



Sian Berry AM
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The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer
The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
Correspondence and Enquiry Unit
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

10 September 2020

Dear Chancellor and Secretary of State,

The urgent need for more funding for youth services

I am writing to you in the context of the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review, to propose an important way you can contribute to these three priorities of the review:

- strengthening the UK's economic recovery from COVID-19 by prioritising jobs and skills
- levelling up economic opportunity across all nations and regions of the country by investing in infrastructure, innovation and people – thus closing the gap with our competitors by spreading opportunity, maximising productivity and improving the value add of each hour worked
- improving outcomes in public services, including supporting the NHS and taking steps to cut crime and ensure every young person receives a superb education

In my work as a London Assembly Member, I have been documenting and exposing the dramatic cuts in the extent to which councils can support youth services in recent years, and I would urge you to set aside a significant reinvestment in youth services, through councils, as part of building back better in this spending review.

In my view this reinvestment should be sufficient not just to bring youth services back to levels last seen in 2011, but to provide for a service that ensures every young person has access to local, accessible and appropriate youth service activities and, importantly, youth worker support.

I would like to remind you both that one of the missions of the 2018 Civil Society Strategy published by the Cabinet Officeⁱ was to improve 'opportunities for young people' and by providing more funding for youth services you would be fulfilling this mission.

Just in the region I represent, my most recent report into London's Youth Servicesⁱⁱ found that since 2011, at least £35.5 million in annual funding has been removed from council youth service budgets, 101 youth centres have closed, and 733 full-time equivalent youth worker jobs have been lost.

Each individual youth worker can provide support, advice and mentoring to many young people and the difference that can be made to each young person impacted by this support is extraordinary. Reinvesting in a comprehensive youth service would be a very good value investment.

Furthermore, the disruptions to education and to jobs and prospects for the current generation of young people who are leaving school is unprecedented, and the timing of this review could not be a better chance to put right past mistakes and build a better and brighter future.

I hope that you will listen to the many voices who have contributed to this consultation calling for more funding for youth services and make this investment now. You could not only help those most disadvantaged by the current crisis, but also provide more and better opportunities to thrive for the next generation of young people.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sian Berry', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sian Berry
Green Party Member of the London Assembly

ⁱ Civil Society Strategy: Building a Future That Works For Everyone, August 2018,
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732765/Civil_Society_Strategy_-_building_a_future_that_works_for_everyone.pdf

ⁱⁱ London's Lost Youth Services 2020, July 2020,
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sian_berry_londons_lost_youth_services_july_2020.pdf