

LONDON'S LOST YOUTH SERVICES 2020



A report by Sian Berry AM
Green Party Member of the London Assembly
July 2020



INTRODUCTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is the fifth that I have released about London's lost youth services. This year it is published in the context of the Coronavirus crisis, during which youth clubs, community centres and other council services have shut their doors, and the future of youth services is more uncertain than ever.

My research for 2020 therefore serves as a snapshot of the position in London before the crisis. It shows that the trend of shrinking budgets for youth work had not gone away, despite efforts from the Mayor's office to plug some of the gaps from years of councils struggling to fund them.

Young people have, ever since 2011, found it harder and harder to access the help and support that youth services and youth workers provide.

Comparing 2019-20 budget responses from the councils that responded this year to their responses last year I can also see that a further £2.24 million has been removed from youth service budget plans during the past financial year. This is intensely concerning.

This year I asked councils if they were running or supporting any specific projects for LGBTIQ+ young people, and less than half of the councils that responded said that they did.

Headline figures – since 2011-12

- At least £35.5 million has been removed from council youth services budgets
- 101 youth centres have closed
- 733 youth worker jobs have been lost



Key recommendations:

- The Mayor of London should commit to support for the Young Londoners Fund on a permanent basis.
- The Government must help councils with restored funding to bring youth services back to at least pre-austerity levels.

I also, for the first time, looked at the numbers of referrals to Children's Services to find evidence of the profound impact the loss of youth services is having on our young people.

Youth projects and youth work are not one-time events, they need ongoing and sustainable funding to be able to provide the long-term support that young people need and rely on.

I hope that the Mayor and central Government recognise this, and that they can both step in with additional funding to allow councils to not just stop their reductions in youth service funding, but also to restore services to how they were before.

Sian Berry AM
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THE STORY SO FAR

Using evidence from my ongoing research, I have pushed the Mayor and Government year after year to make investment into our young people, to provide them and the organisations that support them with the funding that they need to do their work. Each year I have contributed to proposals to support youth work through the GLA budget process.

In 2017, City Hall Greens proposed an amendment to the Mayor's budget that would have raised over £4 million for youth support. After an increase in violence against young people, in September 2017, the Government announced £40 million in new youth service grants across England, but only £7 million of these grants were directed to projects and clubs in London.¹

In 2018, City Hall Greens proposed a budget amendment putting an expected £20 million surplus in the Mayor's budget towards youth clubs, facilities, and more youth workers. We also suggested that some funding should be used to develop a public health approach to youth violence and provide trauma-related support to communities already affected by violence.²

In the Mayor's final budget that year, he was able to create a £45 million, three-year fund for young Londoners off the back of my calls.³

For the 2019-20 GLA budget, City Hall Greens proposed increased funding for the Young Londoners Fund for each of the next two years and extending it with £10 million for a further year in 2021-22.⁴



As part of this year's 2020-21 GLA budget, I asked for a further £23.7 million from the Mayor's strategic reserves to be put into the Young Londoners Fund to continue to invest in our young people and youth services. This money would be distributed during 2020-21 in order to provide for three-year grants covering the years up to 2023-24.⁵

This year the Mayor took up my proposals again, promising £25 million of additional money for programmes for young Londoners, and it is right that he did so. While councils are still struggling for funding and making cuts, we cannot afford to let programmes from the GLA end prematurely.

With this continuing research, and findings every year that raise huge concerns about the future of youth work in London, I will keep pushing the Mayor to support our young people and invest more money in the vital services that they rely on. Our young people deserve mentors, training, guidance, creativity – and support for them to thrive in every way possible.



THIS YEAR'S RESEARCH

As in previous years, I have asked each council in London to provide data on youth service budgets, youth worker employment, youth centre provision, any external grants being received by councils. This year I also added two new questions about specific services.

One new question was about the total number of referrals to Children's Services, I asked this because I suspected that, as councils have been forced to reduce the size of their youth services budgets, they have not been able to provide the same level of early-stage support to potentially vulnerable young people. Where they were not supported initially by youth services, this gap would result in increased referrals to Children's Services later down the line.

Another new research question asked how many specific LGBTIQ+ projects for young people are currently run by or supported by the councils. This is because we know, from research conducted by Stonewall, that LGBTIQ+ young people can find a key source of support in youth services. I wanted to see if councils were meeting this need.

Several councils who have provided data in previous years have failed to provide data this year.

Brent council said that they could not identify the data I was requesting in one of the questions and repeatedly asked for clarity, delaying their response and missing the deadline.

Newham council confirmed receipt of our request but after following up numerous times, did not provide a response

Southwark council confirmed receipt of our request but, after repeated follow-up, did not provide a response

Barnet council did respond to our request, but due to changes in the structure of the services they provide, they could not provide the data for 2019-20 or 2020-21 saying: "it is not possible to provide a breakdown of spend specific to Youth Services beyond October 2018 as Barnet's Targeted Youth Support Service were integrated into a 0-19 Early Help Service."

Hammersmith & Fulham council did eventually provide a response, but it was only to half of the questions asked.

Waltham Forest council did respond to our request, but many questions that I asked were simply answered with 'nil' and this was clarified to confirm that the council now has no general youth service provision. Instead they run a general Family and Children centre model, which is early years-focused, along with a young people's programme for life skills, delivered in a project model through schools. They also run targeted programmes on gangs and family problems under an individual social work model.



2020 DATA: YOUTH SERVICE BUDGET CUTS

New data from councils shows that in every year since 2011-12 except 2018-19, London's youth services have experienced cuts.

The overall cut across the 29 councils we could analyse since 2011-12 is now £35.5 million.

Table 2 shows that youth service budgets from councils in London have been cut by a total of 44 per cent, comparing the earliest and most recent data from councils.

Not all councils have been reducing their youth services budgets, however. Harrow and Greenwich have managed to increase their budgets by 224 per cent and 88 per cent respectively since 2011-12. Croydon and Islington have also increased their budgets by 11 per cent and five per cent respectively, since the earliest data available, but all other councils have made cuts over this period.

Between 2018-19 and 2019-20, seven councils increased their youth services budgets (Camden, Croydon, Enfield, Greenwich, Harrow, Islington, and Merton). However, the latest data shown in Table 1 suggest a more uncertain future.

More councils are predicting reductions in their youth services budgets in 2020-21. Three councils have said they will boost budgets slightly, but most councils who have provided data are either keeping budgets static or providing significantly less for youth services in the coming year.

This return to budget cuts after a sign of hope last year is deeply worrying.

Headline figures:

- Since 2011-12, at least £35.5 million has been removed from council youth services budgets
- Another £600,000 is currently planned to be removed in the 2020-21 budget year

Table 1: Councils' planned changes in budgets for 2020-21

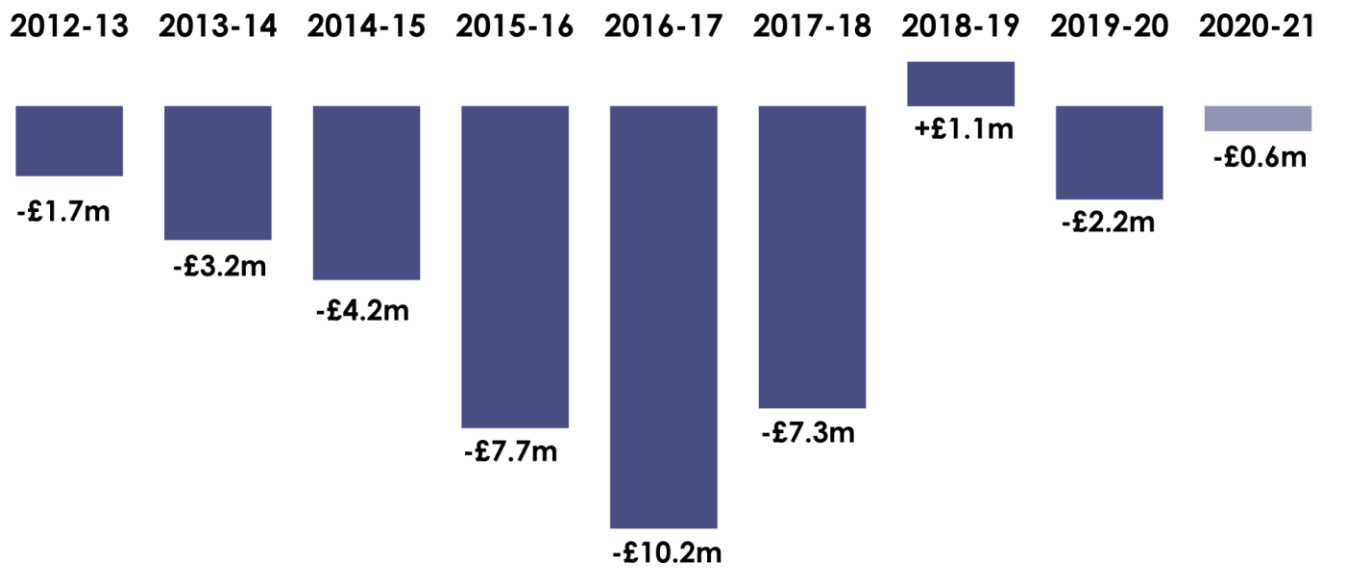
Borough	Planned change in budget from 2019-20 to 2020-21
Barking and Dagenham	£0
Bromley	+£20,670
Camden	+£67,591
Croydon	£0
Enfield	-£30,000
Hammersmith & Fulham	£0
Harrow	£0
Havering	-£130,000
Hounslow	£0
Islington	-£116,833
Lambeth	£0
Lewisham	-£462,330
Merton	£0
Sutton	+£53,100
Tower Hamlets	£0
Wandsworth	£0
Total	-£597,802

Table 2: Council youth service budgets – from FOI responses 2020

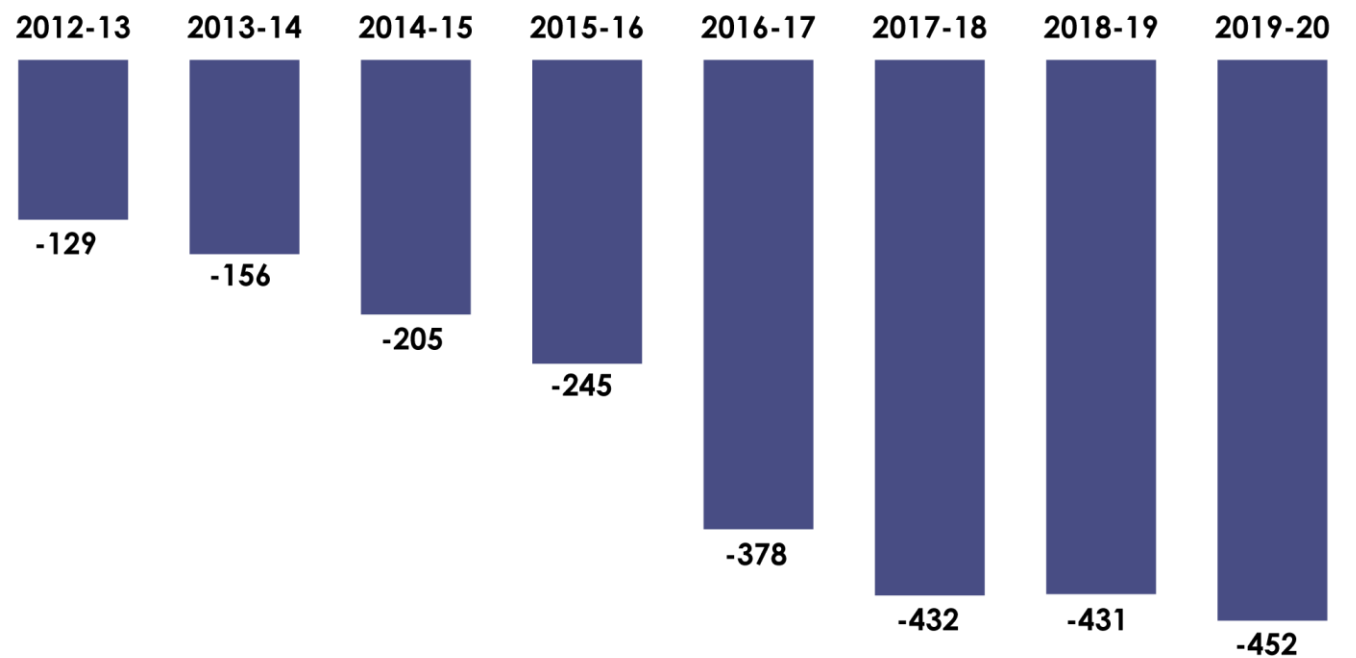
Borough	2011-12 budget	Budget for earliest year available	Budget for latest year available	2019-20 budget	Change from earlier year to 2019-20	% change
Barking and Dagenham	£2,286,200			£738,200	-£1,548,000	-68%
Barnet	£1,492,415		£1,342,954 ⁽⁵⁾		-£149,461	-10%
Bexley	£1,593,000			£1,319,000	-£274,000	-17%
Brent	£1,566,243		£1,417,000 ⁽⁴⁾		-£149,243	-10%
Bromley	£2,527,680			£955,760	-£1,571,920	-164%
Camden	£3,185,398			£2,612,020	-£573,378	-18%
Croydon		£963,387 ⁽³⁾		£1,073,000	£109,613	11%
Ealing	£1,424,707			£616,360	-£808,347	-57%
Enfield	£3,548,353			£505,820	-£3,042,533	-86%
Greenwich	£1,690,181			£3,178,370	£1,488,189	88%
Hackney		£7,536,000 ⁽²⁾		£6,140,554	-£1,395,446	-19%
Hammersmith & Fulham		£703,276 ⁽²⁾		£627,736	-£75,540	-11%
Haringey	£1,520,900			£752,440	-£768,460	-51%
Harrow	£474,166			£1,538,600	£1,064,434	224%
Havering	£1,100,000			£426,130	-£673,870	-61%
Hillingdon	£4,242,000			£927,000	-£3,315,000	-78%
Hounslow	£810,031			£215,000	-£595,031	-73%
Islington		£2,605,100 ⁽³⁾		£2,730,333	£125,233	5%
Kensington & Chelsea		£3,548,724 ⁽²⁾		£2,096,700	-£1,452,024	-41%
Kingston		£536,208 ⁽⁵⁾		£527,125	-£9,083	-2%
Lambeth		£4,700,000 ⁽¹⁾		£1,700,000	-£3,000,000	-64%
Lewisham	£4,422,749			£2,675,830	-£1,746,919	-39%
Merton	£800,040			£630,880	-£169,160	-21%
Newham	£2,107,310		£400,000 ⁽⁴⁾		-£1,707,310	-81%
Redbridge	£1,250,913			£562,450	-£688,463	-55%
Richmond		£761,242 ⁽⁵⁾		£710,025	-£51,217	-7%
Southwark	£2,234,274		£1,046,048 ⁽⁴⁾		-£1,188,226	-156%
Sutton	£1,848,450			£1,189,000	-£659,450	-36%
Tower Hamlets	£8,704,950			£3,605,964	-£5,098,986	-59%
Waltham Forest	£4,757,854			£0	-£4,757,854	-100%
Wandsworth	£4,504,939			£3,154,600	-£1,350,339	-30%
Westminster	£1,494,990			£50,000	-£1,444,990	-97%
Total	£59,587,744	£21,353,937	£4,206,002	£41,258,897	-£35,476,782	-44%

Notes: ⁽¹⁾ data from 2013-14, ⁽²⁾ data from 2015-16, ⁽³⁾ data from 2016-17, ⁽⁴⁾ data from 2017-18, ⁽⁵⁾ data from 2018-19

YEAR-BY-YEAR CHANGE IN COUNCIL YOUTH SERVICE FUNDING ACROSS LONDON
(BUDGET VS PREVIOUS YEAR)



NET YOUTH SERVICE STAFF CUTS VS 2011-12
(FTE POSTS, DATA FROM 16 COUNCILS THAT PROVIDED CONSISTENT DATA)



2020 DATA: CUTS TO YOUTH WORKER JOBS

There are very few councils that have reported consistent data for youth worker jobs. Either they are missing data from the earlier years that I asked for, or they are not able to provide data for the more current years. In the case of Lewisham council who cannot provide data going forwards, this is because they are outsourcing the provision of youth work to an independent Mutual organisation (Youth First) who will be employing the youth workers, youth support workers, play workers, and assistant play workers directly.

Comparing the earliest data to the most recent data from all councils shows a net loss of 733 youth worker jobs.

For the 16 councils that I have consistent data for (shown in the chart above) I can see that once again the largest cut in youth worker jobs was in 2016-17, with the loss of 133 youth worker jobs from the previous year.

Barnet, Croydon, and Enfield councils have all slightly increased the amount of youth workers that they employ, with seven more youth worker jobs being available across the three councils from the previous year. The rest of the councils are all making reductions or staying the same.

In the 16 councils I have consistent data for, the average number of full-time equivalent youth workers in the councils has dropped from 44 in 2011-12 to 16 in 2019-20.

Across these 16 councils, there has been a net loss of 452 youth worker posts from council services since 2011-12.

The data that I have suggest that youth service staff cuts across the councils are beginning to level out.

The cuts are continuing but at a slower rate than in previous years.

This year, 21 youth worker jobs are being lost. While it is disappointing that cuts are still being made, this loss is the smallest decrease since 2011. Last year saw a slight increase with one more job than the year before.

While this is not as alarming as in previous years, it is still going to take massive investment from the councils and central Government to get youth services as whole back to the level of staffing that was seen in 2011-12.

Even the loss of one youth worker can have a massive impact on a local area. One youth worker is likely to support many young people at once. So, if that youth worker is no longer providing support, that can have a ripple effect, negatively impacting a whole community.

2020 DATA: CUTS TO YOUTH CENTRES

27 councils provided enough data for analysis which **shows a net loss of 101 youth centres since 2011-2012**, going from 254 in 2011-12 to 153 in 2019-20.

It is encouraging to see some new investment in youth centres in the past year. Across 27 councils providing comparable data, since the low point of 142 in 2018-19, new council-supported centres are being opened or reopened. This has resulted in a net gain in the past year of 13 youth centres across London.

However, we are still not back to pre-austerity levels of provision.

The average number of youth centres in each of the boroughs that I can compare has fallen from 9.4 in 2011-12 to 5.7 in 2019-20.

Table 3: Councils' new youth centres in 2019-20 - from FOI responses 2020

Borough	New Youth Centres in 19-20
Barking and Dagenham	+1
Barnet	+1
Camden	+2
Lambeth	+1
Tower Hamlets	+3
Westminster	+5
TOTAL	+13

DROP IN YOUTH CENTRE PROVISION (27 COUNCILS)



2020 DATA: REFERRALS TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES

This year, for the first time, I asked all the councils about the numbers of referrals to Children's Services they had received. A referral is defined for the purposes of the children in need census as: "a request for services to be provided by children's social care services."

As councils cut back on youth work and a vital early-stage intervention providing support for young people, it was my concern that this would result in more referrals to Children's Services later down the line.

Several councils were unable to provide the data directly in response to freedom of information requests so, for this research, I used data reported directly to Government.⁶

Between 2011-12 and 2018-19 (the latest available data) referrals to children's social care services in London increased every year.

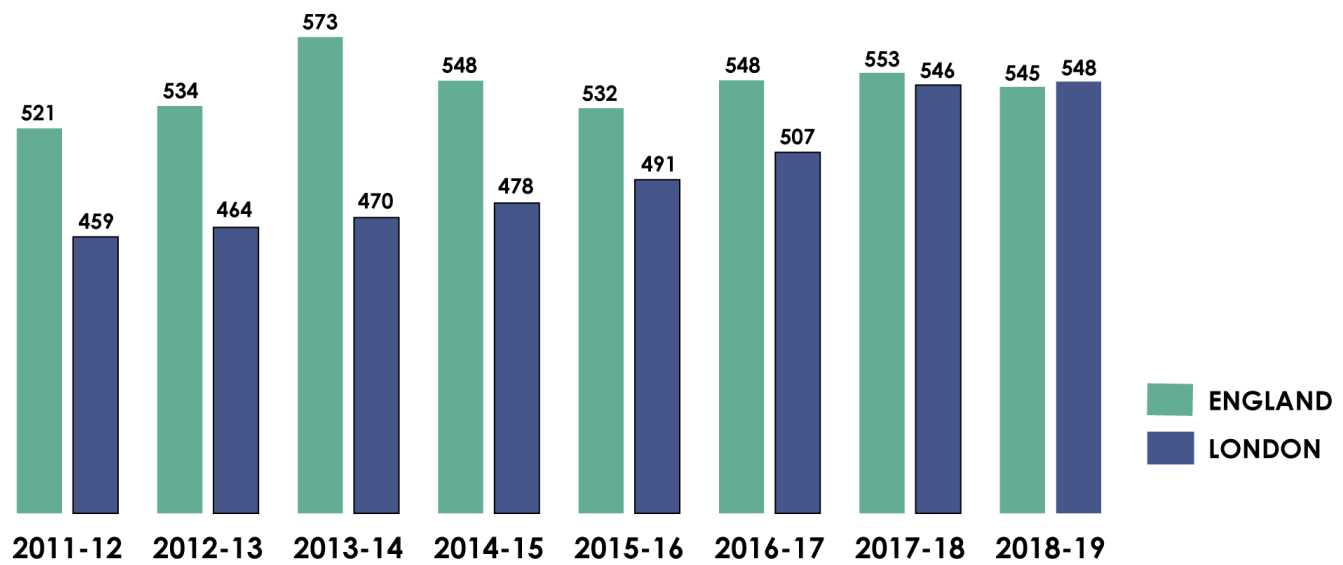
The rate of referrals per 10,000 children also rose every year during this period. From a rate of 459 in 2011-12 to 548 in 2018-19. Therefore, the increase in number of referrals is not due to a population increase.

Although the numbers of total referrals in England as a whole is volatile, the proportion of total referrals that come from London have consistently increased.

The proportion of referrals in England that come from London has also increased by three percentage points between 2011-12 and 2018-19.

This increase in the volume of referrals as well as the rate of referrals for London is another piece of evidence that supports the belief that young people are suffering due to the loss of council youth services.

RATE OF REFERRALS TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES PER 10,000 CHILDREN



PROVISION OF SPECIFIC LGBTIQA+ YOUTH SUPPORT

This year, for the first time, I asked councils about the support that they are providing for LGBTIQA+ young people.

We know that, for LGBTIQA+ young people, youth services can be a key source of support.

According to research conducted by Stonewall, one in six LGBTIQA+ young people have attended a local LGBTIQA+ youth service, such as an LGBTIQA+ youth group. So, it is vital that councils not only continue to provide this support, but that they extend it as well.

This year, I asked councils how many specific LGBTIQA+ projects for young people are currently run by or supported by council funding and, if known, how many specific LGBTIQA+ projects for young people exist as a whole in the borough.

Of the 28 councils who responded, only 12 told me that they ran or supported a project to support LGBTIQA+ young people in their borough.

One additional LGBTIQA+ specific project for young people is hosted in Twickenham and shared between Kingston and Richmond boroughs.

That still leaves 14 councils who responded that cannot tell me they provide any dedicated support for LGBTIQA+ young people.



Some related projects were described, stopping short of youth work. For example, Hounslow told me that: "the Council is running projects with West Thames College and young people for LGBTQ+ History month in February 2020."

Others stressed the inclusiveness of their general provision, for example Kensington and Chelsea said: "N/A however, all contracted providers are required to ensure that services are accessible and inclusive."

I believe that specific support for LGBTIQA+ young people needs to be available. Figures from the charity Just Like Us say that sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination are regular occurrences for the estimated 150,000 LGBTIQA+ pupils in secondary schools in the UK. In schools, 96 per cent of these pupils still hear homophobic remarks, and 50 per cent self-harm.⁷

These young people are more likely to be more vulnerable than other groups of young people, and so councils should be providing clearly signposted dedicated youth work and support to protect them.

OTHER GRANTS

This year I once again asked the councils about the grants that they had received from external sources.

From 2011-12 to 2017-18 there was a consistent downward trend in the average amount of external funding that the councils received, going from an average of £129,684 to £51,710 by 2017-18 which is less than 40 per cent of the 2011-12 average.

This average changed substantially in 2018-19 as a result of several councils reporting large grants that they had received.

The main recipient of new grants was Barking and Dagenham Council, which reported £4,112,130 in external funding in 2018-19. This is 53.41 per cent of the total grants reported across all councils for that year.

The sources for this funding include the Early Intervention Youth Fund, and the Mayor's Young Londoners' Fund and Violence Reduction

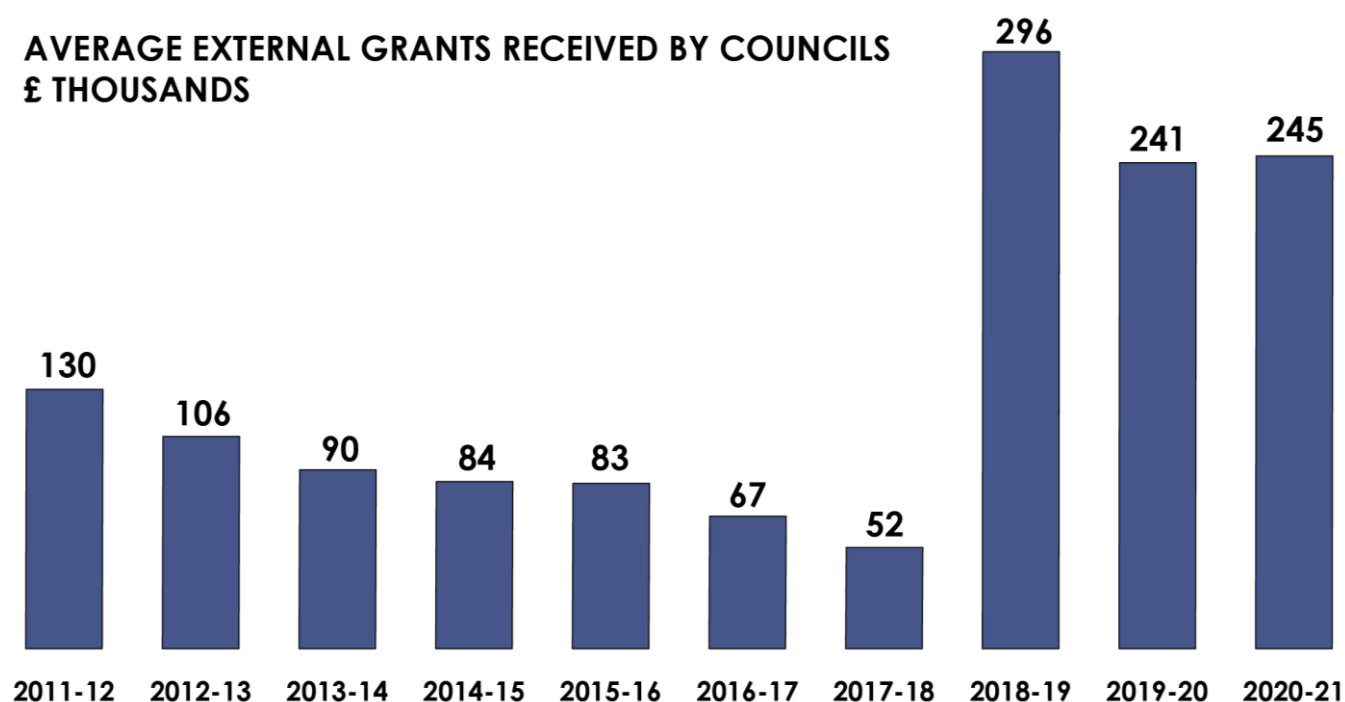
Unit, as well as a £3 million external investment to construct Future Youth Zone from a number of foundations.

Other councils receiving large grants included Waltham Forest Council, which reported around £1 million per year between 2018-19 and 2020-2021.

Haringey Council also received substantial grants from the Department of Health, the Department of Work and Pensions and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Haringey is also receiving £500,000 per year from the Young Londoners Fund up to 2021-22.

Enfield Council is receiving new funding from the Young Londoners Fund, with a grant of £1,326,588 as the result of a consortium bid with 20 different organization delivering 23 different projects. Delivery of these projects is due to start in February 2020 for three years.

AVERAGE EXTERNAL GRANTS RECEIVED BY COUNCILS £ THOUSANDS



Funding from councils to voluntary services

This year I also asked again about the level of funding councils are providing to the voluntary sector for youth projects and services.

The average level of funding provided by council has increased overall, from an average of £222,657 in 2011-12 to £432,000 in 2019-20. However, this is below the peak of this funding in 2013-14, when the average was £467,000.

Of the six boroughs for which I have consistent data every year since 2011-12, only Greenwich and Hounslow have increased the funding that they provide to the voluntary sector.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I would like to hear more from Londoners about their views on youth service cuts, the impact on services near them, and what councils, the Mayor and Government can do to help.

Please get in touch with me if you have any comments or suggestions.

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Steven Lehmann, researcher

This report sets out my views as an individual Assembly Member and not the agreed view of the entire Assembly.

References

¹ £40m cash injection to benefit lives of young people, September 2017:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/40m-cash-injection-to-benefit-lives-of-young-people>

² Call for youth funding boost as budget black hole reaches £100 million, January 2018:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/sian-berry/youth-services-budget-black-hole-reaches-100m>

³ Mayor heeds Sian Berry's call for investment in youth services, February 2018:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/sian-berry/services-for-young-people-get-funding-boost>

⁴ Green Group Budget Amendment 2019-20, February 2019: <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/london-assembly/assembly-members/publications-caroline-russell/publication-caroline-russell-green-group-budget-amendment-2019-20>

⁵ Mayor agrees to Sian Berry's call for £25m investment in youth service, February 2020:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/sian-berry/mayor-agrees-to-25m-youth-service-investment>

⁶ Statistics: children in need and child protection, last updated October 2019:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-children-in-need>

⁷ Just Like Us, LGBT+ charity for young people: <https://www.justlikeus.org/about>