

Meeting **London Youth Assembly Area Forums**

Dates **Thursday 11 September 2025 (East)**
Monday 15 September 2025 (West)

Time **5.00-6.00pm**

Place **Online**

Hugo Maxwell

Chair of the London Youth Assembly

Mia Mormah

Deputy Chair of the London Youth Assembly

Introduction to the Area Forum Meetings

The Area Forum Meetings have been a long-established part of the London Youth Assembly and its mission to ensure that young people can raise issues that young people care about in their boroughs and translate that into broader pan-London discussions.

In 2024, the Area Forums were re-established, with one designated for boroughs in East London, and one for West London. In 2025, as part of his aims to extend the impact of the work of the London Youth Assembly, the Chair Hugo Maxwell put in place reforms of the meetings to ensure that more topics were discussed and empower discussions led by members from across London, whilst a broader aim for more sharing of information is why all successful speeches are now being recorded and shared below.

After a series of insightful speeches and open discussions, members in each meeting voted for two of the speeches to go through for further discussion at the Main LYA Meeting at City Hall, set for the 23rd of September 2025.

East Area Forum Meeting

Cultural Competence

‘We live in one of the most diverse cities in the world. London is home to people of all cultures, faiths, backgrounds, and identities. But while diversity is all around us, true understanding often isn’t. And right now, we’re seeing the consequences of that.

There’s a growing amount of division—protests over flags, the rise of extremist ideologies, and an increase in hate both online and offline. Young people are exposed to all of this, often without the tools to process it or respond to it in a positive, informed way, especially with votes at 16 being introduced it is even more essential for this to be taught.

That's why cultural competence is truly so essential. It's about more than just learning facts about different cultures—it's about learning how to engage with empathy, how to challenge stereotypes, how to communicate across differences, and how to recognise and confront our own biases.

Within Barking and Dagenham youth forum we've already taken steps in this direction. We worked on a race and social justice project, and worked with the council to produce a video to raise awareness and spark conversation. But we believe this work shouldn't just stop with us—it should go London-wide.

We want to see cultural competence taught more consistently among young people—in schools, in youth programs, in assemblies, and in communities. We want young people across the city to grow up understanding that difference is not something to fear, but something to value.

So as the London youth assembly, we should take the lead. We can expand the work we've done locally, and collaborate with other boroughs and organisations to build something bigger. Workshops, resources, awareness campaigns—whatever it takes to make cultural competence a core part of youth development in London.

This is our chance to create change that lasts—to make sure that the next generation not only lives in a diverse city, but actually knows how to thrive in one.'

Roza – London Youth Assembly Member for Barking and Dagenham

Transport Bleed Kits

'One of the key pledges in my manifesto (for Deputy Chair election) was a commitment to improving public safety for young Londoners by expanding the availability of bleed control kits on Transport for London (TfL) services — particularly on buses.

Sadly, we are all too familiar with the rise in serious youth violence across our city. Recent incidents, including a fatal stabbing in Croydon and violent attacks in Barking and Tottenham, are stark reminders of the challenges we face. These events often take place in or around public transport routes — the very spaces many of us use every day.

When a life-threatening injury occurs, every second is critical. Bleed control kits are designed to help manage catastrophic bleeding in the minutes before emergency services arrive — and they can genuinely mean the difference between life and death.

We know this approach works. These kits are already available in many TfL train and Underground stations. The Greater London Authority (GLA), alongside TfL, already has the experience and infrastructure to deploy this type of equipment effectively. The next logical step is to apply that same experience to our bus network — where these emergencies are also happening.

Buses are already required to carry basic first aid kits by law, which means that medical equipment can be stored safely on board. Expanding this to include bleed kits is not only possible — it is a practical, low-cost, and necessary evolution in how we think about public safety.

To make this a reality work in close partnership with the London Violence Reduction Unit, emergency services and charities is needed such as the Daniel Baird Foundation, which already supplies kits and runs vital workshops in schools and communities.

But I also recognise that this must be done in collaboration with existing decision-making bodies. That's why if voted it will allow us to have closer ties with the Transport Committee and the Health Committee of the GLA. Their oversight, expertise, and cross-party cooperation will be essential in helping us move this proposal forward responsibly and effectively.

This is not just about equipment — it's about ensuring that our public services reflect the needs and realities of young Londoners. It's about saying that safety shouldn't be a privilege, and that no one should lose their life because simple tools weren't available in time.

By focusing the rollout on key routes with higher rates of violent incidents, and by engaging Business Improvement Districts and local charities as potential co-funders, we can deliver this initiative affordably and at pace.

Ultimately, this proposal is about protecting life, improving public safety, and showing that when young people speak up, meaningful change can follow.'

Mia – Deputy Chair of London Youth Assembly, London Youth Assembly Member for Barking and Dagenham

Other speeches:

The Opportunity Gap by Kwasi – Shadow Cabinet Lead for Economy and Culture, London Youth Assembly Member for Merton and Wandsworth.

West Area Forum Meeting

Mental Health

If you've been keeping up with the news lately you'll have heard a lot of stories about young people's mental health. Some suggest there's an epidemic of distress; while others imply that we're over-claiming problems, or that our generation is just too soft. But what the headlines don't mention is why? What's driving our distress, and why are we so miserable?

Our distress is real, it doesn't make us weak and it doesn't come from nowhere – nor does it come from social media trends or a desire to cheat the system. Rather than asking if we're too fragile, we should be asking if society is too harsh. Because our generation does work hard, but

that means little in a society that's increasingly uncertain and unfair. We are deeply aware of this, and it impacts our mental health; it stresses us and it depresses us. It's hard not to be miserable in a world like this – our distress isn't an individual issue; it's not that we're soft or lazy or crazy; it's a natural response to the society we live in.

This isn't just about low mood or exam stress, but is something that facilitates even the most stigmatised difficulties – the ones we're told are “inherently disordered”, “severe” and “incurable”. A 2017 study found that London, alongside Paris, had the highest rates of psychosis in the world. The strongest predictor of psychosis, was a low rate of owner-occupied housing – the metric used to measure housing instability, and by extension inequality. A separate study found that the experience of psychosis varied wildly around the world: while paranoid and distressing symptoms are common in individualistic societies like London, psychosis is viewed neutrally or even positively in more community-oriented societies.

This tells us that distress isn't an individual failing; it's a failure of society to let us be happy. That's why, across dozens of studies, mental health difficulties have been found to cluster in urban areas of neoliberal countries – with inequality and lack of community being the main factors behind this. Poverty and precarious living lay the foundations for distress, and the lack of social support facilitates its growth – we don't know each other, and so inevitably we feel isolated, we may distrust and even hate each other, becoming paranoid and asocial, and this of course has a major impact on our wellbeing.

And so we end up with a miserable and mad society. And confronted with this, our society has chosen to ask not what creates it, but how to classify it. There are around 300 officially recognised mental disorders which are listed in the DSM-5 – the book that was designed to standardise insurance billing codes for mental health patients, but is now the official guide to psychiatric diagnosis. While the dubious history of the book, which once included homosexuality as a disorder, certainly undermines its legitimacy – what is undoubtedly true is that, within the 300 diagnoses, and outside of them, there is genuine distress – it's just that psychiatry isn't equipped to support us with this distress.

Mental health services are often inaccessible, highly medicalised, and disconnected from our realities. Many of us may have been through CAMHS and felt let down, or seen others we care about let down. In this sense, mental health services seem a lot like schools and workplaces – it's rare to find someone who's had a good experience, but you'll find plenty that leave with more trauma than they had going in.

So why is this the case? Too often, we're treated as passive recipients of care, as problems to be managed rather than people to be supported. We've got cognitive behavioural therapy, antidepressants, even electric shock therapies and forced institutionalisation – and while these may be helpful to some people, they're often unwanted or distressing, and do little by way of long-term support. The focus of these treatments is management: getting people off benefits and back into work, getting kids to stop misbehaving at school, to shut up and listen,

to calm down, to function in society, not to let the dysfunction of society get to us. This is why we feel let down by mental health services – they try to restore our sanity by making us conform to an insane society.

So what can we do in this situation? We can't medicate or manage our way out of a crisis that is social at its core. If inequality and isolation make us unwell, then the solutions must come from building security and community.

That means stable and affordable housing, and an end to precarious work, so we are not made ill by constant uncertainty. It means restoring youth clubs and public spaces where we can connect and support each other. It means expanding the harm reduction and peer support services that already exist – such as the Recovery College, the Hearing Voices Network, and the Cranston drug service – all of which acknowledge the societal causes of distress and listen to, rather than stigmatising, pathologising, or coercing those involved. And it means valuing the care that happens informally – in our friendships, families, and communities – as much as any service or institution.

Most of all, it means changing how we think about distress. Instead of asking how quickly a person can return to work or school, what we should be asking is why they are in distress, and what kind of workplace or school would allow them to be happy? Because we're not the problem. We're not crazy, our world is – and it's no definition of sanity to conform to this insane world.'

Shauna – London Youth Assembly Member for Wandsworth

Local Youth Councils and the LYA

'The London Youth Assembly is a very large and necessary organisation, and it is constantly churning out great ideas for policies and ways to campaign. However, I believe there is a glaring issue that needs to be addressed. Youth assemblies at the local level, and their relationship with the London Youth Assembly.

To be perfectly honest with you, before I applied to be one of the members for Croydon, I had almost no idea about the London Youth Assembly. I have been a part of the Croydon Youth Assembly for years, yet I never came across the London Youth Assembly or our projects, often just thinking it was another organisation of all talk and no action. Yet, even just spending a few months engaging in it has taught me so much about the world of youth politics and has enabled me to work on many great projects, like the Political Education sub-committee. However, one thing which stood out to me from our first meeting (at City Hall in July) is all the different projects the individual youth assemblies do, and I think this should be the key to our next big topic of discussion.

The borough I'm from is Croydon, and the Croydon Youth Assembly for the past six months has been in a battle with our council to stay alive, when we should be spending this time ensuring

the youth in Croydon have projects going on which better their lives. We have had our youth workers gutted out, and are now running off of political promises (and we know how much they are worth). This is where I believe the London Youth Assembly can help in the future. The London Youth Assembly should empower local Assemblies in their projects, campaign with their GLA representative on youth issues and run projects to benefit young people in their area. As members of the LYA I'd like to believe that means we all believe in the idea of devolution, as that extends powers to the GLA members we work with and the City Hall we meet at, so I believe by empowering the devolved youth assemblies around London we can create an organisation that young people in the future can take up and do great things with! This will differ from area to area, but I believe it should generally come from more correspondence with these assemblies and an active LYA who will step in when a local youth assembly comes under trouble or needs assistance. I want there to be open dialogue between all members on how the relationship between the London Youth Assembly and local assemblies should interact.

Ultimately we are all here because of our local youth assemblies, so surely we should make this organisation in service of the assemblies who send representatives to it.'

Johan – London Youth Assembly Member for Croydon

Other speeches:

Crime and Policing by Peniel – London Youth Assembly Member for Westminster