



## ChooseYouth Response to Building a Statutory Youth Service - Labour Party Consultation 2018

### Introduction

ChooseYouth was established in 2010 when it became clear that the Conservative-led coalition government had particularly targeted the Youth Service and Youth Work not just for cuts, but destruction. The decline in the Youth Service thus had ideological, professional and economic dimensions to it and has had a devastating impact on the opportunities for development of many young people and the cohesion and safety of communities.

ChooseYouth brings together 35 national organisations including trade unions, national youth organisations, charities and professional organisations in the youth work field. It is the most representative body within youth work and the Youth Service. ChooseYouth is not politically affiliated. Significant umbrella bodies including the TUC and British Youth Council, the network of youth work FHE lecturers and National Youth Agency are part of ChooseYouth, alongside the main unions in the field, Unite and UNISON.

Our Manifesto<sup>1</sup> has united the youth work sector at a time of crisis and we commend it for your consideration with this response.

We greatly welcome the Labour Party's consultation paper *Building a Statutory Youth Service* and the many statements made by the Labour Front Bench on the importance of youth work to the lives of many young people. In our view, the questions asked in the document demonstrate, for the first time, a political party asking the right questions and having the right vision.

We also greatly welcomed the recent introduction by Lloyd Russell Moyle MP of a Ten Minute Bill on the Youth Service. We organised many parliamentary and other activities around it and commend it as providing precisely the legislative change that is needed to introduce a statutory Youth Service.

Our members have also participated fully in the recent All Party Parliamentary Group's investigation into the Youth Service. We support their eight key recommendations, with the caveat that their recommendations 6 and 7 are not as extensive as we advocate in this document and that reference needs to be made to other essential components in the creation of a statutory Youth Service.

We note that, at various times in post-war history, the Labour Party has committed itself to introducing a statutory Youth Service. We note also that the current government has recently indicated that it will commence consultation on the nature of statutory Youth Service legislation and regulation in December 2018. It is therefore important that the Opposition Team is fully

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<sup>1</sup> 'Our Vision for a new youth service', ChooseYouth 2013, [https://www.chooseyouth.org/assets/documents/165649-5601\\_ChooseYouth\\_4ppA4\\_Finalweb\\_1.pdf](https://www.chooseyouth.org/assets/documents/165649-5601_ChooseYouth_4ppA4_Finalweb_1.pdf)

prepared for this and able to argue a cogent, detailed case so that Parliament can fully consider the matter.

We note that there was a major policy report during the Brown government ('Aiming High for Young People' 2007<sup>2</sup>) and a substantial investigation by the Education Select Committee under the previous coalition government ('Services for Young People' 2011<sup>3</sup>), but that, despite many excellent proposals these made, their work was eclipsed by the failure of governmental leadership, its imposition of austerity and the subsequent rapid decline of the service especially in England.

National polls of young people organised through the British Youth Council and other organisations seeking to identify the main issues of interest to young people year after year identify the provision of more Youth Services as being in their top five priorities. Campaigns to save the Youth Service saw some of the largest public petitions ever assembled on any issue at local authority level gathered. Many of the local youth councils and youth groups that came together to try and stop cuts to their local Youth Services exhausted all democratic processes in highly responsible ways, using lobbies, petitions, local marches, presentations to local Councils and MPs and so on. In almost all cases they were ignored and this has compounded the feelings of alienation and disaffection. Young people's most important concerns have been unhelpfully side-lined and led some to cynicism with the whole political process. It is pleasing to note that not all local authorities took this approach and some have helpfully sought to protect what remains of Youth Service provision despite almost impossible funding constraints.

In this context, Labour's consultation and commitments to rebuilding the Youth Service can be seen positively. Young people badly need appreciation, champions and recognition. We remain totally convinced that without placing the commitment to a statutory Youth Service in the next Manifesto alongside a funding pledge for it, Labour will not attract potential votes. From a purely self-interested point of view, the parties that speak loudest on how the re-establishment of a modern Youth Service, properly staffed and funded, will meet the needs of the young and their communities will reap the biggest voting rewards.

**As a result of this consultation, there must be a guarantee that the explicit commitment to a statutory Youth Service goes in the Labour Manifesto and confident public policy announcements follow from this consultation.**

Supporters of ChooseYouth have long been active in the building of a lifelong education service and indeed youth workers are strong advocates of cradle-to-grave education. We therefore see

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<sup>2</sup> HM Treasury/Department for Children, Schools and Families, Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities, 2007; <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7758/1/PU214.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Services for Young People, House of Commons Education Committee, 2011: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmeduc/744/744i.pdf>

the future of youth work residing within the Department of Education and the new National Education Service that Labour seeks to build.

The removal of youth work, youth policy and Youth Service affairs from the Department for Education was a long-held ambition of the Conservative Party, designed, in our view, to diminish the youth work's role as an enabler of social and political education. We aspire to an Education Service that will include: early years, play services, schools, Youth Service, colleges, universities, the special designated institutions, adult education, trade union education and be woven together with a renewed commitment to political literacy and education.

The current location of youth work within the DCMS has led to renewed understanding and useful promotional work as evidenced in their recent statement: "The Government recognises the transformational impact that Youth Services and trained youth workers can have, especially for young people facing multiple barriers or disadvantage." (DCMS Civil Society Strategy '*Building a Future Society that Works for All*'<sup>4</sup>) However, funding has flown away from rather than followed such appreciation and a firm grounding within its natural home in Education is needed to make statutory funding have a sustained effect.

**As an initial step, youth work must be returned to the oversight, in all ways, of education both nationally and locally.**

The concerns of young people and society's commitment to nourishing them are, of course, cross departmental. To ensure coherence between all policies effecting young people from health, to housing, to the avoidance of the many social dangers that beset them, there must be a Minister with responsibility for Youth.

**We believe that there is an urgent need for a Minister for Youth with cross departmental powers and the necessary underpinning official and parliamentary structures.**

The Chair of ChooseYouth, Doug Nicholls, has a long history of engagement in the work towards statutory Youth Service provision and the various funding formulae and technical arguments to establish criteria for funding a sufficient level of provision. Further technical background on this can be provided to the team at any time and is not covered in detail in this response.

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<sup>4</sup> DCMS, Civil Society Strategy '*Building a Future Society that Works for All*', August 2018

The report '*NYA Commission into 'what is a sufficient youth offer'*<sup>5</sup> remains relevant along with materials previously produced by the National Youth Agency under the title of '*Spending Wisely*<sup>6</sup>. The funding and staffing formulae provided by *Resourcing Excellent Youth Services*<sup>7</sup>, a previous Labour Government paper, remain relevant also.

It should be noted at this point that the Youth Service has been one of the most exceptionally cost efficient public services. This was a feature regularly noted by the Audit Commission.

The lack of statutory provision meant that historically most local authorities, with the exception of a small handful, spent far less than the governments of the day recommended they should. Nevertheless, despite low financial input figures the Youth Service achieved a great deal and generated at least £10's worth of voluntary time in local community delivery for every £1 of Youth Service spend and sometimes more. There was additional cost benefit felt by other services whether in mental health or criminal justice. It was a service which if you cut; it cost more to the government in other services. This is acutely obvious today. There has never been any reliable mechanism or power by which a Minister could intervene when a local Youth Service was being depleted.

**We welcome the Consultation document's advocacy of new powers  
for the relevant Minister.**

Many elements of the Youth Service that have disappeared were priceless. It was youth workers who, with young people, often organised their first experiences of meeting others beyond not just their own neighbourhood, but their own country. Residential work and international exchanges were formal and official and regular parts of the work.

Youth workers would often be the very first to spot harm to young people (as was noted in the Rotherham child protection enquiry<sup>8</sup>) or the emergence of anti-social behaviour and divisive ideologies and could address such issues before they became social problems. Through their social education programmes youth workers challenged young people and broadened their horizons and assisted the creation of behaviours of respect and tolerance.

Young people accessing the Youth Service are in the main aged 13-25, live in families, in neighbourhoods, go to school and work. 85% of their time in their adolescent years is not spent in school or work. Providing space and support to negotiate their transition to adulthood through a

<sup>5</sup> What is a sufficient youth offer, NYA, <http://www.nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/NYA-Commission-into-%E2%80%98what-is-a-sufficient-youth-offer%E2%80%99.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Spending Wisely, NYA, various dates, A series of booklets from The National Youth Agency which look at youth work's role in young people's development.

<sup>7</sup> DfES, Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Services, 2002  
<http://www.mywf.org.uk/uploads/policy/REYSDec2002.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham 1997 – 2013, Alexis Jay OBE

Youth Service is an essential additional social commitment society must make for educational and welfare reasons. Youth work proudly takes the side of young people and empowers them. Its methodology is an advanced form of popular education enabling engagement and collective solution-making and action.

**The informal education method should be celebrated and knowledge of it shared again.**

A cross party consensus to build a cohesive Youth Service drawing together voluntary and local authority youth work goes back to the 1930s. The builders were young people, philanthropists, faith groups, uniformed organisations, voluntary organisations, and the first youth workers' trade union. This led to a consensus that there should be legislation for 'adequate' provision for young people in the 1944 Education Act.

The inadequacy of this legislative provision was tested in the early 1990s when a Conservative local authority wanted to abandon all of its Youth Service. This led to work to define what a sufficient service would look like, and renewed Labour Party commitment to strengthening legislation. But insufficient progress was made, any regulation was weak or non-existent and thus the Conservative government and local authorities found no difficulty in abandoning their Youth Services from 2010. Along this journey there was another key moment.

Following the establishment of local authority provision for young people after the 1944 Act the service grew, then at the end of the 1950s was subject to Conservative government cuts to such an extent that another coalition of the workforce, union and voluntary sector was established. This led to the creation of a government Committee called the Albemarle Committee and the publication of the Albemarle Report<sup>9</sup> which successfully proposed the creation of a professional workforce, with national collective bargaining through the JNC Committee for Youth and Community Workers, the first professional training courses and a huge building programme of Youth Centres. This proved to be the foundation on which the modern Youth Service was built.

All post- 2010 accounts of the funding decline underestimate the scale of it for several reasons. A first victim of the Youth Service cuts was the function of the National Youth Agency to collect annual data on Youth Service expenditure and staffing and so on. After this, around 2009, no reliable data existed. Then funding streams were amalgamated and reporting methods to the Department of Communities and Local Government were changed to include, undifferentiated, all services to children and young people. In addition, most of the remaining youth work jobs were transformed away from youth work and education to a kind of quasi crisis management approach of individual casework. This so- called 'targeted' provision replaced open access provision. Most

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Education (1960) *The Youth Service in England and Wales* ('The Albemarle Report'), London, HMSO. Extracts can be found in the [archives](#).

Principal Youth Officers' posts disappeared, along with most local authority based training officers and the part time workforce. The service was eroded and diluted.

The Youth Service in England no longer exists as a service provided in every local authority area with a specialist team of professionals and dedicated buildings and projects for young people. It is the first public service to be dismantled. Much of the infrastructure has gone. There are however still fragments of excellent provision. The longer the situation is left the more difficult it will be to rebuild. In Wales, Scotland and especially Northern Ireland, there is much stronger legislation underpinning the Youth Service. It is not accurate to say that England's Youth Service has been cut by half since 2010; the damage done is far more extensive.

The priceless feature of youth work was the development of a cohort of professional youth workers working full and part time. Youth workers have a unique relationship with young people as their trusted friends, challengers, mentors and supporters. The understanding of professional boundaries required to maintain and develop such relationships were pioneered in Britain and inspired many services overseas. Trusting adult relationships, often where no others existed, was always helpful in periods of social breakdown whether in the days of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, or mass youth unemployment, poverty and inner city disaffection and rural isolation. Youth work provided such relationships.

Without doubt the creation of a new core of youth workers with training to sustain such relationships is now more needed than ever. The risks which sociologists of youth identified confronting young people in the 1990s have now become real dangers with an absolutely unprecedentedly hostile environment for young people to encounter: extreme school competitiveness, mental health issues, loneliness, gang violence and county line drug cartels. It has never been worse for young people growing up.

The creation of a youth work workforce embodied the ethical values of youth work itself. Youth work courses were subject to professional endorsement by peers from the youth work profession, including practitioners, managers and academics. The endorsement pioneered access to higher education for working class students. As a result the youth work student body was all drawn from those who had done voluntary work with young people as a requirement and 30% of the students were disabled, over 35% from BAME communities, over 50% women and nearly all enjoying second chances to learn because of the support that youth and community lecturers gave to them. Standards were very high. Working practices exceptionally good and the impact on young people extensive.

**There must be renewed investment in the endorsement bodies, the Education and Training Standards Boards.**



Despite drawing its youth work leadership from the communities it served, youth work students were consistently discriminated against in higher education funding terms. While satisfactory completion of the training courses required at least 50% supervised fieldwork practice, youth work courses received no additional funding for such placement work, unlike parallel professions of teaching and social work.

**There must be special placement funding allocations to youth work training courses.**

In addition despite its consistent requests, the youth work profession lacked protection of title. On occasions this had tragic consequences and it transpired that some who had perpetrated terrorist violence and death had falsely described themselves as 'youth workers'. They never were, they assumed the title because no legislation prevented them from doing so.

While Ofsted Inspectors, who had formerly a special remit for Youth Service Inspections, recognised that youth work was equivalent in status to teaching, and while the national collective bargaining body for youth workers recognised that youth workers should have access to the teachers' pension scheme and set terms and conditions with teaching often in mind, and while hundreds of thousands of young people would attest to the transformative role youth workers had had in their lives, the profession remained a second class citizen as far as governments and definitions of professional were concerned.

**There must be a license to practice and protection of the title youth worker, this is easy to enact. There must be a reintroduction of a specialist core of Ofsted Inspectors to monitor and report on youth work delivery.**

The money allocated to the National Citizens Service is significantly more than then spent on the entire Youth Service in England and Wales in the last year for which we have reliable figures, 2009. It is over three times more.

A 365 day a year educational service offering places of comfort and safety from which to explore the worlds of identity, attitudes and belief, and activities to develop mind and body, with a great sense of equality of participants, was replaced by a more elitist, less supported, part year leisure opportunity at greater relative expense per hour and with less lasting impact than youth work. If a government based on the politics of austerity could fund a National Citizens Service, we are sure that a Government committed to growth can fund a renewed Youth Service.

**We note the recent studies of poor attendance levels on the NCS and note consistent reports that those young people who need most support are not involved with this service. A significant review is needed.**

## **Response to the consultation document**

### **a National Charter for Youth Work**

#### ***What do you think should be the role of a statutory youth service?***

The role of the statutory Youth Service is as set out in the Charter and see no need to amend the Charter as proposed.

We believe the Charter alongside statements about a renewed commitment to statutory provision should be launched publicly as soon as possible and we will work to support any such activity.

#### ***What amendments, if any, should be made to the principles outlined in the draft National Charter for Youth Work?***

We wholeheartedly support this Charter.

### **b Labour's vision**

#### ***What amendments, if any, should be made to Labour's vision for delivering a statutory youth service?***

It should be clear that the document is referring to the Secretary of State for Education and the Youth Service will be part of the National Education Service.

Specialist youth work Ofsted teams should be created.

We wholeheartedly support the vision stated and would add that ministerial responsibility must lie with the Secretary of State for Education and that a cohort of Ofsted specialists should assist the national body's work.

We further believe a group of young people should be trained to be involved in such inspections.

A Minister for Youth should also be identified as a formal position.



We believe that it is very easy to create a national, representative body to oversee the work. This will include significant representation from young people and their organisations.

We believe that this vision and commitment should be in the next Labour Manifesto.

### **c) Service Delivery.**

#### ***At what age should statutory youth services be available to young people?***

Open access youth work should be available to all young people from the age of 13 – 25. Within this the priority generally should be 16-19. However, remaining youth workers consistently report to us that the new environments young people inhabit require youth work and playwork support and intervention at an even earlier age. We can cite 9-10 year olds involved in drug ‘county lines’, in carrying or concealing weapons, and in a variety of behaviours that are quite frankly severely disturbing and new.

Further discussion is needed on this area of earlier intervention. The buzz words ‘early intervention’ were previously used as an excuse for diverting funds away from open access youth work. It hasn’t worked because it removes the capacity for action by neighbourhood youth workers with good relationships and contacts.

#### ***What should the balance be between open access and targeted youth work?***

Identifying a national balance between open access and targeted work is impossible. The national body approving local Youth Service plans should be informed by the needs that emerge from different communities and local Youth Service bodies.

It should be recognised that the advantage of open access provision is that it more successfully than many other services targets individuals and issues requiring attention. Creating a fabric of diverse, open access youth work is the best guarantor of reducing the individual need for targeting by social services or criminal or mental health service.

Targeted provision has been a misnomer. Cuts have been so extensive that even the most needy and vulnerable are not targeted. In addition, key target areas have been ignored. For example, excellent youth work in young offenders’ institutions is undertaken by under-resourced voluntary organisations.

We believe the definition of statutory funding must include sufficient provision of youth workers in the criminal justice system. Similarly, we do not believe the perennial issue of young people in and leaving care has been addressed and the statutory provisions for youth work should include sufficient resourcing to meet these needs.

Many young people have entered into criminal and sometimes quasi terrorist activity. We are convinced that the presence of youth workers in many of those communities most affected by such extreme developments would have made a real difference by raising self-esteem, pointing to creative alternatives and providing an architecture of opportunities and support that would enhance respect and care.

***What role should national programmes such as NCS, voluntary sector, community and faith groups, businesses, and commissioning play in supporting statutory youth services?***

The main funders of previous voluntary sector, and often private sector provision has been the state. Public funding has historically accounted for around 70% of the voluntary youth work sector. This funding has also been cut, forcing amalgamations of key voluntary youth organisations.

No example of commissioned out service has replaced previous levels of funding anywhere in the country. If all providers are to deliver services with professionally qualified youth workers, working to the recognised JNC terms and conditions on the basis of a publicly funded service, delivered, and following the creation of local plans and inspected by Ofsted, there is little place for commissioning. Commissioning out has been a substitute for a social commitment to the Youth Service. The Youth Service has been one of the most exemplary expressions of a public commitment to young people and our shared futures.

As already outlined above, the money allocated to the National Citizens Service is significantly more than then spent on the entire Youth Service in England and Wales. NCS is a time limited activity as highlighted in the summary findings of the APPG on Youth Affairs, Youth Work Inquiry. It has also been the subject of repeated scrutiny regarding outcomes and impact.

**d) Youth Voice**

***How can we ensure that young people's voices are at the centre of a new statutory youth service?***

Young people will be represented fully on the local and national planning body for the Youth Service and be actively involved in the specification, commissioning, governance, delivery and scrutiny of services.

A cohort should be trained and supported to assist Ofsted inspections. Young people and their organisations should achieve a statutory right to consultation on the development of local Youth Service plans and any changes to them and similarly in the formation of the national body and any changes to it and its funding.

## e) Workforce

***What support does the youth sector require to re-establish the workforce capacity needed to deliver a statutory youth service? For example: (a) Should we introduce a legally 'protected title' for youth worker? (b) Should we introduce a statutory national register for youth workers?***

As with the 1960s Albemarle proposals and the 1990's JNC approved Apprenticeship schemes, which drew into qualification and professional employment a cohort of young, often marginalised people from a full diversity of backgrounds, there should be an emergency expansion of training places and jobs based on the sufficient Youth Service funding formula and local plans. Each local plan should include a post of Principal Youth Service Officer, a Staff Training and Development Officer, and sufficient JNC qualified Youth Workers, and qualified part time workers and supported volunteers.

The title of youth worker should be protected by Parliamentary statute and should cover paid professional staff with provisions for quality assurance of volunteer staff.

This should go alongside a new Code of Ethics for youth work, and much thinking and discussion has taken place about this with various examples in existence to draw upon.

There was previously a statutory register for youth workers retained by the Department of Education and Science as then was. This was endorsed by the JNC Committee which introduced a Probationary Year system. After successful completion of the probationary year staff were entered onto the register. Workers could be removed from the register where any misdemeanour was evidenced. In relation to the number of staff, the difficulty of the professional relationship with young people, and in relation to other professions working with young people, the number of cases of youth workers being removed from the register and therefore unable to practice in youth work was extremely small indeed. The main caseworker in the field can only think of two examples over 25 years.

***What role should The Joint Negotiating Committee and other nationally agreed pay scales and conditions play in supporting a statutory youth service?***

There would be no youth work without the JNC Committee for Youth and Community Workers. The Committee has an indispensable role in quality assurance as it delegates the authority for endorsing training to the England and Wales Education and Training Standards Committees and the Community Work Standards Board. Those achieving the recognised qualifications are entitled to the terms and conditions negotiated by the Committee. Perhaps uniquely the employers' side of the Committee includes local authorities and the voluntary sector employers.

The grading criteria for posts reflect and protect the unique professional character of the voluntary relationship with young people and the empowering nature of the work. The grading criteria also

uniquely recognise that youth workers are involved in developmental work with volunteers and local communities. This is precisely the social education role that we believe the Labour Party should want developed in our communities and see rewarded.

We strongly believe that the JNC has played the pivotal role in expanding access to working class communities to higher education and to skilled jobs in the community. At one stage relatively recently, most youth workers came into the profession having been volunteers, then part time workers, then gave up full time jobs in other areas of work to get JNC qualified to become youth workers. This is just one indication of the commitment and dedication this highly non elitist profession developed.

Furthermore, the JNC has been a model of equalities and diversity practice, while raising excellence in professional delivery. The terms and conditions have been tailor made to the particularities of youth work intervention and times of work and have consistently proved better, more flexible and immune to costly equal pay challenges. The Labour Party should be praising the JNC as a model of good practice in collective bargaining, equalities and diversity and good industrial relations. It has succeeded where other more generic systems have failed.

The Labour Party should consider highlighting the importance of the work of this committee to celebrate the JNC's 60<sup>th</sup> year in 2021.

#### **f) Evaluation.**

##### ***What is the most effective way to evidence the outcomes and impact of youth work?***

You cannot measure an atom with a steel ruler. You need a specialist device. Evaluation methods must resonate with the ethics and distinct contours of an educational practice they seek to evaluate.

There is perhaps an irony that those not directly involved with popular and informal education techniques such as youth work may not be aware of. While methodologies like youth work, playwork, adult education, and community work do not have the same more measurable outcomes as say formal teaching to pass an exam, they have developed very sophisticated ways of assessing good practice, impact and outcomes. These were distorted into inappropriate targets and tick boxes by a wave of new managerialist approaches and competence based, or behaviourist alternatives to professional autonomy.

The systems of staff supervision in youth work were models of good practice and afforded opportunities for constant reflection on practice and the development of self-awareness and critical thinking to assess the impact of work. In short, it is relatively straightforward to adopt sensitive yet robust evaluation systems in the hands of the professionals involved.

One of the most important books on youth work evaluation<sup>10</sup> studied how a totally marginalised, very isolated young woman with extremely low sense of self-worth smiled for the first time in years after her involvement gently and supportively in a youth project over months.

A robust system of Ofsted oversight could, as previously, maintain oversight and independent judgment of the self-evaluation systems established by the sector itself.

### **Our Conclusions:**

- **As a result of this consultation, there must be a guarantee that the explicit commitment to a statutory Youth Service goes in the Labour Manifesto and confident public policy announcements follow from this consultation.**
- **As an initial step, youth work must be returned to the oversight, in all ways, of education both nationally and locally.**
- **We believe that there is an urgent need for a Minister for Youth with cross departmental powers and the necessary underpinning official and parliamentary structures and we welcome the Consultation document's advocacy of new powers for the relevant Minister.**
- **The informal education method should be celebrated and knowledge of it shared again.**
- **There must be renewed investment in the endorsement bodies, the Education and Training Standards boards.**
- **There must be special placement funding allocations to youth work training courses.**
- **There must be a license to practice and protection of the title youth worker, this is easy to enact.**
- **There must be a reintroduction of a specialist core of Ofsted Inspectors to monitor and report on youth work delivery.**
- **We note the recent studies of poor attendance levels on the NCS and note consistent reports that those young people who need most support are not involved with this service. A significant review is needed.**

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<sup>10</sup> Brent, Jeremy, Searching for community: Representation, power and action on an urban estate, Policy Press 2009