



LET'S **BUILD IT**  
**TOGETHER.**

[www.itsourfuture.uk](http://www.itsourfuture.uk)

Launched November 2019



The voice of young people is rarely heard in politics and decision-making.

Governments make sweeping changes to young people's lives - affecting our education, our life prospects, and our mental health, to name but a few.

It often feels as if we are powerless to actually do anything about it. But **IT'S OUR FUTURE** they are talking about.

About a year ago, a group of 'civic leaders' came together to think about how to help build a better future for young people across our country.

These senior representatives came from across the public, private and voluntary sectors, and included individuals from Barnardo's, Common Purpose, and New Philanthropy Capital amongst others.

They believe in listening to young people, and supporting us to make the changes we need.

They have spent this year trying to find out what kind of futures we want, and how we can start to build them.

**IT'S OUR FUTURE** is a living manifesto - we want to hear from more young people and civic leaders who want to support them.

You can fill in your blueprint for the future at: [itsourfuture.uk](https://itsourfuture.uk) to say what you want from your future.

You can follow the action on social media at [@ItsOurFutureUK](https://twitter.com/ItsOurFutureUK).

# OUR BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE.

**1: LET US USE OUR POWER.** Young people are citizens too. We need to be involved in large-scale decision making, whether that is by lowering the voting age to 16 or being asked how we feel about issues that affect us.

**2: SUPPORT OUR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING.** One in eight young people are living with a mental health problem. We need better services, support and funding for everyone who needs it, for as long as they need it, with no 'cliff edge' at the age of 18.

**3: EDUCATION THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE.** The education system isn't working for a lot of us, especially those facing additional challenges in life. We need a system that gives everyone a second chance to access the education, training and skills necessary to move into employment, with school exclusion only ever a last resort.

**4: BUILDING COMMUNITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES.** We want to be involved in making change in our lives and neighbourhoods. We need support to make change in the places and for the people that matter to us.

**5: TECHNOLOGY THAT WORKS FOR US.** Technology has a huge impact on our lives. We need to be given the tools to reclaim our ability to do something about this - to use technology how we want to use it.

**6: ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE, NOW.**

Climate change will have the single biggest impact on our future lives. We need to act now, whilst we can.

**Barnardo's** and **Open Lab** launched **#ItsOurFutureUK** with an event on 25 October 2019 **listening** to:

**45**

**Young  
People**

**40**

**Youth Workers,  
Project Workers,  
Civic Leaders &  
Researchers**

We spent 5 hours together, talking about the **real issues** that affect **young people in the UK**. We built a **blueprint of our future** and used it to write this **manifesto**.



# LET US USE OUR POWER.

We don't feel like our  
ability to take part in our  
country's democracy is  
taken seriously.

We already have a lot of power, but we're  
prevented from using it.

Let us use our power - in politics, in society,  
and in the services we use every day.

**We need to lower the voting age to 16.** As we've shown time and time again - from the Climate Strike to mental health advocacy - young people care about making change and having a say in who is making large-scale decisions. Lowering the voting age to 16 gives us a chance to start participating in our country's democracy at the earliest opportunity.

**We need to be part of all large-scale decision-making processes.** Lowering the voting age is just the start. Once we're included in our country's largest decision-making process, we need to make sure that young people feel as if we can take part in all of the other parts of our democracy. Encourage us to join local community groups that are making change. Help us take part in neighbourhood planning processes.

**We need to be part of the delivery of support services for young people.** We know the problems we face better than anyone, because they are our problems. Having people who haven't experienced something decide what kind of support we need doesn't work, because they have no idea what it's like. Let us help you make those decisions. And better yet, give us more opportunities by supporting us to deliver some of these services too. We care about each other - give us a platform to do that.

**Young people need to be represented better in the media.** When young people are shown in any form of media, it often makes it seem like we're all violent, bored, social media-addicted and impulsive. Show our real lives. Our acts of kindness. Invite us to give our opinions. If we feel like people respect what we've got to say, we're going to start speaking up a lot more.

**“We as young people should have more say, because at the end of the day it's our future, and you're making decisions for us.”**

# SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

One in eight young people  
are living with a mental  
health problem.

When we are experiencing mental ill-health or a mental illness, we need to be able to access support services quickly that will care for us, no matter the issue.

We need a system that is concerned with our entire wellbeing - not just crisis management, with no cliff edge



**Support that starts at the earliest opportunity to ensure our mental health doesn't get worse.** Whether this takes the form of people in our lives from schools and teachers to being able to help, to early intervention teams or activities embedded in other services, we need trained supporters to be able to help us when we need it.

**More peer support groups for young people struggling with their mental health.** Talking to someone who knows what it's like to feel the way you feel is important. Hearing from people more experienced than you can help give you tips and advice for living with a mental health problem. The solidarities we form across these groups are important connections that give us a network to reach out to.

**Support services for young people need to be properly funded.** It's no good having support services if they're never open, hard to access or go away once we 'seem' better. We need support services to have enough money to comfortably function across the entire time we need them - to help prevent us having problems, to urgently help when we're in crisis, to support us when we need it, and to help us heal when we're getting better.

**A transition period between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and adult services.** When support from CAMHS ends when you reach 18, it can feel like you're starting from scratch. Introducing a transition period between CAMHS and adult services gives us the continuity we need to feel safe and supported up to the age of 25.

**Change the language used when dealing with mental health.** So much of the language used in mental health care is stigmatizing, making people feel as if there is something they should be ashamed of or treating people as if they are not capable of managing their own care. If we all use open and person-centered language, no one feels worse for just being who they are.

**Create appropriate and specific services for individual needs.** Not everyone has the same problems and different things will work for different people. We need to create specialist services that help people in the ways that work for them. For people that have dealt with a lot of hard to process things when they're young, it might take a long time for them to get to the point of being open to being helped.

# EDUCATION THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE.

The education system  
isn't working for a lot of  
us.

Learning is set up in a very static and rigid way,  
but we all learn differently.

We need to expand our education system and  
make it actually work for everyone, with exclusion  
only ever a last resort.

**Learning about social and political issues should be integrated into the education system.** Our current education system treats learning facts as the gold standard. But we need more personal practical skills training, that will help us live our best lives and plan for the future. Cooking, hygiene, health, safety, driving, relationships and politics all need to become much larger parts of our schools.

**Let people learn in whatever way works for them.** At the moment it feels as if teachers are encouraged to stay close to the curriculum, and value learning facts. But each person learns differently and has different interests. We need to let teachers move away from the curriculum and tailor to people's interests and styles of learning, encouraging our curiosity and ability to ask questions that matter to us.

**“If you look at a classroom 100 years ago, it will be pretty much the same as a classroom today. In the education system there hasn't been much change, you're still forced to choose certain subjects” - YOUNG PERSON**

**Create teaching conditions which make teachers feel respected.** Teaching is a really hard job, and we notice when our teachers aren't in a good place. We need to ensure good working conditions for our teachers, so we can learn better. They need fair pay, more control over what they teach and smaller class sizes to make sure they can support us all how we need.

**An education system that doesn't stop when you leave school, college or university.** For a lot of young people, school can be a really hard time, and we have things going on at home or in our personal life which makes it hard to learn. The same educational opportunities should be open to us regardless of age - if we find things hard when we're 14, we might find it easier when we're 24 and in a more stable place.

# BUILDING COMMUNITIES & OPPORTUNITIES.

When we don't know what to do, or are having a hard time, we need somewhere to turn to feel supported.

This doesn't always need to be a support service if we have stronger communities, where people lend help and trust to each other.

For those of us without a stable family life, our communities can help connect us to a sense of something bigger.

**Make safe spaces in our communities.** If we don't have spaces where we can all meet and come together, we will find it hard to build strong connections. We need to have places to hold events and meet new people.

**Encourage and allow people to make positive and meaningful connections to others.** In hard times, we turn to our social connections for support, relief, and help. But if organizations who support you don't encourage you to connect with others, it leaves you reliant on them and unable to make changes for yourself. We need to encourage building these positive connections.

**Build a sense of security and safety.** If you don't feel safe, you end up living life on the edge - always feeling like there's something out to get you. We need to work on building a sense of safety and security so we can all feel comfortable in our communities, helping us to thrive.

**Public transport that is reliable, efficient, and free to those who need it.** When you're struggling, it's important to reach out to the people who are important to you. But poor quality and expensive public transport keeps us socially isolated, unable to spend quality time with people we care about. This is especially key for those of us who have experience of the care system, as we may live far away from the people who are important to us.



# TECHNOLOGY THAT WORKS FOR US.

Technology and the companies who create these technologies have huge impacts on our lives that it often feels like we can't control.

We need to be given the tools to reclaim our ability to do something about this - to use technology how we want to use it.

**Make it easy to understand how technologies work.** It often feels as if technology and social media is controlling us, but we have little ability to control it. Knowing something is the first step to controlling it. If we understand how different technologies work, it makes it much easier for us to choose how - and if - we use them.

**Make technology that is open, safe, honest and transparent.** No more websites that track your browsing without telling you what they're doing with it or cancellation forms that stop you leaving a service. If we're going to have any chance of choosing how we use technology, we need technologies that are open to everyone and transparent in how they work so we can decide whether it works in a way we are willing to allow.

**Let people limit their own use of technology.** Get rid of unlimited scrolling and features designed to keep you using apps for as long as possible. Technologies should help us to make the decisions we want, not try and manipulate us to spending as long using them as possible. Build features that allow people to understand how they use technology and change that if they want.

**Create new models of technology design and development.** At the moment, most technology creators are large companies who are often based in the USA. But they aren't the only people who are able to make technology that does what they want it to - we can too. We need to find ways of building technology that does what young people want it to, and explore different models for this - instead of a company, it could be a co-operative, or a family, or a group of individuals working together.

**Build sustainable futures whilst we still can.** We live in times of plenty. Particularly in the Global North, there is a huge amount of money and resources. Whilst the worst impacts of climate change are still in the future, we should work on building technology that helps to ensure our future is a sustainable one.

# **ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE, NOW.**

**Climate change will have  
the single biggest impact  
on our future lives.**

If things carry on as they are and we don't move towards a more sustainable future, the planet's ecosystems will shift forever.

We need to act now, whilst we can.



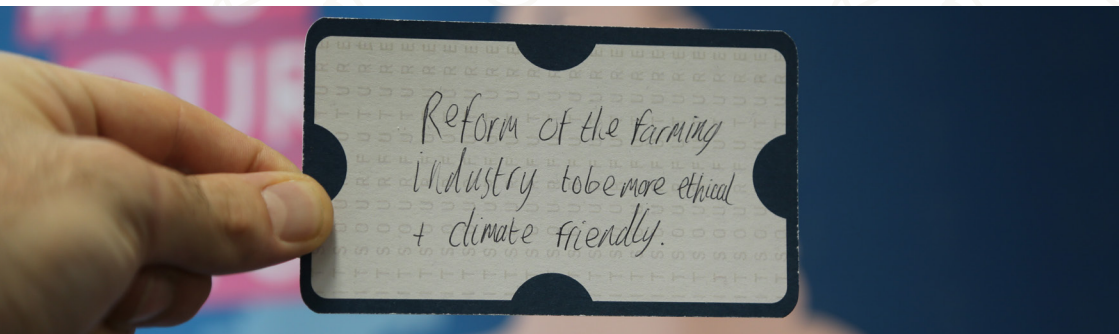
**“We need to make sure big companies move towards renewable energy because they have the biggest impact on climate change.”**

**- YOUNG PERSON**

**Repair, reuse and recycle rather than buying new.** Where possible, we need to find ways to repair what we already have and reuse it in new ways rather than trying to buy new things all the time. If we have more knowledge and ability of how to repair the things we already own, we wouldn't need an unlimited stream of stuff flowing through the world.

**Work with companies to support them moving towards renewable sources.** A small amount of companies are responsible for the majority of emissions that cause climate change. We need to work with these companies to move towards renewable sources as a matter of urgency so we can ensure human life on this planet survives as long as possible.

**Recognize that the causes of climate change are not equally distributed across the world.** Although all of us must take responsibility for making our actions as sustainable as possible, we need to recognize that the causes of climate change are disproportionately led by the Global North. We need to hold governments, businesses and organizations in the Global North to account to make the changes we all need.



# YOUR BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE.

This event was just the start. want to build a future that works for young people with the leaders who can help us make it happen.

We all filled in our blueprints for the future, saying what we will do to make these changes.

We want as many people as possible to join us.

Fill in your blueprint for the future to commit to making change on the next page.

Or at [itsourfuture.uk](https://itsourfuture.uk) you can create your own blueprint for the future online, which you can share on social media channels and use to hold leaders to account.

By creating your own blueprint, you will be pledging to join us to make this future - a better future.


Using the blueprints we will help to organise events between like-minded young people and civic leaders to make change.

We will have resources available for young people, youth workers and organisations to run their own #ItsOurFutureUK events.

Follow our social media channels @ItsOurFutureUK, and use the hashtag: #ItsOurFutureUK

# BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE





# #ITS OUR FUTURE





[www.itsourfuture.uk](http://www.itsourfuture.uk)

[www.barnardos.co.uk](http://www.barnardos.co.uk)

[www.openlab.ncl.ac.uk](http://www.openlab.ncl.ac.uk)

**Believe in  
children**



**Barnardo's**

**Open Lab**

at 10.55 **Newcastle  
University**