SUPPORTING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, AND FAMILIES: BUILDING STRONGER FOUNDATIONS
Communities 1st – What We Stand For Policy Statement (10)

Introduction

Children, young people and families are the cornerstone of vibrant and thriving communities. However, many face growing barriers that hinder their potential and well-being. From a lack of youth provisions to economic and educational challenges, these issues are exacerbated by recent crises and systemic inequalities. Communities 1st, alongside our Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) partners, is committed to addressing these challenges and advocating for long-term solutions that enable every child and family to thrive.

Key Challenges

- *Limited Youth Provisions* - A lack of free or affordable youth clubs and activities leaves vulnerable young people without safe spaces, increasing their exposure to crime and risky behaviours.
- *Decline in Soft Skills* - Overuse of digital platforms and the impact of COVID-19 have led to reduced social skills and interpersonal resilience among children and young people.
- *Barriers to Success* - Economic hardship, generational reliance on benefits, and ethnic disparities contribute to unequal opportunities and outcomes.
- *Educational and Developmental Challenges* - Families face prohibitive costs for higher education, delays in SEND/EHC assessments, and insufficient provisions for children with special needs.
- *Online Safety Concerns* - Inadequate regulation of age-appropriate content and insufficient site moderation expose young people to harm online.

Our Pledge

As Communities 1st and our member organisations, we pledge to advocate for increased youth provisions and opportunities that foster skills, inclusion, and safety; support initiatives to rebuild resilience and address social skill gaps; work to ensure timely SEND/EHC assessments and equitable access to support for families; and collaborate with stakeholders to enhance online safety and empower families with digital literacy resources.

Our Ask of Decision-Makers and Influencers

We call on politicians, senior leaders, and officers within governments, local councils, the NHS, and other public sector bodies to:

1. Provide sustainable funding for youth clubs and free provisions for children and young people.
2. Support initiatives that develop resilience and social skills in children and young people, and recognise the essential role of families and carers in this process.
3. Strengthen local initiatives to create accessible training, apprenticeships, and work placements, alongside support for families facing economic hardship.
4. Collaborate with local schools and community groups to improve digital literacy and equip families with tools to navigate online risks effectively.
5. Increase resources to reduce delays in EHC assessments and improve access to services.