

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Zoë Garbett AM**

Green Party Member of the London Assembly  
C/o [Steven.Lehmann@london.gov.uk](mailto:Steven.Lehmann@london.gov.uk)

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**Date:** 7 January 2026

Dear Zoë,

Thank you for your letter regarding youth sector funding following our discussion at Mayor's Question Time in November.

I am committed to making London the greatest city in the world to grow up in. Where every young person has the support and opportunities they need to fulfil their full potential and thrive.

Years of austerity had a devastating impact on youth services, and Siân Berry's work rightly exposed the scale of those cuts – more than 600 youth workers lost, over 130 youth hubs closed, and more than £240 million stripped from young Londoners.

My response has been to rebuild and reinvest – putting youth work and mentoring at the heart of my approach – including establishing the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) in 2019. In London, working in partnership with others, the VRU is committed to funding, supporting, and championing youth work in all places and spaces in our city. I welcome your support for the work the VRU does.

I know the critical role that youth workers play in a young person's life. It is youth workers we turn to at critical times – when a young person feels lost or has been let down by the system. Like you, I recognise and champion the life-changing impact that youth work has on our communities. I want to thank the thousands of grassroots and community organisations, including our Black-led voluntary and community organisations, working tirelessly to improve the lives of Londoners.

Since 2016, through the VRU and wider City Hall programmes, I am proud to have invested more than £100 million and delivered over 500,000 positive opportunities for young people across every London borough. I am committed to building on that work and investment in youth work by helping young Londoners access a further 250,000 positive opportunities this term.

My record investment of £34 million in mentoring through the New Deal for Young People (NDYP) fulfilled a manifesto pledge to ensure 100,000 young people most in need of support have had access to a mentor.

These opportunities provide safe spaces, trusted relationships, and access to a range of positive activities, including sport, education and employment, mental health and well-being support. I also support the youth work sector by investing in professional development, helping nearly 500 youth workers develop leadership skills, gain more skills and confidence, and be even more effective in supporting young people.

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The VRU's approach is informed by young people and frontline youth workers, whose perspectives are directly embedded in decision-making. Together, they play a central role in shaping strategy and guiding service commissioning.

Whilst I am proud of what we have achieved, there is more to do to help young people fulfil their potential.

## **Increase the transparency regarding what youth organisations yourself, MOPAC and the VRU are funding**

The VRU collects data on investment, programmes and interventions for all boroughs and this can be found on its [website](#). The VRU's new interactive dashboard, which will be published shortly, will allow Londoners to see where activities and work are delivered across the capital.

With the aim of making information on grant programmes accessible, the Greater London Authority (GLA) recently launched the [Find a Grant](#) webpage, improving visibility of live grants. We are working to register all GLA-funded organisations on the [360Giving Grants Portal](#).

A list of funded NDYP projects can also be found on the GLA website.

## **Provide actionable feedback to all bidders for funding**

The VRU is making changes to ensure its procurement process is accessible to smaller grassroots youth groups. We are working with the London Research & Policy Partnership to [pilot a new, collaborative approach to commissioning research](#) that better serves both community organisations. The commissioning process involves consulting with frontline experts, simplifying the bidding process for grassroots organisations and including grassroots in the commissioning process for a research delivery partner. All bidders received detailed feedback.

As part of my NDYP, bidders received tailored feedback through bespoke emails and phone calls from the team.

As part of the "Mayor's Go!" London partnership programme, all applicants are provided with feedback on their submissions.

## **Provide longer-term funding to give organisations more certainty**

I recognise the real challenges youth organisations face when funding is short-term or uncertain. When setting up the VRU, it was one of the first things we heard from the sector, and that is why it has moved to two- and three-year funding cycles, giving partners the stability needed to build sustainable, effective support for young people. This is a valuable opportunity to monitor performance, ensure value for money and consider scaling up if interventions are proving successful.

Through the NDYP, I have invested in more than 150 organisations to deliver high-quality support to disadvantaged young Londoners. A key part of this work is through the Propel partnership, a collaboration with London's leading funding bodies that is supporting selected organisations with up to seven years of long-term funding to drive systemic change. As a result, funders have already contributed an additional £12 million in long-term support to the NDYP mission.

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## **Increase the funding that you provide to Black-led youth organisations and recognise the unique and high-quality work that they do.**

The VRU's commissioning approach is evidence-led, fair and equitable, ensuring investment reaches the organisations with the deepest relationships and strongest impact in their communities, rather than favouring certain organisations. Priority need is guided by London's Strategic Needs Assessment of Serious Violence and supported by a growing 'what works' evidence base developed with our delivery partners.

I am also committed to strengthening grassroots capacity, because we know those closest to their communities are often best placed to support young people. Through the MyEnds programme, I invest directly in local neighbourhoods – building skills, embedding youth and community participation in design and delivery, and improving coordinated responses to local challenges. This approach not only empowers communities, but also ensures smaller organisations are better equipped to compete for funding and to deliver the consistent, trusted support young people deserve.

Equitable grant processes were central to the NDYP assessment. An equity advisory panel was convened to prioritise organisations tackling equity concerns, ensuring that funding reached those best placed to address inequalities. To strengthen this approach, applicant lists were shared and assessment criteria refined, helping to confirm that funded organisations were genuinely equity-led.

Go! London is a £22.5 million partnership between City Hall, London Marathon Foundation, Sport England, London Marathon Events and London Sport. The programme supports children and young people through community-based sport and physical activity initiatives, aiming to deliver 70,000 positive opportunities that improve physical and mental wellbeing, social connections and access to education and employment.

To date, £7 million has been awarded to 208 community organisations through Go! London's Foundation fund. A key priority of the fund is supporting equity-led organisations and those that prioritise youth voice in programme design and development. This ensures programmes are inclusive, representative, and shaped by the lived experiences of young people, particularly those from under-represented communities. So far, 85% of funded groups identify as equity-led organisations.

The VRU and London United, who represent the 17 community foundations of all London's professional football clubs, have joined forces to work in partnership to tackle violence. This new partnership uses the power of football to engage with young people and deliver social impact in communities across the capital.

Alongside leveraging funding from the Premier League and the English Football League, London United foundations have been supported with funding from the VRU to deliver interventions such as youth workers in custody suites, after-school diversionary activities, and the award-winning MyEnds programme.

London is a city built on fairness, opportunity and collaboration, and that is exactly what our Grants Transformation programme is about. Led by the Grants for London team, this work is creating a new service to strengthen grant-making across the GLA group.

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Our goal is simple: to make the experience for grantees and delivery partners better from start to finish, while taking a more strategic approach to investment. We want to be an inclusive and forward-thinking grant-maker – one that reflects the diversity and strengths of London's communities. That means clearer processes, fairer systems and easier ways to navigate funding.

Transparency, openness and equity will sit at the heart of everything we do. These principles will guide how we design a better, more strategic approach to grant-making for the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small '2' written below the name.

**Sir Sadiq Khan**  
Mayor of London