

# Nigel Huddleston speech to Youth Work Summit

I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak to you today in one of my very first engagements as the new minister for Civil Society and Youth. I'm sorry I can't be with you in person, but I would like to thank the National Youth Agency for making it possible for me to share some thoughts by video.

I've seen the impact youth work has across other parts of my ministerial portfolio, particularly in Sport, where I've had the opportunity to work with youth groups on a range of projects and initiatives. And of course, as a constituency MP, I've seen first hand the difference that youth work can make in turning around young people's lives.

I'm delighted to be taking on this role as there is huge potential to embed youth across my wider portfolio, from growing the role of volunteering to creating a greater join up between youth and sport. But of course there is also a need to join up more broadly across DCMS, such as in arts and digital.

The Youth sector is a critical part of so much that DCMS and the whole of government is hoping to achieve. The sector has faced significant challenges in response to the pandemic and young people have sacrificed an incredible amount during this difficult time. Thousands of youth workers and volunteers make a tremendous difference to young people's lives – they build trusted relationships and create opportunities for them to thrive. Youth sector activities provide an essential service for young people and communities, while we all know how transformational youth work can be.

I would like to thank the NYA, who, with the help of the wider sector, stepped up during the pandemic by publishing guidance on activities to ensure the safety of young people, youth leaders and volunteers. Through all the obstacles imposed by covid, the sector has continued to deliver and support young people. We are all very grateful to you for your part in that.

As you are aware, in 2020, the Treasury announced a DCMS-led review of youth services. The aim was to develop a clear direction for our out-of-school youth agenda, and to ensure that our spending and programmes meet the needs of young people as well as our ambitions on 'levelling up'. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your contribution to that review.

DCMS engaged directly with more than 6000 young people across the country and 175 youth sector organisations. This engagement and the feedback collected will be vital in informing future policy.

Young people deserve an offer that addresses their challenges and I am incredibly proud to say that at last week's Budget, we secured £560 million of funding to invest in building a new and improved youth offer that reflects young people's priorities and addresses the inconsistencies in national youth spending, with a firm focus on levelling up.

Accessing youth facilities is not felt equally, with young people in many parts of the country struggling to gain access to them. So we will invest through the Youth Investment Fund, to create and expand youth facilities, levelling up opportunities in left behind areas.

The next three years will see the NCS programme continue, but with a changed delivery model to provide a more cost efficient and year round offer.

The Government is committed to supporting youth workers to develop the skills they need to best support all young people. We are supporting the National Youth Agency to maintain and improve a complete set of national youth work qualifications with a curriculum and workforce strategy, and provide an online non-accredited learning platform.

For the first time there will also be a National Youth Work Register to bolster the professional standing of youth work and give funders, young people and their parents the ability to know who is a qualified practitioner.

As we recover from the pandemic, we face a unique opportunity to build back better. Young people need to be at the heart of those efforts and this government will ensure they remain a priority.

I greatly look forward to meeting with many of you at future events, visits and roundtables. I am keen to hear about your important work and how together, we can achieve our shared objectives, and level up opportunities for young people across the country.

I wish you all the very best and hope that you enjoy the summit.