



# POLITICAL ACTIVIST STANDS FOR YOUTH PARLIAMENT ON FOUR POINT PROGRAMME



Urmston political activist Matthew Leigh is sitting for the National Youth Parliament on a four point programme to help young people in the Trafford constituency.

Matthew, 16, who is taking 10 GCSEs at St. Ambrose College in Hale Barns, wants to replace Personal Social and Health Education with Sex and Relationship Education; he wants to extend Greater Manchester Transport's IGO scheme to support 16 to 18-year-olds not in compulsory secondary education; he wants to activate young volunteers to help the homeless and he wants to fight all forms of discrimination.

Matthew, who ultimately wants to read History and Politics at university, hopes his election to the National Youth Parliament which will be conducted in secondary schools across the Trafford Borough later this month, will be a stepping stone to becoming an M.P. later in life.

He said: "PSHE is out of date and the government has already ruled that it should be replaced by SRE and I want that change to be immediate. Currently lessons don't speak to today's generation of teenagers. We have to deal with an explosion in new technology and problems such as 'sexting' and 'cyber bullying' and need better advice now, instead of a curriculum that was devised before we born."

He added: "The IGO card scheme should be extended to 16 to 18-year-olds not in compulsory secondary education. They are paid child wages and should still pay child fares."

He continued: "At St. Ambrose we have a volunteer programme to help the homeless at Cornerstones and refugees at the Revive centre both in Salford and I feel such programmes should be offered more widely to other teenagers." "As far as discrimination is concerned, it's is something we should be passionate about and I'd like to see more classes on citizenship in secondary education across the Borough."

Matthew will be contesting the campaign against three young women and added: "It makes absolutely no difference if my political opponents are young men or young women, I just want to offer practical solutions for practical problems."

Formed in 2000, the National Youth Parliament has around 600 members, who are elected to represent the views of young people in their area to government and service providers. Over 500,000 young people vote in the elections each year, which are held in at least 90 percent of constituencies. It is managed by the British Youth Council.

Members meet regularly to hold debates and plan campaigns at least three times locally a year and twice on a national level, which includes the annual debate within the Chamber of the House of Commons every November.

St. Ambrose College Assistant Headteacher Patrick Groves said: "There has been a reawakening of political activism in young people in recent years not necessarily centred on party politics but on key issues and Matthew is a passionate and responsible advocate for the coming generation."