to address this culture of 'attack animals' and protect such animals.

23. Mutual respect: Improve the relationship between police and young people

To develop a greater mutual respect between police and young people there needs to be more interaction between the police and the youth community, which can be achieved through initiatives within the youth service and in schools and colleges.

Understanding and navigating the legal and justice system within the UK can be confusing for young people due to its complexity. We believe that it is paramount that all young people have access to free, clear and comprehensive legal aid and support, and that information about the law across the UK is transparent and easy to understand for young people.

24. Make Stop and Search based on evidence, not prejudice

We condemn any form of discrimination or prejudice directed not only towards young people, but also people from the Black and Minority Ethnic communities, within the use of stop and search by the police. We feel that young people should be given more information on their rights when it comes to stop and search, and how the procedure by the police must comply with the law and police codes of practice. Young people need to know that there will be punishments in place for officers who unfairly practice stop and search.

25. Fair representation of young people in the media

We believe we need to tackle the unfairly negative portrayal of young people within our society. This is evident through the use of stereotypes in the media that label young people as jobs or thugs, and also the use of the mosquito device in communities to move young people away from public places. We think a young people's press service should be established to combat negative reporting and that the Press Standards Agency should recognise ageism against young people as discrimination.

26. An equal National Minimum Wage for all

We believe that paying young people a lower National Minimum Wage than their adult counterparts because they are younger is age discrimination, and this is unacceptable.

27. Proud to be British

We believe that British nationalism should celebrate both our individual identities and beliefs and our unity. We believe that everyone should unite around a collective British identity to create a more harmonious and connected society.

28. End Child Poverty now

We believe that no child should live in poverty. Every child matters and deserves a good quality of life.

29. Make leisure and cultural activities affordable

We believe that leisure and cultural activities need to be affordable, with discounts for young people, and that opportunities for young people need to be well advertised.

Young people should be involved in the processes of cultural decisions, for example decisions on the European Capital of Culture, and the decisions made should bear in mind the impact on young people.

30. Votes for 16 and 17 year olds in all public elections.

We believe that 16 and 17 year-olds are long overdue the right to vote in public elections in the UK.

31. Smear testing from 16 years of age

We believe that all young women should have smear tests from the age of 16 as part of the NHS' Cervical Screening Programme, in order to tackle rates of cervical cancer in the UK. Smear testing should be optional for young women who are below 16 on the NHS.

32. Fund our youth services, don't cut them

We believe that cuts to youth provisions are damaging, unfair and being done with haste. Youth service cuts have affected young people from all over the UK and caused many support groups that are a life line to so many young people to close.

We believe young people do not deserve to face youth service cuts due to the repercussions of mistakes that we did not make, and we believe it is the duty of youth representatives to give a platform to young people's concerns around youth service cuts in their local areas and tell decision-makers how much young people value youth services.

33. Empowering local authorities

We believe that local authorities should be empowered to allow different services into school to provide support, help and expertise to students, for example the police, youth services, voluntary groups and companies.

34. Equal maternity and paternity leave

We believe that raising children should be the right and responsibility of both parents. We believe that either a father or a mother of a child should be able to take statutory paternal or maternal leave and be supported financially to do so without fear of job loss or negative impact on their career.

35. Equal treatment in finance for young people

We believe that personal financial services, for example banks, building societies, and insurance companies, should give equal treatment to young people in their service. Retail finance staff should be trained to give sufficient support and advice to young people when they

are using their service. Young people should receive finance skills education within the curriculum so they know not to put up with poor products or bad customer service.

36. A written UK Constitution based on human rights

We believe that the UK should have a written constitution to protect our citizens' rights and codify our political system. This would give the judiciary a fair base to make decisions from, and it could also be used to regulate military intervention by the UK.

37. Tax breaks for young entrepreneurs

We believe that young entrepreneurs, and those attempting to start their own businesses at a young age, should receive tax breaks to help them develop their enterprise.

38. Involve young people in the political system

We believe that before young people reach the voting age they should be thoroughly involved in our democracy through a series of measures; such as youth elections, referendums for young people, youth committees, and conferences and events for young people on political issues. We believe there needs to be a legal obligation on both MPs and local authorities to involve young people in decision-making. Such measures would both inform and educate young people and give them practical experience of politics.

39. A free Press that acts legally and morally

We believe that the UK press should have the freedom to publish any material as long as the information published has been retrieved in a legal and moral manner. We believe that the press should give a fairer representation to different aspects of our society and report on issues in a balanced way.

40. Euthanasia: the right to end your own life

We believe that the UK should adopt that the euthanasia and assisted-suicide laws of the Netherlands. We believe that those who are terminally ill, or who are living in suffering that is unbearable with no prospect of improvement, should be entitled to end their own lives with the assistance of a doctor who acts within the criteria of due care that provide appropriate safeguarding.

41. Combating youth unemployment

We believe that every local authority that faces youth unemployment rates of 20% or more should have to put into place a strategy for tackling this problem. Such strategies should be based around developing the skills of young people, and investing in jobs, apprenticeships and internships for young people within both big corporations and small and medium enterprises in the local area. Young unemployed people should have their own personal advisor to provide support and guidance on their route into employment. The UK Government and devolved administrations should have to review these local strategies to make sure targets to reduce youth unemployment are being met.

42. Widening access to senior public office

We believe that there needs to be legislation and a sharing of good practice to widen participation and improve the diversity and representativeness of people who take public offices in positions within the UK Parliament, the devolved assemblies, the public sector, the legal sector, the private sector and the voluntary sector.

43. A fair Universal Credit system for benefits

We believe that the universal credit system, which simplifies the benefits system by bringing together a range of working-age benefits into a single payment, will give young people easier access to what they are entitled to and smooth their transitions into and out of work. We believe that there needs to be information and advice for disadvantaged and vulnerable young people about the universal credit system to ensure they don't end up with less support under a new system.

44. Giving Young Offenders a chance

We believe in the rehabilitation of both minor and major offenders through programmes which give new and useful skills and then effectively support their rehabilitation both during and after they serve their sentence.