New Youth Projects UK

# Introduction:

There are 3.1 million children living in poverty in the UK.[1](#_ENREF_1) This means 1 in 4 children are growing up cold, hungry and unable to participate in activities with friends. In certain areas the problem is even more serious; in Newcastle, 31% of children are growing up in poverty. The impacts of poverty are vast and damaging. Poverty impacts on health, psychology and educational attainment and stops thousands of children becoming productive and fulfilled members of society.

New Youth Projects UK is a pioneering and modern approach to dealing with social, financial and psychological problems faced by children in the UK. New Youth Projects will be community based projects targeting the most deprived and poorest areas of the country. This manifesto discusses what the clubs aim to achieve, why the clubs are necessary, how the organisation is different from other services and describes the significant benefits this method could have.

New Youth Projects are building centred located within the areas they are trying to work with, easy to travel to and close to members’ homes. A key differential from other clubs and youth initiatives is the level of contact hours. The clubs would be open every day after school and, if needed, at the weekend, with regular meetings allowing relationships to blossom and trust to build. It offers the opportunity for a range of health and educational intervention with the ultimate goal of producing responsible, intelligent and conscience members of society.

# Aims:

* To provide a safe and secure environment for children.
* To reach the most deprived areas of the UK and families, providing support, opportunities and hope.
* To promote health, education, community spirit and social awareness.
* To increase confidence, self-esteem and self-worth in children across the UK.
* To give children lasting and continuing role-models who can mentor, inspire and guide.

# The Club and Purpose

The paramount philosophy of the club is that it is a safe place. Latest NSPCC research suggests 1 in 4 young adults has been severely maltreated during childhood.[2](#_ENREF_2) Safety leads to trust and confidence; members must be able to confide in staff and professionals at the clubs if they need to. Once a trusting and relaxed atmosphere has developed the clubs and staff can provide a guiding influence to underprivileged and underappreciated children.

The clubs will be open to all. A basic floor plan and the facilities offered by the club can be seen in Figure 1. Children and teenagers can be referred to the club by teachers, friends and parents in order to provide service to those most in need. A club will consist of two distinct age groups, youngsters aged 5-11 and teens aged 12-16. It is hoped the clubs will be financed in a number of ways; fundraising and charitable donations from companies and the public would raise the majority of the funds with government grants and sponsorship achieving rest.

The Childhood Poverty Act of 2010 demonstrated the best routes out of poverty are through education and academic achievement. New Youth Clubs will run a number of programmes encouraging children to finish secondary school, pursue higher education and focus on careers. Lower educational attainment and a less-skilled work-force reduce the UK’s ability to compete in a rapidly expanding global economy. In order to reduce and eradicate poverty in the UK the root causes must be tackled.

Gymnasium

Teen Education

Room

Teen Activity

Room

Staff Room

Conference

Room

Teen Lounge

WC

WC

WC

WC

Computer Room

Dining Area

Kitchen

Youth Lounge

Youth Art Room

Youth Music Room

Youth Study Area

Main Corridor

Example Floor Plan for a Club

Current evidence suggests the key mechanism to changing attitude and aspirations is parental involvement.[3](#_ENREF_3) The clubs will partner with both parents and schools to identify children most likely to leave school early. It will provide support to these children academically, helping with homework, and socially, discussing any problems experienced at school.

Having valuable and realistic role models is becoming increasingly rare but highly important in modern society. Mentorship will is a key element of the program and is vital to a child’s development. Unfortunately children in single parent families are twice as likely to live in relative poverty and in some homes parents are absent from their children’s lives. Regular role models who become a trustworthy and familiar face is something members would value.

This scheme would offer young women and girls the chance to meet professional adult female role models e.g. doctors, accountants and businesswomen who they would rarely encounter in their daily life. For boys aged 11-14 targeted effort would be made to engage them in discussions and activities aimed at reinforcing character and positive behaviour. Links between poverty and crime are very intricate. Despite there being disagreement and ambiguity as to whether crime is caused by poverty there is firm evidence those in more deprived areas experience a higher fear of crime supported by higher risk of crime.

Unemployment for young people is reaching a record high, with 960,000 16-24 year olds are currently unemployed and out of full-time education in the UK.[4](#_ENREF_4) At the New Youth Clubs there will be programmes encouraging underprivileged children to continue in full-time education and provide contacts for apprenticeships and promoting a productive lifestyle. Training and skills ranging from interview practice, IT classes and CV help would encourage younger people to enter into employment and regular follow-up would ensure maintained employment. The vast number of people out of work is undoubtedly costly both in terms of benefits and lost taxes.

As well as education, health would also be championed. This would cover all aspects from the psychological to the physical. Active and informed discussion would encourage healthy behaviours throughout teenage years. Children and families living in poverty have significantly lowered life expectancy and quality of life than homes with a higher income. Poverty is associated with anaemia, diabetes, asthma and cancer and a host of other health problems. The cost of healthcare is difficult to define but poor health has further implications economically through sickness and reduced productivity.

Unfortunately, the reality is one in eight of the poorest children in the UK go without at least one hot meal a day.[5](#_ENREF_5) An onsite kitchen would provide attendees with nutritious food and provides opportunity to educate children regarding healthy foods, involving them in preparation of their evening meal.[6](#_ENREF_6) Eating habits are developed from a young age and messages regarding lifestyle should be delivered in a clear and concise manner. Children living in deprived areas are more likely to be obese and experience associated health symptoms and stigma.

Underprivileged children have lower aspirations, experience stigma and are at increased risk of mental health problems.[7](#_ENREF_7) Drama and acting classes within the building will aim to engage in hands-on activities. They can improve self-esteem, confidence and communication skills boosting academic achievement and encouraging creativity.

Exercise and recreation programmes run through the club will help develop fitness, increasing healthy body image, reducing stress and improving teamwork. All are important for children and teenagers and as a consequence can help them develop into productive young adults.

New Youth Clubs provide the forum for making these changes and improving young people’s lives. The clubs will combine the educational and structured background of a school with a more informal atmosphere.

The clubs are run by trained professionals and volunteers willing to give up their time to those in need. All staff would be required to undergo advanced CRB checks to ensure paramount safety for attendees. Clubs workers would be expected to regularly attend the club, becoming a constant and continuing influence in these children’s lives.

# The Focus on Youth

Childhood poverty is a problem that urgently needs addressing. The Institute for Fiscal Studies predicts by the year 2020-21 childhood poverty will reach levels of 23-24%. Far higher than the target set by the government in 2010, aiming for a reduction in UK childhood poverty to 5-10% by 2020. Unless effective and directed action is taken soon, the government will fall significantly short of this target.

All children have the right to good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment. Children also have a right to a relaxing environment. The government should also assist in the provision of support for parents and ensure all children are properly cared for. A report by UNICEF[8](#_ENREF_8) placed the UK at the bottom of the league of industrialised countries, with vast discrepancies between the rich and the poor.

# Current Services

Current policies have focussed on ‘future adults’ rather than children. Intervention has been justified on the basis of future outcomes such as reducing NHS bills and jobseekers allowance and creating a better healthier workforce. These are important factors for making strategies and justifying interventions, and these clubs will fall under those categories. However the government and the public are not fully aware of the impact that a fulfilling childhood has on future prospects, there has been a failure in the realisation of helping children’s present needs.[9](#_ENREF_9) These clubs will aim to increase children’s self-worth and current happiness and as a consequence will produce brighter futures for these children.

Sure Start was a similar scheme focussing on the below 5 age group. The scheme focussed on physical, intellectual, social and emotional development of children under 5.[10](#_ENREF_10) However, Sure Start failed to reach most disadvantaged families and children.[11](#_ENREF_11) This scheme will provide safety and security for a range of ages and a ‘second home’ for many under privileged children. It will also create mentors and build relationships for children from single parent families. The clubs will actively search for children who need the service most and initiate contact with these families and children.

There is already precedent for clubs like this but not in the UK. In the USA Boys and Girls Clubs of America have been operating for over 150 years and regularly work with disadvantaged youth with incredible results and success. An important part of New Youth Clubs will be publicity. It is important that the clubs are seen and projected as modern, dynamic and popular places. In the USA celebrity endorsement from Denzel Washington promotes the clubs and creates an excellent image. This will boost attendance, encourage participation and funding. The clubs will become the heart of communities and provide hope for many disadvantaged children. The clubs and atmosphere created by them have the potential reach across the country aiding the most deprived areas.

The UK needs to adopt this more child-centred approach to tackling problems in society. Youth organisations need to be modernised and improved and this is the way to do it.

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