

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Building
Great Smith Street
Westminster
SW1P 3BT

28 January 2013

Dear Secretary of State

As the leaders of a number of key youth charities in England we are writing to ask for urgent clarification of the remarks you made in your evidence to the Education Select Committee regarding Government's intention to relinquish its responsibility for youth policy to local authorities. Not only does this seem a major reversal in policy one year after the publication of *Positive for Youth* which pledged cross-governmental support to young people, but it also raises huge concerns for us as organisations concerned for the well-being of young people in our country.

We agree that local government has a key role to play in ensuring adequate provision of support services to young people and we believe community groups, voluntary organisations and businesses all need to play their part in engaging young people and delivering services. However, we need central Government to ensure that all aspects of policy – be they health, education, employment, criminal justice and community engagement – articulate coherently a framework that ensures a strong and seamless mesh of support in the often difficult transition between childhood and adulthood. This cannot be left to local government alone but needs to be coordinated and championed centrally.

There is too much at stake - not just for the lives of individual young people but for all of us. Surely at a time when the Government is hoping to kick-start a troubled economy, we cannot afford to lose sight of the contribution that young people make. Yet it seems that instead of placing young people centre-stage, this Government is marginalising them. The results are all too obvious: the latest figures show youth unemployment bucking the otherwise downward trend in unemployment figures, and the number of young people not in education or training remains at an all-time high. Many would directly attribute the disproportional cuts to youth services (estimated by the Department this week to be 26%) to a lack of policy directive from central government. The laissez-faire approach currently favoured by Government will, at best, jeopardise the success of initiatives such as the National Citizen Service because the infrastructure to deliver it is eroded; at worst, it will risk social unrest.

The solution is simple and within your gift: young people need an overarching policy framework that minimises complexity and confusion, maximises the effective use of scarce resources and encourages collaboration amongst service providers. We also need an education policy that considers learning in formal and non-formal settings as complementary and of equal importance, giving clear guidance to local authorities that they need to maintain quality youth services with appropriate investment. Only a coordinated approach will ensure that young people have life chances and aren't consigned to the scrap heap of policy failures.



1st Floor
28 Brunswick Place
London N1 6DZ

T: (+44) 020 7278 1041
E: mail@ncvys.org.uk
W: www.ncvys.org.uk
Twitter: @NCVYS

registered charity no. 1093386
registered company no. 4385383

The anniversary of the publication of *Positive for Youth* offers a unique opportunity to review whether a range of policies are working for young people and what leadership is needed from central Government in areas where we currently fail. Our organisations, and we individually, are happy to offer you and your department support in facilitating such a review but we urge you not to take the unconscionable action of consigning overarching youth policy to the inconsistencies that often arise as a consequence of local decision making.

Yours sincerely,

Susanne Rauprich, Chief Executive, NCVYS

Fiona Blacke, Chief Executive, National Youth Agency

Simon Blake, Chief Executive, Brook

Jane Bryant, Chief Executive, Artswork

Kevin Curley CBE, Chair, Hull Children's Adventure Society

Rosie Ferguson, Chief Executive, London Youth

Marius Frank, Chief Executive, ASDAN

Mark Goodman, Chief Officer, Voluntary Youth Services Devon

Natalie Grant – Young Trustee, NCVYS

Matt Griffiths, Executive Director, National Foundation for Youth Music

Denise Hatton, Chief Executive, YMCA England

Charlotte Hill, Chief Executive, UK Youth

Thomas Lawson, Chief Executive, Leap Confronting Conflict

Helen Marshall, Chief Executive, Ambition

Neil Martin, Chief Executive, Jewish Lads' & Girls' Brigade (JLGB)

Craig Morley, Chief Executive, The Challenge Network

Tessy Ojo, Executive Director, Diana Award

Terry Ryll, Chief Executive, vInspired

Martin Sharman, Interim Chief Executive, Changemakers

Rosina St James, Chair, British Youth Council

Jane Slowey CBE, Chief Executive, The Foyer Federation

Matt Stevenson-Dodd, Chief Executive, Street League

Emma Thomas, Chief Executive, YouthNet

Derek Twine, Chief Executive, The Scout Association

David Tyler, Chief Executive, Community Matters

David Wright, Chief Executive, Confederation of Heads of Young People's Services