An Emergent Enquiry: Youth Power and Leadership in the UK

Produced by the Ellis Campbell Charitable Foundation

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1. About this Document

Last year, at the Ellis Campbell Charitable Foundation, we decided to develop our philanthropy and build our knowledge and understanding of youth power and leadership. By doing so, we hope to play a more useful role within this space, and for the communities we exist to serve, in the future.

We are an established family foundation who have funded many different projects to do amazing work over our thirty-year history. In recent years, we have had a particular interest in funding organisations that work with young people from disadvantaged areas during the transition from education to employment. Whilst we know we have funded good work in this space, we were unsure if we were achieving maximum impact with this. We want to ensure that we are the best possible philanthropists. To this end, we knew we needed to learn and that we lacked the insight provided by people with lived experience.

As a family foundation, we are particularly keen to ensure that the next generation of the family, aged 18-21 years, are involved in our philanthropy as much as possible. We are pleased that, as a family, we have been able to go on this enriching, invaluable, and inspiring journey together.

This document is a repository of the thoughts, feelings and ideas we as a foundation have heard and shared over our seven-month journey to better understand issues connected to youth power and leadership in the UK. It has resulted in us making a new round of grants as a foundation and, we hope, making bolder and more informed decisions about everything from process to outcomes than we have before.

We do not seek credit for the conclusions or insight in this document as it has come from the hard work and generosity of others who have informed and challenged us in equal measure.

Our journey started at the beginning of the year and has continued throughout an international pandemic and during a time that the world has begun to acknowledge and address systemic racism in a different way.

Our learning has enabled us to have conversations with, and learn from, many young people, many of whom are leaders in their own right. It has also enabled us to hear from a broad range of experts that have experience working with young people in education, youth services, criminal justice, the care system, community services, housing and mental health in the UK. In addition to this, we have heard from, and learnt from, researchers, activists and policy makers. We would like to offer our thanks to those we have met who have contributed their time, thoughts and ideas so generously, including those young people who have remained anonymous:-

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Zara Todd

Whilst we are keen to continue with our learning, we are now looking forward to the next stage of our work in this area in playing a supporting role to the incredible work and momentum that is already happening in this space.

Young people must gain the power to influence the world around them. To create social change, young people need power. Young people have proven that they can organise and use their collective power to make change.

We would also like to take this opportunity to clarify our understanding of youth power and leadership. We are increasingly aware that there are both different age brackets and different terms and phrases within this space that can have different meanings. Our research leads us to believe the following when we think about, talk about, and fund in the youth power and leadership space.

> **Youth** – we believe that rigid age brackets are not helpful when defining who young people are. Yet, for practical purposes, we believe that this can be people from approximately age 14 to age 25.

> **Power** – we believe that power can be created and shared in many different ways, and that it is crucial for young people to be able to gain more power over what happens to them in their lives at an individual and systemic level. We believe that young people can be more powerful when they come together.

Leadership – we believe that everybody has the right and the ability to lead their own life, in their own way, with the right support. Young people should have the opportunity to become leaders within social change. We need to create safe spaces and opportunities for young people to become leaders of the future.

Towards the end of 2020, the Foundation will begin to move towards making grants associated with this work, starting with a budget of £200k.

This is an evolving narrative that we will build over time. If, when reading this, you have thoughts and reflections, ideas, challenges and critiques please get in touch with Laura@elliscampbell.co.uk who has supported the development of this document.

2. How We Feel

As a foundation, a family and as individuals going through this journey:

- We have had our eyes opened to a world we were not connected with.

- We have been daunted and overwhelmed at times during our journey. At points it has been difficult to see how we can best contribute to this space – we had not realised how much we did not know.

- We have been amazed by the many talented and exceptional young people we have met and have found their clarity, commitment, positivity, hope and drive inspiring and motivating.

- We feel humbled to have heard from so many young people who are passionate, engaging, knowledgeable and eloquent about the things they believe in. We believe that more people need to listen to them for society to change in the way that is needed for young people today and future generations.

- We feel incredibly lucky and privileged to have had the chance to meet so many changemakers with a huge wealth of knowledge, wisdom and insight that they have shared with us so generously and passionately.

- We have been saddened to hear that so many young people face a myriad of barriers and troubles daily, and do not have the same chances in life as more privileged young people. We believe that we need to listen to these young people to understand how this can be different in the future.

- We have been struck by the unfair disparity between young people of different ethnicities. We have been deeply saddened to hear that young people of colour are disadvantaged within all areas of society. We have been impressed by the work that young people of colour and their allies are doing to change this.

- We have been humbled to hear how people's experiences of life within and outside the school gates have shaped their futures, but we have been saddened to learn about the unjust differences between state, academy and private school systems, and what this means for young people as they grow older.

- We have been shocked by how little funding goes into young people's mental health services and the unimaginable amount of time that young people have to wait during their time of need.

- We have been filled with great optimism for the future and we understand that we must support young people to fulfil their potential, no matter who and where they are. We believe that there is an urgent need to do what we can to empower young people to use their voice to fight for the change that they want to see in the world.

- We have been enlightened to see that youth services of all kinds are essential. They deserve more recognition and need to work hand-in-hand with schools and communities.

- We feel that we can be a better funder and support better, stronger and more powerful young leaders to make the changes that they want to see. We feel like we will have a better impact on the world and look forward to working within this space.

- We strongly believe that all young people have a critical role to play in shaping this. Young people need to be supported and have safe spaces to unleash their potential and change the world for the better.

3.   What we've heard

Youth Power and Leadership can Transform our World

- We have heard that there are a range of methods, mechanisms and tools that support the development of youth leadership and power at all levels in society.
- We have heard that young people have an incredible amount of potential to lead us towards a better and brighter future. They are full of hope and optimism and need to have the right conditions in place to exert their power and influence.
- We have heard that the government does not have a strong history of listening to and acting on the wishes and needs of young people. Government policy that directly affects young people is not shaped by young people. This needs to change as a matter of urgency.
- We have heard that there is an increasing focus on youth leadership, and the emergence of youth-led movements. However, the ability to organise in the United Kingdom (UK) is limited when compared to the United States (US), this is for a number of reasons but largely due to changes in Government funding of youth focused initiatives. Community leaders that take on the responsibility of reforming their communities are often faced with backlash from those resistant to change. They are politicised negatively, and hindered when trying to break into unwanted spaces for the views of the disenfranchised to be heard. Youth movements in the US use powerful and advanced community organising skills that simply do not exist to the same extent in the UK.
- We have heard that the language that people use around youth leadership and power varies and changes. The language that we have heard includes co-creation, empowering, engaging, influencing, leading, involving, including, listening and more.
- We have heard that young people's confidence grows when opportunities arise where they are listened to authentically, without prejudice. When this happens, young people develop skills that equip them with the confidence to become leaders within their own right. These skills can be used throughout their lifetime.
- We have been told that it takes time and resources to develop young leaders. Notwithstanding, in recent years the climate change movement has inspired many young people to take a stand and demand the changes that they want to see.
- We have heard that the creation of opportunities for young people to meet senior decision-makers can lead to big changes within society and structures when done in a manner that is empowering. Such moments, conversations, access and relationships can make a big difference. Youth power and leadership requires the creation of these spaces and for adults to play a role in enabling them.
- We have heard that poverty, inequality, and prejudice all impact young people's ability to lead and become leaders. This is in addition to class and where they live.
- We were told that: "Talent resides everywhere – it's about how we activate it".
- We were told: "You will know you are doing the right thing as a funder when you are terrified at the power amassing in front of you".

On Unlocking Young People's Potential to be Changemakers

- We have heard that funding young people to create social change projects provides valuable employment opportunities, especially for those who may otherwise struggle to gain paid work. Not only does this open the realm of possibilities for young people to earn an income outside traditional employment, such an act helps young people understand that their time is valuable.

- We have heard that it is crucial to create space which allows for young people to identify and explore what kind of changemaking resonates with them most. Having choice and control within this is essential.

- We have heard that young people need to be exposed to careers that enable them to make change and achieve success in this, but that this can be hampered if you cannot see what you want to be.

- We have heard that young people can be supported to be change makers within their schools and communities and that this can be especially powerful when they can see the changes they have affected.

- We have heard that young people need to be educated and supported to help redesign the world and make it a better place for the future. If an older generation prevents this from happening, we will never get to that better place.

- We have heard that there is a need to not just identify what social capital is, but to empower young people to push back against what kind of social capital is acceptable and valued.

- We have heard that you cannot change what you cannot see. The most privileged young people, those who are more likely to have access to power, will not be able to make changes that benefit the most disadvantaged young people because they cannot see them.

- We have heard that enabling young people to explore worlds and sectors that they are not exposed to enables them to dream beyond their present reality.

- We have heard that power holders need to get uncomfortable to make social change happen, and not mistake this discomfort for risk.

- We have heard that the best experiences of social change are when people have acknowledged their power and shared this with those who have less power or no power.

- We have heard that we need to deliberately think about how we share power and how we prepare people to enter powerful spaces.

- We have heard that the language used to achieve social change needs to be language that all communities can identify with, and that this changes based on the community of young people in question.

- We have heard that income generation can be achieved within a community as a result of a social change project. This in itself supports some of the most disadvantaged places.

- We have heard that young people do not know how to have a voice in their local community as they are not given the opportunity to develop the skills, knowledge and resources to do this.

- We have been told that, "you need to be able to listen to young people if you're going to be influenced by them". Young people are not difficult to engage but they are easy to ignore. You need to know more about young people to be able to engage them.
- We have heard that by focusing on people's strengths and assets, Asset Based Community Development is a model that can help local people achieve social change within their community.
- We have heard that young people inspire each other, and it's important for them to learn from their peers who 'have been there, and done that'. Without being with and around and in touch with other young people doing similar work, you can be lonely and more likely to give up when the going gets tough.

On Education and the Education System

Exclusions and Minoritised Communities

- We have heard that all children deserve a good education but those that are most vulnerable often do not receive one.
- We have heard that the majority of society are detached from the experiences of young people excluded from mainstream school. Society does not understand their pathways, challenges and traumas and this is a major problem as it significantly affects people's life course, life chances, and decision making abilities.
- We have heard that education plays a central role in framing the future prospects of young people. Yet, minority groups are more likely to receive disrupted education.
- We have heard that school exclusion rates are rising, and the reality is likely to be worse than official statistics suggest. This is due to illegal exclusions and the reduced capacity and resources to support the most vulnerable children in mainstream schools. We know that the COVID crisis will only exacerbate this.
- We have heard that excluded children are very vulnerable and usually have not had their needs met for a very long time prior to their exclusion.
- We have heard that there is a link between increasing exclusion rates and rising levels of poverty. Many young people have not got enough food to eat to enable them to focus and concentrate on their learning.
- We have heard that specialist schools for disabled young people lack the breadth of curriculum required to create diverse career pathways. The experience of being in a specialist school may inhibit independence later in life.
- We have heard that children with disabilities are often excluded in many early childhood development programmes, as such disabled children often miss out on important opportunities to receive specialist support and services.
- We have heard that young LGBTQ+ people are extremely vulnerable in our society. They disproportionately suffer from mental health issues and face high levels of violent and non-violent discrimination. This is in addition to accessing an education system that fails to provide a curriculum to support them with the pressures they face in society.

Private Schooling and Inequality

- We have heard that there is a disparity of opportunity for young people between state funded schools and private sector schools.
- We have heard that private schools are better able to develop skills compared to many state schools because of the additional extracurricular activities they have the resources to offer.
- We have heard that those who access private schools usually come from the most advantaged communities. These people are much less likely to live in poverty, have complex home lives, find it difficult to engage with education, or experience the same level of mental health issues.
- We have heard that tutoring programmes are extremely beneficial to the future prospects of young people, especially to those that have fallen behind. However, access to tutoring is often limited to the schools and parents that can most afford it and we have heard that around 80% of disadvantaged pupils currently do not have access to quality tuition.
- We have heard that the National Tutoring Programme is a government-funded, sector-led initiative to support schools to address the impact of Covid-19 school closures on pupils' learning. From the 2020-21 school year, the National Tutoring Programme will make high-quality tuition available to state-maintained primary and secondary schools, providing additional support to help the pupils who have missed out the most as a result of school closures.

The Purpose of Education and Schools

- We have heard that young people spend 85% of their time away from school, so what happens in their local community and within their home influences their ability to learn when they are at school. While education is important in shaping the community, there is little effort made to understand how the community can best support the education of young people.
- We have heard that community organising is vital for schools, but many teachers do not know where to start with this as they are often not rooted within their school's local community.
- We have heard that school leaders are essential in creating a culture of civic action within their schools and need support to develop this so that it is part of their leadership style and embedded within their school.
- We have heard that the education system works for some, but not others, and that 'it's not a level playing field' – it favours and works best for those who are already more privileged.
- We have heard that 5-10% of school leaders coming together can change the culture of the education system. Large-scale change is possible without government policy but through the actions of existing leaders.

- We have heard that in our current education system, there is little space to focus on building skills that are essential for life beyond the school gates. However, there is widespread acknowledgement within the teaching community that these skills are key for young people entering the world of work.
- We have heard that politics and democracy are seen as a thing for white middle class people – and classes are often tailored to this audience. However, it should be for everybody and everybody should be taught about it in a way that makes sense to their community.

Ways of Learning

- We have heard that many core skills are interdependent and cannot be developed in isolation – that ways of working across the curriculum and skillsets are really important but less prominent.
- We have heard that there are now higher expectations of children and young people in school and some people face additional hurdles when they access education. For example, you cannot embrace learning opportunities available if you go to school hungry or are unable to go on a school trip due to lack of money. This can lead to the attainment of lower grades.
- We have heard that the current education system does not allow for true youth leadership to develop and flourish. It needs to change for that to happen,

The Education System

- We have heard that the world we live in is full of complex systems – everybody shapes them and everybody is shaped by them. The education system and the communities that schools exist in at a local level are all complex systems.
- We have heard that in the complexity of the education system, the relationship between cause and effect is hard to attribute and can only be perceived in retrospect, requiring analysis, investigation and/or expert knowledge.
- We have heard that systems change is about shifting the conditions that are holding a problem in place, aiming to bring about sustainable change by altering underlying structures and supporting mechanisms e.g. all of the youth-focused services that intersect with a child's education or play an important role alongside it. It is not about developing more projects and interventions within just one part of the system – the education system.
- We have heard that it is essential to work with employers, educators and other organisations to help schools build awareness and understanding of essential skills.
- We have heard that the education sector struggles to work together as there is no shared understanding of outcomes – that the question of what schools are 'for' is a live one. Some are interested in education as an end in and of itself, others want to see schools more as pastoral care and support for young people as they develop. Some want schools to link to the employment market and focus on preparing students for it

and others want to see more general life skills and emotional development connected to the world young people are entering.

- We have heard that it can be difficult to deliver non-curriculum-based programmes in schools as schools do not want to admit that they have a problem with some things, such as racism or mental health. This denial is not helpful to young people, especially those that are experiencing racism and mental health issues.
- We have heard that the education system is not divorced from wider societal trends of inequality and, as such, mirrors and replicates the inequalities at large.

On Youth Work and Youth Services

- We have heard that youth work originated during the industrial revolution when young men travelled to urban areas and needed not only a roof over their head, but a safe space with trusted adults. This was crucial for young men's personal, social and emotional development at the time and led to the early provision of youth services.
- We have heard that youth work sits within non-formal education and has a strong and rich history. It has always been at the forefront of tackling inequality and enables young people to access safe spaces with trusted people. This is especially important for those who may not have this at home.
- We have heard that youth work is deeply misunderstood and often underestimated by those that do not work within it or have not directly benefitted from it, and this has been detrimental to youth services over more recent times.
- We have heard that the government focus on youth work separately from education. This disconnection has been harmful to youth services. Youth services in local communities stand-alone from educational environments and the connections between the two are fragile in most areas.
- We have heard that because youth work is misunderstood and does not have the same standing and importance as education at all levels, it has become vulnerable and a target for funding cuts during times of austerity.
- We have heard that youth work has been underfunded for a long time. On top of this, during the past decade, austerity has had a significant impact on youth sector services and, as a result, they have been decimated even further.
- We have heard that over the last ten years, there has been a steady rise in mental health issues, loneliness and disengagement of young people from society as well as serious crime targeted at young people.
- We have heard that formal education cannot do everything that people expect it to do. Youth work has a role to play and this is being increasingly recognised, particularly during the current pandemic.
- We have heard that the pandemic and its impact on young people's social, personal and emotional development has been monumental in bringing together separate government departments and leaders within education and youth service settings that have previously worked separately and independently of one another.

- We have heard that there has been a lot of innovation and collaboration in youth services in response to funding cuts, but there is no consistent way of sharing best practice, scaling up and achieving change at a greater scale and pace. There is a data gap within this. An example of an initiative that is working to close this gap is Generation Change who are building a community of impact partners. Impact partners are organisations that use a common impact framework and work together to use evidence and data to learn about their impact on young people and communities and encourage best practice.
- We have heard that businesses can financially support the provision of youth services. In addition to money, they can offer opportunities, time, skills and connections - all of which can be invaluable, especially those that do not have access to this through their own personal networks and their parents' networks.
- We have heard that there is a strong need for adequate training for youth workers to be able to support young people's needs but that the profession is generally badly paid and poorly trained.
- We have heard that a lot of people's energy and success when it comes to community focused youth work stems from conversations and networks rather than tangible support and resources. This is especially key for BAME led organisations.
- We have heard that the outcomes of youth work need to be better understood to enable more strategic and long-term investment. This in turn will enable all young people to thrive.
- We have heard that systemic and strategic transformation is required to enable youth work to flourish and play its part in creating a better, healthier and safer world for all young people.

On the Transition from Education to Employment

- We have heard that soft skills are valued within many workplaces but they are not developed within school settings and are not valued within the state education system.
- We have heard that young people need to be educated and supported to think about a broad range of career options. Moreover, access to this support is inconsistent, varied and dependent on who you and where you live.
- We have heard that young people from particular ethnic groups who have the skills required within the employment market still cannot enter employment. More work needs to be done to address ethnic pay gap reporting.
- We have heard that young people at a local level need to feel that they get the right support for them to overcome barriers to employment that are not of their own making. We have heard that what school you go to affects your life chances. Your school determines who you know and what your networks are – which are both crucial determinants of success in future life.
- We have heard that for young people in disadvantaged areas, entrepreneurship presents an option that they might not have considered before. However, this is not something that young people can pursue if they are not aware of it as a credible option.

- We have heard that youth unemployment is a complex long-term issue that requires further exploration. Those that are the furthest away from the employment market have complex issues and are likely to require different approaches that are built on trusting relationships.
- We have heard that it is important for young people to have high aspirations to gain employment and that this needs to be met with appropriate work opportunities. Inequality within communities means that work opportunities are not readily available in many areas and this directly impacts on people's aspirations.
- We have heard that youth unemployment tends to rise more steeply than other forms of unemployment during recessions and that this happens dramatically and unpredictably based on the state of the economy. Even when a recession is expected, nobody is prepared for it in relation to youth unemployment.
- We have heard that the Chancellor is starting a 'kickstart jobs scheme' in the hope it will curb youth unemployment in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic but it is feared that this may be too little too late with young people set to bear a significant brunt of the pandemic's economic impact.
- We have heard that improving the world for young people isn't all about getting them into top jobs and universities. Having a decent job in your own community is just as important.
- We have heard that the emphasis on securing city jobs and university degrees misses the needs of many young people. Securing good local jobs resonates more with people in areas outside London than it does in London.
- We have heard that 400,000 young people aged 16-24 years (11.3% of people in this age bracket) are not learning or earning. This group of people often face multiple disadvantages and the options of learning or earning are not open to them. It includes people who are underemployed and on minimum or zero-hour contracts.

On Social Mobility

- We have heard that capitalism inevitably equates to inequality and lowers social mobility, that the financial and economic system connects directly.
- We have heard that class is key when considering social change. People from working class communities do not see social change as social change - it's just change that needs to happen to make their community and their life better. They make changes that can be seen and felt, but they are not called activists. The issues and passion for change can be completely different for people from working class communities compared to people from middle class communities.
- We have heard that education does not level the playing field. For those young people who enter jobs where there is no natural progression, there's little value in going to school and continuing education after the age of 16.
- We have heard that the UK is not a socially mobile society for those who reside outside of major cities, do not have family connections or privileged backgrounds. If your parent is a doctor, you are 24 times more likely to become a doctor, and if your parent is a lawyer, you're 17 times more likely to become a lawyer.

- We have heard that support is available for young people from disadvantaged areas to enter top universities and careers. Yet, we have heard that many of these programmes struggle to ensure that young high achievers are aware of the issues that may affect their future success without scaring them or demotivating them. Young high achievers need to be empowered to make an informed decision about accessing these programmes of support and must be involved in the development of such initiatives.
- We have heard that the inequalities in our education system and our healthcare system create a reality in which many young people in the UK have a reduced ability to become leaders of the change they need.

On Intersectional Inequalities

- We have heard that young people who face a range of inequalities and are the most marginalised can be the easiest to ignore when designing programmes, services, schools, budgeting and so on, but their views and insight are essential in creating effective social change.
- We have heard that short-term interventions often do not work for the most marginalised or hard to reach young people. Work with these young people takes resources over time and trusted, long-term relationships.
- We have heard that the potential that all young people have is amazing – we just need to find creative ways to activate and support their lived expertise and innate talent and to understand that some will need more support than others.
- We have heard that the most innovative solutions are often created by those people that experience the greatest inequalities in society as they have to be very creative with the ways that they adapt to access services and power. Those in positions of power and authority need to get better at seeking them out, listening to them and acting on their wisdom and insight.
- We have heard that young people who face multiple inequalities can be seen by those in positions of power and authority as being angry. Power holders need to reflect on how they react to this and gain a greater and deeper understanding of that anger and the passion for change that it brings.
- We have heard that we need to get better at holding multiple experiences together because the complexities of people's lives are really important and cannot be separated into neat boxes that may appear easier to address. Solutions need to be developed to address multiple and complex needs through multifaceted approaches.
- We have heard that the success of organising youth-led movements around climate change has had a positive spill-over to other socio-political movements. People who are calling for and demanding change are beginning to see and understand that they have allies within other movements. Collective action could lead to bigger change.
- We have heard that marginalised groups of young people have poorer health outcomes than their peers, including looked after children, young carers, those from ethnic minorities, those with learning disabilities, young people who identify as LGBT and those who have experienced adverse childhood experiences. These health

inequalities usually intersect with other structural injustices such as poverty, ableism and racism.

On Being in Care and Leaving Care

- We have heard that around two-thirds of children in care have experienced significant abuse and neglect. This abuse will likely have a major influence on their future.
- We have heard that most of the children in care do not stay in the care system for their entire childhood and many rotate in and out of lives with their blood relatives, institutions and multiple foster homes.
- We have heard that the majority of children in care are placed in foster families, with only a small minority living in residential care homes. Those in residential care homes tend to be older children and teenagers.
- We have heard that funding cuts to support care leavers to live independently have been drastic and have exposed institutional racism. There have been patterns of prejudice based on ethnicity with young people of colour who have been in the care system facing higher levels of issues in relation to mental ill health, homelessness and a number of other injustices.
- We have heard that children in care experience poor outcomes in relation to academic achievements and mental health issues. However, it is not fully clear if this is due to be in care or their experiences that led them to being placed in care. Research suggests that broader forms of disadvantage had a lasting effect on children's educational attainments throughout their schooling, and such disadvantage was more prevalent in young people who have experiences in the care system.
- We have heard that stability and consistency are important for children and young people, but children and young people in care face huge levels of instability and inconsistency.
- We have heard that it is important to create opportunities for young people to realise their potential and develop solutions to the challenges they face. Believing in them, stretching them, and creating environments where they find and take agency is critical.
- We have heard that young people in care are let down by the system and the people working within the system as there are often patterns of behaviour that are missed and the opportunities to share information with relevant agencies are missed, too. This can lead to over policing and subsequent criminalisation that could otherwise be avoided. As such, there exists a high number of people who have been in care in the prison system.
- We have heard that in the transition to adulthood, if you have no parental or adult support, your opportunities are gate-kept by the state.

On Young Carers

- We have heard that a young carer refers to children and young people under the age of 18 who provide care for somebody, usually a parent or grandparent.
- We have heard that many young carers maintain a constant state of vigilance and this has a toll on their emotional health and education. This has a negative impact on their ability to attend school and learn whilst they are there. In turn, this means that they may not secure the educational qualifications that they need to secure employment.
- We have heard that young carers have a range of unique experiences based on their family context and it's important that the needs of the whole family are understood and addressed. The needs of a young carer do not exist in isolation and the solutions to support a young carer are based on solutions for the whole family.
- We have heard that children are not born young carers and early identification and support is critical to prevent them from becoming young carers. However, many young carers slip through the net and are, therefore, unable to secure the support they need in life.
- We have heard that understanding the experiences and needs of young carers is most powerful when it comes from young carers themselves and this can lead to change.

On Young Disabled People

- We have heard that young people who are disabled by society have found it useful to politically identify as disabled people. However, we understand that this in itself is a label that can cause many difficulties and challenges.
- We have heard that the social model of disability has been created by disabled people and is based on the belief that society puts in place many barriers that make it hard for people with a range of health issues and conditions to access the things that others take for granted.
- We have heard that supporting disabled young people means creating a society which is accessible and inclusive that values, respects and celebrates people equally.
- We have heard that negative images of disabled people can have a profoundly negative impact on how young disabled people, including children, see themselves and their place in the world.
- We have heard that young disabled people face inequality in a multitude of ways. They are more likely to be excluded from school, less likely to attend university, more likely to be out of education, training or employment, more likely to be sexually exploited and to live in poverty.
- We have heard that many young disabled people would choose to attend a mainstream school, but the option to do this has decreased over recent years as local authorities have devolved budgets to schools. Many schools do not see the benefit of investing in support packages to enable disabled children to access mainstream education.

- We have heard that the education system segregates people based on their disability and fails young disabled people. This segregation follows people as they get older.
- We have heard that young disabled people do not have the same opportunities to develop skills and experiences that are essential to prepare them for adult life, and this has consequences throughout their lifetime.
- We have heard that attending a mainstream school enables you to build a diverse circle of friends that are different to you and can support you later on in adult life. It also enables others to have a more realistic image, and positive image, of what life is like for disabled people. Changing how the world sees people who live with a range of health issues and conditions is of paramount importance.
- We have heard that there are limited opportunities for young disabled people to enter the job market, even with the charitable sector, despite the prevalence of government schemes to support employers to employ disabled people.
- We have heard that some disabled young people are so far away from the employment, that employers and potential employers need to be aware of, and put in place practical strategies to overcome challenges that this brings. This is particularly relevant for organisations that offer nominal payments to people for providing insight and expertise into areas of their work, which can unintentionally cause anxiety.
- We have heard that employers do not know how to support disabled people well in the workplace, and as such they are less likely to employ young disabled people and are, therefore, missing out on a talent pool. It means that disabled people are more likely to be financially reliant on their families and be in receipt of state benefits.
- We have heard that there is a lack of mentoring support available for disabled young people by other young disabled people, but they are well placed to provide this as they have personal insight into what life is like and could share that with others. This is in addition to being a positive role model.
- We have heard that involving disabled children and young people meaningfully takes time, but the results will be more effective as you are meeting people's actual needs as opposed to perceived needs.
- We have heard that the issues that matter to young people are also the issues that matter to young disabled people – no topic is off the table because of their health status, and they are not interested in issues solely related to this.
- We have heard that being with other young disabled people to have a voice can be a powerful experience and helps develop a sense of identity.
- We have heard that adults can be very protective over young disabled people and stop them from making their own decisions as well as making their own mistakes. This is not helpful when transitioning to adult life.
- We have heard that disabled people are natural problem solvers as they have to be creative with how they live on a daily basis. This is a skill that should be more valued.
- We have heard that disabled people are often seen as inspiring. Whilst they do face more challenges in everyday life than non-disabled people, it is insulting to be congratulated by strangers for doing everyday tasks. However, young disabled people should be seen as inspiring if they do something remarkable.

On Young Women

- We have heard that young women are trapped in poverty, yet they are propping up the economy. They are more likely to be in low paid work, do unpaid work and experience sexism in the workplace.
- We have heard that young women who are also young mums, from black and ethnic minority groups, are disabled, are refugees or migrants, or experience mental health issues face multiple challenges. This has an additional direct impact on their economic status.
- We have heard that young women are at an economic disadvantage compared to young men, and this has continued during the pandemic as male dominated industries such as construction have been impacted less than female dominated industries like hospitality.
- We have heard that young women find it difficult to enter some industries, like design, as they are not considered as options when they are at school. We have heard that 80% of girls do not believe that they will succeed in creative industries, with 30% of girls feeling like they cannot make a difference to society.
- We have heard that young women find it difficult to identify as activists as it is not a language that they identify with. We also heard that similar barriers are present when it comes to young women and engaging in politics, and as such young women may be less likely to become young leaders.
- We have heard that power holders and decision makers within organisations that intentionally share their power with young women do things with them, not to them or for them. This way of working does not come cheap as it takes time and resources to do it well.

On Youth Offending and Criminal Justice

- We have heard that young people are treated disrespectfully by the police. This is particularly harmful to young black people who are subjected to high levels of stop and search and stop and account by the police on a regular basis. This leads to high levels of mistrust.
- We have heard that if young people are policed differently, they will react differently.
- We need to understand why so many young people feel so threatened that they have to carry a weapon to protect themselves.
- We have heard that the criminal justice system never sees or acknowledges the positive elements of young people and this is never recorded.
- We have heard that there is a complete lack of cultural understanding within the criminal justice system and it is common for a jury's racial bias to impact on their deliberations and subsequent sentencing by a judge.
- We have heard that prison is the worst environment for young people suffering from mental health issues and when they are released from prison, they become even more disenfranchised from society and have to build up even harder exteriors to survive.

- We have heard that people's characteristics are seen by the criminal justice system as negative, when they could be seen more positively. For example, being 'gobby' can mean you're a confident public speaker and getting involved with crime could demonstrate your entrepreneurial skills.
- We have heard that positive behaviour and actions go largely ignored in the criminal justice system with a clear preference to act only on negative behaviours. We have heard that such a focus on negative behaviour and punishment reduces space for positive behavioural change amongst young people in prison.
- We have heard that there is racial disproportionality in the justice system with high numbers of people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds in prison. We have heard that whilst black people only make up 4% of the population in the UK, they represent 17% of the prison population.
- We have heard that to reduce crime amongst young people, you need to invest in youth centres that have positive role models and invest in more public libraries so that people can access the internet.
- We have heard that youth justice is based on a western world where white people are in power and benefit from the system. The majority of judges are white, the majority of juries are white, and this means that the bad behaviour of young white men is excused, but similar behaviour from young black men is punished.

On Race and Racism

- We have heard that in Britain today people do not speak openly and honestly about race, and this is very much true within the education system. The teaching of the histories of other races and ethnicities in schools is limited to October, which is Black British History month, rather than being included within regular weekly history lessons.
- We have heard that the creation and delivery of additional and alternative educational resources about black British history enables young people to connect information with their experiences that helps validate them. However, this is not readily available to all teachers and all schools and so is of benefit to only small numbers of young people.
- We have heard that there is a lack of incentive for many teachers to expand their knowledge and learning around histories of other races and ethnicities. This lack of incentive is not aided by the fact that the vast majority of teachers are white and lack the training to confidently engage with topics relating to race.
- We have heard that the decolonisation of education means looking at the impact of colonialism on populations and looking at different points of view to teach a more accurate version of history.
- We have heard that if we learn more about the people around us, we could be more compassionate towards others. This would lead to a different way of being with and around others that are different that could create more cohesive, and less divisive, communities both now and in the future.
- We have heard that the UK's national identity centres around being a country of global citizens, yet it fails to acknowledge the central importance of colonialism and the

country's central role in the transatlantic slave trade. Colonialism is very British, and we do not explore the connections and history at the heart of our society.

- We have heard that some groups, and in particular people of colour, often modify their behaviour by hiding their authentic selves to avoid being stereotyped.

- We have heard that young people of colour experience racism and discrimination. These traumatic experiences have been heightened more recently following the death of George Floyd. Young people's experiences of being black need to be heard by those who can enable change to happen.

- We have heard that Black Lives Matters is inspiring hope in communities of colour across the UK.

- We have heard that structural violence is an expanded definition of violence that is an attack on people's identity, personhood and value. These implicit forms of violence are normalised through everyday life.

- We have heard that black people are four times as likely as the rest of the population to end up in jail.

- We have heard that young people have been talking about racial injustice for a long time but we cannot put the responsibility on them to fix the system. This responsibility sits with those in power, it sits with white people.

- We have heard that for those with power it can be challenging to balance and hold many different inequalities, and when this is done it can unintentionally create space for more racism. To achieve change, everybody needs to focus on their approach to stamping out racism.

On Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing

- We have heard that young people are the loneliest demographic in today's society.
- We have heard that young people are scared about life – we are living through a pandemic and a climate crisis. Young people require adults to have honest conversations with them about what life is like at the moment and in the foreseeable future.
- We have heard that when young people are distressed, they are often scared. Fear can drive unpredictable behaviour that is seen as problematic. This locates people's distress within themselves as individuals rather than being a symptom of the world that they live in.
- We have heard that young people's wellbeing is more firmly on the agenda than it has been before. There is an increasing focus on this throughout society.
- We have heard that creative arts programmes can support young people with mental health issues to reconnect to themselves, their peers and their communities. Whilst they are therapeutic, they are not seen as a form of therapy.
- We have heard that helping young people understand their identity and their roots can be achieved in creative ways and has a positive impact on mental wellbeing. Young people's environments shape who they are and who they become as well as their image of themselves. For those in more difficult environments, this can be limiting or

harmful. However, we have also heard that, through reflection and coaching tools, young people can create new narratives about themselves.

- We have heard that young people are naturally playful. Play is extremely important for processing trauma and giving young people relief from their daily lives, particularly for those living in hardship and poverty.

- We have heard that there are no real opportunities to focus on young people's mental and emotional development within school settings and this has a direct impact on their mental health. Whilst changes within Ofsted reporting requirements will enable teachers and schools to prioritise students' wellbeing there remains some scepticism about how this will be achieved in practice and what difference it will make and when.

- We have heard that a focus on developing strong mental health and tools that support emotional wellbeing in children and young people make them more resilient to adverse life events that can cause trauma.

- We have heard that the majority of mental health interventions for most children and young people take place in the community and are undertaken by non-mental health specialists and practitioners. They do not take place within specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as these services support only a small proportion of children who have the most severe difficulties. These services have been underfunded for many years.

- We have heard that the NHS Long Term Plan will see additional investment in CAMHS over coming years, but practitioners are worried that the commitments are not enough to provide the service young people need and deserve. There are concerns that this funding will not reach the frontline as these fears have been heightened during the most recent months.

- We have heard that support from CAMHS is very different to support from adult mental health services and when people move from the other it can be difficult, with around a third of people in need being missed at that time. Young people experiencing mental health issues become even more vulnerable at this point.

- We have heard that the government and society both have responsibility when it comes to improving children and young people's mental health.

- We have heard that the narrative that children and young people are experiencing the biggest mental health crisis in history is not necessarily true, but the intensity of their mental health issues have increased due to technology.

On Young People and Technology

- We have heard that technological advances do not come along with an in-depth understanding of the risks they pose. Legislation to limit the negative effects of technology on young people often lag significantly behind. Therefore, technology can present an immediate threat to young people's lives.
- We have heard that there is a lack of long-term critical research that focuses on young people's experience of technology.

- We have heard that a lot of energy is being directed towards better equipping schools to address the negative effects of technology and online activities through education. However, as schools and teachers face a complex web of issues ranging from large classroom sizes to reduced resources, they simply have limited capacity to successfully address this issue at the scale required.

- We have heard that mental health practitioners are increasingly concerned about the relationship between very young children and social media in terms of their social and emotional development, at a time when they experience a reduction in time spent on healthy activities, such as sleeping and exercising.

- We have heard that during the coronavirus pandemic, youth focused organisations have used technology, specifically a number of virtual communication platforms, to ensure that those that are most vulnerable and in need can continue to be supported. However, many of those with the most pressing needs have been further marginalised and may not be able to access such support digitally, particularly whilst they have been in lockdown within their homes. We have heard of organisations not being able to reach young people with complex needs who live in a household where they do not have internet or devices capable of using virtual communication platforms

On Place and Community

- We have heard that young people's local and regional contexts are really important and need to be better understood. While larger cities have a range of programmes available to young people, many smaller cities, towns, rural areas and coastal towns are often under-served but have a high level of need.

- We have heard that power is created within communities where people have something in common, and these communities need to be self-determined. People within their own communities can enable and achieve community cohesion in a way that others from the outside simply cannot – that local solutions are almost always best.

- We have heard that poor transport links in disadvantaged rural areas lead young people to lead unhealthy isolated lifestyles.

- We heard that high levels of poverty do not just exist within urban areas. Poverty exists within towns and rural settings, too. Rural poverty in particular is often missed, forgotten and hidden so young people living in poverty within rural areas cannot access programmes of support. Poor and limited access to public transport and mobile phone coverage can cause additional levels of isolation.

- We have heard that green spaces and extracurricular activities are of significant importance to the development of young people. They need safe spaces to play but this is not readily available to them, particularly in urban areas that experience extreme disadvantage.

- We have heard that the housing crisis has a negative consequence on young people's lives across the country.

- We have heard that some communities experience high levels of trauma and this impacts on people in multiple ways. Fear is a prevalent emotion in the lives of many young people who are living in the most challenging situations and this can cause and exacerbate mental health issues.
- We have heard that some people living in areas of extreme disadvantage experience high levels of trauma. Trauma exists in communities without being adequately supported and addressed.
- We have heard that in areas of extreme disadvantage there are high levels of street crime and violence. The actions of a few have a profound effect on a community and how it sees itself. In these instances, there is a need for people within the community to tell and share a different story to themselves and others.
- We have heard that young people are very conscious of financial difficulties within their households and this is a strong contributing factor to the growth of gangs. In addition to this, if you are a young person who cannot see what employment opportunities are accessible to you because of your limited qualifications, working the streets is an attractive option.
- We have heard that the make-up of working-class communities shifts and changes over time and that different communities have different needs. We need to understand this deeply and not make assumptions.
- We have been told that, "to reach people you have to be in their community". There is a lot of work to be done to build trust between communities and institutions.

On Learning from Overseas

- We have heard that there is an increasing focus on youth leadership, and the emergence of youth-led movements but the ability to organise in the UK is limited when compared to the US.
- We have heard that Australia, Canada and Scandinavia have higher rates of social mobility than in the UK and US, and it can be argued that a capitalist society is destined to have low social mobility rates due to the very nature of capitalism.
- We have heard that the best educational models are found in Helsinki, and are based on what young people want and need, and when the whole curriculum is designed in response to this.
- We have heard that the Delhi government has developed the Happiness Curriculum which includes half an hour of mindfulness practice at the beginning of every school day. Other Indian states are looking at this and adopting it for children aged 6-11 years.
- We have heard that, globally, there is more and more interest in wellbeing as the current rates of mental distress, particularly amongst children and young people, are untenable.
- We have heard that 50% of people globally would be willing to give back to their schools, but only 1% of people were doing that – this presents the education system with the biggest untapped resource that it has at its disposal.

On LGBTQ+ Young People

- We have heard that homeless LGBTQ+ people are not often rough sleepers, but they do not have a safe place to live. This may mean they are sleeping on people's sofas, have a 24-hour lifestyle, use hook up apps for somewhere to stay the night or live in unsafe places with family or partners.
- We have heard that lots of people are questioning whether or not trans people should even exist and this is extremely damaging to trans people.
- We have heard that the government have recently issued a questionnaire about conversion therapy to seek opinions on whether or not it should be legislated and enacted. Posing this as a question creates space for people to be empowered in their transphobia and ignores the fundamental human rights of this community.
- Local authorities find it difficult to recognise the risks that young people face within some communities and do not understand the safeguarding responsibility that they have for young people. For example, a young trans Muslim Iranian person fears for their life, not just their safety, and could be taken away and married off.
- It is scary for young people who trust in a god to then be told that their god does not love them, is against who they are and does not have your back.
- It is not uncommon to hear that some young LGBTQ+ people have experienced conversion therapy and exorcism as different faiths and cultures believe that you can be converted to heterosexuality.
- Having a cultural understanding is key when supporting young LGBTQ+ as, so often, their ability to share what is going on hinges on trust and whether information can be held confidentially because the risk of such information getting out poses a huge threat to their lives.

On Homelessness

- We have heard that the longer that somebody is homeless, the more likely they are to pick up habits and behaviours that become entrenched and are harder to change the longer that they go on for. This can include drug use, mental health issues and sexual exploitation.
- We have heard that early intervention in homelessness makes a difference to people in the long-term and can prevent 20-30 years of periodic homelessness.
- We have heard that there has been an overall 44% increase in demand for support for safe spaces to live in across the country during the first quarter of lockdown, and particularly from those living in rural areas.
- We have heard that there has been an increase in rough sleepers requiring support. In particular, young black men who are told to wait outside for help are then being moved on by the police.
- Young homeless people with complex needs require training and support to tackle the issues they face, and this does not happen quickly.

On Research

- We have heard that there are significant gaps in research about young people, particularly those that are forgotten by society and face the most challenging circumstances.
- We have heard that youth-led research provides unique insight into the issues faced by young people and enables people to express their emotions in a way that they are unable to do in other settings.
- We have heard that despite the multitude of research into young people's opinions there is not much literature on how they can create change about the things they care about unless it is motivated by politics.
- We have heard that recent research has found that young people are becoming more concerned about their future and recent events such as Brexit and climate change strikes can cause a sense of hopelessness and issues with mental health.
- We have heard that data is hugely important when seeking to address inequality in the UK. For many communities that suffer the consequences of a hugely unequal system, there is limited relevant data that could support the creation of initiatives and interventions that adequately address people's experiences of inequality.
- We have heard that there has been research which suggests that children with disabilities are often excluded in the majority of early childhood development programmes meaning that disabled children often miss out on important opportunities to receive the specialist support and services they need to meet their rights and needs.
- We have heard that there is a lack of long-term critical research that focuses on young people's experience of technology.

On Programmes and Services for Young People

- We have heard that scaling successful interventions can be difficult to achieve and may not be the right approach, but that this can lead to great success.
- We have heard that building trusting relationships with young people is central to developing effective support and intervention programmes. This takes time.
- We have heard that mentoring programmes can support young people to improve their attendance, performance and academic attainment.
- We have heard that mentors create different relationships with young people than other adults around them, including teachers.
- We have heard that mentoring and coaching are different, but have some similarities, and the research and literature around this can be confusing.
- We have heard that the more that mentoring is accessed, the higher the impact it has for young people.
- We have heard that art is an educational tool and community cohesion can be achieved through art through the development of creative literacy.
- We have heard that it is important for young people to know that they are trusted by adults who run services.

- We have heard that the use of boxing to introduce mental health support is an effective way to reach people as it allows people to access support in a non-stigmatising and comfortable space.
- We have heard that young people are driven away from services when they are promised something, such as access to a counsellor, a bed for the night or that what they have shared will be kept in confidence, but that promise is not kept. Young people need to develop strong relationships with the people they seek support from. Trust can be easily broken. Among young people, when trust is consistently broken, a general mistrust in authority emerges.
- We have heard that volunteers need to be valued and this can include ensuring that volunteering is financially viable, incorporates strong learning and development opportunities and supports people to find paid employment.
- We have heard that volunteers are the backbone of many charities, especially in those organisations serving communities of colour which tend to be able to access less funding and, therefore, have fewer full-time staff.
- We have heard that creating enabling environments for groups of young people traditionally takes place in 'elite' spaces, but this is key to bringing in diverse talent.
- We have heard that when young people have a say in their own care and support as well as the services they access, this can improve their own wellbeing and create better services.
- We have heard that charitable sector efforts to develop youth leadership need to be further developed to avoid tokenism and authentically shift power to young people.
- We have heard that student governors are often undervalued and not adequately supported and have a difficult experience of governance as a result.

On Barriers to Empowering and Supporting Leaders

- We have heard that the media influences how the general public view young people and are responsible for a lot of negative stories.
- We have heard that the media portray young people negatively, particularly when it comes to drugs and youth violence such as knife crime. This is problematic as it is not the reality for the majority of young people.
- We have heard that the image that older people have of younger people is often incorrect, but this is pervasive across society, and especially relevant for some groups of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- We were told that, "it is difficult to engage with a political system that seeks to ignore the voices of young people and within a society that discredits their voices".
- We have heard that youth leadership requires adults to give up power and control and this can be difficult for both individuals and organisations. Building relationships between young people and adults is important if adults are to play a role in developing youth leadership that shakes the nation.
- We have heard that everybody needs to have an inherent belief in the power of young people to make social change a reality but that older people need to remember that "if you give up power, you've got to really give it up".

- We have heard that local politicians do not listen to young people and take them seriously as they are below the voting age. They need to be educated and engage with young people before they reach 18 and can then vote.
- As we were told by one expert: "Those in low resource settings suffer from a chronic lack of opportunity to dream".

On Funding in this Space

- We have heard that handing power to young people to make decisions about what is funded and how is a very powerful model when it comes to youth leadership and that there are various ways of doing this. Some funders are working in this way already and are leading the way.
- We have heard that there is a gap in funding to support youth leadership, despite many funders working in this space. Most fund organisations that support young people and are not open to funding young people themselves as leaders – young people at different stages need both but there isn't enough in the pot going straight to them.
- We have heard that small amounts of money, or micro-funding, is important for young people. This is especially relevant when considering how to enable young leaders to create change whilst also keeping a roof over their head.
- We have heard that funding for the long-term requires funders to be flexible in their approach and to build relationships of trust with grantees.
- We have heard that it is important for funders to identify whether statements from grantees are honest and truthful, and the best way of measuring impact is to talk with the communities they serve directly.
- We have heard that you do not need to be the content expert on what you fund but be open to learning from the experts that you fund.
- We have heard that it is important to constantly learn from project partners and develop trusting and supportive relationships that enable people to do good work. This means minimising reporting requirements, seeing partners as experts in their work and offering skills and networks in addition to financial resources. This helps re-balance the power dynamic between funder and grantee and allows for real dialogue and partnership.
- We have heard that impact and evaluation is a full-time job and it's expensive. As such, it is best to borrow from the work of others to better demonstrate impact. While this is an expensive endeavour, impact and evaluation is the foundation of high quality research essential for sector-wide learning and change.
- We have heard that the provision of core funding can enable grantees to be more attractive to other funders as this better enables collaboration, innovation, and long term strategic planning.
- We have heard that grassroots organisations survive on small amounts of funding but are increasingly overlooked and overshadowed by others. Funders need to look beyond who and what they trust.

- We have heard that funders need to feel uncomfortable to enable the communities they fund to feel more comfortable.

4. What we've been told must be done

Young People as Leaders and Changemakers

- Directly transfer wealth and resources to young people and organisations that support young people to lead the way.
- We have been told we should fund leadership programmes for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Train young people to identify, inform and create solutions to address the challenges they believe are the most important.
- Provide micro-grants to young people so that they have the financial resources to be the campaigners, changemakers and leaders that they have the potential to be.
- Collect data about diverse groups of young people so that we can reach the most disadvantaged and provide them with the tools to be changemakers.
- Identify the industries that young people want to infiltrate to make them more accessible to disadvantaged young people.
- We have been told we should fund educational programmes that teach young people about democracy, campaigning as well as personal and professional decision-making.
- Support the development of alumni networks for young people leaving all educational settings that incubates their ideas, shares learning and enables leaders to grow.
- We have been told we should fund young people from black and ethnic minority communities to develop more entrepreneurial resources and skills to access a broader range of desirable employment opportunities.

Education

- We have been told we should fund schools to partner with more voluntary sector organisations that are rooted in their communities so that they can better understand the communities that young people exist in outside the school gates.
- Develop additional age appropriate British black history resources to support teacher training programmes that increase knowledge, skills and confidence of teachers to teach outside of the curriculum.
- In partnership with other institutions, build training and learning programmes for school leaders to create sector-led changemakers that inspire young people to become leaders in their own localities.
- Support libraries to become filled with books written by people from marginalised groups that enable people to learn more about inequality throughout society from those who know it best.
- We have been told we should fund the development of a national democracy education programme to improve young people's understanding of, and ability to interact with and influence political systems.

- Develop a way to gain a better understanding of how to achieve a multiplier effect and build the essential skills that all young people need to move from education to employment across all sectors.
- Support young people with their mental health and emotional needs to return to education post-pandemic, with a specific focus on those that are likely to have experienced trauma during these difficult times.
- We have been told we should fund initiatives that focus on personal development programmes for young people who are at risk of exclusion from mainstream education.

Employment

- Support young high achievers who are employed within top professions and come from low income backgrounds to progress at the same rate and get paid the same salary as their peers from more privileged backgrounds.
- We have been told that we should support young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to fit into the arts industry and support it to be more inclusive and successful in retaining diverse talent.
- Create more employment opportunities for disabled people within disabled people's organisations to provide invaluable work experience that enables people to move into other sectors.
- Develop ways to enable more employers to better understand both the legal requirements as well as best practice to enable more disabled people to enter the workplace and thrive within it.
- We have been told we should fund individualised support packages for young people coming out of prison so that they can enter a broader range of careers and learning opportunities.

Youth Sector

- We have been told we should fund training for youth sector workers to be able to enhance their skills to support young people.
- Establish a youth participation budget that enables individual youth councils to have financial responsibility for expenditure and enables a more diverse group of young people to be supported and developed.
- Provide funding to develop a 10-20 year strategy and associated infrastructure that enables the youth sector to strategically position itself and be better valued across all sectors.
- Establish Youth Cards across the country to ensure that no young person falls through the gaps, particularly those that are the most disadvantaged.
- Fund more youth-led social action projects that benefit young people directly.

Infrastructure

- Develop ways that enable more funding to reach young people living in the geographical 'cold spots' across the country so that services can be accessed no matter where you live.
- Analyse innovation within education and the youth sector that informs the creation of toolkits and convenes people to share and spread best practice on what works.
- We have been told we should fund infrastructure that convenes organisations that are at the forefront of cross sector innovation and connects them to build a community that shares the same values, can achieve a bigger collective impact and leverage more resources.
- Establish an innovation fund for young people to access the resources they require to solve their own problems in a way that simultaneously offers employment solutions to high rates of youth unemployment.
- We have been told that we should maximise our impact by working with other funders in this space and provide funding for joint initiatives.
- Support the development of a youth-led political infrastructure in more rural settings.
- Enhance networks for young women within this country and around the world.
- Map different interventions for young people and work out where the gaps are in relation to activity, geography and age groups, and fund the gaps.
- Create intergenerational initiatives that look at how we co-produce programmes that effectively impact the way in which mental health reflects the needs of young people and future generations. Such a cross-generational lens would take learning from previous generations and build a dialogue with young people to create a well nuanced and informed approach to mental health needs among young people.
- We have been told we should develop a think tank to advise policy makers. This should be made up of young people with lived experience, not just those with university degrees.

Services and programmes

- Provide additional funding to enable more therapists to support young people with their mental health needs and reduce the length of time they have to wait to access support.
- Fund youth workers and youth practitioners to reach and empower young people through a range of mechanisms.
- Support the development of more local initiatives that can reach people where they are at.
- We have been told we should fund the provision of permanent buildings and spaces for young people to come together in safe and creative spaces to design their own social action projects.
- Explore, identify and fund the services that have the most innovative practice.
- Provide organisations doing great work with more flexible funding streams that include capital costs and unrestricted funding.
- Fund small organisations to support young people who are most at risk of not learning or earning, so that young people have the space and resources to move forward.

- Work with street homeless young people to get them off the streets and into work.
- Provide more specialist mental health services that support young people who have been in the care system.
- Support organisations who have been doing great work for a long time and have developed strong relationships in their local communities.
- Collect and join up the data through monitoring, evaluation and sharing information to overcome the challenge of disjointed place-based work.
- Create a funding pot for young homeless people who have no family financial support to go to university.
- We have been told we should fund organisations that have low overheads.
- Establish a mentoring programme that brings young people together across different sectors.
- Develop a specific funding pot that supports young community leaders who are people of colour and from working class communities.

Research

- Fund a research project that has the right mix of a literature review, hears directly from young people who are most forgotten and is grounded in action and impact.
- We have been told we should fund paid peer research initiatives that are inclusive of young people who have been in the care system and have a wealth of insight that could address systemic issues within the system.
- Creation of a research piece that compares what works best in different areas across the country and identifies what has the most impact so that this can be shared more widely.

Advocacy

- Invest in youth voice in policy to support the most disadvantaged young people to have a strong voice in influencing, informing and developing policy discussions and decisions.
- We have been told we should fund the development of young ambassadors to support the development of more youth-led projects and be the voice of change across all sectors.
- Enable young people to develop more campaigns about the issues that matter most to them, particularly in areas that are outside of London.
- Support and fund participatory action projects.
- Fund a two-year public affairs programme that works with the media, gains minister interest and is a multiyear campaign to build the voice of young people within government.
- Bring all the voices of young carers together to have a better understanding of how well relevant legislation is working from their perspectives.

- Co-ordinate and support young carers to share their experiences nationally to embed best practice in identifying and supporting young carers across all local authorities.
- We have been told we should fund ways for policy and campaigning to be embedded in communities so that this continues when charities discontinue.
- Fund people to become campaigners and community organisers to redistribute power, and add weight to their abilities to drive change by introducing them to your networks and sharing the levers of change that you have.
- Provide learning and development opportunities for young people working with funders.
- Develop an accessible leadership programme that is designed and delivered by young people, and is for young people, that focuses on political engagement and awareness.
- Invest in making sure that NHSE's commitment to young people's mental health holds true in the future.
- Fund advocacy efforts and initiatives of young people working to educate others about conversion therapy and exorcisms that negatively impact on young LGBTQ+ people.

Additional thoughts

- Get deliberate about what we want to fund – look at the gaps and teach young people about their privilege early on.
- Multiyear or long-term funding programmes achieve longer term change.
- Engage with participatory grantmaking strategies that centre the insight and lived experiences of young people.
- Respect, value, and accelerate new youth leadership programmes that reach, support, and develop young people who live on the margins of society.
- Take a chance and take a risk – the rewards outweigh the risks.

5. What we haven't heard

Whilst we are pleased to have heard so many different perspectives from so many people, we are aware that there are some things that we have not heard. In particular, we believe that we have not heard about: -

- The experiences and needs of young refugee and asylum seekers. We believe that this will be distinct and separate to other minority groups of young people.
- The views and opinions of young people's families – we believe they may offer an additional perspective.
- The impact of health inequalities. We have heard about the needs and experiences of young disabled people, but we believe there may be additional complexities related to health that we have not heard sufficiently.
- The experiences of young people accessing the National Citizen Service. We have heard minimal details about this, but believe that additional insight from the perspective of young people themselves would be beneficial.
- The role of sports for young people. Whilst we have heard about the potential power of boxing to reach people, we believe that other sports may also play a role in creating and inspiring leaders of the future.
- The role of nature and green spaces. Whilst we have heard about how young people have come together to call for urgent action on climate change, we have not heard how green spaces and nature are important for young people.
- Literacy levels of young people. Whilst we have heard about the importance of academic achievements within education, we have not heard the details. We think this may be important to better understand the impact of low literacy levels for young leaders.
- Food security. Whilst we have heard that many young people live in poverty, we believe that it would be useful to have greater clarity about the consequences of food security, and insecurity, for youth leadership.