

INSPIRE LONDON

A vision of change

Presented to Prime Minister David Cameron

October 2012

“You find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave London. No, Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford”

Samuel Johnson



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Foreword

When we started developing the Spirit of London Awards back in 2008 there were 29 deaths of teenagers on the streets of London. Even for an organisation like the Damilola Taylor Trust that is used to trauma this was a horrific time to be working in the youth sector. It was a big problem and in the world of business and commerce big problems require big solutions. All around us we did not see much cohesion let alone collaborative thinking and without this a big solution was going to be hard to find.

The Spirit of London Awards or “SOLA” as it has come to be known to young people was developed as a legacy project for all the young people we had lost in the Years since the death of Damilola on the North Peckham Estate on November 27th 2000 – Damilola was one of the first high profile media covered death of a young person on our streets directly attributed to youth gang culture. The media use of the term “Peckham Boys” in relation to his murderers and their accomplices was the first case of a youth gang name being tagged almost “brand” like by the media.

There has always been a feral minority on our streets and back in the 60’s I do not believe anybody could have mentored criminality out of the Kray twins. This is a personal opinion of course but just as back then we still have a minority on our streets that have chosen a life of crime – The biggest majority of young people by far are good kids who respect and represent their communities with positive



attitudes – This then was the rationale behind the vision for SOLA – With the media grossly misrepresenting young people with the huge coverage given to the acts of a minority we thought something like this was long overdue – An awards programme that would tell young people that the grooming tactics of the gangs were not right and in fact people do care about them. The media have made celebrity culture far too relevant and so we felt that a new level of celebrity was needed – Real life role models their communities can look up to!

Who better to show the right path in life to those at risk and vulnerable to crime than those that had taken the right path and made the right decisions themselves.

When we went to the Home Office to ask for the project to be commissioned we said that we were going to aim to stage the awards on the same level as the BRITS and the MOBOS – They laughed. They were not laughing any longer after what we achieved at the Royal Albert Hall in 2011 with the 3rd event. It is extremely tough to stage the awards in the way we do make no mistake. Getting the big brands to support us along with the media is a challenge. It is a challenge worth taking up though!

The SOLA Foundation represents the cream of young achievers from across London and from all communities and demographic divides. It is becoming a hugely potent force for good as many school head teachers and senior police officers will testify.



The Damilola Taylor Trust is extremely proud of our achievement with the project and look forward to this manifesto being the first step in our young leaders starting to help tackle many of the toughest issues facing their communities

Gary Trowsdale – Managing Director of Damilola Taylor Trust and Founder of the Spirit of London Awards



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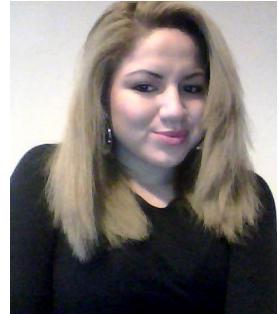
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A huge thank you to all the SOLA Foundation Ambassadors that took part and helped to guide this document.



About Us

The Spirit of London Awards celebrates the achievements of young people from all four corners of London who are champions of their local communities.

The awards show has gone from strength to strength since its inauguration and has attracted the praise and support of many high-profile figures – “Why should young people not be put on a pedestal from time to time?” as Sir Michael Caine said at the first awards night in 2009. Every young person lucky enough to be short-listed as a nominee becomes a SOLA Ambassador and honorary member of the SOLA Foundation.

This means that the SOLA Foundation is a collection of some of the most inspiring and passionate future leaders that London has to offer. Through their collective input this non-partisan and independent policy document has been created to set out both what we believe as an organisation, and the ideas that we believe the government should adopt to strengthen and guarantee a bright future for all young Londoners.

To this effect it is important that this document begins with the ideas that embody the SOLA Foundation ethos.

We unequivocally believe in equality of opportunity. We want all young Londoners, regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation to realise and capitalise on their potential to change their lives. We believe that a priority of



government should be to provide a safe and prosperous future for young people. This document therefore consists of a number of policy recommendations in areas that we feel are of importance to the lives of young Londoners.



Introduction

In 2013 there will be many challenges that young Londoners will have to face. They will be both urgent and unique. It is imperative that we do not let the challenges that we face defeat our ambition and our ability. We must Inspire London.

This report is all about inspiring the next generation at a moment when young people are at a cross roads. Youth unemployment is at record levels, local councils have cut many non statutory youth support services, and crime within inner city areas is still a problem. London is in desperate need for some much needed inspiration, and the Olympics were just a start. We saw how much of a desire there is for a sense of community and civic participation during the summer of 2012. But what happens now that the world is no longer watching?

The jury is still out when it comes to ensuring there is a real legacy and those who have been nominated and/ or won a Spirit of London Award are a good place to start. We have had 1000s of nominations over the years, and all those shortlisted are made Ambassadors. These are young people that didn't need the Olympics before deciding that they wanted to serve those around them, and continue to fight for their local area during such tough economic times. We do not



claim to have all the answers, nor do we claim our views are wholly representative of young London. But through our process we have devised the ideas that we think will be beneficial to us as all as the youth of London.

The Mayor of London would do well to leverage the many talents that young people possess in order to create a lasting legacy. Politicians across the political divide don't always recognise that the best people to solve many of the challenges that young people face are young people themselves. As you read our report, Inspire London, I hope that it does indeed inspire every reader to think outside the box. It is time for London's youth to become a more active and welcome participant in the various power structures. We would like to see a Young Mayor for London, a respected and engaged youth parliament, and approaches to crime reduction that actually work. Only then will we be able to say that we have indeed Inspired London.

Oliver Hypolite-Bishop & Samuel Kasumu



1 Giving Young Londoners a Voice

London is one of the great world cities. All of us who call it home are aware of how much London has to offer. But we are also aware that London comes with its own problems. Issues that affect young people in London are unique to the city and require unique solutions.

In the three months leading up to July 2012, London's employment rate was 69.2%, 2 percentage points below the UK rate (71.2%)¹. 1 in 4 young Londoners are out of work², tuition fees have trebled and housing prices are rising higher in London than anywhere else in the country³. Though it is

true that we must all make sacrifices to help remedy our ailing economy, young people are beginning to feel as if they have unfairly become the victims of government policymakers, bearing the brunt of the recession. Instead of being the victims we should feel as if we are the beneficiaries.

We, the youth of London, are the future, and the legacy that this government should be supporting. Young Londoners understand the issues of London more coherently than many may think, and we can provide invaluable input into policies aimed at young people specifically, and also at the wider population. The government would benefit from creating more ways to draw on the insights, expertise and talents of young people when formulating policies,

¹<http://lseo.org.uk/data/london-data>
²<http://www.londonspovertyprofile.org.uk/indicators/topics/work-and-worklessness/young-adult-unemployment-over-time/>
³[http://www.landregistry.gov.uk/media/all-releases/press-](http://www.landregistry.gov.uk/media/all-releases/press-releases/2012/market-trend-data-february-2012)

[releases/2012/market-trend-data-february-2012](http://www.landregistry.gov.uk/media/all-releases/press-releases/2012/market-trend-data-february-2012)



ensuring that effective consultation with young people is an integral part of policy-making.

“The young people I have met have a lot to offer that politicians, public leaders and decision-makers could learn from. We just need to ensure that their voices are heard and that the contribution they make to this fantastic city is fully recognised. It is only by listening to them and working with them, that we will be able to build the progressive, cohesive and safe future that they will inherit.”

Siobhan Benita, former independent Mayoral candidate and SOLA Foundation Judge

1.1 Establish a Young Mayor for London and a Greater London Youth Assembly (GLYA)

To ensure that young people really are right at the heart of government, we would like to see the establishment of a Young Mayor for London; a publicly elected representative who will work alongside the Mayor of London and GLA officials not only on issues that are regarded as ‘youth policies’, but on a wide range of policy areas too. The post will be for two-year terms and the SOLA Foundation will oversee the facilitation of this position, holding a Youth Mayoral debate at every election.

SOLA would also encourage and support the establishment of a London Youth Assembly. This would allow young representatives from every borough of London to examine priority issues and make recommendations to the Mayor and other senior



officials across the Capital.

1.2 Increase the responsibilities of the Mayor of London

Because London is a unique city, needing unique solutions to unique problems, policies that impact London directly should be formulated from London based politicians. We believe that the Mayor of London is in a unique position to be able to deliver policy that would benefit Londoners more directly. This being said, we believe that the role of the Mayor of London should be both extended legislatively, to have more power over education policy, and more appropriately in the area of housing. The example of the extreme lack of Primary School places in London illustrates why the city requires a Mayor who is accountable to the issues. The Mayor's inquiry into the state of primary and secondary education, in London, conducted by Tony Sewell, illustrates how acute the issues London's education system

faces and exactly why a Mayor who is solely accountable to the City must tackle it.

We also argue that the Mayor needs to utilise, to a greater extent, his powers in housing policy, tackling dodgy landlords and building genuinely affordable housing (see chapter 4).

We feel that having such actions would allow the Mayor to deliver effective, tailored solutions to these important issues facing London.

1.3 Youth Impact Assessment

The perception amongst many young people is that our voice is not given enough weight in policy discussion or debate. Amongst young people there is a lot of enthusiasm and engagement with current issues. The challenge is to find a way to channel this energy and direct it into the formal political arena. One way we feel that the government can show that young people's concerns are being listened to, and that they have a stake in formal politics, is

to introduce a Youth Impact Assessment. In the same way that other interest groups conduct impact assessments on policies that will affect their members or constituents; we would like to see all London targeted policies be subject to a youth impact assessment. This would be an achievable way of demonstrating to young people that they have a stake in politics.

1.4 Youth Select Committee

The Youth Select Committee organised by the British Youth Council is an example of the positive contribution young people can make to politics when given a chance. We would therefore like to see the Youth Select Committee made into a permanent fixture, allowing young people an outlet to express their views on issues that affect them at the highest level.

1.5. Votes at 16

As a society we have decided that 16 is the age where an individual can take on much of the

responsibilities associated with adult life. For example, an individual is not obliged to continue their education, they can get married and can be expected to work and pay taxes. Therefore, we feel that it is fundamentally undemocratic to ask them to take on the responsibilities of adult life whilst denying them the associated rights.

We feel that in the interests of strengthening participation in civil society it is important to involve young people in formal political processes from a young age, in order to foster a sense that they have a stake in the decision making processes that affect them.

According to the *Votes at 16 Campaign*, when the Electoral Commission last consulted the public about extending the right to vote to 16 and 17 year olds, 72% were in support⁴. This shows that there is broad public support for lowering the voting age. Political parties from across the spectrum

⁴<http://www.votesat16.org/about/>



can only gain from the increased participation that the vote at 16 will bring.



2. Providing Opportunities

Whilst the nation as a whole faces significant challenges in finding employment and opportunities, in some areas of London, the problem is even more acute. Young Londoners, especially, are bearing the brunt of the recession and for BME communities the situation is even more problematic⁵. The psychological and physical hardships that come about as a result of unemployment must be a serious concern for policy-makers as their effects will be felt long after the economic recovery. This is particularly pertinent for those young people who are emerging into the world of work now and are finding opportunities vastly reduced at such an important formative time in their working life.

In addition to high unemployment for all young people, graduate

unemployment is also a significant issue in London. A rise in tuition fees has meant the decision to go to university has to be a more seriously informed choice. We believe that it is only fair that the government provides opportunities after university to allow those making this important life decision to benefit from it.

To meet this challenge head on, we are proposing a range of initiatives to solve the multi-faceted problem of how to provide opportunities for young people in London.

2.1 Fair Internships

Fair Internships should be a particular concern for policy makers in London. This is because the vast majority of internships in certain sectors are concentrated in the capital, for example 80% of law internships and 61% of PR internships⁶.

Unpaid internships act as a form of unequal opportunity for young

⁵http://fullfact.org/factchecks/44_per cent_young_black_people_unemploy ed-3381

⁶<http://www.prweek.com/uk/news/1 137165/Demand-action-intern-pay- PR-industry/>



Londoners. It is difficult enough in this economic climate for young people to find employment, not to mention the serious decision to pursue higher education with the introduction of higher tuition fees. Many young graduates in London and NEETs too, cannot sustain a lengthy and unpaid internship. This amounts to a formidable obstacle to getting into many different industries for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The LSE has found that a month living in London will typically cost a young person around £1,000⁷. Internships typically last between three to six months.

A recent Intern Aware survey found that 78% of respondents - former interns - were fulfilling the criteria that define a worker under employment legislation, but were not paid the minimum wage by their employer. There are two steps that the SOLA Foundation feels that the government can

take to begin to address this problem.

- **Every elected office in London to pay their interns at least the London Living Wage**
- **The government to ensure that all private sector companies that work on public sector contracts in London must pay their interns at least the London Living Wage.**

In support of the policy recommendations of the Intern Aware Campaign, we advocate the following to promote the expansion of fair internships;

- The Pay and Work Rights Helpline needs to be properly publicised and promoted. The extremely low number of complaints from interns to the service is a result of its extremely poor visibility. A cost effective advertising drive aimed at young people directly would significantly increase awareness.
- The Graduate Talent Pool, which has a very low number of unpaid

⁷http://www2.lse.ac.uk/socialPsychology/prospective/living_costs.aspx



internships, is a high quality resource that is not being utilised. It should be expanded and better marketed to young people. (It currently has a budget of just £250,000)

2.2 Shadowing Scheme

We believe that current work experience schemes in schools do not provide young people with enough of an insight into the kind of professional careers that are too often the reserve of a small section of society. Therefore, we would ask government to work closely with and strongly encourage businesses taking on Year 11 students for a short shadowing scheme. Young people would gain an invaluable insight into the workings of the corporate and professional worlds, which would encourage them to aspire towards professional careers which they may have otherwise not considered.

“Future First’s vision is that every

state secondary school and college should be supported by a thriving, engaged alumni community that helps each school to do more for its students.”

Alex Shapland Howes – Managing Director of Future First

2.3 An Alumni Network for every school in London

David Cameron told the Conservative Party Conference in 2012 that his vision of an ‘aspiration nation’ was to spread the kind of privilege that he had enjoyed whilst growing up and in school. One important aspect of this privilege is the type of alumni networks that private schools currently enjoy.



Alumni communities can help transform the lives of young people. They provide schools with career and educational role models, mentors, volunteers, work experience providers, governors and even donors and fundraisers. Private schools are the main beneficiaries of former students that engage with the student body after they graduate. Most importantly these alumni have an affinity to the young people who study in the years after them, and are a part of the same community helping connect young people with graduate professionals who can advise, guide and help them along their career path.

The SOLA Foundation believes that every school in London should have access to the kind of alumni network that private schools enjoy. Future First are a perfect example of how these networks can be extended to state schools. For this to be achieved we would like to see the government give full support to Future First in order for them to drive this

movement and put the required infrastructure in place. Through further support we can establish an evidence base that explores the link between alumni and attainment and future career prospects. Data that will be of value to any government who seeks to spread privilege and tackle social mobility.

2.4 More apprenticeships

Youth unemployment has reached a crisis point in London. One in four of our young people are economically inactive⁸. This is a shocking amount of energy and human potential that is not being harnessed. To help find jobs for these young people, we propose an expansion of apprenticeship schemes that allow young people to get a precious first step on the career ladder. We endorse schemes such as the 'Ladder for London' programme, currently being provided by the Evening Standard and City Gateway, that is

⁸<http://www.londonspovetryprofile.org.uk/indicators/topics/work-and-worklessness/young-adult-unemployment-over-time/>



helping young people take their first steps into the world of work. Therefore we would ask government to expand funding for financial incentives for firms involved in such schemes, and promote their uptake amongst businesses.

2.5 Providing skills for the high-tech job market

It is vitally important that the next generation of Londoners are equipped with the skills necessary to compete in a 21st century high-tech economy. We feel that to achieve this, particular academic disciplines such as art, maths, physics and computer science must be tailored to suit the opportunities that the high-tech industries have to offer. We feel this will allow young Londoners to capitalise on the creativity and energy they already possess.

Next Gen Skills, a prominent campaign sets out to improve the computer programming skills needed for the future growth of the UK's economy. We fully endorse the following

recommendations presented by Next Gen Skills.

- The introduction of an industry relevant Computer Science course within the framework of the National Curriculum
- A review of ICT in its current form and to embed essential ICT skills across the wider curriculum
- The promotion of the vital role that teaching maths, physics, art and computer science will play in ensuring the growth of UK's digital, creative and hi-tech industries.

2.6 Creating a financial incentive for students to stay on in further and higher education

With the scrapping of the EMA and increase in tuition fees, many students will have to think harder about the trade-off between increased costs and the benefits of a university education. There is some evidence to suggest that the rise in costs has deterred students from disadvantaged backgrounds



from applying for university⁹. This is a serious cause for concern for policymakers interested in increasing social mobility. In a recent report commissioned by the government, the Independent Reviewer on Social Mobility and Child Poverty has recommended that universities consider using money now currently spent on fee waiver and bursary schemes to implement an EMA-style incentive for students to stay on in college. This is proposed as a more effective way of getting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds into higher education¹⁰. As such, we fully endorse these proposals.

2.7 Improving communication skills

Being able to communicate effectively is a fundamental requirement of almost any job. Unfortunately, many young people in London have not had access to the same kind of experiences and cultural capital that is taken for granted by many,

and would allow them to develop professional communication skills. We would like to see action taken to address this skill shortage. Debate Mate are an organisation that offers a range of tournaments and debating programmes to non-selective state schools in areas of high child poverty¹¹. The aim is to increase self-esteem, communication skills and aspirations through the debating programme which involves working with mentors from top universities. We think this is a great idea, and would like to see Debate Mates current programmes for students supported, as well as expanding the programme to other disadvantaged groups with similar needs, such as children in care, victims of domestic abuse and young ex-offenders.

⁹<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Higher-Education.pdf>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹<http://www.debatemate.com/pages/9148>



“The power of the Olympics should never be restrained or curbed; the stories, values, the togetherness can serve as an huge educational tool to young people from both a sporting and social perspective. It takes everyone to be involved in the Legacy however, as the legacy will not move itself. I grew up with sport. I loved it, all elements of it. I was driven to achieve from a young age. As a young girl, I wanted to play netball for England and I did, playing for both U17 and U19 teams prior to competing as an athlete. I was well aware of the benefits that playing sport would have on me.

It is important for young people to be involved in sports. Sport is a great vehicle to impart great life lessons - self discipline, self respect, hard work, determination - just to name a few. However not all young people are aware of this or even the opportunities that are out there for them to take part in. They may think that they will not be good enough or that their lives won't/can't change as a result of participation. It is the job of the legacy to get through to these young people, to make them understand that they are part of the legacy, that they are a valued component of the movement. Ultimately, developing the legacy and keeping it sustained depends on all parties, which includes the young people themselves, but they have to feel like they are obligated to do so, they should want to be part of the legacy, they have to understand and be encouraged by the spirit of the Olympic games. So I urge those reading that are reading this to listen to the SOLA Foundation and help young people make the most of the opportunities available to them.”

Christine Ohuruogu – Olympic Gold & Silver 400m Sprinter and SOLA Foundation Supporter



3. Building the Olympic Legacy

The lighting of the torch by seven young athletes demonstrated the government's commitment to ensuring that the Olympic Legacy would be aimed at developing the athletic talents of our young people. The Olympic Legacy must be made tangible and defined in real terms; the government must take an active approach in ensuring that this legacy is more than mere words. It must provide substance. Alarming, a Sports + Recreation Alliance survey conducted in 2011 found that 84% of clubs do not see the Games as an opportunity for their sport or recreation. This is a stark warning that the potential legacy for grassroots sport is in danger of remaining unrealised.¹²

In December 2010, the government published a Legacy plan, which set out the legacy

vision for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. A key aspect of this was to harness the 'UK's passion for sport to increase grassroots participation, particularly by young people, and to encourage the whole population to be more physically active'¹³. There is a particular need for this in London as many young people do not have access to outdoor space and facilities as in other parts of the country. Sport can be used as a vehicle to help deliver on a range of policy aspirations, such as health improvement and community cohesion.

The SOLA Foundation believes that the Olympic legacy is about more than just helping young people play sport, it is about helping our young people identify their talents, passions and drive, and creating a forum where their talents can change their lives.

¹²<http://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/lobbying-and-campaigning/policyareas/sport-society/olympic-legacy>

¹³http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/201210_Legacy_Publication.rtf



3.1 Communicating the opportunities in London

Though there is a strong onus on the government to create a legacy for young people, it is also true that it is up to the youth to realise and take full advantage of these opportunities for the legacy to be realised. The Games has already begun to strengthen the 'get up and go' attitude expressed by Christine Ohuruogu, but the government must make a strong commitment to further communicating all sporting opportunities that are available, both for young people wanting to try a new sport, and for spectators, so they know about the games and events that are already occurring. This will provide a strong incentive for young people wanting to get into sports as they can see the tangible benefits and the public support.

In the United States it is not uncommon for there to be hundreds, or even hundreds of thousands, of people supporting young sportsmen and women in their games. Sport is a cultural

strength of the US but they are not alone. We feel that the current national enthusiasm and interest in sports creates the perfect environment for the government to strengthen the support of our young athletes and help bring spectators to their events. To this end we propose two ideas;

Improve communication and sponsorship

The government has many funds available to them that they use on advertising campaigns on various communication platforms like the Underground¹⁴. The government also has the ability to help forge relationships between sports organisations and corporate sponsors. We believe that the government must take full advantage of these opportunities to both advertise youth sporting events across the capital, particularly championship games, and to create links between sporting bodies that facilitate and

¹⁴http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8514798.stm



govern youth sporting events so that the sports can continue to strengthen and grow.

Olympic Facilities

The SOLA Foundation believes that, whatever the plans may be for the future of the Olympic Park, youth championship games should be played on their facilities. This will help give young sports players a goal to reach, encourage spectators to watch the games and also help alleviate the problems of the lack of facilities for young amateur London sports.

3.2 Create a Modern Day Scouts Movement with London Youth

The Olympics provided a new found appreciation for volunteering. We believe the Olympic Legacy must encompass a plan for expanding the role of volunteering to benefit young Londoners. As part of 'Team London' the Mayor has announced intentions to provide a budget of £1.3million to set up 40 new uniformed scout groups with an

intention for 1,000 new volunteers to the scheme¹⁵.

There is definitely some merit to this idea; however the scouts as they are is an outdated programme with skills that provide little relevance to today's young Londoners. Building on the Mayors pre-existing programme we would like to see the programme expanded but made more relevant and applicable to the everyday lives of young Londoners.

As well as teaching important practical skills such as teaching young people how to cook, a modern Scouts would also involve developing skills that would help young Londoners improve their prospects for employment, helping them find their hidden talents and increase their civic participation.

London Youth, a network of 400 youth organisations across the

¹⁵<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/mayor/cadets-and-scouts-can-give-teenagers-the-skills-to-succeed-in-life-says-boris-7309839.html>



capital, support and challenge young people, whatever their background and whoever they are, to reach their full potential. Their involvement with this project provides the foundations from the 400 organisations, across London, all of who are already willing to lend to this movement. Bringing in these organisations into the Scouts will both reinvigorate struggling youth services and provide a contemporary vision of the Scouts.

3.3 Public - private school facility partnerships

What was clear from the Olympic Games is that there is a large disparity between the facilities and funding available for state and private schools. This is demonstrated by the fact that although only 7% of the UK is privately educated, 36% of Team GB athletes were privately educated¹⁶. The success of young athletes in the Olympics

exemplifies the potential of young athletes; something we feel shouldn't be limited to only those with access to private education.

We know there is a lot of good will on the part of independent schools, and with this in mind we would like to develop constructive partnerships with state schools so that facilities can be shared. This would allow independent schools to fulfil their public benefit obligations under the Charities Act of 2006 and increase the availability of quality sporting facilities to all young Londoners.

3.4 Commitment to apprenticeships at the Olympic Park and other facilities

It is still unclear what will happen to all of the Olympic Park facilities and how they will be run but we argue that there must be a commitment that providing apprenticeships and opportunities to young people is a priority when a strategy is mapped out.

¹⁶<http://www.suttontrust.com/news/news/over-a-third-of-british-olympic-winners-were-privately-educated/>



In support of the policy recommendations of the Sports and Recreation Alliance, we advocate the following to ensure that the opportunity to capitalise on the enthusiasm for sports generated by the Games is not lost;

- An extension of the Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) scheme, to include Gift Aid on junior subscriptions and a full review of CASC legislation
- A reduction in red tape which hampers the efforts of volunteers to provide sport and recreation in the community
- Protection for clubs from external financial pressures (such as high music licence fees) and a strengthened planning policy to preserve valuable community facilities.

4. Making London affordable

Living in London means being part of a vibrant, international city with world-class attractions on offer, and as such it is inevitable that this would come at a premium. However, we are concerned that the consistently increasing cost of housing in London is making it much more difficult to live in the city. The rising cost of housing should be a concern for policymakers mainly for its relationship with poverty¹⁷.

It is a widely appreciated fact that poverty affects the life chances of children, in a number of harmful ways. It can affect health, life expectancy, educational attainment and therefore prospects for employment later in life. Any discussion about making London more affordable must involve tackling the multiple causes of poverty that negatively affects the lives of so many young

people in London. Recent research from the Institute of Fiscal Studies suggests that across the UK, child poverty is set to increase over the coming years. By 2015/2016, 22% of children will be living in poverty, before taking housing costs into account. After taking housing costs into account, this figure will rise to 29.7%¹⁸. This is a particularly acute problem for London due to our skewed housing market. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation have shown that the amount of people pushed into poverty due to housing costs is higher in London than anywhere else in the country – a jump from 17% to 28%¹⁹. This shows the real human cost of a housing market that is become increasingly unaffordable for a large amount of Londoners on lower incomes. With this in mind we propose a number of policies that aim to tackle this problem.

¹⁷http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/The_importance_of_income_FINAL.pdf

¹⁸<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-social-exclusion-assessment-full.pdf>

¹⁹ Ibid.



4.1 Build more social housing

Research has demonstrated that spending on housing has a positive multiplier effect on the economy – for every £1 spent on construction, the economy gets roughly £3 of gross output back²⁰. Spending on construction creates jobs and saves money on other policy areas which are affected such as health, education and crime. Research has shown that for every £1.6 billion spent on housing-related support services generated savings of £3.4 billion to the public purse²¹. We feel that this strong economic argument for increased spending in construction impels the government to act as the investor and kick start a construction growth that will benefit the country as a whole. Demand in the capital far outstrips supply, pushing rents and house prices up and excluding most

young people from participating in the market. In addition to the economic argument that not building houses is bad for the economy, there is a strong social argument to make as well. London as a major city needs people who work for low wages to function. Every cafe, restaurant, office block, and public infrastructure requires employees, some of whom are not paid enough to be able to afford to live in inner London. We feel that it is unfair that people who are equally vital to the successful operation of London are forced to spend a much higher proportion of their time travelling to work. In addition to this, we feel that mixed communities are essential in promoting social cohesion. Excluding those on low wages from large parts of the capital is detrimental to happy, vibrant communities.

²⁰<http://www.nasc.org.uk/NASC/files/ea/eabc21b4-91d3-4e44-8f0f-ab27a7a0a4b1.pdf>

²¹http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2012/06/together-at-home-new-strategy-housing_June2012_9279.pdf

4.1 Keep housing benefit for under-25 year olds



Whilst we are pushing for an increase in construction of social housing, we recognise that in the meantime there are many young people whose housing needs are being threatened by the impending withdrawal of housing benefit for the under-25. The idea that all young people have both space and a stable family environment to continue living in without support from the government is completely out of touch and simply unrealistic. At a time when one in three homeless people are aged 18-24²², this policy would cause real hardship unnecessarily. Withdrawing housing benefit from everyone in this bracket, in an attempt to curb the housing benefit bill would force people onto the streets or into insecure and unstable housing arrangements.

4.2 Define affordable housing according to Londoner's incomes

As mentioned, current private sector rents and house prices are increasing year on year and excluding many Londoners from participating in the housing market. The housing charity Shelter has described 69% of London as 'extremely unaffordable' – areas where 'median London rents for two bedroom homes take up 60 per cent of a Londoner's median take home pay'²³. Guidance from the Department of Communities and Local government suggests that the definition of affordable housing should take into account both local incomes and local house prices²⁴. We feel that in London the definition has been too far skewed towards the local market, leaving 'affordable' housing unaffordable for a large amount of workers on average pay. We feel that affordable housing should be much more tightly pegged to local incomes,

²² <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/no-going-home.html>

²³ http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/386828/Private_Rent_Watch_Report_1.pdf

²⁴ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/152897.pdf>

and therefore would actually become affordable in more than just name.



5. Improving transport

An issue of major concern to young Londoners is the high and ever increasing cost of travel throughout the city. Nearly 50% of young adults are paid less than the London Living Wage²⁵ meaning that many are facing ‘transport poverty’, having to spend an unsustainable amount of their income just getting trying to get to and from work or job interviews.

We feel that those young Londoners that have managed to gain meaningful employment, in a time of high unemployment, should not have to lose a significant portion of their income on necessary travel. Therefore we stress the government must work with the relevant youth organisations such as the SOLA Foundation and the Youth Select Committee to arrive at a solution to the ever increasing cost of travel that would both suit young people and the developmental

²⁵<http://www.londonspovetryprofile.org.uk/indicators/topics/low-pay/low-pay-by-age/>

needs of London’s transport infrastructure.

5.1 Later travel on weekends

London doesn’t stop. And on the weekends neither do its young people. London needs to have a transport system that reflects that. The SOLA Foundation feels that the tube should run at least one hour later every Friday and Saturday night to make it easier and safer for everyone to enjoy London and get home safely. The success of the longer operating hours during the Olympics proves that we can do it and make later running tubes on a weekend part of the Olympic legacy for young Londoners. This suggestion has already received significant support from leading West End business groups.

5.2 Drive out illegal minicabs

With London being the 24-hour city, the government must ensure that the safety of those enjoying it is of paramount concern. Illegal minicab drivers and touting is a notable issue with several cases of devastating



consequence. Ensuring the safety of young women enjoying their evenings should be of particular concern to policymakers to ensure their safety. A lot has been done to drive out illegal touts and unregistered mini-cab drivers. However, we feel that policymakers must work with the police and legislators to step up the campaign to drive out illegal minicabs and touting in London.

5.3 Increasing step-free access for London's rail network

Modernising London's transport infrastructure is a key policy area for this government. We believe that as part of this development, step free access must be made a government priority. Although Transport for London has made a concerted effort to make stations more accessible, there are still many locations that are without such facilities, and are virtually inaccessible to those with reduced mobility. The success of improving the accessibility of a large proportion of London's transport network during the Olympics illustrates that it can be done. We would like to see further emphasis made to improve the accessibility of all of London's transport network, so that we can be proud of having a truly inclusive city.



6. Empowering young and vulnerable Londoners

“Too many young people in London are living lives where they are not provided with the care and emotional support that others simply take for granted. Every young person has the right to be raised in a nurturing, loving environment that will allow them to fulfil their potential and grow into a happy, well-rounded adult”

Camila Batmanghelidjh – Founder and Director, Kids Company.



6.1 Expand provision of centres for vulnerable young Londoners

Organisations like Kids Company have years of experience providing frontline services to vulnerable young people who are in real need of care and attention they might not otherwise receive. The centres they operate in South London provide a safe space where vulnerable young people can go to receive emotional and psychological support, as well as practical services targeted at each child's individual needs. We believe these centres are an invaluable resource for some of the most vulnerable young people in London. Therefore, we would like to see an expansion of these centres or similar programmes. We would like to see similar centres established across North, South, East and West London so that children all over the capital are able to access locally the help and support that we feel every young person in London has a right to.

6.2 More male primary teachers

Underachievement in literacy among primary-school aged boys has been a problem for some time. 76% of schools in a National Literacy Trust survey felt that boys did not perform as well as girls in reading²⁶. Given the fundamental importance of literacy for educational and professional development, we would like to see action taken to help bridge the gap between girls' and boys' performance. The Boys' Reading Commission recommends that every boy should have weekly support from a male reading role model. We welcome the news that there has been a substantial increase in the number of male primary teachers²⁷, and would urge that government take measures to ensure this trend

²⁶http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0001/4056/Boys_Commission_Report.pdf

²⁷<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/big-rise-in-male-primary-teachers-7945450.html>



continues, to allow more boys to experience a positive male educational role model.

6.3 A more diverse school leadership

Latest government figures from the Department for Education²⁸ show that 97.7% of head teachers are white. As more male primary teachers will have a positive benefit of young men in primary education, a more diverse leadership also possesses positive externalities, as Sir Keith Ajegbo of Future Leaders states;

“It is hugely important there are more teachers and Head teachers from BAME backgrounds, both in ethnically diverse areas and largely white areas. School has an impact on how young people see the world. We still live in a society where race can signify difference and different races are stereotyped, so it is crucial that young people can relate

respectfully to black and minority ethnic heads and teachers.”²⁹

The Black Teachers in London report from 2007 recognized the lack of progress of minority teachers in London. Though work has been done to change this lack of progress and diversity, the latest figures suggest that such efforts have not gone far enough to overcome the institutional barriers to equality in head teaching. The SOLA Foundation would like to see a coherent strategy set out by the GLA towards increasing the accessibility of top professions in teaching to those from minority backgrounds. Part of this strategy would be to support the Future Leaders Charity Trust in their efforts to build strategic partnerships with Academy groups to become leadership development partners.

6.4 Adapt the ‘Live Below the Line’ campaign for the UK Minimum Wage.

The Global Poverty Project’s ‘Live Below the Line’ campaign

²⁸<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000997/sfr06-2011v5.pdf>

²⁹<http://www.guardian.co.uk/teacher-network/2012/nov/09/diversity-school-leadership>



challenged people to attempt to survive on £1-a-day for a week, in order to raise awareness and foster a sense of empathy for those who live on that income constantly. We think that this is a brilliant idea, and would like to see it adapted for London. As part of our support for the London Living Wage campaign, we challenge politicians to see if they can live on the Minimum Wage in London for 2 weeks. We feel that this would be a powerful way to highlight the difficulties of surviving in London on a low income for policymakers, and ultimately boost our support for the wider adoption of the London Living Wage. We are interested to see how many politicians are brave enough to accept the challenge!

6.5 Improving the sexual health of young Londoners

The Health and Social Care Act that will come into play in April 2013 will change the way that sexual health services are to be commissioned. As part of Public Health England, sexual health

services will be under local authority control. Local Authorities will now control the commissioning of contraception (outside of the GP contract), sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and treatment, sexual health promotion and HIV prevention. Local authorities will be mandated to provide appropriate access to sexual health services and the public health budget will also be ring-fenced. However as programmes such as the National Chlamydia Screening Programme (NCSP) are to be to be embedded into sexual health services as a whole, it is unclear whether such sexual health services will include an emphasis on sexual health for young people, particularly in regards to the future of Chlamydia screening, an STI that is particularly prevalent in young Londoners (1 in 5 tested)³⁰. Certain provision needs to be made to ensure that young sexual health is prioritised in the new HSC reforms. Therefore we feel that it is of the utmost importance that Local Authorities within London recognise and financially

³⁰<http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/pdf/LHO%20Sexual%20Health%20Summary.pdf>

prioritise the sexual health of young people.

Furthermore we also stress that the government does not continue to further cut the funding for charities that work with the sexually vulnerable, exploited and hard to reach young people such as the Family Planning Association and Brook, who currently have no core funding from the Department of Health. These services provide a strong foundation of sexual health provision to vulnerable young people across London that must be sustained if we are to see further improvements to young Londoner sexual health.

“Young people are the future. But too often they are seen as part of the problem. SOLA’s work harnesses the amazing power and energy of young people themselves to change the world for the better. Save the Children is proud to be a partner in this endeavour.”

Justin Forsyth - CEO, Save The Children

6.6 Curbing the growth of the payday-lending industry.

We are concerned that the increasingly easy availability of credit at very high interest rates is locking many young people into a cycle of debt that they find difficult to escape from. Instant credit that can be accessed via a computer screen or a smart phone without stringent credit checks means that many young people are being sold products which they have little chance of being able to repay. 69% of people who have borrowed online are aged between 18 and 34³¹. The trend shows no sign of slowing, with 26% of 18-24 year olds planning to take out a payday loan within the next 6 months³². As well as online access, the proliferation of similar shops on high streets in deprived neighbourhoods is a real cause for concern. Profiting from people’s

³¹http://5.9.39.46/uploads/openwong_a_statistics_july_2012.pdf

³²<http://www.comres.co.uk/poll/789/r3-payday-loan-poll.htm>



need for credit to pay for basic essentials has resulted in a spiral that means people need ever-more loans to pay off existing ones. This has to stop, and indeed many have expressed a desire for stricter regulation to prevent this. We welcome the OFT's compliance review on the practices of the sector³³, and investigations into particular businesses in the industry. We would like to see an effort made to make sure that the industry is complying with current guidance, crack down on businesses who aren't, and ultimately call for greater regulation to stop the growth of these harmful, currently legal, practices.

³³<http://www.offt.gov.uk/news-and-updates/press/2012/110-12#.ULDVjletmv8>



7. Preventing the spread of gang culture

Gang crime and other serious youth violence has become a significant problem in London and other cities over recent years. The tragic consequences in terms of lives lost, futures ruined and families broken have become sadly all too familiar. We at SOLA are extremely concerned that not enough is being done to stem the tide of needless violence being carried out by London's young people against other young Londoners. We are determined to push tackling gang culture up the political agenda, so that pressure can be put on politicians to stop the suffering that many communities in London have experienced as a result of gang crime and youth violence.

It is clear that gang culture has a number of interlinked causes that will require hard work and a sustained commitment over a long time to tackle. Some of the causes frequently advanced are family breakdown and dysfunction,

educational failure, emotional and mental health problems, poverty and unemployment and a toxic relationship between young people and police. There are no easy answers to solving these problems but we feel there are certain key policy recommendations that if adopted, would help the situation tangibly.

7.1 End the 'Wall of Silence'

We believe that improving poor relations between the police and young people in communities across London is key to tackling gang culture. In September 2012, SOLA teamed up with the Rio Ferdinand Foundation and the Mayors' Peer Outreach Workers, in partnership with the Metropolitan Police, to discuss ways to foster better relationships between the police and young people. One of the key suggestions that arose was the need to create closer working links between young people and the police. We recommend that;

- Youth-led, police-youth engagement



training should be developed and implemented across London in partnership with the local voluntary sector

- Working with local youth organisations should become part of police general practice
- Police should be more firmly embedded within the local community, so they are viewed as part of it
- A complete review into the use of stop-and-search powers in London. Despite a very small percentage of stop-and-searches leading to arrests and ultimately convictions³⁴, the highly disproportionate use of the tactic against BME communities, particularly against black men³⁵ has been frequently cited as a large source of tension between the police and young people. We propose a complete review of the effectiveness of the use of

stop-and-search powers in London, measured against its negative effect on relationships between the police and the communities they should represent.

7.2 A greater emphasis on preventative and interventionist measures

We would like to see a much bigger focus on preventative measures that target children at risk of becoming involved with gang violence before they have already become part of the criminal justice system. Groups who work with issues related to gang violence have warned that early prevention work has ‘fallen off the radar’³⁶. We recommend that a greater focus be put on stopping children from getting involved before it is too late, and behaviour becomes entrenched. This would include targeting primary-school age children.

³⁴<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/jun/12/police-stop-and-search-black-people>

³⁵http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/raceinbritain/ehrc_stop_and_search_report.pdf

³⁶<http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/client/images/Gangs%20Report.pdf>



7.3 Improve delivery of the Mayor's Mentoring Scheme

We welcomed the launch of the Mayor's anti-gang crime mentoring programme for young black men in the capital in 2010³⁷. However, it has become clear that not enough has been done to make the programme a success, including missing targets³⁸. We would like to see the concerns of those involved in setting up the scheme and bidding to run it taken on-board in a serious way, and work in partnership with the Mayor's Office to ensure that a great opportunity to positively affect the lives of vulnerable young men in the capital does not go to waste.

³⁷ <http://www.london.gov.uk/get-involved/public/types-of-volunteering/mentoring>

³⁸ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/jan/23/anti-crime-mentors-scheme-adviser>



8. Inspiring young Londoners through the arts

“Music can have a transformative effect and be a very powerful tool for elevating the aspirations of young people”

Liam Tootill– Managing Director,
SBTV

8.1 Increasing training and apprenticeships for the arts.

We all know how much passion and energy young people in London devote to the arts, and what a fantastic vehicle they can be for building self-esteem and skills. We also know that many dream of making a career out of their passion, but may find opportunities limited or not know

how to go about it. Careers in the arts are much more varied than many young people might imagine and involve much more than just being a singer or actor. For example, SBTV has shown how young people with a passion for music can carve out a niche for themselves in the industry. We would like to see more training programmes that educate young people about what other pathways there are into creative industries, and provide them with the skills necessary to make that journey. Organisations like Urban Development, Bigga Fish and others have much experience providing this kind of vocational training, and we would like to see an expansion of similar schemes to allow young people to explore all the options available to them and develop their passion into a profession.

8.2 Integrate music and the arts throughout the curriculum

As well as allowing young people to express themselves and boost self-esteem, the arts can be a powerful vehicle to help engage young people at school. Integrating music and the arts throughout the school curriculum, in a similar way that IT is taught, would be an effective way to get students to engage with subjects that may have previously been a struggle. The goal is to teach key, employable skills such as literacy, communication and maths, and this could be achieved through a medium that young people can relate to and be stimulated by.





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