

# Government outlines ambitious plans to level up activities for young people

- Youth Investment Fund will deliver up to 300 new and refurbished youth facilities in the most deprived parts of England
- Funding will tackle youth group waiting lists and offer The Duke of Edinburgh's Award to all state secondary schools in England
- National Citizen Service receives funding to ensure thousands more young people are 'world ready and work ready'

Young people in England will be given access to more activities, trips away from home and volunteering opportunities as part of a new National Youth Guarantee backed by a £560 million investment, Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries announced today (1 February).

Today's announcement is part of the Levelling Up White Paper set to be published this week, ensuring young people in the most deprived parts of England have access to thousands of new activities. This includes expeditions with every state secondary school being offered The Duke of Edinburgh's Award for the first time, social action projects or learning new money management or public speaking skills through the National Citizen Service.

Youth services across 45 Local Authorities and around 600 district wards in the most deprived parts of England will be eligible to apply for the £378 million Youth Investment Fund. From St Ives to St Helens and Devon to Derby, the fund will benefit communities across all regions of the country.

It will pave the way for up to 300 youth facilities to be built or refurbished over the next three years, providing young people with a safe space to engage in positive activities outside of school, and access support from youth workers.

The new pledge will mean that by 2025, every young person in England will have access to regular out of school activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer. This includes all 11-18 year olds, and up to 25 years old for those with special educational needs and disabilities.

Nadine Dorries, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said:

We want every young person, no matter where they're from, to get the best start in life. That is why we are supporting young people with a National Youth Guarantee to access regular club activities, adventures away from home and volunteering opportunities.

Our Youth Review told us exactly what young people want and that's what this Government is delivering on – levelling up opportunities

for young people, regardless where you were born or where you are headed in life.

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, said:

Every young person should have access to the kinds of life-changing activities which expand your horizons and arm you with vital life skills.

Our Levelling Up White Paper will set out a plan to spread opportunity to every corner of our country, making sure that we are harnessing the true potential of every community.

Phase one of the Youth Investment Fund is now [open for applications](#), with £10 million for local youth services in urgent need, to expand the reach and range of services they offer and meet demand.

This funding includes being able to be used for IT equipment to assist with youth activities as well as capital improvements that will reduce overheads and running costs. Applications will be assessed by the BBC Children in Need charity.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, non-military uniformed youth groups and the [#iwill Fund](#) will also benefit from a transformative £22 million total injection across the three areas.

Part of this £22 million will allow The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, launched in 1956, to now be offered to every secondary state school in England for the first time. For young people aged 14 to 24 the DofE teaches them new skills, provides opportunities to carry out volunteering in their communities as well as go on expeditions. It will contribute towards helping schools that may have previously faced barriers to taking part, such as not being able to afford clothing or kit for outdoor expeditions, or less choice in the extra-curricular activities available nearby.

The £22 million will also enable uniformed youth groups such as Scouts and Guides to tackle waiting lists so teenagers are no longer turned away, creating around 24,000 more places with the help of more adult volunteers. In addition, the #iwill Fund will be able to continue getting young people involved in social action projects, which is expected to trigger tens of thousands of new volunteering opportunities.

The National Youth Guarantee will also see the National Citizen Service (NCS) receive £171 million over the next three years to provide thousands more young people from all backgrounds with opportunities to become 'world ready and work ready'.

The Government absolutely recognises the impact of the pandemic on young people's lives, so in response to this the NCS has agreed to provide a year round offer that supports young people's mental wellbeing and helps them to develop life skills that improve their confidence and employability.

Nigel Huddleston, Minister for Sport, Tourism and Civil Society, said:

Improving accessibility is a key priority for this Government, and today's announcement plays an important role in doing so for young people.

With The Duke of Edinburgh's Award being offered to every secondary state school in England, I want to encourage young people to take part in this fantastic opportunity.

I also look forward to seeing up to 300 new and refurbished youth centres significantly enriching the lives of young people across the country.

The National Youth Guarantee follows the completion of a [review](#) of DCMS spending on out-of-school youth programmes. The review, which was announced in 2020 and has engaged around 6,000 young people and 175 youth sector organisations, has found that:

- The Covid-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact upon young people – their mental health and wellbeing has declined, with anxiety levels at a 12 year high – and they have seen the largest increase in unemployment of all age groups.
- Youth services are a vital part of the response to these challenges, delivering benefits for wellbeing and employability skills.
- Going forward, young people would like the Government to prioritise regular clubs and activities, adventurous trips, and support to volunteer in their local communities.

The government listened to those young people and created the new National Youth Guarantee, which will ensure that long term Government spending on youth programmes is focused on supporting young people's mental wellbeing and developing skills for life and work. In response to feedback from youth organisations, it will work to ensure the Government's youth funding is coordinated, levels up accessibility across every region, so that no young person is left behind as the nation recovers from the pandemic.

Mark Gifford, CEO of NCS, said:

We welcome today's announcement which we believe will offer greater opportunities to young people across the country – in particular,

to those teens who are in most need of a 'leg up'. This funding commitment is about investing in our country's future talent, helping them to become 'our next greatest generation'.

NCS is all about helping young people to become world ready and work ready, grow in confidence and resilience, and give back to their communities. We look forward to continuing to deliver our vision of 'a country of connected, confident, and caring citizens where everyone feels at home'.

Angela Salt, CEO of Girlguiding said:

This much-needed investment is essential as we emerge from a pandemic which has devastated youth organisations membership and finances, as well as negatively impacting young people's mental health and opportunities. It is a long-awaited and welcome recognition that youth services have a vital role to play in levelling up across the UK.

As the largest youth organisation for girls and young women, Girlguiding hopes it will be the beginning of sustainable investment in the youth sector which will mean we can extend our excellent offer for girls and young women, end waiting lists and bring on board many more volunteers to make guiding happen. We know that now is the time to invest in young people's wellbeing, confidence and opportunities.

Matt Hyde, CEO of Scouts said:

Every week, Scouts gives almost half a million young people the skills they need for the job interview, the important speech, the tricky challenge and the big dreams: the skills they need for life. This funding can help even more young people learn these through Scouts.

We welcome young people and adults from all backgrounds, so we are really pleased that Government is committing to ensuring greater equality so that every young person in England can do regular out of school activities, have adventures away from home and get the chance to volunteer.

Ruth Marvel, CEO of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award said:

We are delighted that the government has recognised the amazing difference opportunities outside the classroom can make to young people's lives, and that it is investing to make sure they are accessible to all young people.

Young people face an uncertain future and, now more than ever, need support to develop the vital skills, confidence and resilience they will need to thrive in the years ahead. This investment will help us give tens of thousands more young people the chance to do their DoFE, including those who have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

Simon Antrobus, CEO of BBC Children in Need said:

We're delighted to have been selected to deliver the Youth Investment Fund Phase 1 and encourage organisations across England to apply.

The funding can be used for small-scale capital projects so this could be anything from providing new laptops to a youth group for young people living in an area of disadvantage, or providing a new minibus for a youth club so they can keep children and young people safe and extend activities beyond their local area.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- The £378 million Youth Investment Fund comprises capital and resource funding.
- [Further details on the £10 million portion of the Youth Investment Fund being made available immediately](#)
- [Further details on the list of places eligible for the Youth Investment Fund](#)
- The Government has invested in the NCS Programme for more than 10 years, during which more than 600,000 young people have taken part – teaching life skills, improving confidence and boosting employability.
- The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is currently offered in nearly three-quarters of English state schools, as well as through youth and uniform groups, sports clubs, hospitals, charities, young offenders'

institutions, Pupil Referral Units and alternative provision.

- In 2020, its own research found evidence of the positive benefits on participants' mental health and wellbeing, with 62% saying they agreed that taking part in the Award made them more confident with overcoming difficult situations.
- There is also evidence to support the impact of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award on young people's resilience, self-belief and sense of agency, their social and employment related skills such as teamwork, responsibility and problem-solving, and the knock-on benefits to their academic attainment and employability.
- [The full findings of the Government's review of public spending on out-of-school youth programmes](#)
- The National Youth Guarantee builds on a range of measures the Government has used to support young people outside of school since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Examples include:
  - More than £12 billion given to local authorities this year, who have a statutory duty to allocate funding to youth services in line with local needs.
  - £2 billion in funding provided to help young people into employment through the Kickstart Scheme, which is providing a vital leg up in the world of work for young people who need it.
  - £200 million invested in early intervention and prevention support initiatives, to support children and young people at risk of exploitation and involvement in serious violence, through the Youth Endowment Fund.
  - £90 million released from dormant accounts to support charities including those tackling youth unemployment.
  - £85 million of the Government's £750 million package of support for charities specifically provided to match fund youth organisations working with vulnerable children and young people through the pandemic via the DCMS Community Match Challenge, including Onside Youth Zones, The Scouts Association, Girlguiding, and UK Youth.
- A £16.5 million Youth Covid Support Fund has provided emergency funding to protect the immediate future of 550 youth services across the

country.

- The youth sector has also had access to hundreds of millions of pounds of support this year through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and other cross economy support schemes.