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Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State

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c/o Emma Kosmin
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Do Emma,

19 February 2013

Thank you for your letter of 8 February, on behalf of a number of organisations representing young people who attend, work or volunteer with local youth projects. Your letter was sent in response to the statement that I made at the Education Select Committee on 23 January when I said "*youth policy is primarily a matter for local government*".

I welcome the contribution you have made to the debate on this important issue and am grateful for the opportunity to expand on what I said to the Committee.

In your letter you mention the findings of the survey that you conducted of young people. One of those findings was that young people think that youth policy should be a key priority for national Government. I am absolutely clear that improving outcomes for children and young people is the top priority for my Department and is a key objective across Government. So whilst I am concerned that the young people you surveyed feel that Government does not do enough to show they care, I hope I can show that we care very deeply indeed.

Since 2010, we have put young people at the heart of all our major reform programmes. We are putting in place a policy framework based around my belief that young people should be given 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. I am acutely aware that, as your letter points out, not everyone enjoys their time at school and many need additional help in order to succeed. It is for this very reason that I am so determined to reform education so that it delivers for every young person. It is why we are investing so heavily, despite the economic pressures, including through the £1.875bn pupil premium which we provide to schools alongside the rest of their funding so that they are able to provide additional support to help the most disadvantaged pupils achieve their full potential. We are freeing up schools and teachers to use that money in the way that best meets the needs of their pupils, and that can include investment inside and outside the classroom. And in return for this investment, schools will be held to account for improving those unacceptably poor outcomes you quote in your letter.

Support outside school is also very important to young people. As a Government, we have invested significantly in improving that support – through the £1bn youth contract, the National Citizen Service, support for uniformed voluntary youth organisations, and by building Myplace Centres in the most deprived areas of the country. We know that each of these programmes is helping young people in developing the kind of employability skills you mention in your letter, which will help them to succeed in the future.

So I certainly do not disagree with you on the importance of investment and leadership from central Government to improve outcomes for young people. But I am very clear that local authorities know the needs of their young people 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 and by involving local young people in decision-making. Our role at the centre is to give local authorities funding to enable them to provide a range of services in their local communities and to give them the freedom to use that funding according to local need and responding to young people. Over the past 2 years, my Department has provided funding to support the British Youth Council's training for young people on how to contribute at the local level and I would urge you all to get involved in your local youth assemblies and councils.

Finally, I can reassure you that I regularly visit projects involving young people, both in my constituency and around the country. For example, I recently met some inspirational young people from the Premier League Kickz programme at their award ceremony. The Kickz programme aims to build safer, stronger, more respectful communities through the development of young peoples' potential and is an excellent example of partnership between Premier League clubs, local police forces and local authorities. I also regularly meet and talk to young people at visits to their schools – for example, when I visited Westminster Academy last year to launch a financial literacy programme to help young people get a better understanding of business and the global economy

Thank you for writing to me on this important matter. I hope you are reassured that young people are a priority for my Department and that I will continue to champion their cause.

Yours,
Michael

MICHAEL GOVE