The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) enables young people to use their energy and passion to change the world for the better. Run by young people for young people, UKYP provides opportunities for 11-18 year-olds to use their voice in creative ways to bring about social change.

The UK Youth Parliament has 600 elected Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) MYPs aged 11-18. MYPs are elected in annual youth elections throughout the UK. Any young person aged 11-18 can stand or vote.

In the past two years one million young people have voted in UK Youth Parliament elections.

Once elected MYPs organise events and projects, run campaigns and influence decision makers on the issues which matter most to young people.

There are lots of ways for young people everywhere to get involved with the UK Youth Parliament, from supporting our campaigns to debating in our online forums. Maybe you even want to become an MYP yourself!

For more information, go to www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk

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ABOUT THIS MANIFESTO

Foreword by Catherine Rawsthorne UKYP North West Representative

Welcome to the UK Youth Parliament Manifesto. This document tackles a wide range of topics affecting young people, from child poverty to public transport costs, from class sizes to mental health provision, once again proving that today’s generation of young people are far from apathetic about the world they live in.

It was written entirely by young people locally elected to represent the views of their peers and was re-drafted by Members of Youth Parliament this summer at our Annual Sitting at the University of Canterbury in Kent. It brings together the views of a diverse range of young people from across the UK and takes the voices of a generation directly to decision makers, which is particularly important with a General Election coming up. We hope that some of these manifesto ideas are considered and taken up by the main parties.

As an organisation, it’s been a massive year for UKYP, topped off with the chance to debate in the House of Commons in October – the first time ever that ‘strangers’ have been allowed to sit on the green benches. This event shows how far we’ve come in just ten years and that young people have just as much to say as adult politicians, and we continue to campaign for their voices to be listened to in a modern democracy.
Multiculturalism

UKYP would like there to be an annual youth-led multi-cultural celebration for all generations. This will provide an insight into other backgrounds and beliefs, and be an excellent opportunity to celebrate diversity.

We also believe that multiculturalism should be at the heart of the 2012 Olympic Games in London. We hope that through multi-cultural events leading up to the games, prejudice and stereotypes surrounding cultures could be broken down, in order to achieve cultural awareness for all.

UKYP proposes that current multi-cultural education should incorporate more opportunities to explore a wider variety of different cultures. This should be taught interactively with a chance for young people to take the lead.

Media Portrayal

The negative stereotyping of young people in the media is unreasonable. To change this, UKYP want to encourage opportunities for positive press, on both a local and national scale.

We believe young people should take a more active role in the media. We therefore encourage young people and media organisations to build a positive relationship, where the younger generation have a right of reply and can express themselves.

Sport and Olympics

UKYP believes in diversifying the range of sports available to young people. It is now more important than ever – with the 2012 Olympic Games on the horizon – that young people can enjoy and excel in a variety of sports and activities.

UKYP calls for the school
curriculum to steer away from heavily focussing on traditional sports and asks for more funding for schools into researching a wider range of activities for young people to benefit from.

We acknowledge that there is a fundamental need for an increase in the availability and affordability of leisure and sports facilities for young people. This will further encourage a healthy lifestyle amongst young people, and increase the UK’s sporting prospects.

Media coverage tends to be dominated by the male-based sports, and an increase in coverage of female sports is essential. This will raise awareness of females in sports, and encourage and inspire future female participation in sports.

The BBC News Channel sent a camera crew to Canterbury in July 2009 to cover the UK Youth Parliament Annual Sitting. We want more positive coverage of young people like this.
Higher Education

UKYP is against university tuition fees and support a form of graduate contribution in which a graduate would pay a percentage of their salary (depending on how much they are earning) for a set period of time.

This would mean the total contribution a person makes is linked to the benefit they obtain from higher education but they are not leaving university with a lifetime of debt.

Further Education

UKYP believes that institutions providing further education should offer a wider range of courses, subjects and qualifications,
both academic and vocational. Students must be given the right to choose their courses without pressure or biased advice.

Students should receive more support and be better prepared for transitions between stages of their education. Advice and information on UCAS (Universities & Colleges Admissions Service) applications needs to be clearer, more accessible and given greater priority at the start of further education.

UKYP disagrees with the 50% target set by the government for students to go to university, as we feel it puts pressure on students and educational institutions. During further education, UKYP feels equal emphasis should be put on other options (e.g. training or apprenticeships).

Citizenship Education

Citizenship education should be radically overhauled through a youth-led, UK-wide review. We encourage third party organisations to deliver relevant sessions in schools and colleges. Teaching staff should be specifically trained to an agreed national standard to deliver these lessons following the 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 as young people. We stress that political education should remain impartial.

- **Sex and Relationships Education (SRE)** - more emphasis should be placed on relationships and the emotional impact on individuals.

- **Cultural awareness** - schools should promote equality and awareness of special educational needs of their peers. The syllabus should include sign language skills on a basic level.

- **Community cohesion and environment** - the education system should encourage young people to participate
fully and engage with communities e.g. volunteering and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

- **Life skills** - basic life skills such as budgeting should be taught to young people from the start of key stage three.

**Underperforming Schools**

The Government should carefully consider the underlying reasons behind schools’ underachievement, for example less privileged backgrounds, behaviour, school leadership and teaching methods, and, where appropriate, increase investment and offer practical advice. There should be spontaneous school inspections to get a view of what a school is really like, and then inspectors should offer support and solutions. Students should be involved in these inspections and any consultations.

**Individualised Learning**

UKYP believes that class sizes should be significantly reduced.
and school environments should be well built, well equipped and attractive. We believe that learning should be personalised, with young people following courses most appropriate to their skills, needs and abilities. As part of this UKYP would like to see:

- Local Authorities providing a wide range of curriculum opportunities to meet the needs of all young people, in particular vocational routes and applied academic courses.
- Schools prioritising individualised learning over meeting government targets for GCSE and A-level exams.
- Young people not in education, employment or training being given additional support to identify and achieve their aspirations.
- The encouragement of alternative skills-training, such as modern apprenticeships, which will help to combat our current skills shortage.
- Specialist schools encouraging, not forcing, young people to take their specialist subject at the expense of other choices; student choice is paramount.
**Examination Boards**

In order to both minimise disruption and worry during examination periods and equalise the value of qualifications across the four nations, exam boards need to work more closely together to co-ordinate course specifications and exam timetables to minimise clashes. We encourage exam boards to use more clarity in the setting of examination questions to prevent ambiguity.

**Jobs for Young People**

UKYP believe that all young people (aged between 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 have a professionally trained and qualified careers adviser, or make use of external services such as Connexions, which should be actively promoted by schools. In addition, careers services should engage those not in education, employment or training. Any advice given must be impartial and personalised.

UKYP believes that jobs and volunteering opportunities for young people need to be more widely advertised in accessible places for young people and a broader range should be offered.

**Reform of EMA**

UKYP believes that the threshold for eligibility for the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) should be increased. The process of means testing needs to be improved: it should take into account factors other than household income, such as the number of dependent children in the household, the number of university students or potential university students being supported by the household, housing expenditure (e.g. rent or mortgages) and family situations.
School anti-bullying policies should be written by students in consultation with teachers and relevant professionals. We believe that the policy should include:

- The necessity of having professional advice and peer support for both the victim and the bully.
- Schools should have better training for staff and provide improved information and advice for students.
- A zero tolerance should be enforced towards bullying in schools.
- Discipline should be reviewed and action should be taken according to individual needs.
UKYP believes that providing more opportunities for empowerment of young people can help prevent social issues and problems, such as gun and knife crime, as minds can be opened to new possibilities.

Press Standards Agency should recognise ageism against young people as discrimination.

**Grass Roots Empowerment**

UKYP believes stereotypes of young people presented in the media should not prevent young people being empowered. UKYP believes all are equal and all deserve empowerment.

**Local Government**

The UKYP believe the local government should try to encourage young people with their campaigns and ideas and give real support, not just lip service, whether this be through contacts, funding, shadowing or advice, in order to empower young people.

**Did You Know?**

UKYP is the first non parliamentary body to sit in the House of Commons. There are over 600 elected representatives, covering 20,000 young people across the UK each.

**National Government**

UKYP believes the Government should issue concise advice on all young people funding streams, with young people in control of all youth budgets and compulsory success and failure criteria. A young people’s press service should be established to combat negative reporting and the

UKYP is one of many organisations that encourage volunteering amongst young people. Nearly half of all volunteers say volunteering has improved their physical health and fitness.
We at UKYP understand that the state of the environment is a big issue. Some of the most important issues are:

**Recycling**

We believe that the lack of a national coordination enables certain local regions to neglect their responsibility to the environment; therefore a national scheme should be implemented. Shops should also increase their recycling by using recyclable bags and packaging, with a minimisation of any non-recyclable packaging.

**Energy**

We believe that there should be more renewable energy sources, like harnessing wind-power or
tidal-power, especially given that the UK only gets 2% of its energy from such sources. This reduces our carbon footprint and makes us less reliant upon imported fossil fuels. Schools also waste energy by relying upon energy inefficient equipment when better alternatives exist.

**Public Transport**

UKYP believe that young people should pay no more than 1/2 adult fare on public buses.

UKYP believe a national code of practice should be introduced to ensure consistency on matters such as cleanliness, environmental matters/sustainability and the frequency of rural transport services.

More needs to be done to improve disabled access and facilities on public transport and to revise and enforce existing legislation.

**Rurual Affairs**

UKYP feel that there is a lack of facilities for young people in rural areas. We would like to see more facilities available or new facilities put in place. The facilities that are already in place need to be improved so that more opportunities are available to young people.

Within rural areas the mobile and broadband coverage is poor or non-existent. This should be improved as it restricts young people that live in the areas from socialising. Since there is also a lack of facilities, it greatly limits what young people can do.

Crime in urban areas is focused on greatly due to widespread media coverage. What isn’t realised is that crime also occurs frequently in rural areas which are due to a lack of policing.
Health

Mental Health

UKYP believes that mental health education should be made compulsory in PSHE lessons, covering issues and common clinical conditions including depression.

UKYP feels that the Government should increase provision and improve the existing facilities and support for young people, making them accessible, free of charge and age appropriate.

In addition, we believe that mental health professionals who specialise in the needs of young people should treat young people with mental health conditions in centres exclusively for young people. Also, action should take place in order to encourage the awareness of stereotypes and taboos surrounding mental health issues.

UKYP calls for a clarification on doctor / patient confidentiality. We strongly feel that there should be more representation of young people within the NHS as they currently feel disengaged.

National Health Service

UKYP believes all services provided by the NHS should be open on days and at times which are appropriate for young people. The NHS should also invest in peer education.

UKYP also feels that if support and guidance is not available in the local area then the NHS should provide the funds to allow those individuals in need to access the private sector.

UKYP stresses that sex and relationships education (SRE) should have a balance between the physical and emotional aspects of relationships, for example covering domestic violence.

Sexual Health
Members of Youth Parliament have been campaigning for better sex and relationships education since 2006
UKYP believes that the UK should not ignore international human rights abuses and will not support the regimes of any countries known to be abusing human rights.

UKYP strongly urges other nations to adopt policies that would support the preservation and enhancement of human rights.

UKYP asks our politicians to be at the forefront of diplomatic action. Whilst also encouraging all nations to adopt their own systems of government that safeguard and uphold human rights and the rule of law.
UKYP believes in the principle of Britain’s membership of the EU. We believe the EU should open up to more democratic and transparent practices. Any future changes in the relationship between Britain and the EU including the adoption of the Euro should be approved through a referendum.

**Europe**

**Military Conflict**

UKYP supports our troops stationed all over the world, whilst focusing on upholding human rights and developing democracy. The troops and their families should be supplied with adequate equipment, healthcare and services.

UKYP supports the reduction of nuclear weapons, across the globe via the use of diplomacy and international relations, rather than military force.

**Middle East**

UKYP believes that the UN should be involved in solving problems in the Middle East, encouraging the people of that region to take some responsibility in their attempt to co-operate and co-exist.

**Poverty**

UKYP believes that the issue of Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDGs) debt should be resolved through fair trade agreements, which will ensure they can build up their economy, without the burden of repaying debt.

UKYP believes that the Government should honour the Millennium Development Goals, as we feel they can and should be achieved.
Gun and Knife Crime

Gun and knife crime has grown, particularly amongst young people; nearly a third of young people in the UK have been affected by gun and/or knife crime. Awareness of the extreme consequences of gun and knife crime must be raised on both an individual and communal level and especially in the known ‘hot-spots’ of gun and/or knife crime.

UKYP believes that the current government initiatives battling gun and knife crime are not sufficient to solve the underlying causes of these crimes, and that more money should be diverted away from advertisements and directed towards educating young people about the dangers of gun and knife crime at a younger age.

UKYP believes that more should be done to address the gang culture which exists in today’s society. With the support of schools, youth provisions and the local police, the UKYP believes that this problem can be solved.
Drugs Leading to Crime

The links between drug use and crime are clearly established. In fact, around 75% of crack and heroin users claim they commit crime to feed their habit. UKYP supports The Drug Intervention Programme as it is a key element in tackling drug-related crime. It offers young offenders whose crimes are drug-related the support they need to kick the habit. However, as drug related crimes are still evident in society, UKYP believes that more work still needs to be done in order to eradicate the problem.

Dangerous Dogs

UKYP believes that animals - specifically dogs - should not be used as weapons either for harming or intimidating people. The number of victims needing hospital treatment after attacks by dangerous dogs has increased from 4,328 in 1999 to 5,943 last year across the UK, a rise of 37%.

These ‘weapon’ dogs are not intended to be kept as pets, but solely to intimidate others, causing injury or death. This is proving to be an easier alternative to carrying either a gun or knife. UKYP believes that more should be done to address this culture of ‘attack animals’, and that more should be done to protect the animals from their owners. UKYP believes that the police should be respected and so should young people. In order for a mutual respect to exist there should be greater interaction between the police and the youth community. This can be achieved through a variety of workshops and schemes within youth centres, schools etc.

UKYP also condemns any form of discrimination or prejudice directed not only towards the wider youth community but also to the ethnic minority predominantly when being stopped and searched by the police.
In order for this to be achieved strict punishments should be in place for officers who violate this proposal and therefore young people’s rights.

The UK Youth Parliament would also like to stress the needs to resolve the rising issue of ‘postcode wars’. In order to quell rivalry between youths of different ‘postcodes’, youth activity programmes, including police campaigns in schools and youth clubs should aim to involve youths of the wider community.

UKYP believes that all people are equal regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, faith, hair colour, accent or social group. This means they all deserve to be treated equally.

UKYP will campaign for a fairer representation of young people in the media, and will condemn
any situation where a young person is deemed unequal, or is discriminated against.

We feel that the society we live in today is very divided in terms of age, and conflicting opinions on young people. This is evident through the use of stereotypes in the media, specifically labelling young people as being part of a gang or referring to them as yobs or thugs as well as devices such as the mosquito device used to deter young people away from local shops. MYPs should work on a local level to have the devices removed.

UKYP are concerned about discrimination in the workplace. Despite the 2006 equality act young people are paid a lower wage than their adult counterparts solely because they are younger. This is age discrimination, and UKYP deems this unacceptable.

UKYP understands British nationalism to be a celebration of our individual identities,
backgrounds and beliefs whilst simultaneously regarding each other as members of a united community. We fervently believe that everyone should unite around a collective British identity to create a more harmonious and connected society.

UKYP supports the Government’s proposed consultation to strengthen British and Northern Irish identity and unity.

UKYP believes that British society thrives on the acceptance of others, partnership and cohesion.

UKYP applauds the Government for introducing citizenship education within the national curriculum. However, we believe that it now needs to be radically improved, with a standard citizenship test in schools, and education establishments in general, to facilitate this change.

Teachers need to be fully trained to teach this specific subject to their students, so that it becomes more effective. Students should be focused and tested under the citizenship curriculum – to reflect the test that foreigners have to complete in order to receive British citizenship.

Child poverty is where children are deprived of resources which are necessary for the modern world to flourish in the UK.

On average, one in three children are in poverty in the UK today, with one in ten in extreme poverty.

UKYP believes that no child should be in poverty. Every child matters and deserves a good quality of life. The Government have already set targets to reduce child poverty, however these changes are said to be complete by 2020! UKYP argues that these targets should be met earlier and dealt with as soon as possible.

The Government’s achievements so far have reduced children in extreme poverty to 1.7 million and from 1998-2007 600,000
children have been lifted from the poverty line. However some children remain behind. We believe that we can contribute to the Government’s plans by trying to campaign for the target to end child poverty to be brought forward and to also try to get poverty clinics for children in hot spots around the country. This will enable children to get the support they need to get them above the poverty line.

UKYP believes that no child should be left behind. We all deserve to get the best out of life and the best start to enter the adult world.