

Reform UK's Youth-Led Council Appointments Spark Widespread Concern

July 6, 2025

— Categories: Politics & Government



Reform UK's decision to appoint teenagers to senior council roles has prompted widespread concern across political and professional circles. At the centre of the debate is 19-year-old Charles Pugsley, a university student now overseeing children and family services at Leicestershire County Council, raising questions about the qualifications and readiness

of newly elected councillors tasked with managing essential public services.

Pugsley, a computer science student at the University of Nottingham, was appointed cabinet member for children and family services just two months after Reform UK gained control of ten councils in the recent local elections. His appointment, alongside 22-year-old Joseph Boam, who now oversees adult social care and serves as deputy leader, has ignited debate about the party's approach to governance. Both councillors have expressed support for a party policy that bans flying Pride and disability flags over council buildings, an issue that has drawn strong criticism from council staff and advocacy groups. More than 100 employees have signed a letter opposing the policy, arguing it promotes exclusion and marginalisation.

Boam's appointment has also been overshadowed by controversial past remarks, including a claim on social media that "depression isn't real." Though Boam dismissed the statement as "fake news," anti-extremism groups such as Hope Not Hate reported that a deleted account appearing to belong to him had shared content in support of misogynistic influencer Andrew Tate.

The appointments have prompted reactions from across the political spectrum. Conservative councillor Deborah Taylor, who previously held Pugsley's post, expressed concern over placing young councillors in roles involving high-stakes decisions. Taylor stressed that experience, not just age, is critical when overseeing services that account for the bulk of the council's £616 million budget. Her concerns were echoed by social workers, who warned that early intervention strategies, often reliant

on “spend to save” investments, could be at risk under inexperienced leadership.

Julia Ross, Chair of the British Association of Social Workers, underlined that leadership in children’s and adult services involves managing hundreds of millions of pounds and supporting vulnerable communities. While fresh perspectives are welcome, Ross noted, such roles require statutory knowledge and administrative experience.

Despite public criticism, Pugsley defended his appointment online, stating that his youth allows him to better understand the challenges facing young people. However, others questioned this claim, citing his private education and real estate ventures as indications of a background not representative of most service users. Critics say the appointments reflect a broader trend of populist governance prioritising visibility over experience.