

## **Manifesto Statement - Rowan Hughes 17yrs**

The voice of young people is undeniably important; it is our voices that shape the future and our lives that will be impacted most by decisions made. This being said, why is it that our opinions are overlooked? How many times have each of you had valid arguments only then to have them dismissed on the basis that you're young? I promise I will change this: I will listen; each and every one of you will have the opportunity to have your voices heard and to speak out for what you believe in. Alongside this there are several other issues that I intend to bring forward, as I believe it is important to focus on that which has the largest impact on the youth of today.

One of the main discussion topics of the Youth Parliament is Mental Health; the aim being to raise awareness and increase the support and funding offered by the government; I am of the opinion that the Youth Parliament has been successful in developing an awareness of Mental Health. However, although it is important to discuss this issue, there are several other issues, of equal importance, that should also be discussed. How many debates have there been regarding the thousands of teenagers who live on the streets without homes to go to? Or about those who cannot access the basic necessities that you and I take for granted; food, clothes, education?

Over the past decade an increase in drug usage in young people has led to an alarming rise in the number of students dropping out of school, losing the support and trust of family members, and being forced to live on the streets or in cramped shelters. Are these not issues that also need addressing? Is this not just as important as Mental Health?

These issues are often the underlying cause of the problems that the Youth Parliament fought to have recognised. So far we've looked at treating the symptoms of Mental Health, offering support or counselling, but what if we looked deeper and tried to help ease the problem at its roots. If we could improve the lives of the thousands of teenagers living rough, those taking drugs, or those with nobody to go to, we may just slow the rate at which Mental Health problems are growing, allowing more support to be given to those who already need help.

I vow to be *your* Member of Youth Parliament, raising any and all concerns that *you* might have, and to fight for the support *we*, as a constituency, need. Every Young Person has the right to be heard, the right to voice an opinion, and the right to stand up for what they believe in. I intend to push for these voices to be heard: for *your* voice to be heard. No longer will our opinions be overlooked. *We* can have a voice; *we* can make a difference.