

London Youth Response

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government Integrated Communities Strategy

05 June 2018

London Youth
47-49 Pitfield Street
London N1 6DA



About this consultation

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) is consulting on a new [Integrated Communities Strategy](#).

The strategy lays out the department's plan for building strong integrated communities in the places where people live, work, learn, and socialise. The strategy identifies eight key focus areas:

- Strengthening leadership
- Supporting new migrants and resident communities
- Education and young people
- Boosting English language
- Places and community
- Increasing economic opportunity
- Rights and freedoms
- Measuring success

About London Youth

[London Youth](#) is a federation of over 320 community youth organisations in London. We are a youth charity on a mission to improve the lives of young people in London, challenging them to become the best they can. Young people need opportunities outside school to have fun with their friends, to learn new skills, to make a positive change in their communities and to shape the city they live in.

We deliver a broad range of meaningful benefits to our members, including funded opportunities, training and professional development, specialist networks, Quality Mark accreditation, and a policy and research voice. With members and partners, we deliver sports, arts, and youth social action programmes, as well as the [Talent Match London](#) employability programme to young people in London.

We also run two residential centres, [Hindleap Warren](#) in Sussex and [Woodrow High House](#) in Buckinghamshire, that help young people develop their skills and confidence through specialist outdoor education.

We directly develop the confidence, resilience and relationship skills of over 27,000 children and young people each year and reach tens of thousands more through our membership network.

Our response

General Overview

Question 1: We define integrated communities where people – whatever their background – live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Do you agree with our definition?

- Yes

We support measures to foster strong and cohesive communities. Our experience is that young people belong to multiple, often overlapping, communities. It is important to support strong and integrated community in each of the spaces where young people choose to go, including community youth organisations.

Question 2: We believe that the varied nature and scale of integration challenges means that tailored local plans and interventions are needed to tackle the issues specific to particular places. Do you agree?

- Yes

There is value in proven programmes and the knowledge and relationships within communities. Wherever possible, existing organisations, partnerships, and programmes should be utilised, rather than creating new structures and systems. We consider that any local plans or interventions should include existing community-based networks and organisations, and must include adequate resources to support this activity.

We support MHCLG engaging with local places and communities and providing targeted support. For community groups, sustainable funding and resources from central government is a significantly higher priority than the dissemination of learning.

Community organisations strengthen their communities. Community organisations play a critical role in developing stronger communities. By developing partnerships with local services and business, they bring benefits to themselves, their partner organisations, and their wider communities. Youth organisations are often a vehicle for young people to positively interact with their local communities, firstly by connecting with their peers and then often by growing into leadership positions. For these reasons, community and youth organisations are a mutually beneficial vehicle for better community engagement.

Question 3: Do you have any examples of successful approaches to encourage integration that you wish to highlight, particularly approaches which have been subject to evaluation?

- Yes

We take the position that community youth organisations offer a powerful vehicle for social integration. Youth organisations allow young people the chance to meet and mix with new people,

including those from different backgrounds, in a neutral and trusted environment. They provide a number of benefits to young people, such as skills, confidence, open-mindedness, and a sense of belonging and connection to the local community. While young people are the main beneficiaries, there are positive externalities for their families, friends, and wider communities. This is most apparent in the role that youth organisations play in signposting and connecting their communities to services and local resources.

One member of Dare London, our youth advisory board, summarised youth clubs like this: “For me, youth groups are important for the development of young people. They provide life skills, character development, opportunities, social interaction, support, encouragement and much, much more... You’re a team the minute you’re in a youth group. It lays foundations as to how you grow; you learn from one another. I was able to learn off my friends and my youth leaders and mentors. These mentors were able to give me the courage and strength I needed to step out of my box and I was inspired, and still am, by their kindness and captivating words.”

A proportion of our member youth organisations in London are aimed at specific communities (e.g., based on location, ethnic background, or faith groups). We consider these to be successful in promoting social integration by balancing provision of space for exploring specific identities with activities that increase a sense of belonging to broader society.

Chapter 1: Strengthening Leadership

Question 4: The Green Paper proposes that we need to build the capacity of our leaders to promote and achieve integration outcomes. Do you agree?

- Not sure / don’t know

We welcome MHCLG’s commitment to working with local and community groups to strengthen social cohesion. Community youth organisations play an important role in working with and for their communities. The evidence of our 320 member organisations across London indicates that community youth organisations are very successful at helping to develop well-integrated and active citizens, as well as helping the wider community.

However, many community organisations in London are in unsustainable funding situations. It is unrealistic to challenge these groups to shoulder a greater responsibility for social integration and cohesion and to deliver the government’s strategy without providing additional resources or other forms of support. As well as struggling with increasingly limited funding, community groups often do not receive adequate information, consultation, or recognition from central or local government.

Chapter 3: Education and Young People

Question 7: The Green Paper proposes measures to ensure that all children and young people are prepared for life in modern Britain and have the opportunity for meaningful social mixing with those from different backgrounds. Do you agree with this approach?

- Yes

We support MHCLG's goal to ensure that all children and young people are prepared for life in modern Britain and have the opportunity for meaningful social mixing with those from different backgrounds.

We consider youth organisations to be a vital partner in connecting young people to their communities. The community youth sector continues to struggle with sustainable funding and must be provided with suitable resources to play a role in encouraging social integration. While we support the work of the National Citizen Service (NCS), we recommend that MHCLG recognise that the wider youth sector could be powerful partners for delivering strong communities. We recommend that MHCLG support youth organisations that are permanently established in their communities and open to all young people as long-term vehicles for social integration.

We support MGCLG's view that youth social action provides a means to encourage social mixing outside of schools and positive community engagement for young people.

Question 8: The Green Paper sets out proposals to support parents with their choice of out-of-school education settings. Do you agree with this approach?

- Not sure / don't know

We consider out-of-school education to be a powerful tool for social integration, social mobility, and the personal development of young people. We support measures to make high-quality, safe, and meaningful informal education available to all young people in their communities.

As well as connecting schools with each other, MHCLG should consider ways to connect schools with local community groups and youth organisations to deliver the benefits of local partnership.

We have long supported improving safeguarding standards to protect young people in out-of-school settings. For this reason, London Youth established and delivers the [Quality Mark](#) quality assurance programme for community youth organisations. This programme is accredited by City and Guilds and was included as a prerequisite for small youth organisations applying for the Mayor of London's Young Londoners Fund. However, we have concerns that the strategy implies it is a problem that youth organisations (and other out-of-school settings) are not subject to the same degree of regulation as registered schools or childcare settings. Without statutory status and the commitment of central government funding, this would be an unsustainable regulatory burden for many community youth organisations that would lead to the closure of many organisations and the limiting of positive options available to young people in their communities. We will await further detail about the voluntary code of practice, local authority guidance, and

local voluntary quality assurance arrangements. We encourage MHCLG to meaningfully consult with the youth sector on these measures, so as to benefit from local knowledge and to avoid replicating existing arrangements.

Chapter 5: Places and Communities

Question 10: The Green Paper proposes measures to ensure that people, particularly those living in residentially segregated communities, have opportunities to come together with people from different backgrounds and play a part in civic life. Do you agree with this approach?

- Yes

We support resources and programmes that encourage social mixing and that provide opportunities for young people to meet people from different backgrounds. We consider that community youth organisations are prime examples of the benefits of social mixing and encouraging engagement with civic life. One member of Dare London, our youth advisory board, described social mixing in youth organisations: “I was able to step outside of my comfort zone and come out of my shell. This is because of the people I have met during the last 5 years. I have met people I would have never thought to see myself being friends with and have built many relationships with people I have come to like.”

We encourage MHCLG to consider community youth organisations as potential community hubs, along with libraries and other community resources. We support MHCLG providing additional resources to community organisations to play this role.

We support sports and cultural programmes as a means of creating strong, integrated, and healthy communities. We support MHCLG working with Sports England to provide funding to grassroots organisations.

Chapter 6: Increasing Economic Opportunity

Question 11: The Green Paper proposes measures to provide tailored support to people, especially those who may not currently be active in the labour market, to build their confidence and skills to take up employment. Do you agree with this approach?

- Yes

Through our Big Lottery-funded employability programme, Talent Match London, we have worked with over 2,455 young people to remove barriers and find sustainable employment. Of these, 1,010 were ‘hidden’ young people – those not engaged in employment, education or training and not accessing statutory welfare support. We have compiled our experience with this under-served group in our report, [Hidden in Plain Sight](#).

- ‘Hidden’ young Londoners are typically aged 18-25, are not engaged in employment, education or training and not receiving any welfare benefits.

- A staggering 480,000 young people are hidden nationally each year. This is not only detrimental to their wellbeing and future prospects, but also results in a £440 million loss of revenue from potential income tax and national insurance contributions.
- Unemployed young people who do not access welfare benefits or statutory support are often excluded from employability programmes because they are too qualified or are in part time or insecure employment, such as zero hours contracts.
- Many hidden young people are closer to the job market than we might imagine having achieved good GCSE qualifications and continued with their education beyond 16 years old.
- Often hidden young people were also facing complex and challenging circumstances beyond their control, such as caring responsibilities or mental ill health, meaning that appropriate support or interventions were also needed to prevent a negative impact on their employment outcomes.

Based on the findings of the report, we have made the six recommendations below:

- Choose to see the hidden: Unemployment statistics should include details of the number of young people who are unemployed and not claiming benefits, as well as provide a more accurate picture of the employment status of young people who are in work.
- Enable access to statutory support: The Government should review current arrangements under the Youth Obligation to ensure that Job Centres provide meaningful and adequate support for young people.
- Bridge the gap: Funders and commissioners should ensure there is designated funding in place for programmes that provide specialist employment support for young people and that programme eligibility criteria do not exclude hidden young people or those in precarious work.
- Informed choices: The Government's Careers Strategy should recognise the needs of older young people and ensure that all young people have access to independent, personalised and impartial careers advice throughout adolescence and into adulthood.
- Start at home: Funders should invest in building the evidence base for effective models of support and advice that involve and empower families by funding pilot programmes and approaches that draw on this critical source of support.
- Beyond employability: Funders and commissioners of employability programmes should ensure that adequate time and resource is built into programmes to support young people with their wider needs.

Chapter 7: Rights and Freedoms

Question 13: The Green Paper proposes measures to address practices which can impact on the rights of women. Do you agree with this approach?

- Yes

In late 2017, we conducted a survey of 1,000 young people in London between 15 and 25 years old. One of the findings was that young women and girls are particularly disconnected from their communities. 31% of female participants said that they did not feel connected with their local community and 25% did not feel that young people were respected in the local community. We consider that this is a group that requires particular targeted support.

We encourage MHCLG to consider measures that would support this group to be better engaged in their communities. Through our Getting Ready Girls sports programme, in which we engaged 900 girls from 36 youth projects and doubled participation from 17% to 35%, we are aware that well-designed programmes that are targeted at young women and girls can be extremely effective.

Get in touch



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