

The Service of Youth

Circular 1486, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1939

From the Government Board of Education to Local Education Authorities  
For Higher Education

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1. The social and physical development of boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 20, who have ceased full-time education, has for long been neglected in this country. In spite of the efforts of local education authorities and voluntary organisations, provision has always fallen short of the need and today considerably less than half of these boys and girls belong to any organisation. In some parts of the country, clubs and other facilities for social and physical recreation are almost non-existent. War emphasises this defect in our social services; today the black-out, the strain of war and the disorganisation of family life have created conditions which constitute a serious menace to youth. The Government are determined to prevent the recurrence during this war of the social problem which arose during the last.

2. They have accordingly decided that the Board of Education shall undertake a direct responsibility for youth welfare. A National Youth Committee has been appointed to advise the President of the Board and a special branch of the Board has been organised to administer grants for the maintenance and development of facilities. The Committee includes members of local education authorities and voluntary organisations and also others competent to speak on behalf of industry, medicine and physical training. The purpose of this Committee will be to provide central guidance and leadership to the movement throughout the country.

3. The Committee has already taken practical steps to deal with the immediate difficulties arising out of the present abnormal conditions. They have facilitated the re-opening of clubs and pressed for the release of premises requisitioned for war purposes, and they have recommended the provision of financial assistance, through voluntary organisations, to help clubs and centres to hire premises, where necessary, to provide equipment and to secure competent leaders and instructors. This financial assistance is being provided and will include grant-aid to the Central Council of Recreative Physical Training for carrying on the Council's valuable work in maintaining and developing the supply of trained leadership in all forms of recreational activity. The Council will be happy to co-operate with any local authority, voluntary body, industrial or other organisation that requests them to do so.

4. But the problem goes deeper; it challenges our whole sense of social responsibility. Now, as never before, there is a

call for the close association of local education authorities and voluntary bodies in full partnership in a common enterprise; nor need this entail any loss of prestige or individuality on either side. The Board have made clear their intentions by setting up a National Youth Committee representing all interests, with the Parliamentary Secretary as Chairman. The National Youth Committee will have as its counterpart local Youth Committees representative of both local education authority and the voluntary organisations. For administrative purposes the local education authority will communicate direct with the Board, but the National Youth Committee will welcome suggestions from both them and the voluntary organisations on matters affecting youth.

5. The Board, therefore, urge that all local education authorities for Higher Education should now take steps to see that properly constituted Youth Committees exist in their areas. Suggestions are made in the Appendix to this Circular as to the steps which might be taken to this end. In some areas excellent Committees already exist and there is no need for any change except in name. Elsewhere it may be necessary to reorganise an existing Committee or set up a new Committee. In some places it may be thought best to form a sub-committee of the Education Committee under Section 4(5) of the Education Act, 1921, with adequate representation of the local voluntary bodies; in other places it will be found preferable to establish an Advisory Committee in close association with the local education authority. Special arrangements will be necessary in County areas to associate Youth Committees in the Boroughs and Urban Districts with the County Education Committee to whom such matters stand referred; but this should present no difficulty where, as is frequently the case, there is already machinery for delegating the work of Higher Education. It is important that from the outset the constitution and functions of the Committees should be clearly defined. In all cases it is essential that the Secretary should be a person fully acceptable both to the statutory and voluntary bodies, and the local education authority should generally make themselves responsible for seeing that the Committee is properly staffed and equipped with office accommodation and clerical assistance.

The Board will be glad if local authorities for Higher Education will give this matter their early consideration and will inform them, not later than 1st March, 1940, of the arrangements for constituting Youth Committees in their areas.

6. The first duty of the Local Youth Committee is to formulate an ordered policy, which shall provide for meeting the most immediate needs and which shall indicate the lines on which a real advance can be made under more favourable conditions. For this purpose the Committee should ascertain the local needs and decide where assistance can best be given. In doing so, it should bear in mind that the better use of leisure, on which the welfare of youth largely depends, cannot be considered without reference to social and economic questions. For example, when young people are living under unsatisfactory conditions and are employed for unduly long hours, often on work of a dull and arduous character, they cannot be expected to take full advantage of any facilities offered for the use of such leisure as is left to them. The Committee will also plan the lines of future development, showing clearly how the field should be covered and where the responsibility for any new facilities will lie. In this way the foundations of an ordered scheme of local provision will be laid without imposing an undue strain on public and voluntary finance.

It is not the task of the Local Youth Committee directly to conduct youth activities, but to strengthen the hands of local authorities and voluntary organisations. But co-ordination is not enough; a new initiative is needed. Young people themselves must be encouraged to find through the Local Youth Committee new constructive outlets for their leisure hours and for voluntary national service.

7. The principal directions in which local education authorities can assist financially are: first, in the provision of staff, office accommodation and clerical assistance, to which reference is made above in paragraph 5; secondly, in making

grants where necessary, towards the rent of buildings and salaries of full-time leaders and towards the upkeep and maintenance of premises, including the provision of equipment; and lastly, in providing competent instructors in such subjects as physical recreation and craft work for classes in clubs and other centres. Approved expenditure by local education authorities under Section 86 of the Education Act, 1921, will rank for grant at the rate of 50 per cent. There are many other practical ways in which the work of youth welfare can be fostered by local education authorities. They can, for example, grant the use of their school premises free or at reduced charges, they can offer the use of playing fields on favourable terms, they can make special concessions in their evening institutes to local voluntary organisations and they can give facilities for the purchase of equipment.

8. The association of voluntary effort with the public system is typical of the history of the growth of the education services in this country and will give the service of youth an equal status with the other educational services conducted by the local authority. In the Youth Committee the individual traditions and special experience of youth possessed by the voluntary organisations will be joined with the prestige and resources of the local education authority. The Board realise that the requirements of the civil defence services and the disorganisation of the public system of education under the present abnormal conditions make heavy claims upon the attention and the resources of local authorities. But the service of youth, a too long neglected part of the education field, today assumes a new significance in the national life and the Board are confident that local education authorities will do all in their power to meet this challenge.

## APPENDIX

1. The following notes in regard to the constitution of local Youth Committees are made in the hope that they may be of some assistance to authorities. They should be regarded as suggestions only, since it will obviously be for each authority to determine the constitution of the Youth Committee as appears best in the light of their knowledge of the particular circumstances of their area.

2. The size of the Youth Committee will, it is suggested, be conditioned by two main considerations — first, that it should not be too large to impede speedy and effective action; secondly, that it should be so far as possible representative of all the interests concerned. On this basis a lay-out generally on the following lines might be found suitable:

Chairman and Vice-Chairman (appointed by the Local Education Authority — one to be from the voluntary side)	2
Representatives of the Local Education Authority	6
Representatives of minor local authorities	2
Representatives of the principal voluntary organisations*	2
Representatives chosen by other voluntary youth organisations in the area	2
Representatives of teachers	2
Representatives of religious denominations and philanthropic bodies	2
Representatives of local civic and industrial life	2
Representatives of public health, juvenile employment and similar services	4
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In order to ensure that free and direct expression may be given to the views of youth, it may be desirable for some representation to be given, by co-option or otherwise, to young people of both sexes, not necessarily connected with any particular youth organisation.

3. The authority may find it desirable to call a Conference, to which all youth organisations in the area and, in the case of Counties, the minor local authorities, might be invited to send representatives. The Conference might also be open to young people generally in the area, including those who do not belong to any particular youth organisation. Similar conferences might afterwards be called to meet at least once a year. It is realised that, at any rate in County areas, the authority might find some difficulty in making contact with all the voluntary youth organisations in the area and the Standing Conference of Juvenile Organisations would be glad to render authorities any help needed.

As indicated in paragraph 5 of the Circular, special arrangements will be necessary in County areas to associate Youth Committees in the Boroughs and Urban Districts with the County Education Committee and for the purpose of delegating the work the Authority may find it desirable to set up separate local Youth Committees in the areas covered by Part III Local Education Authorities and minor local authorities.

\*Boys' Brigade, Boy Scouts Association, Church Lads Brigade, Girl Guides Association, Girls Friendly Society, Girls' Guildry, National Association of Boys' Clubs (including the Association of Jewish Youth), Girls' Life Brigade, National Council of Girls' Clubs, Welsh League of Youth, YMCA, YWCA, National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs.