

IAIN STEWART MP
Member for Milton Keynes South



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Right Honourable Rishi Sunak MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

6 December 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

As the Member of Parliament for Milton Keynes South, I have heard first-hand the positive impact enrichment activities like the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) are having on young people in my constituency. Last year, 537,759 young people between the ages of 14 and 25 completed the Award and 937 were from my constituency. Enrichment providers such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award help young people to develop soft skills through a combination of volunteering, skills development, physical activity, and teamwork. These activities form a vital part of the world class education we must provide our young people.

Enrichment is needed more than ever, as young people today are facing a unique set of challenges. They still feel the enduring impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on their mental health, and they face challenges getting the necessary skills to access the jobs market. In response to these challenges, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, alongside all members of the Back Youth Alliance, are calling for a National Youth Offer that contains the following core elements:

- An Enrichment Guarantee – which would ensure all young people, no matter their background, would be able to access a guaranteed minimum level of enrichment.
- A targeted youth development offer for the most marginalised and at-risk young people.
- Youth voice and representation at all levels of policy and decision making.

Support for an Enrichment Guarantee has been steadily increasing. Last October, the Times Education Commission called for the introduction of an 'Electives Premium', for all schools, with the funding being spent on enrichment activities including sport, music, drama and dance. Onward and the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) are endorsing it, and in September the Education Select Committee published its report examining student absenteeism, entitled *Persistent absence and support for disadvantaged pupils*. In it, the Committee recommends the implementation of an Enrichment Guarantee as a mechanism for reducing student absenteeism.

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A universal Enrichment Guarantee would also be a way for young people to reengage with school. Schools are a vital pathway for readying young people for the workforce of tomorrow. Yet young people cannot benefit from school if they are not there – enrichment providers and schools must work hand-in-hand to ensure young people are benefiting from education.

I am proud that our Government is supporting the DofE and I am aware that DfE, DCMS and MoJ have all provided funding support for even more young people to access the Award. The targeted support offered by the National Youth Guarantee has been transformational in the delivery of youth services across the country, and I know we can build on this success. I believe now is the time to make sure every young person in the UK, no matter their background, can access high quality support, enrichment activities and opportunities to ensure their voices are heard.

I hope you will give this topic due consideration, and I look forward to discussing this with you further.

Yours ever,
Iain Stewart

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