

British Youth Council General Election Manifesto 2010



**Our
minds
matter**

A British Youth Council
Campaign **byc**

**16: A new
age for
democracy**

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**All aboard for
affordable
travel**

A British Youth Council
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**Equal
pay for
equal work**

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**End
child
poverty**

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We empower young people across the UK to have a say and be heard



Five actions that Parliament must take to improve the lives of young people

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Our Parliament
Our Vision

Foreword by Alex Delaney, BYC Chair

Youth led, youth ideas, youth vision: this is what makes the British Youth Council's General Election Manifesto unique.

The British Youth Council (BYC), comprised of youth organisations and local youth councils, has a sixty year history of enabling young people to get to the ballot boxes and vote at General Elections. Following growing disillusionment with the institution of Parliament, BYC thought it was important to take the opportunity of the 2010 General Election to be a platform for the proposals of young people. We want politicians to engage with us, listen to us and talk to us. We want other young people across the UK to feel empowered to start a dialogue and debate with their prospective parliamentary candidates on the issues in this Manifesto and on their local issues.

This Manifesto contains our top five calls for action as prioritised by young representatives from all across the UK. Over 600 proposals were submitted on what Parliament can do to improve their lives. All of the five calls for action in this Manifesto address real issues that affect them today. Teenagers are struggling to meet travel costs to get to places of education, training or work; young workers are being paid unequal wages just because of their age; four million children are living in poverty; the needs of young people with mental health problems are not being met; young people are not heard in our democracy.

Thanks to the hundreds of young local representatives across the UK who have contributed to this document, through submitting your ideas for change, debating at our devolved BYC Conventions or voting at our Annual Council Meeting. You have proved that young people are not hard to engage in active discussion about important political issues, they are just easy to ignore. This Manifesto is itself a challenge to politicians to join with us, debate these issues and commit to action.

Through this Manifesto we say 'it's our Parliament too'. Our vision should inform and influence what it does. BYC calls on everyone to sign up to the calls for action, and to politicians to respond to them.



Alex Delaney

Joint statement from BYC Honorary Presidents

As Honorary Presidents of the British Youth Council, we are proud to support the vision of young people articulated through this General Election Manifesto.

We believe this initiative will inspire young people across the UK to campaign locally, engage with the politics of the General Election, and work together for positive change in their communities.

We call on all those looking to represent their constituencies as Members of Parliament to use this Manifesto to inspire debate with young people in their local areas. We hope all parliamentary candidates will fulfil the British Youth Council's challenge to work with young people to create youth debates in their local areas. Such debates offer the opportunity to forge a connection between what young people care about and the formal political process. We cannot afford to miss this chance to breathe fresh air into our democracy.

Natascha Engel MP

Labour Member of Parliament for North East Derbyshire

Nigel Evans MP

Conservative Member of Parliament for the Ribble Valley

Jo Swinson MP

Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament for East Dunbartonshire



Natascha Engel



Nigel Evans



Jo Swinson

A Manifesto by young people for young people

Throughout summer 2009 BYC ran a consultation so young people across the UK could create the BYC General Election Manifesto. Over 600 young people submitted their ideas for what Parliament could change through an online survey and these ideas were shortlisted by over 250 young people at BYC Conventions in Belfast, Glasgow, Leeds, London and Swansea. Young delegates from our membership then voted for their top five priorities at the BYC Annual Council Meeting 2009.

600 young people submitted their ideas

GIVE US THE CHANCE TO VOTE

MAKE ALL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES MORE ACCESSIBLE

ELIMINATING CHILD POVERTY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

IT SHOULDN'T COST SO MUCH MONEY TO GET A BUS



15 proposals shortlisted



5 calls to action



We want OUR PARLIAMENT to:

Reduce the voting age for parliamentary and other public elections in the UK to 16 years.

16: A new age for democracy

A British Youth Council Campaign 

OUR VISION is: For 16 and 17 year olds to be given the vote in all elections and empowered through inspiring political education to engage in their democracy. Lowering the voting age to 16 would be the foundation that the UK Parliament could build on to change the way that 1.5 million 16 and 17 year olds see politics.

CASE STUDY

"I feel that at 16, I am mature enough to have my contribution towards the running of the country. I should have the chance to vote in general elections and local elections and choose who represents me. Young people are taught in school and college what democracy is and how government works, yet we have to wait to vote. I have political opinions and express these by supporting petitions, joining groups on social networking sites or discussing things online but I can't vote.

I know people argue that the vote should be for older people who have more experience, but many young people's issues do not directly affect their lives. 'Votes at 16' would mean youth issues are represented more and that more is done for young people."

Jack (16) from Bridlington, East Yorkshire. Jack volunteers with BYC membership organisations St John Ambulance and NCVYS.



© Electoral Reform Society

Key facts:

- 16 and 17 year olds can pay Income Tax, get married and have consenting sex and can join the armed forces yet they can't elect MPs whose decisions affect their lives and responsibilities.
- Young people have to wait at least two years before putting their knowledge of politics and democracy gained from compulsory citizenship classes into practice at the ballot box.
- 64% of the public supported lowering the voting age to 16 in a recent Government consultation.¹
- More than four in five of young people aged 12 to 15 believe there should be a way to give young people a voice in politics.²

¹ Responses to the Youth Citizenship Commission, June 2009, *Old Enough to Make a Mark*.

² Home Office, 2005, *Citizenship Survey*.

We want OUR PARLIAMENT to:

Support a National Youth Transport card that offers 16 to 25 year olds a third off public transport fares.

All aboard for
affordable
travel

A British Youth Council
Campaign 

OUR VISION is: Young people are empowered to choose public transport as their low-carbon way to travel. Young people will be able to travel affordably between local authorities to access education, training, employment, and positive leisure opportunities. Young people will know that a National Youth Transport Card entitles them to a minimum concession of at least a third off adult fares on buses, trams and trains.

CASE STUDY

"I go to college in Oldham and have a part-time job so I have to get about town on a daily basis. I don't use public transport as much as I'd like to though as I find it really expensive. As part of Oldham Youth Council we've been petitioning in our local area for all young people to have the right to concessionary bus fares. In our area concessionary bus fares currently end at 16. Or if you're in full-time education you only get reduced fares during college hours. We believe not all young people over 16 have access to the money to pay the extortionate adult

fares, around £14 a week minimum. I support the British Youth Council's call for all young people to be able to get a national card so everyone can get a decent concession wherever you live in the UK. Not all young people can rely on their parents for lifts all the time so public transport must become affordable."

Chantel (18) from Oldham, Greater Manchester. Chantel is a Youth Councillor in BYC membership organisation Oldham Youth Council.



Key facts:

- There is no national concession card that young people can buy to get reduced bus fares across the UK.
- 83% of young people would use public transport if it was cheaper and 95% supported a UK-wide discount card.¹
- If fares were reduced by 20%, bus travel would increase by 13%.²
- Research has found that young people start to struggle with transport when they turn 16 and have to pay full adult fares while on limited incomes and being unable to drive.³

1 UK Youth Parliament survey of over 4000 young people, 2008.

2 Campaign for Better Transport, 2008.

3 Department of Transport, 2006, *Young people and transport*.

We want OUR PARLIAMENT to:

Create an equal National Minimum Wage for everyone aged over 16.

**Equal
pay for
equal work**

A British Youth Council
Campaign **byc**

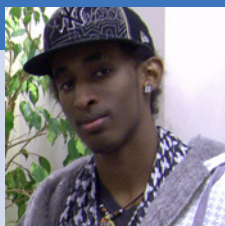
OUR VISION is: Young workers aged 16 to 21 are paid an equal hourly rate of the National Minimum Wage. Young workers are not discriminated against because of their age and receive equal pay for equal work.

CASE STUDY

"The current Minimum Wage system means workers can get paid up to £2.23 less per hour for doing the same work as another colleague because of their age. You can't just stereotype that this is OK because young people's pay is just pocket money. Many young workers on the Minimum Wage live independently and this wage is what pays for their bills, rent and food. Others work part-time to help with living costs while studying or put something towards their families' income. I've campaigned with BYC to get

young people's opinions heard on this issue. As part of my campaign work I delivered 1800 letters to the Chair of the Low Pay Commission from young people across the UK calling for fair pay. I want this Manifesto to start a debate about this issue across the UK. It's time to get people talking about equal pay for young people."

Robel (20) from Leicester. Robel is a BYC Online Action Network volunteer.



Key facts:

- 16 and 17 year olds paid the National Minimum Wage earn 38% less than those aged over 22.
- Workers paid the adult rate of the National Minimum Wage earn £312.20 more for a month's work than colleagues aged 16 to 17 doing the same job.
- Over 60% of 16 to 21 year olds work in low paying jobs compared with just 30% of those over 22.¹
- The UK Government have committed to 21 year olds receiving the adult rate of the National Minimum Wage from October 2010.

¹ Low Pay Commission, 2009.

We want OUR PARLIAMENT to:

Keep the promise to end child poverty in the UK by 2020.



OUR VISION is: Once the commitment to ending child poverty is enshrined in law, the UK Parliament will ensure the Government stays on course to meet its legal targets to tackle the causes and consequences of child poverty by 2020.

CASE STUDY

"It's not acceptable that in our modern world, many children still grow up in poverty. Four in ten children in London live in poverty and this figure is higher in Newham. Young people locally are committed to campaigning to end child poverty and as the elected Young Mayor of Newham it's one of my top priorities.

I believe that education and employment are vital in this fight. There are lots of things we're doing in Newham to help families and young people escape from poverty. I am leading the Youth Council to campaign for more learning and volunteering opportunities in the community. I believe that young people with a

wide range of experiences behind them can become high achievers in education and avoid getting trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty.

We've made progress in reducing child poverty but there's still more we can do. As Young Mayor of Newham, I support the British Youth Council's campaign and I'm absolutely committed to ending child poverty for good."

Kaycee (16) from Stratford, London. Kaycee is Young Mayor of Newham; Newham Youth Council is a BYC membership organisation.



Photo by Colin, from Wolverhampton

Highly commended in the BYC Snapshot60 competition for young photographers, 2008



Key facts:

- The Child Poverty Bill will make it law for the Government to meet UK-wide targets to get families and children out of poverty. It will be law to eradicate child poverty by 2020.
- A third of UK children live in poverty: Four million children.¹
- Almost half (48%) of inner London children live in poverty.²
- Child poverty costs Britain at least £25 billion a year.³

¹ End Child Poverty campaign, 2009.

² London Child Poverty Commission, 2009.

³ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008, *Estimating the costs of child poverty*.

We want OUR PARLIAMENT to:

Invest in comprehensive mental health services for young people.

**Our
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OUR VISION is: Through investment there is accessible, age-appropriate, and youth-friendly care and support for 16 to 25 year olds with mental health problems.

Young people are supported to understand, access and benefit from a range of preventative and responsive mental health services and treatment. Services are joined up and continue to help young people during transition from child and adolescent services to adult services.

CASE STUDY

From my experience I think investment in services for 16 to 25 year olds is extremely crucial. I went for help when I was 16. I was put on a waiting list for a counsellor and told the minimum waiting time was six months, although for me it turned out to be eleven months. I was told to go home and 'act safe'. During this period, I got worse and ended up being hospitalised a few times. I believe that if I was treated when I went for help, I wouldn't be at

such a bad stage now. When I went to the doctor I felt like my depression wasn't 'serious' enough for help. Seeking help is an extremely hard thing to do, and a negative experience can set someone back, and stop them seeking help again.

Cheryl (18) from Bangor, Northern Ireland. Member of YoungMinds Very Important Kids panel.



Photo by Amber, from London
Highly commended in the BYC Snapshot60
competition for young photographers, 2008



Key facts:

- Over half of adults with mental health problems are diagnosed in childhood, yet less than half are treated appropriately at the time.¹
- Less than 5% of teenagers who make the transition to adult mental health services receive the best possible care at the time.²
- Self-harm affects at least 1 in 15 young people.³
- Only 1% of young people with eating disorders said that they felt they could talk to their parents about their eating-related concerns.⁴

1 YoungMinds, 2009.

2 Department for Health, 2009, *New Horizons: Toward a shared vision for mental health. Consultation.*

3 Mental Health Foundation, 2009.

4 BEAT, 2007, *Something's got to change*, a survey of 600 young people with eating disorders.

Pledge your support for BYC's General Election Manifesto

BYC needs you to get young people's voices heard by getting active in your local community!

To support the General Election Manifesto you can take these steps:



Pledge your support at www.byc.org.uk/gec



Show your support by completing a BYC General Election Manifesto pledge card



Meet with your local parliamentary candidates and ask them to pledge their support too



Get the message across at your school, college or youth group



Get involved in the online photo challenge at www.byc.org.uk/gec



Organise a youth debate in your local community in the run up to the General Election



Tell BYC who you've spoken to and what you've achieved.

Find more information and resources on how to get active at www.byc.org.uk/gec or email campaigns@byc.org.uk



The British Youth Council (BYC) is a charity run by young people for young people. We empower young people across the UK to have their say and ensure their voices are heard.

We inspire and empower young people aged 25 and under to have a positive impact through campaigning, engaging with local, national and international democracy, and as volunteers, decision-makers and leaders.

Our membership encompasses over 120 youth organisations large and small around the UK. We reach out to over 600 local youth councils and our networks reach into local communities and around the world.

Our training workshops develop young people's skills so that they can have a say and be heard, while our consultation services tap into the views and opinions of young people across the UK.

We empower young people across the UK to have a say and be heard

empowering inspiring campaigning inspiring

To find out more, please contact BYC:

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