



All-Party Parliamentary  
Group  
For Youth Employment



## Joint APPG for Youth Employment & Youth Employment Group Meeting - Levelling Up for young people

Meeting minutes: 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Note takers: Josh Adcock, Helena Vine, Charlotte Jefferys

[Meeting recording](#)

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**Chair:** James Daly MP

**Contact:** Josh Adcock, Policy and Research Apprentice  
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### Agenda

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| 09:00 | APPG business and AGM   |
| 09:10 | Presentation on the Levelling Up Paper - <b>Anna Smee - CEO Youth Futures Foundation and Co-Chair the Youth Employment Group</b>  |
| 09:20 | Panel Discussion chaired by <b>Amran Hassan - Youth Ambassador Youth Employment UK</b> with <b>James Daly MP, Fleur Anderson MP, David Gallagher - CEO of NCFE (TBC)</b> and <b>Anna Smee Youth Futures Foundation and the Youth Employment Group</b> |
| 09:50 | Breakout room discussion: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. September Guarantee (Chair Steve Haines)</li><li>2. Investing for the future (Chair Richard Rigby)</li><li>3. Delivering for young people (Chair Tony Wilson)</li></ol>            |
| 10:20 | Breakout room discussion summaries, led by Youth Employment Group Co-Chairs   |
| 10:30 | Next steps and meeting close  |

## Minutes

<p><b>Welcome and introduction</b></p>	<p>James welcomed delegates to the APPG meeting, thanking them for joining today. James also gave some context as to why youth unemployment is still an important issue that should not be forgotten about.</p>	<p><b>James Daly MP</b></p>
<p><b>APPG business and AGM</b></p>	<p>In the last year the APPG led an inquiry into the Plan for Jobs and making youth employment policy work. This was the core business last year. Youth Employment UK do not receive any financial support, any support received was in-kind.</p> <p>James invited confirmation of officers for the APPG. Are all colleagues happy to go forward as officers for the APPG for next month? [All officers confirmed]</p> <p><b>Officers:</b>  <b>Fleur Anderson MP</b>  <b>Andrew Gwynne MP</b>  <b>Chris Green MP</b>  <b>Ben Bradley MP</b>  <b>Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle</b>  <b>Lord Aberdare</b></p> <p>There is a vote on chair, James stated he was happy to continue for the next 12 months. Chris Green MP proposed, Lord Abedare seconded.</p> <p><b>Chair</b>  <b>James Daly MP</b></p> <p>James thanked Youth Employment UK, Laura-Jane and Josh for their fantastic work. James raised the vote of Youth Employment UK as the secretariat. Chris Green MP proposed, James Daly MP seconded.</p> <p><b>Secretariat</b>  <b>Youth Employment UK CIC</b></p>	<p><b>James Daly MP &amp; Laura-Jane Rawlings</b></p>
<p><b>Presentation on the Levelling Up Paper</b></p>	<p>Anna provided contact on why levelling up paper is important and has come at a crucial time in the recovery from Covid-19:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The UK is one of the most geographically unequal developed countries in the OECD.</li> </ul> <p>Anna introduced the latest YEG paper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Labour market and educational outcomes are not looking better for young people just yet</li> <li>● Those with lower level qualification, disabled young people, Black and Asian young people and the most disadvantaged with complex and multiple barriers are losing out the most</li> <li>● Long term youth unemployment is rising.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Anna Smee</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The overall picture may not look too bad, but many young people have stepped out of the labour market while it improves, thousands are on furlough and many more will be joining the labour market this summer as they leave compulsory education. This will lead to a surge of young people looking for jobs, raising competition higher than it already is.</li> </ul> <p>The YEG paper outlines a 3 stage plan to deliver a Youth Opportunity Guarantee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A september guarantee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide more opportunities in education</li> <li>Ensure kickstarter is available to those who need it most</li> <li>Generate more work-based opportunities</li> <li>Improve the quality and quantity of local support</li> </ul> </li> <li>Investing in the future <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand and refocus both Kickstart and apprenticeships</li> <li>Invest in sustainable opportunities and infrastructure</li> </ul> </li> <li>Delivery for young people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embed new youth-focused initiatives</li> <li>Develop cross-government accountability and collaboration</li> <li>Prioritise 'what works' and improve the quality of work</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	
<p><b>Panel Discussion</b></p>	<p>Panel members: James Daly MP (JD), Anna Smee (AS), David Gallagher</p> <p>Amran introduced herself, outlining the stage she is at on her journey from education to employment. Amran shared her experience of volunteering with Youth Employment UK.</p> <p>Question 1: What does leveling up mean to you?</p> <p>JD: James stated equal life chances and fairness of opportunity at a fundamental level. Target individuals who need extra support will also be vital. This should involve schools, DWP, and employers. James leaned into his experience as an employer, stating it is on people like him to make sure they are offering opportunities to those young people.</p> <p>DG: It's really important for everyone to understand what this means to them; the language used has to be accessible, meaningful and somewhat universal. Opportunities are important, but everyone especially (those from the most difficult of starting points/or difficult situations) have the inspiration, motivation and means to get on. We must have equity and diversity built into the levelling up agenda. We really need to establish what we mean, something that is accessible to everyone.</p>	<p><b>Chair:</b> <b>Amran,</b> <b>Youth</b> <b>Employment</b> <b>UK Youth</b> <b>Ambassador</b></p>

	<p>AS: This will take a long time to achieve, it has got worse sometimes rather than better. It is a complex problem, it isn't going to be solved quickly. Young people's journey from education-employment is really important, and those working around these young people need a more joined up approach. We have some strong foundations to build on, we need to look to the bedrocks in our communities that need scaling up and connected to the right people and the right funding.</p> <p>Question 2: What is working and what needs to be prioritised for young people both in the short term (6 months) and long term (12 months)?</p> <p>JD: Early years education is so important in a young person's life that sets the foundation for their future. Once they get to school leaving age, and before, we need more careers advice. We need more funding for families that have difficulties. Young people need to be told that they can achieve what they want, and equally we need to make sure that support is there. The input young people get in education will have a monumental impact on where they will go in the future.</p> <p>AS: We need to make sure that people don't think that the problem is solved, we've seen this in past recessions and those with the most complex needs are always left behind. We need to make it possible for all young people who want to and can join education to be supported to do so. Kickstart needs investment and an extension, this will give employers a chance to take part.</p> <p>DG: A recent report said that educators spend 60% of their time planning for lessons and marking work. Are we giving young people enough of their time? Are we giving educators enough time? No, they are unable to do what they came into this profession for - to inspire young people to be the best they can be. How do we as employers and civic society wrap around educators to provide transformation? We need to move beyond the academic vs vocational/technical education; we need metaskills to be the centre of their education experience, to enable them to get on not just in education, employment but in life too.</p> <p>Question 3: Are there regional factors that need to be considered?</p> <p>AS: Yes. There is an interesting blend. Young people need a long term caring adult presence in their life, that they need long term support, and peer support really works for them too. Some barriers to accessing work include poor transport links and availability of employers in an area are really important. There can be huge differences within cities, so focusing on neighbourhoods is really important. It is less complex to understand if you have levelled up a neighbourhood than a whole city or region for example.</p>	
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	<p>DG: If we are serious about raising awareness and levelling up individuals as well as areas, we have to talk about the opportunities available across the world. Understanding the needs of individuals and local economies and then delivering programmes to meet those needs whilst also recognising that we need to equip young people with the credentialing of skills for a global economy. We need to help young people to understand themselves, their context and their goals, and the path to this and opportunities available. Doing that is about education, careers advice, employer engagement and civic society. How do we help young people to have the self confidence and awareness to make the most of these opportunities., and they are the things we don't measure. A balance between local needs and preparing young people for a global market through all the things mentioned above.</p> <p>JD: In my constituency, I have a high proportion of people leaving the Bury labour market to work in Manchester. I want as many young people to have global skills; AI and technology in particular. I don't want young people to have to leave Bury to find work. That means creating opportunities locally for these young people. Geography does matter, Cornwall for example is vastly different to Bury, and London or other major cities. We want more jobs distributed across employers and across places. Employers are happy to invest if young people have the skills they need.</p> <p>Amran thanked the panelists for taking part and handed back to James. James then announced the start of the breakout room session.</p>	
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	<b>Breakout Room 1 - September Guarantee (Chair Steve Haines)</b>	
<b>Overview of Recommendations</b>	<p>Steve ran through the recommendations of Stage 1 -A September Guarantee, providing context of the state of the labour market.</p> <p>Steve introduced the four main discussion questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are your views on levelling up and the recommendations?</li> <li>2. What more could we include?</li> <li>3. Are there ones you particularly support?</li> <li>4. How does this play out regionally, across different groups and in national policy?</li> </ol>	<b>Steve Haines</b>
<b>Discussion</b>	<p>Kieran Gordon – Careers England: concept of a Sept guarantee has existed for many years but not as extensive or impactful as detailed in the report but a method of counting where young people are. Conscious of this getting short-circuited by someone in the department saying they already have one and so don't need to engage. Do we have an age range for the guarantee – is</p>	

	<p>it school leavers at any level? Focus is on traditional educational routes about employer based apprenticeships, or voluntary or community work with accredited learning outside of the education environment. Issue with 16-17 year olds accessing Kickstart because not eligible for UC and lack that entitlement so not on JCP radar. We don't have a coherent/cohesive view of how we handle this – NCS, JCP, CEC not well connected – and many people aren't aware of them either. Scotland has a much more joined up system and we should aspire towards this rather than trying to bolt pieces onto the existing system.</p> <p>Steve: completely agree with the cohesive system, and YEG will be bringing the team in Scotland in to share their insights. Subgroups are looking at mapping and connecting across groups. Important flag on the September Guarantee. Key role of civil society in non-traditional routes as well e.g. Impetus charity partners.</p> <p>Harriet: contributions incredibly helpful in this stage. YFF are currently mapping the youth employment system from the young person perspective which will be helpful in addressing the cohesion of the system.</p> <p>Andy Frith – Liverpool CA: Echo Kieran's comments- the September guarantee exists for the year 11 to year 12 transition group and then transition from year 12 so I'd echo the development of more age precision on the communication of this concept.</p> <p>Melissa Milner: Agree with you Kieran re. Kickstart - we're also finding issues with the referrals process - placements ready and waiting but reliance on the YP contacting the Kickstart Gateway rather than direct referrals from JCP. If Kickstart is to be extended, need to get some of these fundamentals right first!</p> <p>Amy Fazackerly: We need employers to support the notion of social mobility and the development of young people, but they may also need financial or capacity support to do this. Is there any recognition of the need for entry level skills in this? Most apprenticeships require at least entry level 3 and there is very little discussion around provision for young people who don't get at least a level 1 qualification by age 16.</p> <p>Kelly: Really agree with Kieran's comments about Kickstart and the age and the fact that some/a lot of suitable YP are not in the benefits system.</p> <p>Amy Fazackerley: Building on Laura's point, there seems to be a gap between the skills and confidence of young people and employers' expectations. As a result of the pandemic, employers are telling us they need employees that are 'ready to hit the ground running' which adds further barriers for young people with little or no experience.</p>	
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	<p>Andy Frith: if we're talking about integrating, it makes sense to extend apprenticeship incentives alongside Kickstart extension to ensure there are apprenticeships available at the end of the Kickstart placements to allow for progression.</p> <p>Steve: I absolutely agree – psychology aspect to this of putting yourself into the shoes of young people and the choices they're making and what opportunities are available. What about the pull of university access schemes versus apprenticeships?</p> <p>Robert Gill – Scope: Kickstart eligibility criteria shouldn't just be for those on UC but disabled young people claiming legacy benefit e.g. employment support allowance. As the flagship scheme it's unfair for it only to be open to the disabled young people who are on UC when other groups of disabled young people have barriers to this as well.</p> <p>Elisabeth Lawal – INCO Academy UK: absolutely incredible recommendations in the paper. Supported by Google to disseminate IT qualifications that are targeted at gaps they envisage being in the skills in the market – new to the UK. Interested in the cross-sectoral alignment – working closely with future of the digital industry and the green sector and working closely with employers.</p> <p>Steve: We have a burgeoning employers and quality of work subgroup. We are looking at taking advantage of the new sector and how we work with them.</p>	
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	<p><b>Breakout Room 2 - Investing for the future (Chair Richard Rigby)</b></p>	
<p><b>Overview of Recommendations</b></p>	<p>This part of the paper has the most immediate and challenging task ahead: to convince the government to spend and invest in young people in the Spending Review and Budget. The Treasury is starting to pull up the drawbridge of spending, as has been seen with the Universal Credit uplift being withdrawn and the education recovery budget being much smaller than was recommended. It's therefore going to be a challenge, but the YEG are confident they have a strong case.</p> <p>Richard recapped the recommendations on expanding and refocusing both Kickstart and apprenticeships. The paper is not saying that Kickstart should continue as a mass employment programme next year. Kickstart was first introduced so the government would pay wages and create jobs for young people when employers could not afford to. There now needs to be measures for long term unemployed young people who are not getting the vacancies available as the economy opens up.</p>	<p><b>Richard Rigby</b></p>

	<p>Looking at other initiatives, Youth Hubs are a relatively new introduction by DWP and have almost 100 nearly up and running. However, to date, the Government hasn't put a lot behind them or allocated a pot of money to help them make local partnerships, so the YEG are asking for this support to facilitate the success of Youth Hubs. With other initiatives like traineeships, there has been some level of growth, but this needs to be continued. The New Enterprise Allowance comes to an end in December, so to support self-employment some version of this needs to be extended and available to young people.</p> <p>Richard Rigby: Asked what attendees felt was the most important to prioritise from this section of the paper.</p>	
<p><b>Discussion</b></p>	<p>Anna Ambrose: Need for join up with Kickstart. The cliff edge with Kickstart proposals is concerning because there is nothing structured in place to get employers thinking about how to support young people into employment or providing sustained support beyond the placement.</p> <p>Richard Rigby: To embed Kickstart into the wider system some changes will be needed. Kickstart is currently seen to compete with other programmes whereas the YEG want it to be joined up and working amongst other programmes.</p> <p>Ian Tinto: Feedback from young people is that the constant tweaks to programmes confuse them because of the added layers to navigate. Need to consider how to support young people from all backgrounds to navigate this complicated landscape upon extension.</p> <p>SJ Fulton: ABP UK as an employer have struggled to match candidates against vacancies. There need to be mechanisms to capture feedback from employers as there aren't any currently. ABP UK are approaching Kickstart to facilitate permanent vacancies and if there was more from a bridging perspective, they might see more success. It might be better approached from an industry focus to harness industry understanding from partners and bodies, to get people into sectors that they don't know about.</p> <p>Richard: Asked if there is a particular time in the year where ABP UK recruit for apprenticeships.</p> <p>SJ: ABP UK tend to recruit in September as that's when term starts but are not wedded to that and are much more flexible as a result of the pandemic. The company have struggled with the high investment put into Kickstart but low numbers of successful recruitment.</p> <p>Richard Rigby: One of the reasons behind the paper's argument to extend Kickstart in the new year is that the placements would naturally end as apprenticeships commenced in September, allowing for an easy transition.</p> <p>Stewart: Agreed that Kickstart is currently in competition with other schemes, particularly traineeships which are historically a progression into</p>	

	<p>apprenticeships. So there needs to be consideration about how Kickstart and traineeships could work together. Whilst employers are focusing much more on Kickstart placements, they should consider what other incentives the government could put in place to get employers to invest in schemes like Kickstart, beyond the direct funding of salaries. Asked if there are opportunities for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support young people, potentially through ring fenced funding. Though the fund mentions disadvantaged areas, there is a need to focus on disadvantaged people. It is also important to look at the procurement process, for example with infrastructure projects. Social value needs to be used to make sure opportunities are ring fenced for young people and work must be done to ensure that it is more than a nominal amount like 5% that is going towards creating opportunities.</p> <p>Richard Rigby: The SPF is mentioned in the paper and will be key in the levelling up of young people.</p> <p>John Blackmore: Agreed that there is conflict between Kickstart, Traineeships and Apprenticeships and that Kickstart needs to be extended. Youth Hubs are particularly concerning, as there are no resources from job centres to cover the costs associated with making them work in practise. There is currently no coordination between the organisations working with NEET young people- Youth Hubs could pull these together if they had the resources to. Not only is there a lack of coordination between organisations supporting unemployed young people, but there is also too much competition between them. It is important to get young people into worthwhile jobs. Out of the proposed changes in the paper, it is important to treat Youth Hubs seriously and coordinate services more effectively at the local level. This means that even if supply is not at the level needed, disadvantaged young people would particularly benefit from the improvements brought by this change.</p> <p>Richard Rigby: Asked if anyone has experience with Youth Hubs who could give advice for best practise.</p> <p>Mara Fehling: An inquiry in the House of Lords found that young people are not aware of the variety of opportunities that are available to them, so young people need a centralised place to go and find out about the breadth of opportunities. Even when they felt information was available to them, they did not feel that they knew all the options available to them. There needs to be help for young people on how to make use, and how to benefit from them the most.</p> <p>Peter Beeby: Employers and young people are asking what comes next so there needs to be decisions now. The idea to waive National Insurance Contributions in the paper is great but the decision needs to be made now to give employers the certainty to act.</p> <p>Paul: People aren't aware of opportunities until organisations go out into the community, this can be due to mistrust of government or lack of access to</p>	
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	<p>technical resources. As a community organisation, they have experienced real trouble with getting involved in Kickstart due to the time and effort needed to get it set up and manage it. There needs to be more support from the government to help with delivery. The effort could put people off, especially if they do not see pay off for effort in filled vacancies.</p> <p>Richard Rigby: Frustrations help make the case for extension. Asked if extending by 6 months is enough time.</p> <p>Paul: The scheme needs to go further to give enough time for people engaging in it to have a meaningful experience.</p> <p>Richard Rigby: Thinking more locally, combined authorities with a commitment to an opportunity guarantee will be bidding for money in the Spending Review. Asked if anyone has reflections about how local politics can be part of a longer-term spending plan.</p> <p>Lindsey: At Street League, there has been an example of the local authority driving good practice because they want to make sure their investment is being put to good use. By bringing everything together it stops competing priorities and brings the strongest results. This example is from a rural local authority where the geography is not straightforward and there is a different employer network, but there was still good work of mobilising quickly. As the new market and new local providers were there from the outset, it was always clear what everyone was working towards. In other local authorities, there have been struggles with new people coming into the conversation every week, meaning that they constantly have to go back to the first discussion. Local authority leadership is really key.</p> <p>John Blackmore: Local authority engagement is crucial. Money is so tight on the ground, meaning different local authorities want to put money into different services.</p> <p>Richard Rigby: Local authorities might need to chip in if DWP doesn't.</p> <p>Richard Rigby: Closed out the breakout room and thanked everyone for their contributions and insights</p>	
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	<p><b>Breakout Room 3 - Delivering for young people (Chair Tony Wilson)</b></p>	
<p><b>Overview of Recommendations</b></p>	<p>Tony stated that the youth labour market crisis has been made worse by Covid-19, but they were not caused by them. There are structural problems at play. Over the last 30 years, about 1 in 10 young people are NEET, through</p>	<p>Tony Wilson</p>

	<p>recessions and recovery. How can we reform, using this crisis as an opportunity, and produce a more joined up approach to supporting young people.</p> <p>Tony worked through the recommendations before opening the floor for a discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are your views on levelling up and the recommendations?</li> <li>2. What more could we include?</li> <li>3. Are there ones you particularly support?</li> <li>4. How does this play out regionally, across different groups and in national policy?</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Discussion</b></p>	<p>James Plunket: This is a long-term issue; what works in one place, will not work here. Beyond the 1 year budget and parliamentary cycle, a 25 year view.</p> <p>Clare Caccavone: For our Ambitious about Autism Youth Patrons they find two things extremely traumatising;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. being forced to undertake qualifications which they know they will repeatedly fail</li> <li>2. accessing Job Centres to be assessed in order to access UC which would then make them eligible for Kickstart</li> <li>3. Can't access Kickstart due to being on ESA</li> </ol> <p>Colette: we have used youth hubs for our autistic young people, and that has worked really well -bring the JCP to them.</p> <p>Gary: multi-department, multi-stakeholder approach in YEG paper is good. There is an inequality gap. Even if we get some young people to thrive and achieve in an apprenticeship, they simply cannot afford to keep it up (travel and other expenses).</p> <p>Melanie: policy is being developed, but those with extreme disadvantaged (homeless young people for example) are just not able to access it. Youth Hubs are really fantastic, being able to join up the services is essential.</p> <p>Corrina: support for employers, as well as learners. Kickstart is just gaining some traction, with the incentives coming to an end at the wrong time.</p> <p>Sharon: DWP needs to train their staff to deliver what they want.</p> <p>Rob Benson: Just on the perspective of the Youth Hub Programme – Government/DWP should commit to a long-term future utilising more than just the Flexible Support Fund and ensure that Local Government, Stakeholders and other interested parties all have the appropriate resources to make the programme a success. Most Youth Hub funding is scheduled to expire in either late 2021 or early 2022 and both stakeholders and young people need that certainty going forward – because this crisis is not going</p>	

	<p>anywhere anytime soon. Lots of Job Centres have been shuttered and closed over the last decade and that in part has highlighted the core focus on physical locations provided by Youth Hubs – alongside a digital offer, which can provide the support young people need in the long term.</p> <p>Dave Reece: I have to go to another meeting but a point regarding entry to apprenticeships in the automotive sector and any industry requiring technical skills. Because of the qualification criteria with Maths and English it reduces the number of young people who can become apprentices. We now form experience that there are students in schools that will struggle to achieve the academic levels for apprenticeships that have amazing hand skills and passion. We are working on an industry traineeship but it is currently 19-24. The industry needs this to come down to 16-18.</p> <p>Cathryn Moses: A lot of the comments today keep coming back to the issue of underemployment - it's not enough that programmes of support exist when they aren't attainable/realistic for sustainable long-term employment - how do we influence the government to see this side of the problem in the right way? Still feels like a huge challenge.</p> <p>Ed Holroyd Pearce: We've been excited to see really good engagement from SMEs in kickstart, and willingness to take candidates some with high levels of need, once they see that they can get support from us.</p>	
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<p><b>Breakout room discussion summaries</b></p>	<p>Breakout room 1, SH: enough coverage within recs, the age ranges of initiatives. New parts of the economy and other policy agendas need linking up. How do we create a coherent view across government, how is this related to parents and young people themselves.</p> <p>Breakout room 2, RR: lots of support for the recs. How do we look at these measures, ensure they are joined up and work alongside each other. What scale do we need, given the overall youth population. How can they work together?</p> <p>Breakout room 2, TW: how in the long-term can the crisis be used to transform the system. Places -our major cities are different, we need to be able to do them differently but in the national framework people -different groups are not well served. Policies -don't join up as well as they could. Youth hubs present an opportunity to join up services for young people, having this koin up at a policy level across government needs to happen.</p>	<p><b>Steve Haines (SH)</b></p> <p><b>Richard Rigby (RR)</b></p> <p><b>Tony Wilson (TW)</b></p>
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<b>Meeting close</b>	<p>Thank you to the panel and all participants of the call - a fantastic session today.</p> <p>As politicians, we should be judged on this levelling up agenda and what this means. This group is so important to ensure that the spending and dunning is in the right place.</p> <p>Myself and my colleagues in parliament will try our very best to deliver your thoughts.</p>	<b>James Daly MP</b>
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## Sign up to the APPG for Youth Employment Newsletter

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