

Meeting **London Youth Assembly Area Forums**

Dates **Monday 10 November 2025 (West)**
Tuesday 18 November 2025 (East)

Time **4.45-6.00pm**

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 1st of December 2025.

West Area Forum Meeting

Housing Insecurity

Firstly, London is facing a youth housing crisis that demands immediate action. In the first quarter of 2025, 73,000 households in London were living in temporary accommodation, including 90,000 children – equivalent to one child in every London classroom. Over 1.6 million children in England live in cold, damp, and mould-ridden homes, leading to chronic health conditions including asthma and serious lung problems. Research shows that children living in damp homes are almost three times more likely to have breathing problems, and up to 14% of childhood asthma is attributable to living in a home with damp or mould. While efforts to reduce pollution through initiatives like ULEZ zones are welcome, they are insufficient to

address the immediate health crisis caused by substandard housing conditions affecting young Londoners today.

Secondly, care leavers and estranged students face particularly dire circumstances when it comes to housing security. Over one in ten care leavers aged 18-20 now face homelessness or the threat of homelessness, with 3,710 care leavers in this position in 2022/23 – a shocking 33% increase since 2018. These young people, who already face significant disadvantages, are being failed by a system that should protect them as they transition to independent living. Without family support networks to fall back on, they are left vulnerable and at risk of falling into homelessness at a critical stage in their lives. Therefore, with the support of the London Assembly, we need more comprehensive financial and life skills support. This includes enhanced PSHE in schools to help young people who cannot live at home, including care leavers and estranged students, to develop the practical skills needed for independent living, including budgeting, tenancy rights, and accessing support services.

Thirdly, youth offenders are trapped in a destructive cycle of homelessness and reoffending. Over two thirds of children reoffend within 12 months of release from secure institutions, and without stable housing, this cycle continues unbroken. Young people leaving custody often have nowhere to go, pushing them back into the very environments and circumstances that led to their offending in the first place. Secure, stable housing is not just about giving these young people a roof over their heads; it's about breaking the cycle and giving them a genuine chance at rehabilitation and a positive future. Therefore, with the support of the London Assembly, we need secure, stable housing pathways for young offenders leaving custody, ensuring they have real options beyond returning to prison. This can be achieved by strategically including practical advice on budgeting, welfare and work skills to young people in prison, to ensure they are equipped for the skills necessary to survive once they are reintegrated to society.

Farhiya – London Youth Assembly Member for Brent

Exam Stress and Mental Health

**NOTE* – Before this motion, the London Youth Assembly's new Wellbeing Lead gave her official introduction, as there had not been the chance to do so previously, as shown below:*

Introduction

Hello everyone, my name is Sirad Mohamed, and I'm honoured to be your Shadow Cabinet Lead for Wellbeing. I've been active in youth leadership for several years, including as Deputy Member of Youth Parliament for Hounslow and as part of the Hounslow Youth Council leadership team, where I served as Wellbeing Lead. I'm also a current Member of the London Youth Assembly, and I've worked with organisations like Engineering UK, Participation People, and Listen to Act — helping to bridge the gap between young people and decision-makers on

issues like STEM opportunities, careers access, and, most importantly, health and mental health services.

In this role, my passion is to ensure every young person in London feels supported, valued, and able to thrive. Wellbeing is about more than just health — it's about dignity, safety, and opportunity. That's why I want to focus on improving access to mental health services, creating safe spaces for young people, and making sure wellbeing is at the heart of education and community life.

I'm excited to work with all of you to build a London where every young person can feel seen, heard, and cared for.

Motion

Last year, during GCSEs, a student I know started revising before sunrise and stopped after midnight, even though they were revising consistently throughout the year. Teachers told everyone to “look after your wellbeing,” but when she tried to see the school counsellor there was a three-week waiting list. She said, “It's fine, I'll sort myself out after exams.” By summer she was burnt out, anxious, and felt completely disconnected from herself.

That's not one isolated story, as similar situations to these haven't just happened for GCSEs but also during A Levels too, as I have seen it happen to students before. It's happening in classrooms all over Hounslow and London. When young people finally reach out for help, there's nowhere fast enough or safe enough to turn.

Most schools have just one counsellor for hundreds of students. Sixth-formers, and boys are often left until last because people assume they can cope. During exam season, students convince themselves that every minute has to go on revision, and they push their wellbeing to the side. We keep telling young people to “reach out,” but too often the message meets a closed door or a long waiting list. The issue isn't awareness anymore; it's access.

That's why I'm proposing Youth Mental Health Hubs, which are local, youth-friendly spaces designed with young people's ideas but run by professionals who can guarantee safeguarding and confidentiality. Each hub would offer three things:

- Immediate support: drop-in spaces for calmness, study breaks, and group activities that build resilience, and other young people to talk or relate to.
- Short-term counselling: delivered by qualified youth workers and NHS-linked charities
- Digital and anonymous help: online chats or text lines where you can talk to professionals so anyone can reach out safely while waiting for NHS appointments. Ai or chatbots will not be used when talking to these professionals online as these conversations should be genuine and authentic so young people can develop a sense of relatability and understanding with the professional that they are talking to.

Across the UK there are already early-support hubs backed by Youth Access and the government. Around sixty exist nationwide, but access is uneven as not every borough has one, and many lack youth co-design or online options. This motion builds on that model.

Every hub would follow the same safeguarding rules as schools and the NHS. Professionals, not volunteers, handle private information. Young people shape the activities and environment through having youth advisory boards and youth volunteers not the clinical side. For those who aren't ready to talk face-to-face, there'll be anonymous online options such as secure chats monitored by trained staff, so no one is left out or feels exposed.

To help students who feel they don't have time to seek help, we will also bring support directly into schools. Short lunchtime or after-school pop-ups can introduce the hubs and let students book sessions later. They're not a replacement for ongoing help but they are the first door because protecting your mind shouldn't feel like another deadline on your timetable. We don't need to build new buildings. We can repurpose existing youth centres and libraries after hours — for example, a library that closes at five could keep one room open until seven for hub sessions. In winter, we'd use central, well-lit venues with clear travel plans so young people can get home safely.

This approach cuts costs and keeps support rooted in the community.

In terms of funding, the money could come from partnership, not new budgets such as:

- The Mayor of London's mental-health grants and local NHS Integrated Care Boards.
- Community organisations and charities that are already funded to deliver programmes
- Corporate-Social-Responsibility funding which is where local businesses such as Heathrow Airport contribute to youth projects as part of giving back to the community.

The goal is coordination, not competition. We are connecting what's already out there into one joined-up network.

If we invest in Youth Mental Health Hubs, we're not just reducing waiting lists; we're proving that London values young people's wellbeing as much as their grades. Let's make sure no student ends exam season feeling invisible or alone. Let's give young people safe, welcoming spaces where support is easy to reach and stigma has no place. I urge the Assembly to vote for this motion because when we protect young minds, we protect London's future.

Sirad – London Youth Assembly Wellbeing Lead, London Youth Assembly Member for Hounslow

Other speeches:

Knife Crime by Yasmin – London Youth Assembly Member for Kensington and Chelsea

East Area Forum Meeting

Food Security

‘Right now, families across London are facing a triple crisis: food poverty, rising living costs, and freezing winter temperatures. More and more parents are struggling to provide even the basics. On social media, I’ve seen mothers calling churches and places of worship asking for baby formula or food, and being told there’s nothing left to give. Then that same mother calls a mosque — and instantly, she’s welcomed. They tell her, ‘It’s okay, we’ve got you,’ even though she’s Christian.

That moment says two powerful things: first, the level of need in our communities is deeper than many people realise. But second, the compassion and willingness to help is already here — in our faith centres, in our neighbourhoods, and in our young people.

But compassion alone isn’t enough. With Christmas coming up, with young people going hungry, and with parents having to choose between heating and food, it’s time for us as the London Youth Assembly to step up. So the real question I want to end on today is this: How are we going to act? How are we going to respond to this crisis — practically, boldly, and together?”

Strategy: “Warm Hands, Full Hearts” Initiative

A London-wide Youth Assembly campaign that partners directly with food banks, faith centres, schools, and youth groups to support families during winter.

It would focus on three simple actions:

1. Collect – Youth groups and schools gather essentials (non-perishables, baby formula, clothing)
2. Connect – We link local food banks with places of worship
3. Support – Youth Assembly members volunteer at distribution points and help spread awareness

Goal: Make sure no child goes hungry and no parent is left without support during the coldest months.’

Sabir – London Youth Assembly Member for Lewisham

Vaping

‘In Tower Hamlets, we’ve seen a troubling trend: vaping among young people is rising sharply. National data shows that almost 1 in 10 secondary school pupils currently vape, and a quarter of 11–15-year-olds have tried vaping. In Tower Hamlets specifically, while smoking rates among adults have fallen to record lows, 15.5% of young people aged 16–24 vape daily or occasionally. This is not just a local issue, it’s a London-wide challenge.

Across the capital, the numbers are stark: 18% of 11–17-year-olds have tried vaping (around 980,000 children) and 7% currently vape, with 40% of those vaping daily. For the first time, more young people vape than smoke, and flavoured disposable vapes (brightly coloured and sweet) are driving this trend. Research shows these products are deliberately designed to appeal to children, making vaping seem “cool” and harmless.

But vaping is not harmless. Nicotine is highly addictive, and early exposure can affect brain development and mental health. We risk creating a generation dependent on nicotine.

So, what’s the solution? Today, I propose the “QUIT”: a city-wide strategy to tackle youth vaping through four key actions:

Q – Question the Trend

Launch a peer-led education program in schools and youth centres that challenges myths about vaping. Young ambassadors will lead discussions, making it relatable and authentic.

U – Unify Communities

Create a London-wide coalition of schools, parents, youth groups, and health professionals to share resources, run workshops, and coordinate anti-vaping campaigns.

I – Implement Regulation

Push for stricter enforcement: ban child-friendly flavours and packaging, restrict advertising on social media, and require retailers to display vapes behind counters with ID checks.

T – Targeted Social Media

Create a social media campaign that will help demystify the effects of vaping, raising awareness and ensuring that young people know about the effects of vaping with forms of media that actually resonate and connect with them.

This is about safeguarding our generation’s health and future. If we act now, we can stop vaping from becoming the next public health crisis.’

Iffat – London Youth Assembly Lead for Health, London Youth Assembly Member for Tower Hamlets

Other speeches:

Phone Theft and Street Safety by Tiya – London Youth Assembly Member for Waltham Forest