



MAKE OUR RIGHTS REALITY

A manifesto created
by hundreds of young
people across England

BENEFITS, HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS,
ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES, DEBT, EDUCATION RIGHTS,
IMMIGRATION, DISCRIMINATION, EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

justrights

OUR BASIC RIGHTS – to housing, education, a reasonable standard of living, good healthcare and protection from abuse and exploitation – are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

OUR RIGHTS MATTER TO US! BUT NOT TO EVERYONE...

**OVER 1 MILLION
16-24 YEAR OLDS**



are left to
cope alone
with complex
rights-related
problems
each year

**THIS IS
UNACCEPTABLE!**

We want:

- to help ourselves as far as possible
- to be listened to, taken seriously and treated with respect
- to have our rights respected and upheld
- the advice and support we need **before** we reach crisis point
- help from workers we can trust
- to be treated as individuals, not as a problem

We aren't asking to change the world.
We just want to be given the help and
services we need so that we can get on
in life and become good citizens.

"If you are homeless
would you care about
college? You need a
healthy mind and be
able to deal with your
basic needs first! Then
you can sort all the
other stuff"

Emma, aged 20





TO GET THE HELP WE NEED, WE CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT, LOCAL COUNCILS AND OTHERS TO...

1 Make it easier for us to get the correct information

We don't understand our rights. We don't know where to turn for help. Teachers, youth workers and social workers need to actively help us find out about our rights.

- All young people should be taught about their rights as part of the National Curriculum.
- We need ONE website where we can find ALL the information we need about our rights and services.

65% OF YOUNG PEOPLE

believe that government doesn't want them to know about their rights and entitlements

"It took me a year of research to find out where I could go."

Lianne, aged 18



2 Make independent advice services just for young people available in every local area

It's essential that we have access to services that are just for young people where we can get all the advice, counselling and practical support we need in one place.

- Services should be delivered by charities and help all young people aged 11-25. No more cuts to vital services!
- We want advice workers we can trust, who genuinely care, are skilled in working with young people, know their stuff and won't judge – a cross between a lawyer and a youth worker.

96% OF YOUNG PEOPLE

said that a good advice service allows you to drop in and ask anything, or nothing

"A lot of young people need more than just practical support, they need emotional support as well"

Ayan, aged 17





3 Give us free access to solicitors who specialise in working with young people

We are vulnerable to exploitation and injustice. People in authority often don't take our rights seriously unless we have a legal representative.

- We need to have free access to specialist lawyers for young people in places we feel comfortable.
- All lawyers who work with young people should be trained in how to talk and listen to us.

"Advisers should have skills like youth workers and youth workers should have advice skills"

Ruby, aged 23

75,000 FEWER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
will get legal advice and representation each year because of legal aid cuts



4 Make Citizens Advice Bureaux young person-friendly

Many of us are not comfortable using services that are for adults. We don't feel the CAB is for us – we don't expect to be taken seriously because of our age and are put off by all the waiting around.

- All advice services should employ advisers who can relate to young people.
- Adult advice services should develop services just for young people – and talk to us to find out what we want.

"I would never use a CAB, I wouldn't know how! They are for senior citizens"

Taylor, aged 20

ONLY 35% OF 15-25 YEAR OLDS
feel comfortable approaching a CAB





5 Tailor services to meet our individual needs

Services should be for all young people, but we are all different and we want to be able to choose how we access advice. Some of us are particularly vulnerable and need extra support to sort out really difficult problems.

- We need as many ways of getting support as possible – including online information and telephone advice – **but always give us the option of seeing an adviser in person.**
- Young people who are particularly vulnerable should get the right support they need, e.g. interpreters or people on our side to attend meetings with us.

**77% OF
YOUNG PEOPLE**
want face-to-face advice

"Politicians should have a reality check. Just 'cause we are young doesn't mean we want to get our advice and support online, we aren't all tech savvy!"

Laura, aged 19



6 Put our interests first – above those of the system

We find it difficult to trust the official services that are meant to be there to uphold our rights and protect us. They are complicated, often make our situation worse and let us down when we need them most.

- Social Services, JobCentre Plus and housing departments must stop fobbing us off with bad advice that isn't in **our** best interests. They must refer us on to independent sources of advice.
- We want the Government to sort out the problems that are causing us to need advice in the first place – unfair benefit sanctions, rip-off payday loans, a hostile immigration system, unlawful homelessness decisions.

**75% OF
YOUNG PEOPLE**
think local Councils don't always give advice that's in young people's best interests

"They don't want us to know [our rights] because they don't want to get into trouble. It's a lot less work for them to deal with if we don't know what to ask for."

Arlind, aged 16



TAKE ACTION: SIGN OUR PETITION MAKE OUR RIGHTS REALITY



Hear from young
people in their own
words – watch our
film online

JustRights is a coalition of charities campaigning for fair access for children and young people to advice, advocacy and legal representation.

Thanks to all the young people who participated in working groups, focus groups, surveys, making of the film and our youth editorial board.

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 www.justrights.org.uk

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