

HEADLINERS

A young speakers' corner

The young people and adults who help keep the Children and Young People's Unit on track explain their roles, and their expectations of the government.

The CYPUs Advisory Forum (CYPAF) has 25 members aged 11-18 from a range of backgrounds across England. The CYPUs Adult Advisory Network offers independent advice on policies and their impacts on the young.

Gareth Albert, 18

CYPUs Advisory Forum member

"The best thing I've done with the forum was I went to Valencia for a weekend on a consultation on the European White Paper for Youth. It involved flying to Spain, reading through the White Paper and giving our views on it.

"Five things came out of it - two of them were education and information. Since then I believe that young people have gone over to Geneva for a conference on information.

"The forum shows that the Government is interested in taking young people's views forward. Like they say, young people are the future of the country."

Ashley Ryder, 16, Winchester

CYPUs Advisory Forum member

"Everyone on the forum is friendly and everyone respects people when they're speaking. You feel comfortable and you can give your opinion freely.

"I'd like to see more on health issues because I'm part of a health council. So far, we've focused on the core principles, the strategy document and the European White Paper. This involved giving my opinion on what issues relate to young people and whether I thought the wording was accessible to young people.

"The main thing is being honest and trying to have an opinion which is not just my own, but which is brought forward from the local level. I think our contribution to government is being taken into account, but that's up to us as well to make sure our opinion is listened to.

"The forum could improve by reaching a more diverse group of young people, because 30 members can't really represent the whole country. It basically just needs more representation."

Kathryn McDermott

**Director of Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Health Action Zone
Adult Advisor to the CYPUs**

"For far too long in this country the culture was that you haven't really prioritised children and young people. So the CYPUs strategy of getting government departments to think about the impact of their policies on children and young people is really about trying to turn round the way adults in this country think about them.

"Involving children and young people in developing services has more of an impact than just better services, it allows people to feel that they do have a role to play, that they are listened to, that their opinions do matter. And it helps to make more confident, more assertive adults."

Dr Gillian Pugh

**Chief Executive of Coram Family
Adult Advisor to the CYPUs**

"It's easy for policymakers to assume they know what young people want. But if they don't ask them, it would be easy to put policies in place that make sense to Whitehall but don't address issues important to young people.

"The CYPUs has made a real start in bringing together young people and the needs of policymakers to deliver services in different sorts of ways. It's a new departure for government."

Paul Ennals

**Chief Executive of The National Children's Bureau
Adult Advisor to the CYPUs**

"Too many of the decisions politicians make are not driven by an understanding of children's lives and therefore they're still making the wrong decisions. The NCB has been pushing the government for years to try to think differently about young people.

"We very much want the CYPUs to succeed in helping the government become a bit more joined up in its thinking. We'll only persuade young people to get more involved nationally if they're more involved locally. Early steps are making schools more democratic, ensuring children can feel more involvement, so that young people can feel that they can effectively shape the services of meeting their needs locally."

Victor Adebawale

**Chief Executive of Turning Point
Adult Advisor to CYPU**

"I'm interested in getting services to people who aren't going to go to Oxford or Cambridge, who aren't middle class and live on estates and don't necessarily know or care about the Government. That's what I thought I had to do and that's what I thought I had to say and I said it and I still keep saying it.

"I'm the person who nags the CYPU. And I repeat things all the time. Hopefully they pick up some of it and sometimes they don't and they probably think I'm really, really irritating. But you've got to keep at these things, haven't you?"

About the team

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