



getting young voices heard



Believe in children



United We Stand

was written by the following agencies:



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Manifesto 2010

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Manifesto 2010

United We Stand:

A Voluntary and
Community Sector
Manifesto for
London's Children
and Young People

Introduction

This manifesto is the work of a diverse coalition of organisations working with children and young people aged 0-25. Never before has such a range of voluntary and community groups come together with one voice to articulate what we need to do to make London better today and for our successor generation.

We are trusted, typically locally-based organisations that children and young people choose to engage with. We partner a full range of statutory services from nurseries to young offender institutions. Crucially we work across generations, supporting families and carers too. And we're here for the long-term, building meaningful relationships with children and young people.

Our vision is of a great city in which every child and young person is valued, cherished and challenged to be the best they can be.

The basis of our approach and of this manifesto is that we believe voluntary and community organisations, working in close partnership with public services, are ideally placed to support children and young people. We need, all of us, to take a truly joined-up approach to children and young people's needs – we cannot tackle presenting symptoms in isolation from one another. Furthermore, we believe that children and young people themselves need to be engaged in the process of building stronger communities.

So, set out in this document are a number of ways in which we believe policy-makers and commissioners can improve outcomes for children and young people. We do not pretend it is comprehensive. But we are confident it captures the clear need for a holistic approach to children and young people. The range of recommendations reflects the complexity of children and young people's lives.

They are grouped in six broad themes relating to children and young people's experiences:

1

Getting On:
Providing high quality education, employment and training

2

Getting Access:
Providing high quality, responsive and accessible services

3

Getting Healthy:
Supporting and improving health and well-being

4

Getting Active:
Supporting the right to play, sport and recreation

5

Getting Involved:
Embedding genuine participation and engagement with children and young people

6

Getting Recognised:
Promoting and celebrating the achievements of children and young people

A final section summarises how we believe government (and independent funders) can best support, fund and hold the voluntary sector to account as you work with us to achieve our mutual objectives of improving outcomes for children and young people.

So we ask three things of you, namely to...

1

Sign up to our vision and the principle of taking a truly joined-up approach

2

Use the range of recommendations contained in this manifesto as a guide whenever you are faced with a decision about children and young people

3

Believe in the capital's future

A young man and woman are sitting at a desk in a classroom, looking at a book together. The man is on the left, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a grey tank top. They are both focused on the book. The background shows other desks and chairs in the classroom.

1

**Getting On:
Providing high
quality education,
employment
and training**

High quality education, employment and training opportunities are fundamental to the successful futures of London's children and young people. Addressing school exclusion, developing strong extended schools programmes and providing effective information, advice and guidance can enable all children and young people including the most vulnerable to achieve. Access to flexible volunteering, employment and training is essential to the future of London as it will enable a generation to thrive in the aftermath of the latest recession.

To achieve this vision, together we should:

Education

- Reduce the number of school exclusions through preventative measures by working with local voluntary organisations to provide peer support and advocacy to young people at risk of exclusion as well as utilising voluntary sector activities to promote positive behaviour and to raise self-esteem and aspiration amongst at risk groups.
- Provide appropriate opportunities and support for young people who are not in education, employment or training, through a wide variety of means including engaging employers, offering volunteering opportunities and training schemes. Such opportunities must be flexible and accessible to ensure that every young person can expand their skills and learning by building on their strengths and abilities.

Information, Advice and Guidance

- Provide access to impartial information, advice and guidance services for all young people, by knowledgeable, approachable staff, who can offer support with all aspects of a child or young person's life.

Only **14%** of young people **in care in London** achieve five or more A*- C GCSE grades, compared to **56%** of all young people

Rates of permanent and fixed term **school exclusions** are **higher in London** than elsewhere in England

There are significant **variations from borough to borough** with the share of young people **achieving 5 'good' GCSE's** ranging from **30% to 60%**

Employability

- Provide a wide range of innovative and recognised learning opportunities that will enable children and young people to develop new skills, build confidence and become engaged citizens. This includes offering more flexible vocational courses which help with both practical and academic learning and development.
- Acknowledge the importance of personal and social development to equip young people for employment. Acquiring these abilities through volunteering, rather than formal education provides many young people with the flexibility they need to enhance their employability whilst making a positive contribution to their community.
- Recognise full-time volunteering as training for the purposes of claiming benefits on the basis that these activities provide young people with important personal and social skills that will help them to gain employment in the future.

Two thirds of young people in London believe that providing more work experience placements would be very helpful in preparing them for their future careers

Fewer than 40% of children in care in London are in education or employment at 19, compared to 86% of all 19 year olds

Joined-up Schooling

- Support schools and voluntary and community organisations to work together to enhance the school experience and promote community cohesion. This could be done through encouraging schools and voluntary and community organisations to work together in delivery of the Extended Schools programme.

Life Skills

- Improve the transitions from adolescence to adulthood for all young people while recognising the specific needs of disabled children and young people and those in care. We particularly need to better prepare young care leavers for the transition out of care. This should include classes and practical support on topics such as cookery, financial capability, managing accommodation and support on entering employment, training or further education.

A young boy with short dark hair, wearing a yellow long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, is sitting on a colorful mat (green, orange, purple) and playing with wooden blocks. He is looking down at a block in his hands. In the background, there are more wooden blocks and a blurred indoor setting.

2

**Getting
Access:
Providing
high quality,
responsive
and accessible
services**

Early intervention and preventative work must form the cornerstone of children's services. It offers a way of supporting children and young people from the outset avoiding costly crisis interventions later. The voluntary and community sector in London has a strong track record of providing early intervention work for children, young people and families in need which is both holistic and child-friendly. Childcare and early years, housing services, the criminal justice system, child poverty interventions and provision for young runaways all deliver the best outcomes for children and young people when they have an early intervention focus. These are all vital services and represent particularly pertinent issues which impact strongly upon the lives of the capital's children and young people. The recession and its impact on young people furthers the case for the importance of early intervention work. London must continue to invest in a range of targeted child-friendly interventions that we know work for our most vulnerable children, to improve outcomes and short-circuit the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage.

The complex needs of children and young people in London are supported by a diverse range of services, delivered by multiple partners. To make an impact on some of the most pressing challenges together we must:

Childcare & Early Years

- Beat the recession by supporting local childcare settings to provide 'fee holidays' for parents struggling to pay childcare costs, freezing rents for childcare settings where councils are the landlord, and creating a special trained taskforce of caseworkers to step in and assist parents if they lose their childcare place.
- Proactively seek the views of all parents and carers, including the most disadvantaged, to ensure that childcare is set in the context of an integrated education and flexible care approach.
- Close the childcare gap by making sure there are more places for disabled children, during school holidays, for older children out of school hours and for parents working atypical hours.

4 in 10
(or 650,000) children in
London **live in poverty**,
12%
above the national
average

In 2005-06
child tax credit take up
in London was **64%** –
take up in other regions
ranged from
76 – 86%

Housing

- Provide holistic and specific additional provision targeting the thousands of London's children and young people who are housed in temporary and/or unsuitable accommodation.
- Subsidise temporary accommodation and provide intensive employment support measures for parents to reduce disruption in education for affected children and young people.

Criminal Justice

- Ensure that children and young people involved in the criminal justice system receive support for their mental and emotional needs, are enabled to continue in their education and are offered positive activities to develop self-esteem, confidence and skills. The voluntary and community sector are particularly well placed to provide this support.
- Increase use of specialist intensive and remand fostering so that custody is only used as a last resort.

Poverty

- Inform and empower families to ensure they are able to access and make the most of the financial support they are entitled to. Sustained investment needs to be made in outreach programmes that target the poorest families in order to increase uptake of tax credits and free childcare places.

Runaways

- Work across borough boundaries, in partnership the London Safeguarding Children Board to raise the standard and levels of emergency accommodation provision for young runaways across London. This is of particular importance to 16-17 year olds to who do not meet children's services' threshold criteria or do not wish to be looked after by the local authority.

A third of young people believe that **safety and policing** is one of the **poorer aspects about living** in London

In 2007
22.6% of pedestrian road traffic victims in London were **children under 16**

Around **200,000** London households are overcrowded this is around **50,000 higher** than the level of the **mid-1990s**

Transport

- Work with transport providers to ensure staff and facilities are child and parent friendly. There is currently a lack of safe and comfortable seating for infants and young children and inadequate space for prams on public transport. Adults travelling with young children often experience problems getting on and off public transport and feel that they and their children are frequently treated less favourably than others.

Child Friendliness

- Ensure that museums, libraries and art galleries are child-friendly and actively encourage young people to enjoy, learn and interact with them. Currently, children and young people are often dissuaded from visiting these valuable community resources through unfriendly policies on noise, access and cost.

Children in care represent less than **1%** of all children, yet almost **40%** of prisoners under 21 were in care as children

A child growing up in London is a **third more likely** to live in poverty than in the rest of the UK

London has almost **54,000** households living in **temporary accommodation**, accounting for around **72 per cent** nationally



3

**Getting
Healthy:
Supporting
and improving
health and
well-being**



Good mental and physical health is fundamental in enabling all children and young people to make the most of their lives. London has a higher proportion of 16 and 17 years olds with mental health needs compared to any other part of the UK. Teenage pregnancy rates and sexual health also continue to pose challenges across the capital and safeguarding is a priority for all sectors.

To meet these challenges, collectively we need to:

Mental Health

- Ensure that staff working in universal services are appropriately trained and supported to recognise and respond to the emotional health needs of children and young people when their behaviour is seen as 'challenging' or 'difficult'. Many children and young people would benefit from a counselling service that took a less clinical and more holistic approach to their mental health.
- Work across Primary Care Trusts to ensure that 16 and 17 year olds with mental health needs do not fall into the gap in service provision between child and adult mental health services. Equally all partners must strive to provide age-relevant, sensitive services to this group to give them the best chance of leading fulfilling lives.

Sexual Health

- Ensure that all practitioners working with children and young people know how to identify the potential signs of sexual exploitation and that each local area has a clearly agreed referral pathway to ensure that children involved are able to access services.

20% of Londoners aged between 2 and 15 years old were obese in 2003, and this is continuing to rise

For every **£1.00** spent on **contraceptive services**, the **net gain** to the NHS is **£11.00**

London has the highest prevalence of **sexual ill health** of any English region, including the **highest numbers of sexually transmitted infections**

- Improve primary prevention work such as awareness raising about sexual exploitation and bullying, in schools and with parents and carers. This targeted prevention work should be undertaken by professionals, groups and agencies working with children who are specifically vulnerable to sexual exploitation such as children who are looked after.
- Improve young people's awareness of sexual & reproductive health and how to identify and access local services which provide free advice, counselling, contraception and STI testing.

Substance Misuse

- Ensure that the minority of children and young people who need treatment for drug or alcohol misuse get it immediately, and don't have to suffer long waiting lists.
- Embed substance misuse training within all mainstream services. All relevant professionals working with children and young people should have the skills to identify and address substance misuse issues.
- Ensure that every area has a range of drug services designed with young people's needs in mind, as these will differ greatly from older drug users.

Safeguarding

- Ensure that GPs and other practice staff are appropriately trained so that they are better integrated into child protection systems and can play an active role in safeguarding children, especially as one in 10 GP consultations takes place with children aged 14 years or younger.

Rates for most STIs amongst young Londoners are now **higher than in 2005** and continue to be significantly higher than national rates

Investment in sexual health services varies widely across London – from **£57.67 to £5.46** per head of population, this does not correspond directly with levels of need

The London Ambulance Service NHS Trust received **8,126 alcohol** related calls in 2007-08 for **11-21 year olds**. This equates to almost **one in ten** of the calls received for this age group.

A young child with light hair, wearing a bright yellow long-sleeved shirt and dark blue pants, is sitting on a large orange hula hoop. The hula hoop has a black line drawing of a dog's face on it, featuring large eyes, a black nose, and a smiling mouth with teeth. The child is looking upwards and to the right with an open mouth, as if speaking or laughing. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a reddish-brown ground, possibly a playground or park. Two blue circular overlays are present: one containing the number '4' and another containing text.

4

**Getting
Active:
Supporting the
right to play,
sport and
recreation**

The 2012 Olympics offer a once in a lifetime opportunity to inspire and encourage young Londoners to develop healthier lifestyles through sport, play and the use of green spaces. An active lifestyle is core to the health and well-being of all London's children and young people and this can only be supported through varied, safe and accessible play, sport and recreational activities.

To maximise the opportunities London offers through its sport, green space, play facilities and the 2012 Olympics, together we should:

2012

- Build the long-term capacity of voluntary and community organisations to strengthen and diversify the range of sports and healthy activities on offer to children and young people on their doorstep. All the available evidence from previous major games is that legacy depends on investment in a community development approach rather than one-off events close to the Games.

Sport

- Ensure children and young people have access to inexpensive, high quality and relevant sports sessions and training beyond the school gate regardless of whether they are in education, employment or training. These opportunities should bring together disabled and non disabled children and young people.

Recreation

- Provide more safe and clean green spaces for children and young people across London and specifically in areas of deprivation, ensuring that every local area becomes a truly child-friendly community, where all children and young people can access exciting, well-maintained green spaces nearby.

76% of young people in London regularly use open spaces, parks and nature reserves, this is up from **51%** in 2004

32% of young people see **preserving parks and green spaces** in London as a **priority** for improving London's environment

- Provide greater information to parents and other adults about encouraging and supporting children and young people to play outside near their home and in their community.

Play Opportunities

- Ensure children can access play opportunities that are child-led and enable them to experience and negotiate risks, whilst safeguarding their welfare, by having well-supervised play spaces. Rather than having an authoritarian figure 'police' these areas, play rangers and play workers, youth workers or other well-respected and liked community figures should have a role in this.
- Adopt a more inclusive approach to play that ensures disabled children and young people have access to good quality play opportunities. To ensure universal access it is essential that staff providing play opportunities to children have training about attitudes to disability and how to offer good quality inclusive provision.



Research has shown that access to **green space** has a **positive impact on health and well-being**, including reducing the likelihood of anxiety disorders and depression in children and young people



Outdoor Education

- Provide young people, particularly those who are marginalised, with access to outdoor adventure activity programmes in and outside London, away from the day-to-day pressures of city life.



5

**Getting
Involved:
Embedding
genuine
participation
and engagement**

Effective participation and engagement of children and young people in the planning, delivery and evaluation of all services maximises outcomes. A key way of fostering participation is through the provision of high quality volunteering opportunities which can build children and young people's self-confidence, develop their personal skills whilst engaging them with their communities.

To embed genuine participation and engagement, together we must:

Participation

- Provide children and young people with more opportunities to participate in regional and local decision making forums, including meaningful involvement in the development and evaluation of Local Authority Children and Young People's Plans. We need to support children and young people who may face challenges because of transport, financial issues or their caring responsibilities to participate in these activities.
- Recognise that giving children and young people real influence depends on structured youth work facilitated by a skilled workforce. This can only be delivered by continuing to invest properly in workforce development across sectors, particularly in participation and youth action workers.
- Promote the idea of youth-led initiatives throughout local communities. For many children and young people being able to get involved in an activity and have the chance to lead and develop projects is highly rewarding.

Volunteering

- Increase the quality, quantity and diversity of volunteering opportunities for children and young people by supporting networking, training, capacity building, and the sharing of good practice across agencies and in partnership with children and young people.
- Focus on the lessons learnt and skills and confidence gained through volunteering, rather than on hours of completed activity.
- Develop and expand peer mentoring programmes for all children and young people to improve self-esteem, develop life-skills and improve performance at school. Peer mentoring can be especially beneficial to vulnerable groups, particularly for Looked After Children.

**19% of
young people
in London
currently
volunteer**



6

**Getting
Recognised:
Promoting and
celebrating the
achievements of
children and
young people**

O-25 year olds make up over 30 per cent of London's population, and their aspirations, ideals and achievements must be recognised and celebrated.

It is our responsibility to collaborate to:

Promote Young People

- Engage children and young people in the design, leadership and delivery of celebratory events and multi-media materials which advance a positive view of young Londoners.
- Utilise the knowledge and experience of the voluntary and community sector to highlight some of the great youth-led work that takes place in the city – including work that often falls under the radar of statutory services.
- Encourage and support lead members to engage with children and young people in their borough and to champion their merit and achievements to local media.
- Work to ensure that children and young people's offending and anti-social behaviour is kept firmly in perspective. Too often children and young people are viewed as a threat that communities need protection from. Sections of the media and policy makers in particular, must do more to acknowledge that the overwhelming majority of young people do not offend or behave anti-socially. Indeed, young people are statistically more likely to be the victims of offending behaviour than the perpetrators.

40% of 16 year olds in London feel that the **media portrayal of children and young people is unfair**

Young people are more likely to be the victims than perpetrators of crime

When asked why they hadn't been involved in moves to enact local change, **51%** of children and young people said it was because they hadn't been asked

Recognise Volunteers

- Reward children and young people for the positive activities they do including volunteering. Volunteering projects should always offer accreditation, award schemes and celebratory events, to promote and reinforce the good work that children and young people can achieve. Awards, events and accreditation positively build young people's skills and help them become more employable.

A high-angle, low-key photograph of a diverse group of approximately ten people of various ethnicities and ages. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. Their arms are raised and interlocked in a central circle, suggesting a team huddle or a moment of collective celebration. The background is bright and slightly overexposed, making the people stand out. A large, semi-transparent pink circle is overlaid in the center of the image, containing the text.

Working with Us

The preceding six sections outline what we believe a joined-up approach to improving outcomes for children and young people should look like.

We do not claim that this manifesto is wholly exhaustive – in either its scope or in terms of the organisations who have drawn it up. We are a broad coalition working with people aged 0-25, made up of large national charities with a significant presence in the capital, London-wide representative bodies and grassroots organisations working in neighbourhoods across the city. Never before has such a range of voluntary and community organisations come together with one voice to articulate what we need to do to make London better for children and young people. We are continually looking to extend the conversation and engage with other charities.

We also argue that the voluntary and community sector engages children and families beyond the reach of the state and in ways that are distinctive to statutory services. This is not for one moment to undermine the role and value of the statutory sector but to press for ever-increasing partnership between state and society. Nor do we make special pleading for charities. Our aim is not to promote any type of organisational form but to improve outcomes for children and young people.

London's voluntary and community sector comprises nearly 27,000 registered charities and tens of thousands more community groups working with the most marginalised and vulnerable communities in London. Thousands of these organisations demonstrate a strong track record of service delivery, representation and innovation in terms of serving children, young people and their families. And we fulfill crucial roles sitting on Children's Trusts and Local Safeguarding Children Boards, as well as bringing practitioner experience, skills and knowledge to wider arenas, such as through Local Strategic Partnerships.

If policy makers are to exploit the voluntary and community sector's potential to the full in improving outcomes for children and young people, we believe the following considerations are key:

Quality Assurance

- We believe policy makers and commissioners should take a hard line on quality. A number of robust and respected quality assurance frameworks exist including some specifically with small, volunteer-led organisations in mind. With the leadership of Councillors, we believe significant efficiencies and service improvements can be achieved if commissioning is linked explicitly to achieving quality standards.

Workforce Development

- The voluntary and community sector comprises 7% of London’s workforce – the same as the financial services sector – and contributes £18bn to the London economy. Supporting investment in the workforce (paid and voluntary) is crucial but needn’t be expensive. Specialists such as the Children’s Workforce Development Council and the London Regional Change Up Consortium can provide further information.

Funding

- We are no doubt entering a very difficult period where substantial decreases in public spending are expected. Clearly we urge that children and young people’s services remain a priority. Equally, we believe that the quality of funding relationships can be as important as volume. We encourage all Councillors to familiarise themselves with the Compact’s commitments on allocating resources to the voluntary and community sector which reflects good practice in grant-funding and commissioning, and is relevant to the entire commissioning cycle. (Further information can be found at thecompact.org.uk.) We also urge that appropriate focus is given to organisations working with ‘single’ communities of children and young people – such as young refugees – as well as organisations working with a broad range of young people. Such work is essential for engaging with young people on the edges of society who are at risk of alienation and radicalisation.

Supporting the VCS Engagement Function

- As elected members you can encourage and enable communities to shape public services and play a full role as active citizens in local democracy by engaging with partner organisations in the voluntary and community sector. Councillors can advocate for representation on Children’s Trusts and Local Strategic Partnerships, back targeted investment for the local infrastructure organisations and support the adoption and use of local and national Compact agreements.

These areas for consideration are reflected alongside others, in the Pan London framework for strengthening the voluntary and community sector engagement in Every Child Matters. A framework which is actively supported and promoted by the London Children and Young People Partnership (LCYPP) which is the pan-London strategic body facilitated by London Councils, which draws together the Chairs of Key London Children and Young People’s stakeholder bodies.