London Challenge Poverty Week and the Youth sector October 2022

We are London Youth: a charity on a mission to support the capital's youth sector and improve the lives of young people. We do this with and through our members – a network of 600 youth organisations – and at our two outdoor residential centres, Hindleap Warren and Woodrow High House.

1.   The context for the capital

- 37% of London's children live below the poverty line and 41% are living in poverty and not eligible for free school meals (Children Poverty Action Group). Children in London are 9 percentage points more likely to live in poverty than those in the rest of England (Trust for London)
- Low-income households spend a larger proportion than average on energy and food, so are more affected by price increases (House of Commons Library)
- Debt Free London report a 300% demand for their services, that 27% of Londoners are currently in a debt crisis and overall 51% are likely to need help in the coming months (London Funders webinar)
- London Funders have surveyed grantmakers responding to the cost of living crisis: "*Funders spoke of looking at a house of cards nearing a fall, leading to a domino effect in the sector, with grantees reporting that the cost of living crisis is a threat to their continued existence.*"

2.   What youth practitioners are saying

Young people struggling in the pandemic aftermath	Energy and transport costs
"It is noticeable that young people have lost resilience and are fearful of getting back into social environments." "When kids go through puberty – boys and girls alike – it is normally in a school environment where the boundaries are clear. Those disappeared during the pandemic. They don't know how to cope and they have missed that learning during a critical stage "Young people are going from crisis to crisis and there's no certainty for them. We're the one constant for them in their life that they can rely on"	"Some young people are arriving in damp clothes, or unwashed; parents are doing fewer washes…" "I am worried about whether we can keep our offices running if our young people can't afford to come." "There is a need to charge the powered wheelchairs, which can have a knock on effect for people struggling with energy bills – wash the sheets or charge the chair?" We are energy dependent for football, and have three sets of floodlights, how will we keep the lights on?"
Food poverty	**Demands on the youth sector workforce**
"We provide hot meals after our boxing sessions twice a week, we have a big influx of young people just coming in for a meal afterwards, sometimes asking if they can bring their siblings too. We've had our funding cut and are worried that soon we won't have enough to provide nutritious meals. It's heartbreaking" "Working parents are coming to foodbanks. For a parent who has younger children with no access to free school meals they could be paying £120 a month or more for hot school meals" "The quality of food at foodbanks often falls short. And for those from African and Caribbean backgrounds, often going to markets and getting traditional foods, these are not found in foodbanks."	"A third of my youth workers are having to work two jobs to make ends meet. I worry about the strain on them. And that many will leave the sector" "I've spent my entire career in youth charities, over those 25 years the charities are picking up more and more work but with less recognition, there's an expectation that charity workers should be paid next to nothing" "We are making judgements about what we can afford to do with young people." "Youth workers need to be helped and sustained… I thought about leaving…but for a mentor I probably would have"

3.   What the sector needs

- A third of London's statutory youth organisations have closed over the last decade. Community-based organisations have stepped in so that vulnerable young people have somewhere to go, something to do, and someone to trust.

- Youth organisations are running on empty and urgently need sustainable long term revenue funding so that they can keep their doors open, their lights on, and their activities resourced.