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Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State

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Ms Faiza Khan

Thank you for your letter of 28 January, on behalf of a number of key youth charities, asking for clarification of the statement that I made about youth policy at the Education Select Committee on 23 January.

I welcome the opportunity to expand on what I said to the Committee on this important issue. I am absolutely clear that, as a Department, our overarching priority is to improve outcomes for all children and young people.

In your letter, you say that "*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*". I could not agree more.

At the heart of that policy framework should be giving young people the opportunity to benefit from an excellent and rigorous education, which provides them with the knowledge and skills they need to go on to further study or employment. Young people also need to know that, if they are vulnerable, they will be protected from harm, and if they are disadvantaged, they will be provided with the support they need to access education.

I am committed to providing this kind of overarching framework, by addressing the needs of young people across all our major reform programmes. We are not only improving the quality of education for all young people, but we are also supporting the most disadvantaged through the Pupil Premium and the Youth Contract. We are focusing on the needs of young people in care or leaving care; and protecting young people from sexual exploitation.

Beyond the work of my Department, the Government is investing significantly in young people. This includes the roll-out of Universal Credit, enhanced support for unemployed young people, and support for young homeless people.

You will also be aware that, since 2010, the Government has invested in other kinds of support for young people, including rolling-out the National Citizen Service, completing the Myplace Centre building programme, and supporting uniformed voluntary youth organisations.

But I am also very clear that local authorities know the needs of young people and their communities much better than central government. Decisions about the prioritisation of funding and the provision of services for young people are best made at the local level, taking account of the local context. Our role from the centre is to give local authorities the freedom and flexibility to make the most effective decisions, by providing them with un-ringfenced funding and removing unnecessary bureaucracy.

It is for this reason that I said to the Select Committee that "*youth policy is primarily a matter for local government*" and it is why I do not believe that 'discrete' youth policy should be a top priority for the Department.

But you can be reassured that young people, alongside children, do take centre-stage in my Department's policies and that I will continue to champion their cause across Government.

Thank you for writing to me on this important matter.

Ys.

A handwritten signature consisting of the letters 'Ys.' followed by a long horizontal line that curves slightly upwards at the end.

MICHAEL GOVE