



YOUTH ACCESS

Championing Youth Advice and Counselling

Key policy asks *summary*

Getting the right support and advice at the right time is pivotal for setting young people up for a healthy adulthood. But right now, young people are navigating more obstacles than ever before and are too often overlooked in decision-making that impacts their lives and their futures.

As we approach the next General Election, we are calling on all political parties to pledge to take three steps to ensure all young people can stay afloat and safely ride the waves on their journey into adulthood.

We need the next Government to prioritise prevention and early intervention to address the social, health and economic factors shaping young people's lives and wellbeing. At the core of this approach must be widespread recognition of young people's experience and expertise in the changes needed to protect the mental health and wellbeing of current and future generations.

May 2024

Key policy asks

summary



“Our member network of youth advice and counselling services are on the frontline, providing tailored support to young people to help them respond to and navigate the obstacles they are experiencing. We hear from members that more young people are accessing their services than ever before, and with a greater level of urgency and need.”

Cassandra Harrison
Chief Executive

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Together with our member services and the young people they work with, we call on political parties to commit to changes that see:

1. Young people in all local communities able to access advice and counselling services

- Commit to **£125 million¹ a year to fund early support hubs in every local authority area**, putting the services that already exist on a sustainable footing and establishing YIACS in underserved areas.
- **Invest £165 million² in capital costs to support the initial national roll out**, with opportunities to build on existing infrastructure in some areas.

1 This is the median figure for the estimated range for annual running costs for a hub in every local authority area (£114 million to £134.5 million).

2 This is the median figure for the estimated range of capital costs to establish a hub in every local authority area (£125.4 million to £205.2m).

2. Mental health support that meets young people's needs and rights

- **Experts who understand** the unique issues facing young people today.
- Services made for young people in **a range of places and spaces**.
- Services made **with young people so we're part of decisions** being made about our own mental health care and the wider system.
- **Equity, diversity and accessibility** to make sure services cater to everyone.
- Help when young people need it, **avoiding long waiting lists and arbitrary thresholds**.
- **Education and training for all**, so young people and all professionals understand mental health and where to get help.



3. A fair plan for young people in social welfare policy and decision making

- **End structural disadvantage experienced by young people**, by removing age-related discrimination in universal credit, low pay and housing options and reviewing the diverse needs and challenges facing young people as a distinct cohort in social welfare policy.
- Require national and local decision-making structures to **meaningfully engage with young people** in policy making across departments and agencies, with a focus on young people experiencing marginalisation, and respecting their voice and experience.



“Young people shared with us that their lives and futures are being impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, overstretched support services, limited opportunities, and escalating money, education and social pressures, leaving them feeling powerless.

Though the current situation can at times feel hopeless to young people, it doesn't have to be this way. We urge political parties to pledge to take these steps to protect the mental health and wellbeing of current and future generations. This is the chance and now is the time to seize it!”

Youth Advisors

Kyra and Ryan

We hope you will join us.

We would love to hear from you. Please contact Sarah Uncles, our Policy and Campaigns Manager at sarahu@youthaccess.org to discuss our asks further.

About Youth Access

Our vision is that all young people can access support on their journey into adulthood that respects their rights and meets their individual needs.

Alongside our member network of 133 local youth advice and counselling services, we champion young people's right to access high-quality services in their community that provide a range of support, from mental health and wellbeing to housing and employment, all under one roof.