

Manifesto For Youth Employment

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A message from our CEO

The Manifesto for Youth Employment focuses on the direct issues that contribute to youth unemployment as told to us by the thousands of young people feeding in to our Youth Voice work each year.

Young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than any other age group. Although youth unemployment has made some recovery since the recession, overall levels have generally been 10 percentage points higher than that of the general population for the last 20 years. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities often face further barriers to employment, and despite wanting to work they are more likely to be underemployed or in part-time or precarious work.

Equally concerning is that more and more young people are now telling us about the wider challenges they face including mental health and wellbeing, serious violence and exploitation, and a lack of localised support, all of which affect their ability to transition into employment. Young people do not feel happy and are deeply concerned about their futures, and those that start from a place of disadvantage will almost never close the gap with their non disadvantaged peers.

Our Manifesto for Youth Employment provides detailed recommendations in a number of policy areas that we believe could provide a solid foundation for change. We are also calling for a Cabinet Office appointment of a Minister for Young People who would have direct responsibility and accountability for leading this change. We recommend the Ministerial brief includes building on the excellent work already started by some of the UK's leading youth organisations to develop a Youth Charter.

The Youth Charter is a ten year cross government commitment to supporting all young people to fulfil their potential and has been created under five key pillars:

Skilled and equipped to learn and earn
Experiencing positive health and wellbeing
Treated fairly and equally
Safe and confident in their future
Active members of their communities and society

For the UK to prosper, it is imperative that the government takes some ambitious steps now to ensure that young people can grow up with the support they need to fulfil their potential. We must have a bold ambition to become a country that is great to grow up in, where young people feel valued, included and secure in their futures. We need a government that believes it is their responsibility to make this a reality for all young people.

Laura-Jane Rawlings

Youth Employment UK is an independent, not-for-profit social enterprise, working with a network of tens of thousands of young people, employers and partners. We put youth voice at the heart of everything we do and have gathered extensive evidence of the challenges young people face via our annual Youth Voice Census, as well as researching what support employers need via our enquiries as the Secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment.

Our vision for youth employment

There are 792,000 young people aged 16 - 24 who are not in education, employment or training¹

The priority areas set out in this manifesto focus on achieving the best possible outcome for our nation's young people, and are informed by youth consultation.



Embed Youth Voice in policy decision-making

- Make youth voice consultation a statutory requirement in key national and local government policy areas including education, health, youth services and welfare
- Establish youth-led commissions across local councils and national government to evaluate and quality assess publicly funded youth services and policies
- Encourage charities and social enterprises that provide youth services to have young trustees on their boards
- Enable young people to actively participate in democracy by reducing the voting age to 16

Ensure schools and colleges meet the needs of all pupils to enable successful transitions post education

- Review current curriculum offers to ensure that young people can make curriculum choices based upon their individual needs and learning styles, by investing in, protecting and valuing applied general and vocational qualifications - in particular those at Levels 1 & 2
- Review GCSE Maths and English resit policy, taking advice from providers, employers and young people about what works
- Provide adequate funding for Career Leader positions in schools and colleges to fully meet the Gatsby Benchmarks
- Recommend that young people are registered for the Young Professional so that they receive key employability and careers information from aged 14-24
- Implement statutory work experience at Key Stage 4
- Provide adequate funding to ensure that every school and college can track the destinations of students for a minimum of 6 months after they leave that setting

¹ Office for National Statistics, Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), UK, August 2019.

Make apprenticeships work for all young people

Increase the number of Level 2 apprenticeships available to young people aged 16-24

- Approve Level 2 standards such as Business Administration, recognising the importance of entry level pathways
- Fully fund Level 2 apprenticeships with 0% co-investment contribution from employers
- Incentivise providers to support disadvantaged young people and those with protected characteristics

Support greater SME participation in apprenticeships

- Guarantee £1bn/annum for non-levy paying employers
- Provide grant funding/incentives for SMEs to take on a 16-18 year old apprentice, a disadvantaged young person or those with protected characteristics
- Allow for functional skills to be included as part of the off-the-job training

Ensure adequate and consistent support for vulnerable young people who become NEET or are identified as “at risk” of becoming NEET

- Develop an ambitious national youth employment strategy to coordinate the leadership and oversight of youth employment policy
- Ensure there is adequate funding at a local authority level to offer personalised support to individuals who are vulnerable, in need of support the most, who become NEET or “at risk”, including the provision of one-to-one support, traineeships, careers and skills support
- Improve the quality and consistency of support available to young people through the Jobcentre

Support employers to increase the quality of work and to reduce barriers which currently prevent young people from gaining employment

- Endorse the Youth Friendly Employer Mark and adopt it in all government departments - the rigour behind this mark supports every employer of any size to offer quality opportunities for young people to explore, experience and gain employment
- Mandate government procurement policy to require all public sector suppliers to bear the Youth Friendly Employer Mark and adhere to the criteria

Support mental health services that are vital to the wellbeing of young people

- Invest in CAMHS services to keep up with increasing demand
- Ensure earliest intervention and make provision for all schools to have a funded and trained member of staff dedicated to mental health and wellbeing
- Promote the mental health in the workplace toolkits offered by Public Health England to all employers

Improve public transport infrastructure services across the UK

- Free travel for young people aged up to 18 while they are still in full time education or training
- Half price travel for young people aged 18 - 21, who are in education or training, or for those young people who are NEET
- Improve regional inequality of investment in public transport to make working in rural parts of the country more youth-friendly
- Invest in improving the operation and availability of public transport where services are unavailable, operate infrequently or do not cover 6am -10pm
- Ensure that public transport is a safe mode of travel for young people

Recognise the vital, long-term role youth services play in promoting social mobility and supporting a young person's personal, social and educational development

- Develop a government-wide strategy that ensures a unified approach to youth work and youth services
- Invest in youth services as a valuable resource in supporting young people's personal, social and educational development
- Ensure sufficient guidance and funding for local authorities to fulfil statutory duties for quality youth services, trained youth workers and youth club provision available at a local level

For more information about the Manifesto for Youth Employment please contact info@youthemployment.org.uk.

Embed youth voice in policy decision making

“Youth voice is important because it keeps the interests of young people at the heart of policy. It prevents incorrect assumptions and leads to better understanding and better outcomes

Deuvaunn A Darroux, Youth Employment UK Ambassador

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- Make youth voice consultation a statutory requirement in key national and local government policy areas including education, health, youth services and welfare
- Establish youth-led commissions across local councils and national government to evaluate and quality assess publicly funded youth services and policies
- Encourage charities and social enterprises that provide youth services to have young trustees on their boards
- Enable young people to actively participate in democracy by reducing the voting age to 16

We are delighted to see that in their latest Civil Society Strategy, The Department for Digital Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and the Office for Civil Society insist that young people should have a central role in shaping the future of our society.² The strategy is introduced as “setting out how government will work with and support civil society in the years to come, so that together we can build a country that works for everyone”. To ensure that the UK works for young people, young people must be empowered to speak, contribute, and engage in politics and policy-making. This ‘insistence’ must develop into something tangible.

Youth Voice already plays a part in many organisations, with young people contributing to policy discussions and sitting on boards and committees. These organisations advocate that engaging young people in this way has added significant value to the organisations understanding, development, service creation and impact.

Talent Match was a £106 million programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund to address unemployment amongst 18-24 year olds who had been NEET for 12 months or longer. A requirement of the funding was that young people had to be involved in the service design and delivery of any programme created. At the end of four years, 1,489 young people had been involved in Talent Match, and Sheffield Hallam University produced a report on the impact of this youth involvement. Young people were involved in the 21 partnerships in a number of different ways including youth-led governance and consultation groups, advocacy, programme design and influencing.

The key findings from this participation include:

- Young people’s involvement has many forms, and changes over time
- Young people’s involvement improves service quality
- Involvement is an important mechanism for supporting young people who are facing some of the most challenging barriers to labour market participation
- Involvement supports young people to build skills and confidence

At Youth Employment UK, our Youth Ambassadors ensure we have the perspectives of young people feeding into our policy work, programmes and research, and crucially into this Manifesto for Youth Employment.⁴

² Civil Society Strategy: Building a Future That Works For Everyone, Department for Digital Culture Media & Sport, Office for Civil Society, August 2018.

³ Big Lottery Fund, Involving Young People: Lessons from the Talent Match programme evaluation, October 2018

⁴ Youth Employment UK, Youth Ambassador <<https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/ambassadors>> [accessed 18 November 2019]

Youth Employment UK was set up in 2012 to tackle youth unemployment at a time when there were more than 1 million young people NEET. With almost 1 in 5 young people in this category it was clear that young people needed to be supported and empowered to have a voice on the issues that affected them and a one-size-fits-all Whitehall policy would not necessarily benefit those that needed support the most. By listening to the views and needs of young people and putting their voices at the heart of our work, we have been able to design services that best fit young people, as well as making policy recommendations across government departments that truly reflect the widest views of those policy beneficiaries. Without this insight, broad assumptions may be made about what young people need, but policy and services can often fall short of what is really required.

Examples of existing policies not consistently meeting the needs of young people can be found in Youth Employment UK's Youth Voice Census; the Youth Voice Census is an annual nationwide survey which benchmarks the life, study and work related experiences of 14-24 year olds⁵. The survey is used to monitor the successes and challenges of programmes and policies designed to support young people as they transition from education into employment. Over 3,000 young people aged 14-24 completed the 2019 Youth Voice Census. From their responses we learned about the biggest barriers to youth employment such as mental health, location and travel, lack of experience, lack of understanding of or having the right skills, and the competition for jobs. In addition, we gathered insight about what young people think about work experience, accessing careers services and careers advice in education.

UK Youth, the national charity committed to empowering young people also puts youth voice at the heart of their work. They appoint young people aged 16-25 from every region in the UK to sit on their National Steering Board, allowing them to contribute to the policy-making process and the strategy and direction of the organisation, as well as ensuring that their concerns are heard. Encouraging lessons can also be drawn from the 'National Ambassadors' programme at Clarion Housing Group, the country's largest housing association who have invested £150 million over ten years to provide support, skills development and opportunities to more than 360,000 social housing residents. Their National Ambassador programme is made up of residents aged 18-25 who are central to improving the Group's services by ensuring that the voices of young people are heard by the decision-makers.

Crucial to the success of both these youth voice programmes is the fact that the young people involved either have lived experience of the issues they are supporting, or they are able to represent the wider youth voice. Diversity and inclusion must be integral in any youth voice work, to ensure it is authentic and able to engage all young people.

This model needs to be applied to key policy areas in national and local government. By setting up the appropriate youth-led commissions and advisory boards, young people can inform the policy-making processes that currently leave their valuable perspective and insight out of the discussion. Specifically, established youth-led consultation bodies would also prove invaluable in the evaluation of services such as Universal Credit and National Citizens Service (NCS). The welfare system must be able to work for everyone, and government funded youth programmes need to receive the evaluative scrutiny from the young people they have been set up to serve.

Central to this ask is the empowerment of young people to meaningfully influence policies that greatly affect them. In line with that, Youth Employment UK joins the UK Youth Parliament,⁶ the British Youth Council (BYC) and several other organisations in calling for the age of democratic participation to be reduced to 16.⁷ Young people are often very engaged in politics as BYC highlights in the case of the Scottish Referendum with three quarters of 16 to 17-year-olds casting their vote⁸. With so many issues directly affecting 16-17 year olds, including youth service funding, costs of higher education and careers education delivery in schools and colleges, we must grant them an equal right to participate democratically.

We know that young people do not feel confident in their futures; they are not confident in the political system nor in the sort of future they will have. This is evidenced in the Youth Voice Census 2019⁹ and in the Prince's Trust Happiness Index and many other reports¹⁰. If there is a genuine ambition to make the UK work for everyone, we must ensure that all young people are supported and empowered to shape the future of the country they live in.

⁵ Youth Employment UK, Youth Voice Census Report, 2019

⁶ UK Youth Parliament, Young people should vote from the age of 16, <<http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/campaign/include-16-17-year-olds-public-elections>> [accessed 18 November 2019]

⁷ British Youth Council, Votes at 16 <<https://www.byc.org.uk/campaigns/votesat16>> [accessed 18 November 2019]

⁸ British Youth Council, 1.5 million young people denied a vote in the EU Elections <<https://www.byc.org.uk/news/2019/1-5-million-young-people-denied-a-vote-in-the-eu-elections>> [accessed 18 November 2019]

⁹ Youth Employment UK, Youth Voice Census Report

¹⁰ The Prince's Trust, Youth Index 2019, 2019

Ensure schools and colleges meet the needs of all pupils to enable successful transitions post-education

“ I feel quite frustrated that a lack of GCSEs at grade C/4 and above hold me back from moving forward into higher education and work. I really struggle with traditional exams and I wish I was given better, alternative study options that are suited to my learning needs ”

Isha Par, Youth Employment UK Ambassador

- Review current curriculum offers to ensure that young people can make curriculum choices based upon their individual needs and learning styles, by investing in, protecting and valuing applied general and vocational qualifications - in particular those at Levels 1 & 2
- Review GCSE Maths and English resit policy, taking advice from providers, employers and young people about what works
- Provide adequate funding for Career Leader positions in schools and colleges to fully meet the Gatsby Benchmarks
- Recommend that young people are registered for the Young Professional so that they receive key employability and careers information from aged 14-24
- Implement statutory work experience at Key Stage 4
- Provide adequate funding to ensure that every school and college can track the destinations of students for a minimum of 6 months after they leave that setting

Reviewing the current curriculum offer including the GCSE Maths and English resit policy

The education system needs to be able to cater to all learners as well as to the changing needs of the world of work. According to research from the CBI almost one in four young people aged 17-23, do not feel adequately prepared by their education for the world of work, and nearly half of all employers do not feel that young people leaving education are ready for the world of work.

Nearly 1 in 5 young people do not achieve pass grades at GCSE level, and the evidence suggests that young disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs are less likely to achieve good GCSE results compared to their better off peers. In addition, findings from our Youth Voice Census Report (2019) tell us that 34% of young people do not think that the learning style offered at their school suited them.¹²

Our student population is diverse; young people have individual learning styles and preferences, while the numbers of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), and disadvantaged pupils increased at 14.9% and 15.4% respectively in 2019.¹³ With such diversity in our schools, we must ensure that the curriculum and support services reflect the needs of all pupils. This is essential since those young people who do not have good GCSEs make up over half of the long-term NEET population demonstrating a clear correlation between success in education and a successful employment outcome.

11 CBI/YouGov, Young People, November 2018 <<https://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/articles/half-of-young-people-do-not-feel-prepared-for-world-of-work-cbi-accenture-hays-survey>> [accessed 18 November 2019].

12 Youth Employment UK, Youth Voice Census Report

13 Impetus, Research Briefing 1: Establishing the Employment Gap, April 2019.

However, success can and does look different to young people. According to Department for Education (DfE) figures, around 200,000 16 to 18-year-old students took Applied Generals or Tech Level qualifications in 2018, only 100,000 fewer than took A levels¹⁴. In addition, a 2018 Ofqual commissioned report found that 38% of respondents agreed that Applied General qualifications (AGQs) are good preparation for work¹⁵. These qualifications have also become a common pathway into higher education for many students, with 25% of young people going to university holding at least one AGQ.

In response to the mounting evidence that there is an appetite amongst young people for vocational learning, we are calling on government to review the current education system, removing the bias to GCSEs and A-Levels and introducing a broad and balanced curriculum from Level 1 that will help all young people to fulfil their potential. A broad and balanced curriculum should ensure adequate provision of personal development education including finance skills, political and cultural education along with additional support around mental health and online safety.

Feedback from employers informs our stance that there needs to be a greater focus on skills training and careers education in the wider curriculum. According to statistics from The Open University Business Barometer, employers are unable to find the young people they are looking for, reporting in 2019 that:

- 63% of UK organisations are currently experiencing a skills shortage;
- 68% of employers found that they were unable to find candidates who were suitable for vacant roles and;
- managerial skills were the most lacking in job applicants, followed by IT and leadership skills.¹⁶

However there is still a fundamental lack of understanding of what employers are looking for with fewer than half of the 3,008 young people (48%) responding to our 2019 Youth Voice Census answering 'yes' to the question 'Do you think you understand what skills employers are looking for?'.¹⁷

Much of this confusion arises around the constant debate of what 'soft skills' are and the mixed terminology around employability/soft skills and behaviours. In our 2017 Employability Skills Review, Youth Employment UK identified over 86 reports listing more than 18 skills frameworks¹⁸. With growing emphasis from employers on the importance of soft skills (as an example the LinkedIn 2019 Global Trends Report, found that with the rise of AI/automation changing the job market, 92% of talent professionals and hiring managers agree that candidates with strong soft skills are increasingly important) the curriculum must support young people to develop the skills needed for future employment¹⁹.

Good maths and English skills are important to employers, a grade 4/C in both subjects is often the minimum requirement for entry level jobs and apprenticeships. Yet as we have seen 1 in 5 young people do not pass GCSE maths and English and two thirds of students resitting their English and maths GCSE do not pass the second time round with over half of the lowest-performing students doing even worse when they retake the qualification.

In view of this, we emphasise the importance of identifying young people at risk of leaving compulsory secondary education without achieving GCSEs in English and maths and suggest offering them an alternative qualification. By teaching functional mathematics and English, and encouraging employers to recognise these qualifications in addition to GCSEs, we can help prevent a significant proportion of young people being locked out of employment.

Provide adequate funding for career leader positions at schools and colleges and ensure that all young people are registered for the Young Professional

Any investment in our education system must include funding for careers education and work experience. Our Youth Voice Census tells us that young people feel that their biggest barrier to employment is a lack of knowledge about the careers that exist and a lack of work experience²⁰. These current gaps contribute to the fact that young people do not feel confident in their futures and risk making poor transition choices that result in some young people falling out of the education or training system.

¹⁴ The Ofqual blog, Applied Generals and Tech Levels this summer, April 2019 <<https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2019/04/18/applied-generals-and-tech-levels-this-summer-2/>> [accessed 18 November 2019].

¹⁵ Ofqual/YouGov, Perceptions of A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications in England: Wave 16, April 2018

¹⁶ The Open University, The Open University Business Barometer, July 2019

¹⁷ Youth Employment UK, Youth Voice Census Report

¹⁸ Youth Employment UK, The Youth Employment UK Employability Review, June 2017

¹⁹ LinkedIn, Global Talent Trends 2019: The 4 ideas changing the way we work, Jan 2019

²⁰ Youth Employment UK, Youth Voice Census Report

We are pleased to see that the investment into the Careers Leader programme via the Careers & Enterprise Company along with the statutory requirements on schools and colleges to meet the Gatsby Benchmarks, are starting to have a positive effect. However there is still a long way to go; not all schools are meeting the benchmarks, and provision remains inconsistent from school to school. This creates further inequality for many students, particularly those who do not have family support to bridge the gap.

In our 2017 report *The Role of the Family in Social Mobility* we identified that social, economic and cultural capital were assets that young people needed in order to transition into good employment.²¹ At a time of downward social mobility, it has become ever more important that in the absence of family to transfer this capital, the systems around our children need to step in. If there is a real ambition to level the playing field and improve social mobility, we must make bold decisions backed up by investment into an education system that works for everyone.

We are therefore calling on the government to invest in a Careers Leader in every school and college and to bolster the Gatsby Benchmarks by ensuring that young people are recommended to join the Young Professional programme, a free online skills and careers programme for 14-24 year olds. The Young Professional provides young people with inspiring and impartial information that helps to boost their knowledge about skills and the world of work, whilst also supporting them with information around mental health, managing their finances, peer-to-peer support and much more.

The Youth Employment UK website that provides the Young Professional training is visited by more than 70,000 young people per month. The site includes a Careers Hub which offers career ideas for young jobseekers linking in Labour Market Information, careers inspiration, practical support and job search advice. As a universal platform it offers a consistent and accessible place where all young people can receive support, regardless of their education, employment or training status.

Implement statutory work experience at Key Stage 4

UCAS found that two thirds of employers look for graduates with relevant work experience because, 'it helps them prepare for work and develop general business awareness'²². Young people also recognise the importance of work experience with our 2019 Youth Voice Census Report finding that most young people agree that work experience could help build useful skills (83%) and help them to get a job (81%) . However despite its acknowledged role in the successful transition from education to employment, only 52% of respondents had actually been offered work experience in secondary school.²³

Employer encounters can also be very beneficial with research showing that when young people encounter employers more than 4 times whilst in education, the more they earn.²⁴ Studies have also revealed that greater levels of school-mediated employer engagement are associated with reduced incidence of young people becoming NEET by up to 86%²⁵. However, it is worth noting that when there are fewer than 4 encounters, there were no positive outcomes recorded. This suggests that unless there is consistent and deep engagement between employers and schools, the benefits will not be felt.

We therefore call on government to implement statutory work experience at Key Stage 4, ensuring that the benefits of work experience are available to all young people regardless of family background or which education pathway they select.

²¹ Youth Employment UK, *The Role of Family in Social Mobility*, March 2018.

²² UCAS, *Is Work Experience Important*, January 2019 <<https://www.ucas.com/connect/blogs/work-experience-important>> [accessed 18 November 2019].

²³ Youth Employment UK, *Youth Voice Census Report*

²⁴ Education & Employers, *Contemporary transitions: Young Britons reflect on life after secondary school and college*, Occasional Research Paper 11: June 2017

²⁵ Education & Employers, *Contemporary transitions: Young Britons reflect on life after secondary school and college*, Occasional Research Paper 10: January 2016

Provide adequate funding to ensure that every school and college can track the destinations of students for a minimum of 6 months after they leave that setting

Provisions need to be put in place to prevent those furthest from the labour market falling through the cracks. In the Department for Education's (DfE) 2017/18 report on the destinations of Key Stage 4 and 16-18 students in England, it identified that although 81% of students that completed their 16-18 study programme were tracked successfully into their next destination, 19% of pupils either did not sustain to their following destination or were untracked.²⁶

Once a young person becomes 'hidden' from the labour market, they are likely to face multiple barriers to reengaging with education, employment or training. A review by Greater Manchester Talent Match in 2017 also revealed that some of the recurring reasons given for a young person remaining 'hidden' or 'unknown' (in comparison to being labelled 'NEET') included a lack of capacity within JobCentre Plus for dealing with the complexities of being NEET.²⁷

It is therefore essential that funding is put in place to ensure that all young people leaving education are successfully tracked for a minimum of 6 months. During this time there needs to be a clear support plan for those young people who do not move to a positive destination. This could be funded support either through a traineeship or an employability programme with a provider.

²⁶ Department for Education, Destinations of key stage 4 and 16-18 students, England, 2017/2018, October 2019.

²⁷ Greater Manchester Talent Match, Hidden: Who are 'hidden' young people and why are they not engaging with welfare support? 2017.

Make apprenticeships work for all young people

“ I have been able to progress my career and knowledge through an apprenticeship. I knew I didn't need to go to university to gain so much freedom and career advancement as I have with my apprenticeships. Completing a Level 3 and 4 apprenticeship, I am now currently completing my Level 6. I want all young people to know about and be able to benefit from career and education progression like I have

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Patrick Cantellow, Youth Employment UK Ambassador

Increase the number of Level 2 apprenticeships available to young people aged 16-24

- Approve Level 2 standards such as Business Administration, recognising the importance of entry level pathways
- Fully fund Level 2 apprenticeships with 0% co-investment contribution from employers
- Incentivise providers to support disadvantaged young people and those with protected characteristics

Support greater SME participation in apprenticeships

- Guarantee £1bn/annum for non-levy paying employers
- Provide grant funding/incentives for SMEs to take on a 16-18 year old apprentice, a disadvantaged young person or those with protected characteristics
- Allow for functional skills to be included as part of the off-the-job training

Increase the number of Level 2 apprenticeships available to young people aged 16-24

It is widely acknowledged that government aspirations for the apprenticeship levy as a means to increasing investment in workplace training, have been unsuccessful. Since the apprenticeship levy was rolled out in 2017, apprenticeship starts fell from 509,400 in 2015/16 to 375,800 in 2017/18.²⁸

Apprenticeships should be targeted at young people, providing them with alternative pathways to sustainable careers, and should be valued as a route to improving social mobility. When we look at the recent Level 2 attainment figures, it is evident that such alternative methods of learning are clearly needed. In 2015, 36% of 16 year olds did not achieve qualifications up to Level 2.²⁹ Children receiving free school meals (FSM) are twice as likely to leave school without Level 2 attainment versus their non-FSM peers.³⁰ Worse still, attainment gaps between special needs education (SEN) pupils and non-SEN pupils by age 19, have risen from 26% in 2015 to 33% in 2018.³¹ With this volume of young people leaving education without a Level 2 qualification, it is imperative that a non-academic pathway is protected for them.

²⁸ Department for Education, Further Education and Skills, England: 2017/18 academic year, [updated] March 2019.

²⁹ Department for Education, Level 2 and 3 attainment in England: Attainment by age 19 in 2018, April 2019.

³⁰ Children's Commissioner, Briefing: the children leaving school with nothing.

³¹ Ibid.

The IfATE (Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education) have the responsibility to approve Apprenticeship Standards and have shown a reluctance to sign off Level 2 standards despite clear evidence of their popularity and the need for these pathways. For example, 12,500 under 19's took the Level 2 Business Administration Apprenticeship in 2016/17. However, despite the trailblazer group submitting a number of applications and justification documents to the IfATE, the Institute still refuses to authorise the standard, claiming it is too closely aligned to the Level 3. However, the 100,000 young people who left education in 2018 without substantive qualifications, are unable to move to a Level 3 pathway, leaving them with limited options for progression.³²

It is also important to recognise that some of this cohort may present with additional needs and barriers to their learning. It may be that some of these young people would benefit from additional pastoral support, mentoring and other support to help them succeed in a Level 2 pathway. The government should therefore look to reinstate grants or incentives for employers and providers, to enable them to support young people from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with protected characteristics and SEN needs. The government should also look to pay the full cost of training for Level 2 apprenticeships. These are vital pathways for young people, and while the government will fully fund the cost of post 16 education pathways such as applied general qualifications or A levels, they are putting the burden of cost for apprenticeship training onto employers.

Support greater SME participation in apprenticeships

The issue of non-levy funding is a significant barrier to apprenticeship starts. Non-levy funding is the funding provision put aside by the government to pay for the training of apprentices in non-levy paying organisations. (Only 2% of employers pay the apprenticeship levy, where they can then draw down the cost of apprenticeship training from the levy fund)³³. The government has not left enough money for non-levy employers to meet their demand for apprentices, resulting in training providers being unable to recruit apprentices into vacancies because they have no funds to do so.

According to an AELP Survey, 74% of organisations who have non-levy employer funding, said that they do not have sufficient funds to meet projected SME employer demand.³⁴ This is a gross failure of the apprenticeship reform, as 98% of employers are non-levy paying employers and will make up the majority of the vacancies for apprentices across England, particularly in rural, coastal and industrial communities³⁵. This is why a call for £1bn per annum fund for non-levy paying employers is essential to the growth of apprenticeship opportunity.

A final recommendation is to add more flexibility for employers and providers around the 20% off the job training requirement. This should be expanded to include the delivery and training of functional skills as part of the off the job training. For some employers, providing what equates to one day off the job training per week is already stretching their limited resources and budgets. The 2017 policy rule that English and maths resits cannot count towards the 20% off the job training requirement adds a further time and cost burden to SME's.

When apprenticeships work, they really work; according to the Youth Voice Census Report 2019, 83% of respondents rated their apprenticeships as helpful or very helpful in preparing them for their next steps. This was in sharp contrast to only 57% rating university as helpful or very helpful in preparing them for their next steps.³⁶

Apprenticeships can bring huge value to the productivity and economic development of the UK, as well as supporting those young people who may not excel in standard education settings to fulfill their potential in a different way. They can also support young disadvantaged people to remain in training and further their career aspirations. However unintended consequences of the recent apprenticeship reform have resulted in more vulnerable groups of young people being left out. Swift action must be taken to undo some of the policy that has created these issues to ensure that apprenticeships are available to all young people and particularly to those that need this pathway the most.

32 Children's Commissioner, Briefing: the children leaving school with nothing, September 2019.

33 Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), Briefing Paper 62: Apprenticeship Levy Briefing for Local Authorities, Multi Academy Trusts & Schools, January 2019.

34 AELP, Levy shortage starving small firms of apprenticeships poses early test for Johnson campaign pledge, August 2019.

35 AELP, Briefing Paper 62.

36 Youth Employment UK, Youth Voice Census Report.

Ensure there is adequate and consistent support for those young people who are vulnerable, in need of support the most, who become NEET or are identified as “at risk” of becoming NEET

- Develop an ambitious national youth employment strategy to coordinate the leadership and oversight of youth employment policy
- Ensure there is adequate funding at a local authority level to offer personalised support to individuals who are vulnerable, in need of support the most, who become NEET or “at risk”, including the provision of one-to-one support, traineeships, careers and skills support
- Improve the quality and consistency of support available to young people through the Jobcentre

With 792,000 NEET young people it is imperative that government policy focuses on the support and services young people need to ensure that they do not remain NEET³⁷.

Young people who experience periods of being NEET can face both short and long-term scarring effects including poor mental health, poor employment outcomes and socio-economic disadvantage³⁸. At a time of high employment rates, it is also important for the economy that all of those people who can work are in work, and as we face growing skills shortages across many sectors, the case for supporting young people into employment has never been stronger.

Since the recession and peak levels of young people NEET in 2011, there have been a number of different policies and approaches by government to tackle youth unemployment. Yet, the reduction in NEET figures from 1 million young people in 2011 to 792,000 young people in 2019 does not reflect the investment or positive action created by the policy changes put in place.

On top of the scarring effects that becoming NEET can have on young people there are wider economic costs too, it is economically better to prevent young people becoming NEET in the first place³⁹. This is why we are calling on government to develop an ambitious youth employment strategy that will coordinate policy and funding to ensure that no young person is left behind. This strategy should target better youth employment support aimed at preventing young people becoming NEET as well as practical support for those NEET and additional support for those long term NEET⁴⁰.

Investing in local authority level support must be a part of a wider youth employment strategy. Local authorities are required to collect information about young people so that those who are not participating, or are NEET, can be identified and given support to re-engage⁴¹. Alongside this duty, is a requirement on local authorities to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all 16-19 year olds and to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate.

³⁷ Office for National Statistics, Young people not in education, employment or training

³⁸ Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, Long term health effects of NEET experiences: evidence from Scotland, 2018

³⁹ New insights into improving outcomes for at-risk youth, 2016 <https://www.socialfinance.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/insights_1_newcastle.pdf>

⁴⁰ The Long term NEET population, Impetus, September 2019 <<https://impetus.org.uk/assets/publications/YouthJobsGap-The-Long-term-NEET-Population.pdf>>

⁴¹ Department for Education, Participation of young people in education, employment or training - Statutory guidance for local authorities, September 2016.

Government cuts to local authorities including services such as Connexions, has seen a fall in the tracking and service support of young people who become or are at risk of becoming NEET. Therefore funding and provision of services that work for young people such as traineeships and one-to-one coaching should be prioritised.

The latest research from Impetus shows that 75% of young people who are NEET have been so for three months or more, the longer young people spend time as NEET the harder it is for them to move in to EET status. In addition, we call on government to improve the quality and consistency of the service offered to young jobseekers through Jobcentre Plus and the Youth Obligation. The Youth Obligation is a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) programme which aims to provide intensive support for all 18-21 year olds making a new claim for Universal Credit. The programme is intended to be tailored to individuals to meet their needs and job goals. However, the reality of the support offered through the Youth Obligation is patchy and has limited evidence of success.

Young people often tell us that they do not want to engage with Jobcentre Plus nor are they aware of what services and support they are entitled to. They also report that when they have engaged, they have⁴² received poor levels of service and support. These findings have been echoed in the Young Women's Trust Report⁴² and also in a report from the charity Centrepont which found that some of the most vulnerable people were dropping out of the benefits system and sanctions were much higher for young people on Youth Obligation⁴³. Centrepont also found that not all young people were offered a work placement, and that the support offered was not being tailored to the very complex needs facing some young people.

Support available to young people through Jobcentre Plus should clearly enhance a young person's chances of moving into employment. However in some cases the Youth Obligation is performing against its objective. We therefore ask that examples of good practice and evidence of what works, are replicated across Jobcentre Plus to ensure quality and consistency of the service.

⁴² Young Women's Trust, Working Well? Young people's experiences of Jobcentre services, October 2018.

⁴³ Centrepont, The Youth Obligation: Does it work? January 2019 <<https://centrepont.org.uk/about-us/blog/the-youth-obligation-does-it-work>> [accessed 18 November 2019].

Support employers to increase the quality of work and to reduce barriers which currently prevent young people from gaining employment

“What do employers look for when advertising for entry level jobs as everyone I have applied for it's always been more experience needed? Are entry level jobs not about learning and firstly having no experience?”
Ben Fisher, Youth Employment UK Ambassador

- Endorse the Youth Friendly Employer Mark and adopt it in all government departments - the rigour behind this mark supports every employer of any size to offer quality opportunities for young people to explore, experience and gain employment
- Mandate government procurement policy to require all public sector suppliers to bear the Youth Friendly Employer Mark and adhere to the criteria

In the 2019 Youth Voice Census only 50% of young people said that they felt confident or very confident that they would find meaningful work, with only 31% believing that employers were supportive of hiring them⁴⁴. They also reported that they thought there were not enough jobs to go around. Yet currently, 63% of UK organisations are experiencing a skills shortage⁴⁵ and there are more than 169,290 apprenticeship vacancies being advertised⁴⁶.

This clearly demonstrates the ongoing disconnect between young people's perceptions and experiences, and the range of careers, pathways and opportunities that are in fact available to them.

It is generally accepted that to support their knowledge of careers, skill development and confidence in future transitions, young people need to have early experiences of the world of work. This requires employers of all sizes to support schools with early careers activities, as well as creating good quality work experience opportunities and offering positive employment pathways from entry level to apprenticeships and graduate roles. However there are insufficient numbers of employers working with schools or offering quality opportunities.

Significant as well is that many employers have created unintended barriers to employment. There are still too many employers setting high qualification criteria for entry level jobs, and using language in job descriptions and on recruitment websites that exclude young talent from applying. It is important that early careers support, work experience and entry routes into employment are of high quality and provide opportunities for all young people, including those with SEN and additional barriers. When employers have so many priorities and their resources are stretched, they need support to help them recruit and retain diverse young talent.

⁴⁴ Youth Employment UK, Youth Voice Census Report

⁴⁵ The Open University, The Open University Business Barometer

⁴⁶ Department for Education/ Education and Skills funding Agency, Statistical data set, FE data library: apprenticeship vacancies, July 2017.

As a youth employment specialist working with thousands of young people, Youth Employment UK have developed the Youth Friendly Employer Mark, a standard of best youth employment practice to help employers overcome these barriers and create better, more inclusive workplaces that young people can excel in.

To achieve the Youth Friendly Mark, employers must sign up to the five principles of good youth employment practice.

Creating Opportunity – Commitment to providing diverse opportunities for young people to gain the skills and experiences they need for work and life.

Recognising Talent – Commitment to recruiting young people based on their ability, talent and potential. Understanding they are still developing and may have had limited experiences or educational attainment.

Fair Employment – Commitment to removing barriers for young people to enter the workplace. Offering fair opportunities and rewards based on the role they are recruiting for and in accordance with the highest industry standards.

Developing People - Commitment to training and supporting the development of young people, so they are motivated to take ownership and responsibility for their careers, and they are equipped to progress.

Youth Voice – Commitment to listening to young people and to providing opportunities for their voice to be heard within a community or organisation.

The Institute for Employment Studies 2019 report “Young People’s Future Health Inquiry, The quality of work on offer to young people and how it supports the building blocks for a healthy life” explores the issue of quality work and the negative impact of poor quality work on young people and their health, happiness and long-term socioeconomic outcomes.⁴⁷ The report sets out recommendations for a renewed focus on improving the quality of work for young people and has identified Youth Employment UK’s ‘Youth Friendly Employer Mark’ as the quality standard for organisations to work towards.

Youth Employment UK has a benchmarking tool so that employers can look in detail at their existing policies and procedures and ensure that they are fit for purpose. The benchmarking tool helps employers review their early careers outreach, work experience programme and employment programmes against best practice standards.

By endorsing the Youth Friendly Employer Mark, government will be helping employers of all sizes to get the support they need to create more quality opportunities for young people. As a first step, we recommend that all civil service departments are asked to follow the example already set by the Department of Health and Social Care and sign up to the Youth Friendly Employer Mark.

47 Institute for Employment Studies/The Health Foundation, Young People’s Future Health Inquiry - The quality of work on offer to young people and how it supports the building blocks for a healthy life, October 2019.

Support mental health services that are vital to the wellbeing of young people

“...there is nothing I see as more important in our current social climate, when we break down stigma from an early age we make bigger progress than we can even imagine, especially in regards to mental health”

Zack Tucker, Youth Employment UK Ambassador

- Invest in CAMHS services to keep up with increasing demand
- Ensure earliest intervention and make provision for all schools to have a funded and trained member of staff dedicated to mental health and wellbeing
- Promote the mental health in the workplace toolkits offered by Public Health England to all employers

A recent survey carried out by Mind reported that nearly 60% of young people aged 11-19 have either experienced a mental health problem themselves, or are close to someone who has⁴⁸ We recognise the impact that mental health can have on a young person's transition into employment with data from our 2019 Youth Voice Census reporting that in the 16-24 age group, depression, anxiety and mental health issues are among the most commonly reported barriers to employment⁴⁹ These findings are echoed in The Prince's Trust Macquarie Youth Index found that 61% of young people agree that having a job gives (or would give) them a sense of purpose, and 49% think that having a job is good for their mental health.⁵⁰

Addressing the growing mental health crisis is important for the health of the UK economy and ensuring that every young person has the best possible start in their working lives. There has been a growing focus on improving mental health services and the education and support that is available to people, and Youth Employment UK supports the recommendations in the Greenpaper - Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision specifically the proposals to:

1. incentivise and support all schools and colleges to identify and train a designated Senior Lead for mental health;
2. fund new Mental Health Support Teams, which will be supervised by NHS children and young people's mental health staff and;
3. pilot a four week waiting time for access to specialist NHS children and young people's mental health services.

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Schools must be better equipped to ensure all possible early intervention/prevention measures are implemented to develop resilience in young people's mental health and wellbeing. The same Mind survey revealed that 38% of all pupils said they wouldn't know where to go to access support within school, and 52% said they wouldn't feel confident approaching teachers or other school staff if they needed help⁵² Greater efforts must be made to reassure and inform young people suffering with poor mental health, removing the stigma and guiding them to the necessary support. Planned reforms to children and young people's mental health services must be bold and provide schools with extra resources to avoid putting additional pressure on teachers.

For this reason we recommend that all schools have a funded and trained member of staff dedicated to mental health and wellbeing or adequate funding to bring in a mental health worker, in order to ensure both the quality and availability of support is high.

⁴⁸ Mind, Mental Health Survey, July 2019 <<https://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/news/three-in-five-young-people-have-experienced-a-mental-health-problem-or-are-close-to-someone-who-has>> [accessed 18 November 2019].

⁴⁹ Youth Voice Census Report, 2019

⁵⁰ The Prince's Trust, Youth Index 2018, April 2018.

⁵¹ Department for Education/Department of Health and Social Care, Government Response to the Consultation on transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: a Green Paper and Next Steps, July 2018.

⁵² Mind, Mental Health Survey.

It is especially important that more information and support is given to the most disadvantaged and marginalised. Research by DfE has found that 38% of children living in children's homes had a statement of special educational needs and 62% had clinically significant mental health difficulties.⁵³

Resilience, most often described in the education sector and by the DfE as the capacity to 'bounce back' from adversity, is believed to offer protection against poor mental health and wellbeing in children, adolescents and adults.⁵⁴ Evidence shows that resilience could contribute to healthy behaviours, higher qualifications and skills, better employment, better mental wellbeing, and a quicker or more successful recovery from illness.⁵⁵ Not all young people have the same opportunity to access the resources that are necessary to build and strengthen resilience. Poverty is widely evidenced as a barrier to 'resilience'.⁵⁶ Schools have a key role to play in building resilience in all young people, supporting their transition into work and higher education, promoting healthy habits and encouraging better interpersonal relationships between people – particularly between parents or carers, and children.

The implications of not building and strengthening resilience in young people persist into the workplace. Guidance issued by the government to employers earlier this year, titled 'Health matters: health and work', includes the subheadings 'Creating Healthy Workplaces' and 'Mental health in the workplace'. These sections detail how 1 in 6 employees in the UK reported stress, depression and anxiety as leading causes of sickness absence⁵⁷. In 2017, these conditions accounted for 14.3 million working days lost per year (7.6% of sickness absence). The estimated cost to UK employers of mental health-related absence is £7.9 billion⁵⁸. Employees with mental health challenges are also often over-represented in high-turnover, low-paid and often part-time or temporary work.⁵⁹ Government guidance on best practice with regards to mental health in the workplace needs to reach more businesses, especially SMEs who make up 99.5% of all businesses in the UK and may struggle to stay up to date with the most recent advice. The government should be actively campaigning to ensure this vital guidance reaches the right ears to help stem, treat and manage the rising mental health complications in our young workforce.

53 Department for Education, Children's Homes Data Pack, December 2014.

54 Public Health England, Local action on health inequalities: Building children and young people's resilience in schools, September 2014.

55 Ibid

56 Schoon I. Risk and resilience: Adaptations in changing times. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2006

57 Public Health England, Health matters: health and work, January 2019 <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-health-and-work/health-matters-health-and-work>> [accessed 18 November 2019].

58 Ibid

59 Ibid

Improve public transport infrastructure and services across the UK

“A lack of adequate public transport outside of major cities can lead to isolated communities and can affect the ambitions of young people living in rural areas. It's wrong for the government to create a culture around car dependency when many young people don't drive or can't afford to

”

Harvey Morton, Youth Employment UK Ambassador

- Free travel for young people aged up to 18 while they are still in full time education or training
- Half price travel for young people aged 18 - 21, who are in education or training, or for those young people who are NEET
- Improve regional inequality of investment in public transport to make working in rural parts of the country more youth-friendly
- Invest in improving the operation and availability of public transport where services are unavailable, operate infrequently or do not cover 6am -10pm
- Ensure that public transport is a safe mode of travel for young people

The “Geography of Youth Unemployment” report published in 2014 by The Work Foundation points to poor transport infrastructure as a major contributor to unemployment.⁶⁰ High cost or low availability can be a real barrier to employment for some young people, particularly those living in rural or poorly connected areas. Our Youth Voice Census report corroborates this picture; of all the factors connected to undertaking an apprenticeship, travel is most likely to prove a challenge or frustration and receives the greatest number of ‘dislike’ or ‘really dislike’ responses (from 25% of respondents)⁶¹

Typically young people working in or competing for lower paid jobs, are less likely than adults to own a car and are more likely to rely on public transport. As of 2020, commuters will face rail fare increases of 2.8%, increasing the average season ticket price to £3,000⁶². We must consider the exclusionary effect this has on young people looking to get their foot on the first rung of their career. There can be no social mobility without workforce mobility.

There are some schemes currently in operation that could be replicated nationally; for example Hertfordshire County Council has been operating and funding a scheme that offers half-price bus travel to 11-18 year olds for all journeys across Hertfordshire making bus travel a more affordable option for young people⁶³. The number of young people taking part in the scheme has been rising year on year, with 12,500 cards bought and issued in 2018.

We are calling for half price travel nationwide for all young people up to the age of 21, including those in education, employment or training. Young people who enter the world of work often take up entry-level low-paying jobs, and with the current cost of housing in Britain forcing many to commute long distances to commercial districts, young people should be supported in these early years to nurture their ambition and maximise their choices.

⁶⁰ The geography of youth unemployment: a route map for change (2014), L Crowley, N Cominetti - The Work Foundation, 2014.

⁶¹ Youth Employment UK, Youth Voice Census Report

⁶² Harry Yorke/Adam Williams, ‘Rise in rail fares will push average season ticket past £3,000 for first time’, The Telegraph, 14 August

⁶³ Hertfordshire Council, Hertfordshire steps up support for young people's travel costs, August 2019 <<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/press-releases/hertfordshire-steps-up-support-for-young-people%27s-travel-costs.aspx>> [accessed 18 November 2019].

Country and regional public sector finances (financial year ending 2018) reveal that transport spending rose by more than twice as much per person in London (£330 per person) as in the North (£149 per person)⁶⁴. Cuts in spending have also disproportionately affected the North of England. Analysis by IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research) North shows that between 2009/10 and 2017/18, the North has seen a £3.6 billion cut in public spending⁶⁵. There has been swift decline in rural public transport, exacerbated by pressures on local government finances, reducing support for bus services. Rural bus mileage fell by over 6% between 2011/12 and 2016/17. During this period, the number of passengers on supported bus services in non-metropolitan areas of England fell by more than 30% and in Wales by 44%⁶⁶.

The Foundation for Integrated Transport have produced an insightful comparison between bus services in rural England and countries in Europe showing key areas for improvement in UK bus services. Focusing on Shropshire, it found that buses do not connect with train services, often stop in the early evening, do not run on Sundays and bank holidays, are subject to budget cuts and run infrequently. In contrast, buses in similar rural areas in Germany, Sweden and Switzerland have links with train stations, often start at 6am, run until 10pm 7 days a week, are coordinated alongside trains in a regional transport plan and are funded to guarantee high quality⁶⁷. Better alternatives to our current arrangements do exist and can be replicated if government shows the will to improve these outdated services that are holding our young people back.

Travel has to be safe for all, Government must be working with young people to ensure that services feel safe for them to travel in. Adequate CCTV, lighting and regularity of services are just some of the issues facing young people. According to a survey conducted by Brum Youth Trends, 8.2% stated that transport is unsatisfactory, mostly dirty, expensive, unreliable, overcrowded, congested and more services are needed.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Country and regional public sector finances: financial year ending 2018, Office for National Statistics

⁶⁵ IPPR, The Northern Powerhouse: 5 years in, June 2019 <https://www.ippr.org/blog/the-northern-powerhouse-5-years-in#_ftnref6> [accessed 18 November 2019].

⁶⁶ Campaign for Better Transport, The Future of Rural Bus Services in the UK, April 2018.

⁶⁷ Foundation for Integrated Transport, Shropshire Rural Buses, January 2018.

⁶⁸ Brum Youth Trends, Who runs Brum? 2018.

Recognise the vital, long-term role youth services play in promoting social mobility and supporting young people's personal, social and educational development

- Develop a government-wide strategy that ensures a unified approach to youth work and youth services
- Invest in youth services as a valuable resource in supporting young people's personal, social and educational development
- Ensure sufficient guidance and funding for local authorities to fulfil statutory duties for quality youth services, trained youth workers and youth club provision available at a local level

Youth services represent tremendous social value in delivering a variety of educational and recreational services for communities around the UK. We have supported the calls from the youth sector for government to increase funding and to demonstrate a clear commitment to young people through a national youth policy under the Youth Charter. Recent commitments made by political parties regarding this agenda must now come to fruition, which is why we are calling on government to develop a government-wide strategy that ensures a unified approach to youth work and youth services.

In a National Youth Agency (NYA) report for the APPG on Youth Affairs, inquiry respondents argued that future investment in and extension of youth work services should not solely take place within schools but also outside of them⁶⁹. The importance of such services outside of the school system was also stressed in the 2011 Education Select Committee Report on Services for Young People, which stated that 'around 85% of young people's waking hours are spent outside formal education'⁷⁰. The British Youth Council see youth services as an important addition to young people's formal education, contributing to the creation of well-rounded, socially conscious individuals⁷¹.

Beneficiaries of services that develop informal education and soft skills are typically disadvantaged children. As outlined in the Youth Employment UK 'Role of the family in Social Mobility' report, a person's cultural and social capital is heavily influenced by their family⁷². Where care leavers, children from troubled homes and children from poorer backgrounds cannot receive guidance from a responsible parent or carer, they are missing out on a positive role model with regard to work centrality and work ethics; both beneficial characteristics for future self-sufficiency.

Despite a recent increase in funding, youth services are still a long way from returning to former levels of funding and staffing. An analysis of figures revealed average spend on youth services per local authority plummeted from £7.79m in 2010 to a planned expenditure of just £2.45m in 2020⁷³. The cost of late intervention has recently been estimated at £17bn per year in England and Wales⁷⁴. However, low-level preventative services are what have been most affected by changes in government spending since 2010: funding of non-statutory, preventative and early intervention services for children, as well as youth services funding, has reduced by 60% since 2010⁷⁵. London Youth, for example, has heard from practitioners at youth organisations, that in some cases opening hours and the amount of open access sessions have had to be limited.

69 National Youth Agency; APPG on Youth Affairs, Youth Work Inquiry 2019, Final Report, April 2019.

70 House of Commons Education Committee (2011) citing Professor Tim Brighouse. Education without failure, The RSA Digital Journal, Autumn 2008.

71 British Youth Council, Save Our Youth Services, <<https://www.byc.org.uk/campaigns/save-our-youth-services>> [accessed 18 November 2019].

72 Youth Employment UK, The Role of Family in Social Mobility

73 May Bulman, 'Youth services decimated by 69% in less than a decade amid surge in knife crime, figures show', The Independent, <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/knife-crime-youth-services-cuts-councils-austerity-ymca-a9118671.html>> [accessed 18 November 2019].

74 Early Intervention Foundation, The Cost of Late Intervention: EIF Analysis 2016, 2016.

75 HM Government, Civil Society Strategy: Building a Future that Works for Everyone, 2018

76 London Youth, Young People's Capital of the World? Understanding and responding to young Londoners' changing needs, 2017.

Practitioners added that this runs the risk of depriving young people of a safe place to socialise with people their own age, as well as limiting access to a trusted adult and other positive activities that develop relationships and skills. In addition, it was observed that shortages of funding led to a shift towards more 'targeted, project-specific' funding, which has a negative impact on the continuity of provision for young people. This high-turnover arrangement means quality programmes have to be abandoned if practitioners are required to secure new funding which often demands from-scratch programmes. This is why government must invest in youth services as a valuable resource in supporting young people's personal, social and educational development and ensure that the investment is focused on quality youth work.

This raises the question: what does quality youth service look like? The NYA have developed a very clear model on what quality youth work is:

"Youth work focuses on personal and social development – the skills and attributes of young people – rather than to 'fix a problem'. It is an educational process that engages with young people in a curriculum that deepens a young person's understanding of themselves, their community and the world in which they live and supports them to proactively bring about positive changes.

Therefore youth work needs to be (and be seen to be) transformational, harnessing the skills of young people not fulfilled by formal education.

- *Where youth work provides a safe place to be creative*
- *Providing and developing a social network and friendships*
- *With a trusted adult (who knows what is needed)"*⁷⁷

There are examples of successful youth programmes which can divert at-risk young people away from criminal activity and reduce reoffending among ex-offenders. Both the Berkeley Foundations 'Street Elite'⁷⁸ and Develop EBPs 'Ex-Offender Alumni' programmes demonstrate the successful use of role models and mentoring in inspiring confidence and self-belief⁷⁹. We support the call for more collaborative working between charities, schools, local statutory partners and volunteers to better meet the needs of those requiring a multi-agency response and contribute to the 'ecosystem of services for young people'⁸⁰. The rise of knife crime and youth violence is widely regarded as the latest and most visible consequence of the disruption of this 'ecosystem'. Research by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Knife Crime found that areas suffering the largest cuts to youth spending on services such as social clubs and youth workers had seen bigger increases in knife crime⁸¹. The research also reveals a 51% drop in the number of youth centres supported by local authorities since 2011, and a 42% drop in youth service staff over the same period. 88% of councils which responded had seen at least one youth centre in their area close. With such losses, the ability to intervene at an earlier stage in young people's lives becomes harder to accomplish outside of the school system.

⁷⁶ London Youth, Young People's Capital of the World? Understanding and responding to young Londoners' changing needs, 2017.

⁷⁷ National Youth Agency, Youth Work Inquiry, 2019

⁷⁸ Berkeley Foundation, An employer's guide to supporting talented young people facing barriers into work, 2018.

⁷⁹ Develop EBP, Working in Custody, <<http://www.developebp.co.uk/adult-provision/working-in-custody>> [accessed 18 November 2019].

⁸⁰ National Youth Agency, Youth Work Inquiry, 2019

⁸¹ APPG on Knife Crime, Prime Minister Needs to Listen to Young People in Knife Crime Debate, August 2019 <<http://www.preventknifecrime.co.uk/news/>> [accessed 18 November 2019].

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