PM remarks at the King’s Trust Centre: 15 October 2026

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Prime Minister Andy Burnham's remarks at the King’s Trust Centre in Manchester today.

I’m going to bring a message from the real King. I was with His Majesty King Charles yesterday and I told him I was coming here and Tom, he asked me to relay a message of complete appreciation to you and, one of pride in all of the young people, because the work that happens here at the King’s Trust in Ancoats.

I was involved in the building of this place and seeing the work that you’ve done, I know how life-changing it is and that is the best way to describe it, completely life-changing.

It is harder to grow up these days and that means we’ve got to do more to support you and put you on the life path, working with the King’s Trust and all of the partners, businesses and others that support you Tom.

So here to say thank you to all for all of that.

My own story began here, and I was just sharing it with some of the young people. It’s hard when you’re in your early 20s and you’re trying to find that first foot on the ladder.

You get a lot of knockbacks, don’t you? You send a lot of CVs. At least in our day, when you went for an interview, there was a real person right in front of you.

We were just hearing that sometimes you get an AI interviewer these days, which is not easy, but also doing interviews via screens. It’s not that good is it, in terms of how do the young people get themselves over.

I came back here in the early 90s from university and just couldn’t find anything and that period of my life is the period I remember most and I was relating to some of the young people I’ve just spoken to in terms of how it just knocked everything out of you for a period and you just don’t see how you’re going to get that first hook on the ladder.

Mine was as an unpaid reporter on the Middleton Guardian. I never was good enough to join the ranks of the media that are here with us.

But finally you can do it, can’t you? But we’ve got to recognise that it’s tough, but all of our young people have got incredible qualities, passions, and it’s about supporting them so that they can be everything that they can do.

I believe in the generation that’s coming through, Gen Z, I think for millennials, I know it’s a mixture of both. I believe in you.

I think you've got so much to give. You see the world in such a good way and the onus is on me leading from the front, but with all of our ministers and government departments to get behind you.

It's time to get behind our young people here so that we can create that platform for you to go forward and make the country what we all want it to be in the future. That's what I want to talk about briefly today.

I think it has got harder to grow up. And if I go back, let's say to the late 2000s, so going into 2010, things were really changing with the social media revolution coming through.

But it was just at that time where a lot of support was stripped away from young people in terms of youth services.

Pretty much abolished in all parts of the country, school support got serious cuts.

We saw a situation where it became longer and longer for young people to access mental health support.

For me that should be given as quickly as possible for a young person on their journey. It should never be the case that people are waiting months, years sometimes for mental health support.

But then also the education system changed. The government I was in, in my view, shouldn't have put such a focus on university without an alternative ambition for young people but then the school system was very much wired on that principle that it was all about the university route and I think that was damaging too because we always will need academic and technical capabilities.

And we should have a school system that sets young people up on both of those paths and actually be able to jump from one path to the other if they want to.

But that wasn't the case. And when we look at the situation, as Charlie just mentioned, around a million young people across the United Kingdom, not in education, employment or training.

I don't know who you blame for that, but I don't blame young people. I said that when I was the Mayor of Greater Manchester when I came in.

We should never ever make young people the target for cuts.

Young people have always got to be the priority for investment if we want a stronger society in the future.

And I tried to put in place some things here like free bus travel for 16 to 18 year olds because it's just about giving them that bit of help to get on in life.

Young people should be our priority for investment and that's how we see it going forward from here.

So what I just want to finish by talking about is what we're going to do to make it easier to grow up in this country, what we're going to do to make this one of the best countries in the world to grow up and it does require a sea change in how we think about young people.

Obviously we're anticipating the report from Alan Milburn next month. And we're beginning now to think about how we respond to that report. It's got to be a huge change. It's not just a DWP report.

We’ve got to think about a whole government, whole society change in the way we support young people - a social contract.

That’s what I said in my conference speech in Liverpool. What are we going to do for young people? What guarantees are we going to give them?

I believe we need a new guarantee of support when young people need it.

But then a clear expectation that young people take up that support and we provide it as in-work support because it’s not going to be good for anybody to be out of work in their 20s.

So that’s the way our thinking is developing. At the moment, you go to the benefits system, you get three things, an assessment, a payment and then a goodbye. And you then you are just forgotten to some degree. Where are you? Where are you going? That just isn’t good enough.

I want to put in place an approach where we do give a new guarantee for young people. For instance, a guarantee of mental health support when you need it.

A different education system that does offer every young person a path that’s right for them, academic or technical.

Good quality work experience between 16 and 18 based on the 45 day work placements that came with the T level reform, which was a good reform of the last government. I would like to see that type of quality of work placement available to every young person who wants one. Many more apprenticeships for young people.

So we will begin to set out that guarantee for young people so that you know that support will be there for you and that you can call it down.

But then we will expect young people to take up that offer and meet us halfway.

We want to invest in young people And then at the same time, we don’t want necessarily then to be supporting people out of work.

We can’t do both. We can’t pay for the support as well as then pay for people not to be in education, employment or training.

And it’s getting this right now that we want to work on, working across government.

So it’s a really big change that is coming and that’s what I wanted just to make people think about today. It is a new social contract for young people and we are going to make this a moment where we change what it is to grow up in the United Kingdom.

We put all of our young people on a path to success. We work with outstanding organisations like the King’s Trust. I know there are businesses all over this country too who want to help and we’re going to make it easier for them to help.

Today we’re announcing a partnership with UK hospitality, 100,000 jobs and work placements from our hospitality industry, often a brilliant way to get on your path to a career, starting off in a pub or in a restaurant gives you great people skills so we do thank them for that.

We’ve also had retailers with Marks and Spencer stepping forward to help us, Sainsbury’s have stepped forward to help us, the businesses are there, we’ve just got to connect it all together and

that way we get this country back on the right path where everybody feels they're involved, everybody feels they've got a future, everybody feels they're moving forward and that's how we get the positivity back, that's how we get the hope back into but more broadly in society.

So thank you for coming along today everybody to the King's Trust in Ancoats. I am confident that we can rise to this challenge. I know that the young people with us today and the young people of this country have got so much to give to make it what we all want it to be.

It's our job, myself, the Cabinet, the whole of the government, working with all of our partners, it is our job to open the doors for them, and we will.

Thank you very much, everyone.

https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-remarks-at-the-kings-trust-centre-15-october-2026