

**Candidate Name: Zarina Syed**

**Age: 16**

**Connection to the Borough: Resident**

**School: Wallington High School for Girls**

My name is Zarina Syed, and I am 16 years old. My candidacy for Youth Mayor is not about holding a title—it's about being a voice for young people in Wandsworth and ensuring that our ideas, concerns, and ambitions lead to real change. Too often, decisions are made about us without us. I am running to change that.

Growing up in Wandsworth, I have seen both the efforts to support young people and the barriers that continue to hold us back. Through my involvement in the Youth Council, I have attended senior council meetings, advocating for greater youth involvement in decision-making, and helped organise financial literacy events to equip young people with essential life skills. My commitment to the community extends beyond leadership roles—I have also volunteered at Tooting Library, engaging with local residents and supporting educational initiatives. But there is still more to be done.

**My Key Priorities:**

**Improving mental health support for young people; Aims:**

- Break the stigma surrounding mental health by fostering open conversations in schools and community spaces.
- Advocate for peer-led initiatives where young people can share experiences and support one another in a judgment-free environment.
- Work towards expanding access to youth-friendly mental health services by collaborating with local organisations to ensure that young people can seek help without fear or barriers.

No one should ever feel alone in their struggles, and together, we can create a culture where asking for help is seen as a strength, not a weakness.

**Expanding opportunities for young people**

**Aims:**

- Propose an initiative where local businesses and professionals partner with schools to offer hands-on work experience, mentorship programs, and career workshops.
- Ensure that every young person, inclusive of all backgrounds, has access to guidance and skill-building opportunities.
- Push for youth-led initiatives to be supported with funding and resources, which will allow young people to take charge of their ideas and turn them into impactful projects that benefit our community.

Too many of us struggle to access work experience, mentorship, and career guidance, leaving us unprepared for the future. Through my work with Work Match and financial literacy events, I have seen first-hand how impactful these opportunities can be.

**Creating safe spaces that support young people needs.**

**Aims:**

- Campaign for the creation of safe, inclusive areas where young people can meet, learn, and express themselves without judgment.
- Include young voices in conversations that shape our community.
- Promote policies that empower young people and don't restrict us.

I believe in a borough where young people don't just ask for change—we lead it. It's about stepping up, making our voices heard, and creating the future we deserve. Too often, young people are excluded from public places and decisions that affect us.

A vote for Zarina is a vote for action, for progress, and for real change. Let's make it happen—together.