



BYC Youth Manifesto with lapses

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AMD5 - Annual Meeting Document 5a

Please keep this document safe, you will need it to participate in BYC's Annual Meeting 2008. If you need this document in another format contact events@byc.org.uk or on 020 7785 6461.

The BYC Annual Meeting 2008, incorporates the Annual General Meeting and Ordinary General Meeting.



YOUTH MANIFESTO

POLICY OF THE BRITISH YOUTH COUNCIL, as passed at BYC Ordinary Meetings.

BYC policy falls under one of its ten policy themes, which are listed below. Since 2006 policies may have been updated in response to changing events, informed by BYC surveys, consultations and the approval of Trustees.

Updates have been marked with an * throughout the document.

BYC Members will be asked to approve the carrying forward of all the text of this manifesto during the Ordinary Meeting at the BYC Annual Meeting to be held on the 16th August 2008, except for the sections in bold which the trustee board have recommended to lapse as it is either policy that has been achieved or is no longer relevant.

If any member of BYC wishes for any other sections of the manifesto to lapse or to be carried forward then they must notify BYC in writing by the motions deadline date, 6th June 2008.

BYC's ten policy themes:

- **CULTURE, LEISURE & SPORT**
- **EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING**
- **ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS**
- **GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING**
- **HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**
- **INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**
- **POVERTY AND QUALITY OF LIFE**
- **TRANSPORT**
- **THE VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE**
- **YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE LAW**

CULTURE, LEISURE & SPORT

Discounts to Facilities

Young people believe that people between the ages of 16 and 25 are entitled to discounted prices for leisure and culture facilities similar to those received by under 16 years olds. We believe this because those between the ages of 16 and 25 have similar financial resources to those under age of 16 and consequently should be treated similarly.

BYC will lobby local and national service providers to change their policy with pricing and concessions.

Equality

Young people affirm their belief that people of all cultures, religions, race and sexuality should be treated equally and have necessary changes in the law to ensure that this can be the case.

Experiencing Culture

Culture should be made accessible to all through a variety of mediums such as festivals and museums. Capital of culture bids should be involving of the community; young people are an important group in all future work.

Local Facilities

There should be a variety of play schemes and sports events all years round that are affordable and cater for both younger and older young people. Leisure centres should also have lower prices so they are more accessible.

Out of Bounds

Parks and open facilities can be out of bounds for young people due to dangers with traffic, dog fouling, fear of crime and the threat of dirty needles. BYC should support local youth councils to address issues locally.

Quality and Quantity

Young people believe that there should be more youth facilities, e.g. parks, clubs, Cyber Cafes, and trips. These should all be well funded and well kept.

BYC should support local youth councils to address issues based on local need.

Safety in Facilities

BYC believes that young people should feel safe whilst participating in leisure activities and during their leisure time. It is important that where this is supervised, there is adequate adult support and that proper systems are in place to ensure that this support is thoroughly checked by Criminal Records Bureau. Public spaces should be well lit, and any equipment should be safe and in good working order. Spaces for young people such as youth shelters, skate parks and centres should be places where young people can go without fear of intimidation, and should be incorporated into the wider community to promote community cohesion.

BYC will endeavour to maintain this standard of safety wherever possible, with recommendations to and liaising with local borough, district and city councils. It will work with local youth councils and other young people to support their own work on this, providing resources for campaigns and other information.

Special Interest Youth Groups

Young people believe in the value of youth groups with particular interests. These include: special educational needs, cultural, LGBT, single gender, religious groups. Young people believe in equal opportunities for every one and for these groups to have a safe place to meet.

BYC should encourage the government to ensure specific interest groups are available and accessible for young people in line with Transforming Youth Work and Every Child Matters.

Sport

Young people support the option of more sport in school and more PE lessons but young people believe that there should not be increased pressure on them to do sport if they don't want to. Where they have to, there should be more variety, for both boys and girls, beyond, football, rugby, netball, hockey and tennis.

Local clubs should be better known about, cheaper and supported to provide variety in sporting activities.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Education and Skills Bill *

Through the Education and Skills Bill the Government wishes to raise the compulsory participation age for education or training from 16 to 18. BYC supports the motivation behind the Education and Skills Bill to see an extension of educational opportunity to all young people and improvement of support measures to young people in education, but has concerns about the use of compulsion to ensure young people remain in education or training until they are 18.

BYC believes that there should be a removal of the clauses within the Education and Skills Bill which impose penalty fines on young people if they do not participate. Also the offence of not complying with an attendance notice must not be regarded as a recordable offence under the National Police Records and result in young people getting a criminal record.

BYC will campaign to voice these concerns and to spread the message 'Dont force us, inspire us' on this issue. BYC believes that legal coercion is the wrong approach to engage young people with learning. If criminalising measures are enforced on those who do not participate in education or training it could lead to the further alienation of young people who are already struggling within the education system. (* update)

Access to Education and Student Finance

BYC will campaign for a government-led programme, educating post-holders in all educational institutions, which will break down stereotypes and seek to remove all real, perceived, intentional and unintentional barriers that form an obstacle to an open and accessible education system for all. We support the government's widening access agenda, which will provide new opportunities for people to gain access to education.

BYC will pressure Education Institutions (EIs) and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) to provide confidential feedback to students on their application to institutions.

We commend the scrapping of the outdated, unjust visitor system. BYC supports the commitment made by Universities UK (UUK) to the Office of Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and will lobby for the introduction of legislation to make the OIA a statutory organisation which all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must subscribe to.

We will campaign for greater powers for the OIA enabling them to identify areas of student performance, which could be used to measure and target student potential as a method enabling greater access to EIs. BYC will campaign and lobby for a properly funded education system, free at the point of entry, with a student grant that properly reflects the cost of living. This system should be based solely on students' ability and be independent of economic or social background, allowing free access to education.

BYC opposes any form of tuition fees because they act as a barrier and a deterrent to participation. Instead BYC believes education should be funded by progressive taxation gathered via the income tax system.

We also support and will campaign for the introduction and expansion of Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) to level 3 of the education system, regardless of a student's age.

Employee Volunteering

BYC believes that volunteering provides numerous benefits for volunteers, employers and the community. It gives the opportunity for personal development, training and building relationships with local residents. The benefits are there regardless of the type of employment or hours worked.

BYC will campaign for employer supported volunteering including, but not limited to: flexible hours; use of resources; time off in lieu; regular paid time to volunteer; and financial remuneration. BYC will also campaign to raise the profile of volunteering and recognise those individuals who volunteer.

Equal Opportunities

BYC has a strong Equal Opportunities Statement and believes that these values should be reflected in the Education, Employment and Training sectors.

BYC is committed to combating areas within the Education, Employment and Training sectors where there is not equality of opportunity; specifically where young people's pay and employment rights at 16 are different from their elder colleagues.

National Minimum Wage

BYC aspires to have an equal National Minimum Wage for everyone over the age of 16; this will consist of two tiers: a training rate and a working level. BYC supports the creation of a national minimum wage for all workers legally eligible to work, currently from 13, entitling them for the first time to equitable legal protection, pay and conditions in the work place as their adult colleagues.

BYC acknowledges that there are young people that live independently or are supplementing a low-income family; these young people need a *living* national minimum wage. We also believe that only an exceptional national minimum wage rate would attract people out of their choice of education or training; the argument that a minimum wage would tempt young people away from their course of action is unsubstantiated and should not be an obstruction to introducing a national minimum wage. We feel that this should go hand in hand with a higher national Education Maintenance Allowance.

The rights that young people have at work, including Minimum Wage rights should be made available to all young employees at the start of their employment, where their contract should be explained before signing.

BYC will co-ordinate a coalition of member organisations to campaign to for an equal minimum wage, for the rate to be increased and to raise awareness with young people about what to do if you rights are not being enforced.

Safety in the Workplace

BYC opposes violence and intimidation from clients and calls on all workplaces to do all possible to prevent violence towards their staff. BYC calls for this and all other aspects of an employer's duty of care to be more properly enforced. BYC calls for effective guidance on basic employee rights to be integrated into the school curriculum through Citizenship and/or PSHE including assertiveness training or similar.

Special Educational Needs

BYC believes that all people have a right to education. Education occurs in situations apart from the classroom and a complete national curriculum is not appropriate in all cases. Opportunities for practical training currently exist at a post-16 level and BYC believes that there should be opportunity at pre-16 level for:

- Alternatives to academic assessment such as practical assignments.
- Substitution of practical work/apprenticeships in place of non-core academic subjects where appropriate.
- Accreditation for practical work/apprenticeships.
- The value of industry partnerships.

Current policy is for integration of all children. BYC believes that this is not appropriate in all cases and may not maximise the potential of the individual.

BYC believes that in many cases specialist schools and units provide the best resources and support. BYC believes that some integration is beneficial to all; this could be achieved by joint assemblies, facilities and some lessons.

Student Voice

BYC believes that children and young people have a set in stone right to be involved in the governance, design and decision making process within their school, college or place of education. BYC recognises that traditionally "teaching and learning" discussions have been out of bounds; we feel that young people have positive contributions to make to the education system this will make learning and schooling more relevant and appropriate.

Student voice initiatives include:

- Student councils
- Local youth councils
- Students as researchers
- Students as interviewers
- Student governors
- Peer education
- Peer mentoring and support

We feel that resources, both human and material, need to be made more available for this to happen effectively. We feel that students are currently uninformed about their rights and the scope for student involvement.

BYC is to look to develop information for students about the scope, first steps, best practice and integration of student involvement programmes. **BYC welcomes the change in status of students as governors but believe that students should have full voting rights as members of governing bodies and that there should be a minimum of two young people on a governing body.**

BYC supports the right of secondary school students to be represented through a national union or association and will actively support the establishment of such a body.

Wider Curriculum

BYC believes that all people are entitled to a balanced education, which includes vocational, academic and life skills. BYC recognises that a number of issues are raised by this, in particular: the perception of vocational and life skills being of less value than academic qualifications; the recognition of voluntary work; and the value of having an equivalence of qualifications to recognise life skills.

BYC proposes to campaign towards an appropriate way to recognise non-academic skills that are assessed in a practical way.

Vocational Training

BYC understands that people have different skills. The education system is biased towards academic subjects and that a negative stereotype exists around vocational courses. There is a shortage of skilled labour and there should be more opportunities for vocational training at all levels including pre-16. Council believes that students should be encouraged to follow vocational courses when this is appropriate.

Students following vocational training courses cannot apply for student loans and may receive insufficient funds to cover living costs; this can lead to pressure to study academic subjects.

BYC believes that grants and funding should be made available to students and their institutions for vocational training and apprenticeships to the same extent as for academic courses.

ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Climate Change*

When consulting young people on the Government's Climate Change Bill, BYC found that the majority agreed that the Government is right to set an unilateral long-term legal target to reduce CO² emissions. There was also strong support for the Government to have a legal duty to stay within the limits of carbon budgets proposed within the Bill. The majority of young people surveyed by BYC also thought that the most important factor for the Committee on Climate Change established by the Bill to consider was 'scientific knowledge about climate change'.

Tackling climate change efficiently now, and with reference to scientific knowledge, is important to young people.

BYC would like to see the target to reduce CO² emissions, currently 60% of 1990 levels by 2050, increased. BYC believes that 80% is an absolute minimum target for the UK to reduce its CO² emissions and this should be the target on the face of the Climate Change Bill. (*update)

Save Greenfield Sites

Young people need space for their future; by building on Greenfield sites you take their future away. There are currently many derelict brown field sites that could be used for buildings thus reducing damage to existing habitats and wildlife.

BYC will campaign to get all building development on brown field sites and defend the greenbelt. "Campaigning to save young people's today and tomorrow."

Transport

BYC notes the importance of transport on the lives of young people in rural communities. BYC will campaign on this issue as outlined in the *Transport* section of its Youth Manifesto.

GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING

Apathy

Young people recognise the importance of democracy and see voting and wider political participation as important to a just and equal society. Young people fear the rise in extreme politics and recognise that an apathetic and depoliticised society gives scope for exploitation of the system and room for extreme parties.

BYC will support young people to register to vote and champion measures that remove the barriers that stop young people voting. BYC will approach each of the political parties in the run up to the general election to make youth versions of their manifestos and make them available through our website and other media.

Candidacy Age

Young people believe that the age to stand as candidates for local, regional, national and European elections should be 16, as should the age to become a trustee of a charity. Young people have significant responsibilities to society at the age of 16 and can have significant responsibilities in the private sector as company directors; this inconsistency should be rectified. Young people have lots to offer and the decision of their appointment to positions of political authority or governance of organisations should be in the hands of the electorate or membership respectfully.

BYC will lead a coalition of organisations to bring agreement on the issue and lead a campaign to ensure the situation can be rectified during imminent bills on electoral reform and charity law.

Children and Young People's Rights Commissioner

Young people believe all parts of the UK should have a Children's and Young People's Rights Commissioner who is responsible for all children and young people up to and including 18. Children and young people should be involved at all stages of the selection, recruitment and review of the Commissioner. The Commissioner should be independent of government and an advocate for children and young people. We believe the Commissioner should have the power to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, opening investigations as they see fit and publicly reporting as they see fit.

BYC will work with the Children's Rights Alliance for England to campaign for the Children and Young People Rights Commissioner and young people's active involvement in each part of the process.

Votes at 16

Young people support the right of their colleagues from 16 to be able to vote in all civic elections, this would correlate with the rights and responsibility young people currently have including being able to join the army and pay taxes. Young people need to be better represented within the current political systems, as do their views.

Votes at 16 will put more young people's issues on the agenda, which will seek solutions to their specific needs.

This should be an opportunity where society looks at enabling young people to vote where they are, maybe at school, a youth club, college, at work or while serving in the armed forces. Most young people are in an organised community at this time, i.e. a school, which would facilitate perfectly opportunities for politicians to meet young people where they are.

BYC will continue to be a leading member of the Votes at 16 Coalition and will look to work with the Electoral Commission, Government and partners in the voluntary youth sector to encourage young people to register and use their vote. BYC will make known to young people the role they have taken in changing the voting age when it happens.

Young People in the Lords

Young people believe they must have their currently poor representation within the Lords rectified immediately, as well as the representation of women; black and minority ethnic citizens; openly gay, lesbian, bisexuals; transgender people, people of all major faiths and people with a disability.

The House of Lords remains an important institution in the law making process, young people's views need to be taken into consideration on all matters. The House of Lords as an institution is currently incredibly hard to lobby and this process needs opening up, not least to young people. Young people support all measures to make the House of Lords more accountable and to remove the barriers for members of the public to execute the responsibilities of the position if they were selected to the House of Lords.

BYC will make provision within its constitution to have members of the House of Lords under the age of 26 as Honorary Presidents. It will also through its Youth at the Table training programme and networks promote young people being able to take such positions and work to get some under 26 year olds selected to sit in the House of Lords.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Adolescent Pregnancy

The UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe. BYC recognises the need to support these young people. BYC resolves to help prevent support a more visible and open sexual health programme. Young people have the right to make informed choices about their sexual life and BYC should:

1. Empower young people to protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies and STIs
2. Lobby to ensure there is enough information regarding contraception, pregnancy, abortion and adoption
3. Campaign for more funding in the sexual health services and GUM clinics

BYC understands that some people chose to become parents at a young age but also recognises the massive impact that parenthood has on young peoples' lives. BYC resolves to promote inclusive education which respects the additional needs and difficulties faced by young parents

Access to Services

BYC resolves to support greater access and wider publicity to all services that provide advisory and support facilities for all young people. BYC should also promote the principles of anonymity within these services. For those students and young people who move away from home, finding health care provision can be very difficult.

BYC will work with government services like NHS Direct who should be able to provide people with the information on where the local provision exists.

Bereavement

Every 30 minutes in the UK, the mother or father of someone under 18 dies. Bereavement and the grieving process can dramatically affect young people, and each individual will deal with their feelings in their own way. The effects are often most profound and apparent just after the incident, but will continue to affect the young person for many years to come. Since death often affects whole families or friendship groups, the young person's existing support network will often be insufficient.

BYC will campaign for increased awareness of the issues surrounding bereavement and its long term consequences. BYC believes there should be a wider network of support and services available to young people dealing with grief, e.g. in schools, youth groups, health services and support services/help lines.

Blood for All

BYC believes that banning male homosexuals from giving blood donations is unfair and unnecessary practice, which must be stopped immediately.

BYC will work with a coalition of youth, gay and lesbian rights organisations to raise awareness of the issues and campaign to change the current situation build equality into the system.

First Aid in Schools

First aid is a valuable and life-saving skill. Its training can also be an empowering experience. First aid teaching should be given enough time and support to be taught to a high standard for all school pupils at a level appropriate to their ability.

BYC will raise this in current education reform policy debates and work with St. John Ambulance and similar organisations to bring clearly make a case for change in the system.

Healthy Eating

Young people believe that healthy eating should be encouraged from a young age in schools and at home and that unhealthy food should be more expensive and healthy food should be cheaper to buy and there should be fewer adverts for unhealthy food on TV.

Mental Health

Young people believe that the NHS and the wider health and education sectors do not give enough recognition to people with mental health. Help is scarce and often very hard to obtain.

BYC should work with the media to help to promote good self-esteem to young people and provide educational information on the issues surrounding eating disorders and other mental health issues.

Organ Donations

Young people believe that everyone should be an organ donor on their death but have the opportunity to carry a card, or make it otherwise known to opt out of organ donation if they wish for that to be the case.

Sex and Sexual Education

BYC resolves to support the adoption and implementation of a wider, modern and wholly more effective curriculum within our schools to facilitate more effective education on issues such as sexual education, and that this curriculum adheres to our equal opportunities policy and caters for culture, race, disability, etc.

Sex Education should be taught at different ages by people who are not the people who mark your other work, i.e. a peer education group, a young worker or health care worker, who can relate to the students and best deliver the message.

Schools should be prepared to try new solutions to teenage pregnancies like making condoms freely available in schools and work to break down the taboos surrounding sexual health issues.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

International Development

Young people believe that the international economic and political system is biased against developing countries. Young people think that this is unjust and that all countries should be treated as equal partners. All governments have an obligation to ensure all citizens can enjoy minimum standards of living as set out in the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals.

BYC will raise awareness amongst young people of:

- Underlying causes in unequal development
- The UN's development goals
- Best practice in combating under development

BYC will put pressure on the British government to increase international development spending as a percentage of GDP (Gross Domestic Product). BYC will conduct research and develop briefing papers for members to allow an informed debate among young people and to allow BYC to link itself to specific campaigns.

BYC will campaign as a member of the Tobin Tax Network to make currency transactions fairer and stabilised and to provide an ability to generate additional sustainable funds for use as international aid.

International Trade

All Countries should be treated equally in trade rules, big countries should not be able to dominate markets and national and regional subsidies like the Common Agricultural Policy should be scrapped to make trade fair.

Fair trade products should be supported by the government by removing the VAT on all fair trade goods to support their development and in helping organisations promote their existence and the fair trade message.

BYC supports the fair trade towns' initiative and wishes to support local youth councils to help them get involved in making their schools or towns fair trade. BYC will work towards making itself a fair trade organisation.

POVERTY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Economic Poverty

Young people support the government's aims to eliminate child poverty and wishes to ensure the government sticks to its targets. No children or young people should have to live in poverty in the UK; it is appalling and needs to be stopped as soon as possible.

BYC will raise awareness of the situation with young people and join the End Child Poverty Coalition.

Educational Poverty

Young people believe in the equal opportunities of the basic standard of skills and education. There should be no divide between tertiary education generally and especially on levels of support and maintenance.

BYC will work with NUS' Vice President Further Education Union Development to campaign against the inequalities in the tertiary sector.

Health Poverty

Young people believe that health care and nutrition are major factors for a young person living in poverty. All young people and students should be entitled to free health, dental care and prescriptions.

BYC will campaign for free school meals for all young people to give at least one balanced meal; free health, dental care and prescriptions and ensure schools provide healthy food and healthy eating education.

Housing Poverty

Young people believe that everyone has the right to a safe place to live. Young people are often most vulnerable as tenants. Young refugees and their families are often in the worst situation and need to ensure that their basic rights are catered for.

BYC will provide information on tenants' rights and work with STAR (Student Action for Refugees) to raise understanding about the living situation of young refugees.

Make Child Benefit Count

BYC is to sign up the MAKE CHILD BENEFIT COUNT campaign led by Child Poverty Action Group. BYC is also to support the campaign through the website, encourage BYC members to also join and get young people to send a message to the Chancellor through the campaign website.

Social Poverty

Young people believe that all young people should have a decent standard of living, independent of their economic status. This should mean access to adequate facilities and equal access to benefits.

BYC will run an awareness campaign for young people's access to fair benefits, especially housing.

TRANSPORT

Accessibility

Young people believe there should be a regular and reliable transport service for everyone.

BYC will campaign for regular bus and rail services especially in areas away from big transport hubs. BYC will also campaign to ensure that timetables and timetabling information is published and accessible.

Pricing Transport

Young people believe that access to transport is crucial to opportunity. If you cannot access transport then you are unfairly treated.

BYC will campaign for:

- Concessions for under 18 year olds
- Flat, regular (non-fluctuating) fares
- Recognized Identity Card that enables young people to claim discounts
- The abolition of the Young Person's Rail Card and replaces it with a Free National Transport Card that gives you discounts on all forms of public transport.

Safety and Cleanliness

Young people believe that transport operators have a responsibility to provide them with a service that is safe, clean and accessible to everyone. There is particular concern about transport especially for young people, like school buses.

BYC will campaign to ensure that transport, especially young people specific, is well regulated and maintained to a decent standard.

Social Exclusion

Young people believe that those with a lack of access to transport are being discriminated against.

BYC will campaign to make sure that transport is open and available to all people with disabilities and ensure that transport operators (and their staff) do not refuse to pick up a user due to discriminatory judgments made on age, gender, disability, race and sexual orientation, etc.

THE VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Further Education

The FE sector is valuably characterized by its social and educational inclusiveness in providing for a wide range of socio-economic, age and ethnic groups and that its structure, funding, curriculum, administration and culture should continue to reflect this.

Currently colleges are not able to provide sufficiently and equally for all their diversity of students for a number of reasons, including the higher value that the Government places on secondary schools as preferred providers of academic qualifications.

The Government missed an historic opportunity to secure the future of further education when it published its White Paper on 14-19 education which ignored or side-lined many of the proposals outlined in the Tomlinson Review, especially the integration of academic and vocational education in a diploma structure characterised by a 'stage not age' approach to learning.

The Foster Review on the Future of Further Education provides an opportunity for the Government to revisit some of the decisions it made in diluting the Tomlinson Review.

Representation should not just be a tick box procedure but that the views of students should be places at the heart of their institutions.

BYC will publicly emphasise the importance of representing students at every level within the structures of FE institutions.

BYC will publicly emphasise the importance of students' unions as 'the learner voice' in every aspect of college life.

BYC will lobby the Government to increase student representation within the new structures developed to support the Government's Skills Strategy.

BYC will actively support Tomlinson's proposals of a qualification that integrates academic and vocational learning that would give people a greater choice and ownership over the future direction of their education.

BYC will work with NUS, ESSA and other relevant external organisations in making sure that these resolves are publicly articulated and maintained.

Local Youth Councils

Young people have the right to be represented through a youth council that feeds into government at all levels and acts as the voice for young people. Local youth councils should not be ignored by councillors and MP and have the resources to run well supported campaigns. They should have the resources to run young people led events that are relevant and in line with young people's agenda. All young people's opinions should be respected and listened to by people in power.

Young people have the right to be involved in quality assurance of local provisions, in the delivery and assessment of services and give a platform to make their opinions known.

Young people should be able to get involved in their local youth forum through their schools, youth clubs and as many other places as possible.

BYC should work with relevant Government departments, Regional Assemblies and associated bodies to develop regional youth councils and forum and build links with existing regional youth councils.

BYC will run a project called, Every Young Voice, to promote diversity in local youth councils to ensure they are reflective of local communities and don't act in ways that can be exclusive or discriminatory or people due to socio economic status, race, religion, sexual orientation, and refugee status.

Political & Citizenship Education

BYC believes it is important young people have a basic knowledge of the political process in order to empower them to take part in the voting process if they wish. Citizenship education should be improved to make it more effective.

The Principles

Young people should be involved at local level to allow them to be represented and to make their voices heard. Young people must have the right to scrutinise service providers to ensure they get a fair deal. BYC believes that as part of the Young & British campaign BYC should link bringing young people with expertise in this area to making BYC a more diverse organisation.

Young people's Voice in BYC

BYC should be a balanced and representative voice for British young people.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE LAW

The use of ultra-sonic dispersal devices or “Mosquito” devices. *

BYC expresses concern at the use of ultra-sonic dispersal devices. BYC believes these devices indiscriminately target young people regardless of their behaviour and that the use of these devices will have the consequence of reinforcing the imbalanced negative stereotypes of young people found within the media and British society.

BYC supports the “BUZZ OFF” campaign, supported by the Children’s Commissioner for England, Liberty, Groundwork and The National Youth Agency, which aims to challenge the use of ultra-sonic dispersal devices.

BYC supports the encouragement by “BUZZ OFF” of community-led solutions to address anti-social behaviour where it exists as a constructive alternative to the use of ultra-sonic dispersal devices. BYC wishes to emphasise that young people should be thoroughly involved in the creation of these community-led solutions. Not only should young participate in decisions which affect them, but their input will also aid the development of effective solutions. (*updated)

Anti-Social Behaviour

The Government should make a commitment to review and amend their policy on Anti Social Behaviour, as young people are increasingly being stereotyped as 'Anti Social' and through current legislation, potential for criminalising young people and ostracising them from society is growing.

The way to tackle crime and anti social behaviour amongst young people is to support young people and engage them in society. This can only be done with properly funded community and youth services and support for people with mental health, drug and alcohol or other social problems. With strong local youth support services we can help to build an inclusive society and one founded on a mutual respect as well as promoting a more positive view of young people to the public particularly the media.

By focusing so heavily on enforcement the Government has neglected to address many of the underlying causes of an individuals anti social behaviour.

BYC will join the ASBO Coalition and support its aims, as well as form an independent working group of informed young people to develop and publicise BYC’s policy and proposals on this issue.

BYC will lobby Government to:

- Promote partnership working with relevant national and local youth bodies, matched with sufficient levels of funding and resources so that young people can participate in the decision making process to find viable solutions that tackle the cause of problems.
- Establish a consultation, to seek the views of young people and gauge their ideas for policy that stem Anti Social Behaviour at the root cause.

- Open channels of discussion with young people to deliver a more positive image of young people to the public and the media.

Domestic Violence

BYC believes that children and young people should have the same rights to protection from Domestic Violence as adults.

BYC will join and work with partners in the 'Children are Unbeatable' Coalition and actively support their campaigns.

Marriage Equality

Young people believe that gay people have equal rights to marriage and all the benefits attributed to its legal status in society. The civil partnership proposals are a positive step that should be opened up to all people but is in itself a second-class system that does not bring equality.

BYC will join and work with partners in the 'The Coalition for Marriage Equality' and actively support their campaigns.

Reporting Crime

Young people believe that when they and their peers report crimes they are not taken seriously and as a consequence they do not report crimes they witness, this means that young people feel unsafe and unprotected so congregate in groups for safety. The later results are that as adults they continue not report crimes and have a disregard for the law and law enforcers.

Young people feel there are often huge assumptions made about young people and their activities; the police will always believe the word of an adult over the word of a child.

The Justice System

BYC notes that many young people do not have a sound knowledge of the British judicial system, and are not provided with adequate foundations to become active citizens. Young people should be educated, through citizenship lessons and other methods about the judicial system.

BYC and membership organisations should lobby parliament and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), to ensure that this happens in all sectors of education, including higher and further education and informal education, particularly through voluntary organisations.

The Prison System

Young people believe that simply moving young people on does not work and can cause friction between the police and young people. They equally believe that the prison system does not work and actually gives some people street-cred on their release.

Prison should not be seen as the answer to or relevant result of a conviction; young people recognise that prisons can be the training ground for future criminal activity.

There is also clearly an unfair divide between the sentences on men and women for the same crime; sentences are often arbitrary and should be standardised.

Understanding the System

BYC believes that all young people have a role to play in the justice system. BYC should promote a greater understanding between young people and the justice system. BYC should work to improve the relationship between young people and law enforcers. BYC should encourage young people's involvement in community-centred programmes and in becoming special constables, and lay magistrates.

Young People and the Police

Young people are often stopped and searched for no apparent reason or based on some discriminatory judgment whether it is their age or another means. This can mean young people feel that there are being victimized and harassed by the police and can cause bad feeling between young people and law enforcers which can only be negative for local communities.

BYC should campaign to raise awareness that young people are often the victims of crime and should not be seen as the problem. Local groups and youth workers should work to broker the relationship between the police and young people. Police should make more effort to visit schools to build awareness.