

**All-Party
Parliamentary Group
for Youth Employment**



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**March 2023 -
July 2023**



**The Impact of Place Based
Approaches to Tackling
Youth Unemployment**



Contents

Foreword	2
Executive Summary	3
Key Findings	4
Recommendations	5
Introduction	8
Inquiry Focus and Context	8
Inquiry Aims:	9
Inquiry Questions	9
Overview of Evidence	10
First Meeting Overview	10
Second Meeting Overview	12
Inquiry submissions: overview of written evidence	17
Conclusions and Recommendations	24
Appendices: Written Evidence	27
Appendix i: Babbassa - supported by Impetus	27
Appendix ii: Business in the Community	29
Appendix iii: Career Connect	33
Appendix iv: Centrepoint	43
Appendix v: City and Guilds	48
Appendix vi: Duke of Edinburgh's Award	53
Appendix viii: Greater Manchester Combined Authority	58
Appendix ix: Local Government Association	66
Appendix x: London Councils	75
Appendix xi: National Citizen Service	81
Appendix xii: Prince's Trust	86
Appendix xiii: Southwark Council	93
Appendix xiv: Think Forward	100
Appendix xvi: Young Enterprise	111
Appendix xvii: Youth Employment UK	114
Appendix xviii: Youth Futures Foundation	120
Contact Information	129

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This report was written by Joshua Knight, Laura-Jane Rawlings and Lauren Mistry of Youth Employment UK.

Foreword



Shaun Bailey MP
Chairman
APPG for Youth Employment

I am delighted to introduce the latest report from the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment following the inquiry into place based approaches to tackling youth unemployment. On behalf of the APPG, I would like to thank all of those organisations that provided written submissions to this report, as well as the sector experts and young people we heard from during this inquiry.

Contributors to this inquiry have been clear about the power of place based approaches to tackling youth unemployment and the importance that place plays in young people's access to good quality education, employment and training opportunities. In meetings, we heard expert insight from local authorities, employers, education and training specialists and researchers as well as young people sharing their personal experiences and insights.

Our conclusions highlight the need for policy responses to the youth unemployment challenge to be rooted in a place based approach which recognises the distinct challenges, contexts and opportunities of different locations across the country. This means that the national government has a role to play in developing a national strategy to tackle youth unemployment and in supporting local areas and local authorities to meet the needs of their young people. We must build on evidence-based 'what works' approaches that support young people into education, employment and training in their local communities.

I look forward to seeing further progress in supporting young people where they live with support and opportunities available in their communities enabling them to make positive progress and fulfil their potential.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S Bailey', written in a cursive style.

SHAUN BAILEY MP
WEDNESBURY, OLDBURY AND TIPTON

Executive Summary

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment (‘the APPG’) presents this report following an inquiry into place based approaches to tackling youth unemployment.

Addressing regional disparities and geographical inequality across the United Kingdom has become a cornerstone mission of successive governments in recent years. The 2022 “Levelling Up the United Kingdom” White Paper states “Levelling up means giving everyone the opportunity to flourish.”¹

The latest employment figures from the Office for National Statistics reveal that there were over one million young people aged 16-24 who were not in full time education or employment across the months of February - April 2023 with the youth employment rate sitting at 10.93%. These figures are cause for concern, however they only tell one part of the story. Beyond the national youth unemployment picture, there are significant regional and sub-regional differences in youth unemployment rates.

The inquiry sought to understand some of the drivers behind these regional variations and the role that place plays in young people’s access to opportunity, education, training, employment and support.

The aims of the inquiry were:

- To understand the challenges facing young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities where they live
- To understand how place based solutions to youth employment are working and who they are working for
- To identify ‘what works’ in a place based approach to tackling youth unemployment

As the government continues its commitment to ‘Levelling Up’ the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment hopes that this report and its recommendations will be considered as it continues to work towards its aim of “giving everyone the opportunity to flourish.”

The inquiry heard oral evidence from fifteen contributors from a range of stakeholder organisations from a range of regions across the country including local councils, mayoral combined authorities, employers, and charities, as well as young people themselves. The inquiry also received eighteen written submissions which included a range of both national and local organisations.

¹ [Levelling Up the United Kingdom: Executive Summary \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/103111/levelling-up-white-paper.pdf)

Key Findings

Evidence submitted to this inquiry shows that support for young people and youth employment that responds to local challenges, labour market demands and the needs of the young people in their communities is an effective way to approach the youth unemployment challenge we currently face. However, this inquiry has identified a range of barriers to effective implementation of place based approaches to youth employment, meaning many communities and young people are still being underserved and locked out of opportunity.

1. **Place Matters** - Submissions to this inquiry unanimously recognise the significance that place plays in the lives of young people. Place matters at both a macro and micro level; there is unfairness in the provision available in our coastal communities, urban and rural areas and there is unfairness in our communities too right down to a postcode level.
2. **Place plays an important role in young people's exposure to and access to a range of services and opportunities that support positive transitions to employment** - Access to high-quality careers provision, extra-curricular activities, positive role models, enterprising opportunities, developing 'social capital' and positive networks, work experience and other activities which provide essential personal development and confidence building is not equal for all young people across the country.
3. **There is an interplay between economic and social deprivation and place which contributes to high youth unemployment, NEET rates and a lack of access to opportunities for some young people dependent on where they live** - The intersectionality of measures of deprivation highlight the complex nature of place and the need for a place based approach to youth unemployment which recognises and challenges the various elements of disadvantage that some young people face.
4. **There are a range of challenges inhibiting the effectiveness of place based approaches and interventions which must be addressed** - These include:
 - A complex network of provision at both a national and local level and complex funding arrangements for skills and employment support.
 - Lack of access to quality, reliable and detailed data on young people's post-16 destinations, employment status and NEET status at a local level.
 - Poor connectivity in terms of transport, digital communication and social networking further disadvantage young people at a place based level.
 - Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance is not sufficiently tailored to local labour market needs or local employment, education and training opportunities.
 - Poor visibility of existing local services and employment programmes available to support young people and a lack of awareness young people have about how and where to access support locally.
5. **Place based approaches to youth employment can and do work** - There are several factors which support the efficacy of place based approaches, these include:

- Collaboration with local stakeholders at all levels.
- Programmes that are tailored to meet specific needs of local areas, circumstances and labour markets.
- Early intervention which is coordinated and delivered at a local level.
- Access to long-term funding to ensure consistency of programme delivery and measurable outcomes.
- Services which are accessible to young people where they are and offer a range of services (i.e. Youth Hub approach).
- Involvement of Youth Voice in the design and delivery of support services, careers education, work experience, employment and training opportunities.

The accumulation and summary of this evidence is explored in further detail in the main body of the report. The full contributions of each organisation is presented in the appendix of this report. Based on this evidence the APPG for Youth Employment is making the following recommendations to the government.

Recommendations

It is clear that place has a significant impact on young people's access to opportunity and can play a vital role in tackling youth unemployment. Evidence provided to this inquiry demonstrates the power of place for young people and the impact it can have on their aspirations, confidence and access to quality opportunities. To address the youth unemployment challenge we are currently facing, policy responses need to be rooted in a place based approach which recognises the distinct challenges, contexts and opportunities of different locations across the country.

There is a clear interplay between place, economic deprivation and youth unemployment. The intersectionality of these three factors are complex and deeply rooted in wider socio-economic inequalities that exist across the country. However, as a starting point to tackling youth unemployment there must be targeted support and interventions in the places of greatest need for the young people at greatest risk of being excluded from the labour market.

The government and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should recognise place based approaches as key to tackling youth employment by including a commitment to tackling youth employment as one of the 2022 Levelling Up White Paper missions.

Whilst the points above set out a starting point our recommendations below provide clear asks of government at a national and local level which will support place based approaches to tackling youth unemployment and build on existing work which is already making a difference to young people where they live.

Our recommendations to government are as follows:

National Government Level:

Tackling youth unemployment must be a national priority and led at a national level, with support and flexibility provided to local authorities.

- The government and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should review and evaluate the impact that Trailblazer devolution deals have on tackling youth unemployment in those areas to identify lessons learnt, best practice and identify next steps.
- The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should work alongside the Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education and other departments to establish a Youth Employment Task Force to urgently address the one million young people currently not in full time employment or education.
- The Department for Education must ensure that all young people are able to access the right qualifications in the right place to provide a balanced local offer of education and training for all young people.
- The Department for Work and Pensions should have an expanded brief for NEET and economically inactive young people who are not claiming benefits (from 18+). There should be funding available to local JobCentres to be able to perform outreach and engagement activity to support young people into a positive destination. The use of Youth Hubs should become central to this work, ensuring young people can identify the local support and opportunities available to them.
- The Department for Work and Pensions should build on the successes of the Youth Hub model by identifying 'what works' and expanding the model to all communities with high levels of youth unemployment.
- The government should set out a long term strategy for youth employment and provide a national framework for Combined and Local Authorities which provides guidance and support but enables flexible delivery.
- The government should create a clear accountability framework for local authorities regarding their role and responsibilities in addressing youth unemployment in their areas.

Improve data accuracy and accessibility:

Accurate and accessible data of young people's employment, education and training status available at a granular, local level is vital in ensuring that local authorities are able to effectively target support and provision for young people where it is most needed.

- National and local government should work towards improving the recording and sharing of young people's employment, education and training status, with data published providing granular information such as council ward figures.
- Develop a national tool that allows schools, colleges and other providers to report and share data on young people so that those who become NEET can be identified and supported by the appropriate services at a local level.
- The Department for Education should have clear responsibility and duty of tracking NEET young people up to 18 and up to 25 if the young person has an EHC. Once young people reach their 18th birthday they should be transferred to the Department of Work and Pensions who should be responsible for reporting and supporting NEET young people 18+.

Funding:

Government should ensure that there is adequate and flexible funding available to local authorities to support the needs of young people in their local areas.

- The long-lasting impact of COVID 19 and young people missing out on school should be reflected in local authority funding allocations to meet the increasing demand and complexity of the support needs for school leavers in the next 2-3 years.
- Funding streams to local authorities for youth services and youth employment support should be streamlined to allow for improved coordination and management from local authorities in commissioning services for young people at a local level.
- Local Authorities should be able to access flexible funding with less restrictive funding terms and conditions to allow them to respond to the needs of the young people in their areas.
- Employers should be given more scope to 'flex' their apprenticeship levy funding to respond to the needs of local labour markets and provide training that is suitable for young people in their areas.
- Funding should be available to commission evidence of "what works" at a place based level to tackle youth unemployment.

Local Authority Level:

Local authorities are well placed to understand the needs of their communities and provide oversight, leadership and coordination of local services. Local authorities should be given the opportunity and confidence to play a pivotal role in addressing youth unemployment in their local areas.

- Local authorities should lead on and improve the coordination of services available to young people at a local level. There are numerous service providers operating in the youth employment space including education providers, local authorities, charities, employers and other 'social' services such as health, childcare etc. These organisations need better coordination so they can work together to meet the needs of young people in their areas.
- Local authorities should be involved in the work of Local Skills Improvement Plans to understand the skill needs of their local areas and help shape provision to match employer needs.
- Local authorities must ensure that there is good transition support available to all young people in their local areas, particularly those at greatest risk of becoming NEET, with support for young people accessible in their local communities.
- Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance should be enhanced a local level so local authorities can ensure young people in their areas receive advice and information pertinent to their local labour markets and labour needs and that reflects the needs and aspirations of the young people in their areas.

Youth Voice:

For any solution to be viable Youth Voice must be at the heart. Youth Voice should be a structured part of any place based solution and young people should have a say on the services they need.

Introduction

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment was created in 2014 and exists to:

1. promote youth employment in all its forms and the vital role of young people within the economy.
2. to ensure young people's voices are heard.
3. to highlight the need for quality opportunities; and to share best practice.

Inquiry Focus and Context

Where a young person lives can determine the types of opportunities available to them, resulting in young people having different experiences of education, training and employment opportunities and different levels of support. Youth Employment UK's 2022 Youth Voice Census found that only 14.2% of young people were confident that they would find good quality work where they lived.

The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics highlight that the unemployment rate for young people varies considerably across the country, for example, the youth unemployment rate in the West Midlands is nearly three times higher than that of the South West, 14.2% vs. 5.5% respectively.

However, it is also clear that regional differences only tell one part of the picture and that the disparity in employment rates within regions are greater than between regions. This is partly demonstrated by differences in NEET rates for 16 and 17 year olds within the North West region, the regional NEET rate for 2021/2022 was 4.9%, however Cheshire East had rates of 2.0% NEET whilst Tameside was four times this rate at 8.1%².

Research from the Prince's Trust also highlights substantial variation in the reason for young people being NEET across sub-regional areas. The proportion of young people who are inactive due to sickness or disability is over 15 times higher in Cumbria and Shropshire (4.7%), compared to West and North West Outer London (0.3%). East Yorkshire and Lincolnshire have over ten times the proportion of young people who are economically inactive due to family responsibilities (4.3% and 4.2%), compared to the Highlands (0.4%), Inner London East (0.7%), Cornwall (0.8%) and Outer London South (0.8%).

It is clear that place plays an important role in determining a young person's access to opportunity. This inquiry seeks to understand the differing levels of opportunity available to young people at a hyper-local level and explore how a place-based approach to youth unemployment can address locale-specific challenges to move more young people into education, training or employment.

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<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/participation-in-education-training-and-net-age-16-to-17-by-local-authority/2021-22>

Inquiry Aims:

- To understand the challenges facing young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities where they live.
- To understand how place based solutions to youth employment are working and who they are working for.
- To identify 'what works' in a place based approach to tackling youth unemployment.

Inquiry Questions

We invited external organisations and stakeholders to provide written submissions in response to the questions below. Submissions did not need to respond to all questions and could be focussed on organisation and stakeholder expertise.

1. What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment?
 - a. Who are the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place based level?
 - b. What impact does place/location have on a young person's access to employment, training and education opportunities?
2. What place based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities?
 - a. Who do these solutions work for, what does the evidence tell us about the demographics of young people benefitting from successful intervention?
3. What is the role of local government and national government in tackling youth unemployment at a place based level?

Overview of Evidence

The evidence gathered for this inquiry comes from both verbal evidence provided at inquiry meetings held in the House of Commons across the months of October-November 2022 and written evidence submitted online.

The inquiry heard oral evidence from guest speakers including young people, experts on the labour market, youth organisations, education providers, local authorities and employers. Speakers included:

Laura-Jane Rawlings, *CEO, Youth Employment UK*

Dr Tom Kerridge, *Policy and Research Manager, Centrepoint*

Sadie Obeogberin, *National Head of Work, Skills and Employability, Centrepoint*

Asif Rob and **Marcia Higgins**, *Jobs and Education Coordinator, Centre Point*

Councillor Gillian Ford, *Deputy Chair of the LGA City and Regions Board, LGA*

Dr Fiona Aldridge, *Head of Skills Insight, West Midlands Combined Authority*

Clare Boden-Hatton, *Director of Operations Employment and Skills, West Midlands Combined Authority*

Councillor Jon Clarke, *Darlington Borough Council*

Andrew Perkin, *Business Growth and Investment Manager, Darlington Borough Council*

Eddie Playfair, *Senior Policy Manager, Association of Colleges*

Dean Giles, *Head of Learning and Development, Bourne Leisure*

Aniyah, *Youth Ambassador, Youth Employment UK*

Eden, *Youth Ambassador, Youth Employment UK*

Laudy, *Youth Ambassador, Youth Employment UK*

Michelle, *Youth Ambassador, Youth Employment UK*

First Meeting Overview

During the first meeting of the inquiry the Chair, Shaun Bailey MP, set out the purpose of the inquiry and the key questions set out to answer. The Chair highlighted the regional disparities in both youth unemployment rates and NEET rates, recognising the impact that place can play on a young person's access to opportunities. The Chair also called for the inquiry to draw together an evidence base from a range of stakeholders to better understand what is working in different areas across the country so we can share best practice and promote a place based approach to young employment that means all young people regardless of where they live have access to good quality opportunities and good quality work.

The session heard key evidence from two expert speakers on youth employment and heard testimony from two young people sharing their own experiences of place based disadvantage and the impacts this had on their access to opportunities.

LJ Rawlings, CEO, Youth Employment UK shared findings from Youth Employment UK's Youth Voice Census 2022, a national survey of over 4,000 young people, highlighting that whilst some challenges facing young people entering the labour market were consistent at a national level there were clear nuances and differences for young people based on where they lived.

The inquiry heard the key findings of the Youth Voice Census:

- Young people are in a mental health emergency
- Young people feel that difference is a disadvantage
- Young people are feeling unprepared for the world of work
- Young people are not confident that they will find good quality work locally

Each of these findings represent national concerns of young people, however, where a young person lives means different experiences and different levels of access to support.

The inquiry heard that young people were concerned about their safety in their local areas, however the reasons for this varied depending on location, with young people in larger cities predominantly worried about knife crime whilst those living in coastal areas expressed greater worries about drug use.

The Youth Voice Census was supplemented with a number of in-person sessions in different regions across the UK. The inquiry heard that young people's perceptions of the opportunities available to them and their aspirations for the future were impacted by their sense of place, what they could see around them and the services they were able to access. LJ Rawlings concluded the evidence by reflecting, "We have to meet young people where they are now."

Dr Tom Kerridge, Policy and Research Manager, Centrepunkt UK, shared the work that Centrepunkt is doing to support vulnerable young people with experiences of homelessness across the country, providing tailored support to help them address their health, learning and employment needs.

The inquiry heard that the cohorts of young people that Centrepunkt support are often highly vulnerable – having multiple, complex needs and coming from backgrounds in the care system and homelessness. This means that these young people regularly have turbulent experiences of education and limited access to employment opportunities. Centrepunkt staff,

therefore, work with young people to ensure that they receive appropriate education and training experiences, as well as opportunities to access work when possible.

Centrepont is able to deliver services that respond to the challenges of local areas by understanding the cohorts accessing support and responding to their needs, this tailored and place based approach is key to ensuring positive outcomes for their young people.

Dr Kerridge shared examples of programmes working at a place based level to address youth unemployment and the factors which ensured their success:

- Partnerships with local and national employers
- Local employers engage with Centrepont services to provide career talks and information about local employment opportunities with service users.
- Pre-employment support to develop sector specific skills, linked to local labour market demands.
- Work experience provided by local employers with guaranteed interviews at the end of the work experience if a suitable vacancy is available.

The inquiry also heard testimony from two Youth Employment UK Ambassadors, Eden and Aniyah. Eilish Peters, Policy and Youth Voice Coordinator, at Youth Employment UK shared the contributions from the Youth Ambassadors with the meeting.

Eden, who lives in Northern Ireland, shared with the inquiry that access to work experience where she lived had been a barrier for her and her peers in accessing opportunities. In particular, Eden was concerned that where she lived limited the type of work and industry sectors she would be able to access. Eden has an interest in publishing and needed to access online work experience to be able to gain experience in this industry as there were no similar opportunities available to her locally for in-person work experience. There was a concern that not all young people would be able to access similar virtual work experience and therefore have limited opportunities because of where they lived.

Eden also shared that there were few apprenticeship opportunities available where she lived which could limit the choices a young person is able to make about their future. There was also a sense that whilst there are opportunities for employment locally these are limited to certain sectors, in particular to social care and hospitality. Therefore the choices a young person is able to make about their future career paths and the opportunities that are available to them are often limited due to the types of work and industry sectors that are available in their local areas.

The inquiry also heard from Aniyah, who lives in London, who shared with the inquiry her concerns that where a young person lives can lead to negative stereotyping of young people which can limit their employment opportunities. Aniyah shared that in London, postcodes can show insight into a young person's socio-economic background which can lead to negative stereotyping and discrimination. Aniyah has experienced this first hand as employers had taken advantage of her as they perceived she would not understand her employment rights and would not have access to support networks because of her background and where she lived.

Second Meeting Overview

The second evidence session heard from key stakeholders including the Local Government Association, the West Midlands Combined Authority, Darlington Borough Council, Bourne Leisure and the Association of Colleges.

The central message that emerged from the session was the recognition from all key stakeholders that developing a place based approach to tackling youth unemployment is vital in addressing locale specific challenges facing young people, removing barriers to opportunity and helping more young people into good quality work, education and training.

Contributors also recognised the need for the delivery of support services to be driven locally in order to respond to local labour market needs, the availability, quality and suitability of education and training provision and to meet the needs of the young people within particular geographic locations.

The inquiry heard from the expert panel that a place based approach to youth employment offers the following benefits:

- A place based approach allows interventions and support to be better targeted at young people most at risk of unemployment and those in the greatest need of support.
- Service design can be tailored to respond to local labour market challenges and the needs of young people when approached from a place based perspective.
- Local authorities and councils are uniquely positioned to understand the specific challenges and needs of their areas.
- A place based approach allows national policy to be flexed to fit the needs of individual areas.
- Youth voice and co-design is an important element of any place based approach to youth unemployment.
- At its best, a place based approach to youth unemployment is able to bring together various stakeholders in a local area to coordinate support services, skills training, education and employment opportunities, so that young people have clear pathways.
- Careers advice that is tailored to local labour markets and linked to education and training opportunities available locally allow young people to make informed decisions about their future.
- Engaged employers at a local level who have strong working relationships and partnerships with local education providers.
- Local colleges and education providers work with local employers and key stakeholders to provide suitable, quality education and training programmes that drive social mobility and lead to positive employment outcomes for young people.

The expert panel identified a range of barriers to a place based approach to youth unemployment:

- A lack of clear coordination of stakeholders across the youth employment and education sector at a local level can lead to a 'crowded marketplace' of provision without a clear strategic overview.
- Local authorities can face constraints around funding which can make it difficult to address the specific needs of the young people in their areas.
- Poor local transport infrastructure makes it challenging for young people to access opportunities to work or study.

- The short term nature of funding for employment services and other programmes for young people make it challenging for local authorities to develop and execute long term plans to address youth unemployment.
- National policy can also be a constraint on the powers of local authorities to undertake activities that may address the needs of the young people in their area.
- Cuts in funding to local community groups, youth agencies and other organisations undertaking youth work is negatively impacting young people's career prospects in communities.
- A lack of support for employers wishing to engage with local education providers and other local services.

Councillor Gillian Ford, Deputy Chair of the City and Regions Board for the Local Government Association, told the inquiry that councils have an important role and duty in supporting young people to have “the tools and support to reach their potential.”

The inquiry also heard that specific groups of young people are most at risk of unemployment, economic inactivity and becoming Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). Common risk factors identified were economic disadvantage, ethnic background, those with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), carers and care leavers, those with involvement with the criminal justice system and those with low or no formal qualifications. In addition to these risk factors, the inquiry heard that where a young person lives also impacts on a young person's access to opportunity and life chances and location can often compound existing barriers to Employment, Education or Training (EET) status for young people.

“Place does make a difference. Every area has its own unique labour market and economy, including a mix of jobs, qualification levels, unemployment and vacancies, with often as many differences within regions as between them.” Councillor Gillian Ford

The inquiry heard that councils are uniquely positioned as the “convenors of place” with wide ranging functions and expertise that are vital to getting the employment and skills offer right for their residents, communities, and businesses. Such positioning allows councils to work closely with partners, including education providers and employers, to deliver targeted interventions to support young people who face additional barriers or have complex needs.

The Local Government Association has highlighted numerous examples of how councils have utilised their expertise, networks and powers to deliver effective interventions and employment support for young people most at risk of NEET status.

Devon County Council which provides bespoke and open-access support to all young people, tailored to different specific needs through their Devon Youth Hub / Exeter Works. This includes 1:1 mentoring and group work tailored to LGBTQ young people, young carers, children in care, care leavers, those experiencing mental health issues, designed to build confidence, motivation and resilience.

While Hackney Borough Council have embedded an inclusive approach to employment pathways within the council, focussing on engaging and supporting those experiencing disadvantage into their internship programme, which has resulted in high representation among care leavers, young people with disabilities, and young black males. They also run a supported internships programme, which is providing a stepping stone to employment for young people with SEND.

Each example illustrates how targeted programmes which respond to local needs can support young people, often facing complex barriers to employment, into positive destinations and opportunities.

Dr. Fiona Aldridge, Head of Skills Insight for the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) told the inquiry that rates of youth unemployment and economic inactivity vary considerably across the different Local Authorities within WMCA. The drivers behind such variations are also complex, with high levels of economic inactivity often linked to high numbers of young people in full time education. Consequently it is important for Combined Authorities and Local Authorities to understand the context of their local areas, the make-up of their young people and the barriers to EET.

“Placed based solutions that have worked bring services, capacity and outcomes together.”
Dr. Fiona Aldridge

The inquiry heard how Darlington Borough Council are developing their own place-based solution through the development of a “Youth Friendly Darlington” project. The project, supported by Youth Employment UK, aims to bring together young people, education and training providers, employers and local services to create a holistic package of support for young people in Darlington. This network of stakeholders are able to share information and opportunities for young people which are hosted on an online platform targeted at young people living in Darlington. Whilst the project remains in its early stages both Councillor John Clarke and Andrew Perkins, Business and Growth Manager for Darlington Borough Council, were optimistic that such an approach will provide greater access to opportunities to young people where they live.

However, the inquiry also heard that the short-term nature of funding cycles and the complex landscape of providers the skills and employment landscape is fragmented.

“as of last year, funding was delivered across 49 employment and skills-related schemes across England, managed by multiple Whitehall departments and agencies, and delivered over different boundaries by various providers, with no one local point of coordination.”

The inquiry heard that such a complex and fragmented system poses acute challenges to local government in providing leadership, coordination and planning of joined-up provision and support for young people, particularly those with complex or additional needs.

Eddie Playfair, Senior Policy Manager for Association of Colleges, shared with the inquiry the significant role that colleges play in helping young people on their journey to employment. The inquiry heard that colleges work at the interface of education, training and employment, often engaging strategically with JobCentre Plus and DwP programmes such as Kickstart and Sector Based Work Academies. The location of colleges within communities give them an important role in place based approaches to tackling youth unemployment. Colleges work closely with local employers to ensure education and training programmes reflect local labour market needs and to ensure that their learners are able to access work placements.

The inquiry heard that colleges are also well situated to support young people who are NEET in their communities and re-engage them with education and support them to be work ready.

However, there are a number of challenges that young people face at a local level in accessing quality education and training opportunities. In particular, there is more work to be done to support young people at key transition points, particularly moving from secondary education to post-16 education. A place based approach which brings together local colleges, schools, local authorities and other local stakeholders is key to ensuring that young people feel supported during these transitions and are able to access a suitable progression route locally.

Young people can also face barriers to education and training opportunities at a local level due to poor public transport availability and reliability.

“Transport issues play a huge part in supporting young people to access opportunities, being able to access transport is a luxury and not something all young people feel mobile enough to do”

When developing place based approaches to youth unemployment the role of colleges should be recognised and their standing as recognised local institutions should be utilised.

The inquiry also heard from Dean Giles, Head of Learning and Development for Bourne Leisure. Dean shared with the inquiry the extensive work that Bourne Leisure are doing to support young people into employment in different locations across the country. As a large employer in the travel and tourism industry with holiday sites all over the country, Bourne Leisure recognises its role as an employer in creating opportunities for young people where they live.

“Barriers and challenges start early for young people, we all, employers included, have to support young people and schools earlier in the process otherwise by the time they are moving into employment the barriers feel too big for young people to overcome.”

To support young people at a local level, Bourne Leisure works closely with schools and colleges in local areas where their sites are situated to provide work experience opportunities and programmes to young people. Local partnerships with education providers have been an effective way of engaging young people at a place based level and providing them with opportunities to develop their employability skills through work experience programmes and employment opportunities at local Bourne Leisure sites.

The engagement of employers in developing place based approaches to youth unemployment is a significant factor in supporting young people where they live and connecting them to real opportunities for employment and development. However, Dean also reflected that adopting such an approach can be challenging for employers who often need support to coordinate local partnerships with schools, colleges and other education providers. Bourne Leisure’s engagement with education providers within their local areas and commitment to ensuring opportunities are extending to young people in the places they are working is not a universal offer from all employers.

To better engage employers and garner their support in providing opportunities at a local level they need more support with developing local partnerships, understanding the unique challenges of the places in which they work and the barriers to employment facing young people today. An important starting point for employers on this journey is committing to becoming a Good Youth Employer by signing the Good Youth Employment Charter.

Inquiry submissions: overview of written evidence

This inquiry received 18 written submissions from:

Babbassa - supported by Impetus
Business in the Community
Career Connect
Centrepont
City and Guilds
Duke of Edinburgh's Award
Future Voices Group - Youth Futures Foundation
Greater Manchester Combined Authority
Local Government Association
London Councils
National Citizen Service
Prince's Trust
Southwark Council
Think Forward
Whizz Kids
Young Enterprise
Youth Employment UK
Youth Futures Foundation

This section of the report will summarise the written evidence provided to the inquiry. All written responses to the inquiry are published in full in the Appendices.

Summary of written submissions

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment are thankful to all the organisations who provided written submissions to the inquiry. The summary of written evidence below outlines the importance of place for young people in accessing good quality opportunities; the challenges that currently exist for effective place-based approaches to youth employment; and examples of current place-based approaches which are working across the country.

It is clear that support for young people and youth employment that responds to local challenges, labour market demands and the needs of the young people in their communities is an effective way to approach the youth unemployment challenge we currently face. However, evidence submitted to this inquiry has identified a range of barriers to effective implementation of place-based approaches to youth employment, meaning many communities and young people are still being underserved and locked out of opportunity.

Why Place Matters

Submissions to this inquiry unanimously recognise the significance that place plays in the lives of young people, in short “place matters.” Place influences the educational experiences a young person has, their exposure and access to opportunity, their access to support services, their aspirations and how they feel about their future.

“Place is a critical element as to how young people perceive themselves and their future opportunities.” **GMCA**

“Place makes a difference in young people’s life chances, access to support and economic opportunities.” **LGA**

Evidence submitted to this inquiry reveals significant disparities in the rates of young people experiencing NEET status and their access to employment opportunities based on where they live. Furthermore, the reasons for a young person being NEET also varies depending upon their location. Research from the Prince’s Trust reveals that *“there are substantial geographical differences both in proportion and the different types of economic inactivity”* with striking differences at the subregional level.

Evidence provided to this inquiry shows that place impacts the likelihood of NEET status and increases a young person’s risks of being NEET. Areas of economic disadvantage have higher proportions of young people who are NEET than more affluent areas leading to concentrations of young people struggling to access opportunity in particular council wards in which other elements of disadvantage are overrepresented.

“There are substantial inequities in the number of young people that are NEET at the local and hyper-local levels, with around one third of wards in local authorities providing almost two-thirds of the number of young people who are NEET.” **Career Connect**

“From our work in Blackpool it is clear that the issues facing young people are interconnected with poor housing, a lack of affordable public transport options, and high levels of crime form part of a wider picture relating to high levels of unemployment.” **BITC**

Submissions to this inquiry have also highlighted that marginalised groups are over-represented in areas of economic deprivation, with place compounding existing disadvantage.

“Almost 60% of Bristol's ethnic minority populations live in areas of economic disadvantage, two-thirds or whom live in Bristol's most deprived inner-city wards” **Babbassa**

“Youth unemployment appears to be concentrated in areas of the borough with higher non-white populations, reflecting disadvantages that young people from ethnic minorities experience nationally in relation to employment” **Southwark Council**

“Whilst young people are disadvantaged in the labour market, barriers to entry are not felt equally, with demographic characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, care experience, disability, and risk of youth violence all further disadvantaging young people- and intersectional experiences even more so.” **Prince's Trust**

We have also heard from contributors to the inquiry that place plays an important role in young people's exposure to and access to a range of services and opportunities that support positive transitions to employment. Access to high-quality careers provision, extra-curricular activities, positive role models, enterprising opportunities, developing 'social capital' and positive networks, work experience and other activities which provide essential personal development and confidence building is not equal for all young people across the country. Areas which experience economic disadvantage or are physically and digitally more remote or disconnected are less likely to provide the opportunities above for their young people.

Submissions to the inquiry suggest that young people living in areas with high levels of youth unemployment or high NEET rates experience the following challenges:

- A lack of role models and positive peer networks
- A lack of work experience, exposure to the workplace and opportunities to develop workplace skills
- Access to Further Education opportunities and post-16 qualifications
- Issues with transport infrastructure, cost and reliability
- Local labour market challenges
- Access to high-quality careers, information, advice and guidance
- Lack of access to support services including mental health support
- Digital exclusion/internet and data access
- A lack of inspiring and varied employment opportunities

“The need to travel to access opportunities creates an uneven playing field for young people gaining employment or work experience” **Future Voices Group**

“Difficulties getting to work mean that young people find it difficult to sustain their apprenticeships, training or employment” **CentrePoint**

“There is seemingly a lack of opportunities for young people, with one in five (19%) telling us that there simply aren't the jobs available in their local areas” **City and Guilds**

“14.2% of young people were confident of finding good quality work where they lived” **Youth Employment UK**

“In areas where there are fewer opportunities in the labour market, young people may be disadvantaged by a more limited range of role models, or by lacking real-life examples of career pathways they can aspire to” **Prince's Trust**

“Youth unemployment is also driven by limited job opportunities, lack of investment and business closures. In November and December 2022, 57 businesses went into administration in Kent, 16% of those across the whole of England and Wales.³ This is 31% higher than the previous quarter.” **Think Forward**

“Young Enterprise finds that schools in more disadvantaged areas face additional barriers to delivering enterprise and financial education, which have a consequent negative effect on the likelihood of their pupils having opportunities, and on the quality of those opportunities.”
Young Enterprise

Risk Factors and Geographic Clustering

There are a range of factors which increase a young person's risk of becoming NEET or being unemployed. Submissions to the inquiry identify common cohorts of young people as being most at risk of not engaging with the labour market or accessing education and training opportunities. These include: young people from economic disadvantage/low income backgrounds; young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); care experienced young people; young people who have been engaged with the criminal justice system; young people with low or no formal qualifications, young mothers and other young people with vulnerable characteristics.

The risk of becoming NEET for these cohorts has been long established, however it is the interplay of these risk factors with where a young person lives which this inquiry seeks to understand. Evidence suggests that place can compound these existing barriers to the labour market that young people are facing.

Areas of social and economic deprivation experience higher NEET rates and youth unemployment rates than more affluent areas. This may be explained by ‘geographic clustering’ of groups of young people at greater risk of becoming NEET in such areas. Evidence from Career Connect found that the proportion of young people with risk factors associated with being NEET were more common in areas with higher NEET rates, *“clustering of young people with a higher risk of NEET in certain geographical areas helps explain why NEET levels are disproportionately high in those areas.”* The submission from Career Connect included a comparison of risk factors associated with young people being NEET to areas with high proportions of NEETs and low proportions of NEETs, the analysis *“found that all four risk factors we looked at (SEND, YOS, being a care leaver, and being a young mother) were more common in areas with higher levels of NEET.”*

There is an interplay between economic and social deprivation and place which contributes to high youth unemployment, NEET rates and a lack of access to opportunities for some young people dependent on where they live. The intersectionality of these measures of deprivation highlight the complex nature of place and highlights the need for a place based approach to youth unemployment which recognises and challenges the various elements of disadvantage that some young people face.

“From our work in Blackpool it is clear that the issues facing young people are interconnected with poor housing, a lack of affordable public transport options, and high

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/company-insolvency-statistics-october-to-december-2022/commentary-company-insolvency-statistics-october-to-december-2022>

levels of crime form part of a wider picture relating to high levels of unemployment.” BITC

“The prevalence of youth unemployment across Southwark, however, is not uniform and is more concentrated in areas where other measures of deprivation are more prevalent.”

Southwark Council

Challenges of place

Given the complex challenges young people face at a local level there is a clear need for support services and provision to be delivered within the context of place by local authorities, councils and grass roots organisations which best understand the needs and challenges of its young people. However, a range of factors are inhibiting the effectiveness of place-based approaches and interventions, these can be summarised as follows:

- A complex network of provision at both a national and local level is difficult to coordinate at a strategic level and difficult to navigate as a young person, often resulting in duplication and ineffective use of resources.
- Complex funding arrangements coupled with the short-term nature of funding provision make it difficult for employment programmes and support services to become embedded and their impact to be fully measured and evaluated. This is particularly the case with the removal of the European Social Fund (ESF) and the late announcement of funding from the UK Share Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).
- Lack of access to quality, reliable and detailed data on young people’s post-16 destinations, employment status and NEET status at a local level make it challenging to effectively identify need.
- Poor connectivity in terms of transport, digital communication and social networking further disadvantage young people living in deprived areas, particularly remote, rural and coastal areas.
- Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance is not sufficiently tailored to local labour market needs or local employment, education and training opportunities.
- The lack of a clear youth employment strategy at a national government level and subsequent lack of oversight has led to limited accountability at a local level for youth employment and a lack of a coherent policy response to drive effective interventions and support for young people where they most need it.
- Poor visibility of existing local services and employment programmes available to support young people and a lack of awareness young people have about how and where to access support locally.

“[The] skills and employment system remain highly complex and fragmented – delivered across 49 employment and skills-related schemes or services across England, managed by multiple Whitehall departments and agencies, and delivered over different boundaries by various providers – with no one local point of coordination.” LGA

“many youth employment programmes and initiatives over recent years, too often they are short term and funding is precarious so even where there are successful projects and services, very few are resourced in ways that enable them to be embedded and rolled out as part of the employment support landscape for young people and young adults.” GMCA

“Young people have been severely affected by challenges around funding for and provision of local support services. Whilst there have been various funding avenues available to local places for youth employment in recent years, the landscape is complex.” Youth Futures Foundation

“borough and other local youth employment services, particularly those provided by the voluntary and community sector, are heavily reliant on Section 106 and European Social Fund (ESF) funding. They face a future of uncertainty as these funding routes wind down.”

London Councils

“participation in certain types of education and training is not evenly distributed across the city-region footprint, nor are neighbourhoods in which residents appear to share comparable levels of education or employment disadvantage participating equally. However, these variations are often masked by data, particularly on national interventions where data is only available at LA level. Where the factors that impact labour market access/participation are hyper-local, the evidence/data must also be available at that level.”

GMCA

“differences are informed by the nature of local labour markets and the quality of jobs available where a young person lives – if the skills and qualifications young people possess don’t match up with opportunities available, then they will struggle to get into good quality work.” **Youth Futures Foundation**

“The two common barriers of effectiveness for most place based solutions are the lack of accessibility and over-generalisation of the approaches that were adopted across the board.” **Future Voices Group**

The ‘promise of place’

Despite the many challenges facing the effective delivery of place-based approaches to youth unemployment, this inquiry has received a number of submissions which demonstrate the promise of place. A range of case studies have been presented which illustrate the power that place specific interventions can have in supporting young people into positive opportunities where they live. There is much in the submissions to celebrate and to learn from as they clearly illustrate the promise of place in tackling youth unemployment and creating opportunity for all young people regardless of where they live.

The key features of successful place based approaches to youth unemployment can be summarised as follows:

- Collaboration with local stakeholders at all levels, including local authorities, government departments such as DWP, business, local and national employers, education providers, community groups and third sector organisations.
- Programmes that are tailored to meet specific needs of local areas, circumstances and labour markets.
- Early intervention which is coordinated and delivered at a local level
- Sustained support for young people over longer periods of time which build relationships and trust.
- Access to long-term funding to ensure consistency of programme delivery and measurable outcomes.
- Devolved funding to a combined authority and local authority level with sufficient flexibility to meet local needs and challenges.
- Services which are accessible to young people where they are and offer a range of services (i.e. Youth Hub approach)
- Support which is delivered in environments and spaces that young people know, feel comfortable and trust.

- Access to enrichment opportunities at a local level, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's award and National Citizen Service programmes, which support employability skills and transitions.
- Involvement of Youth Voice in the design and delivery of support services, careers education, work experience, employment and training opportunities.
- Engaged employers at a local level who are supported with providing work experience and employment opportunities and understanding the challenges facing young people.

"Involving the young person's community, local professionals, employers and staff in a way that provides the effective interaction needed to improve the learning efficacy for the young person" - Babassa

"Young people are more likely to access training opportunities if they are delivered in settings that they are comfortable in and by professionals that they trust." Duke of Edinburgh's Award

"Involving UK businesses is crucial to any effective place-based solution to youth unemployment. National and local governments must recognise that businesses not only have a transactional role to play in providing employment, training and education opportunities for young people but also a strategic one." BITC

Early interventions, geographically targeted, that sustain support over time will be needed to reduce the number of young people that are NEET between age 16-24, and longer-term unemployment and inactivity. - Career connect

GM Hidden Talent (funded by UKCRF, building on the legacy of the earlier Big Lottery funded GM Talent Match) saw good results in supporting YP and young adults, often with multiple/complex barriers, who were not engaged with 'core' services offered by JCP. A highly personalised approach, with support delivered by work coaches based in local organisations, was key to the positive evaluation and job/education & training outcomes. GMCA

"Place based approaches to youth unemployment can also help to strengthen local communities, with potential positive impacts on social action, cohesion and young people's mental health and wellbeing." National Citizen Service

"We believe interventions that are long-term and tailored to the young person's individual needs are the most effective." Think Forward

Conclusions and Recommendations

It is clear that place has a significant impact on young people's access to opportunity and can play a vital role in tackling youth unemployment. Evidence provided to this inquiry demonstrates the power of place for young people and the impact it can have on their aspirations, confidence and access to quality opportunities. To address the youth unemployment challenge we are currently facing, policy responses need to be rooted in a place based approach which recognises the distinct challenges, contexts and opportunities of different locations across the country.

There is a clear interplay between place, economic deprivation and youth unemployment. The intersectionality of these three factors are complex and deeply rooted in wider socio-economic inequalities that exist across the country. However, as a starting point to tackling youth unemployment there must be targeted support and interventions in the places of greatest need for the young people at greatest risk of being excluded from the labour market.

The government and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should recognise place based approaches as key to tackling youth employment by including a commitment to tackling youth employment as one of the 2022 Levelling Up White Paper missions.

Whilst the points above set out a starting point our recommendations below provide clear asks of government at a national and local level which will support place based approaches to tackling youth unemployment and build on existing work which is already making a difference to young people where they live.

Our recommendations to government are as follows:

National Government Level:

Tackling youth unemployment must be a national priority and led at a national level, with support and flexibility provided to local authorities.

- The government and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should review and evaluate the impact that Trailblazer devolution deals have on tackling youth unemployment in those areas to identify lessons learnt, best practice and identify next steps.
- The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should work alongside the Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education and other departments to establish a Youth Employment Task Force to urgently address the one million young people currently not in full time employment or education.
- The Department for Education must ensure that all young people are able to access the right qualifications in the right place to provide a balanced local offer of education and training for all young people.
- The Department for Work and Pensions should have an expanded brief for NEET and economically inactive young people who are not claiming benefits (from 18+). There should be funding available to local JobCentres to be able to perform outreach and engagement activity to support young people into a positive destination. The use of Youth Hubs should become central to this work, ensuring young people can identify the local support and opportunities available to them.

- The Department for Work and Pensions should build on the successes of the Youth Hub model by identifying ‘what works’ and expanding the model to all communities with high levels of youth unemployment.
- The government should set out a long term strategy for youth employment and provide a national framework for Combined and Local Authorities which provides guidance and support but enables flexible delivery.
- The government should create a clear accountability framework for local authorities regarding their role and responsibilities in addressing youth unemployment in their areas.

Improve data accuracy and accessibility:

Accurate and accessible data of young people’s employment, education and training status available at a granular, local level is vital in ensuring that local authorities are able to effectively target support and provision for young people where it is most needed.

- National and local government should work towards improving the recording and sharing of young people’s employment, education and training status, with data published providing granular information such as council ward figures.
- Develop a national tool that allows schools, colleges and other providers to report and share data on young people so that those who become NEET can be identified and supported by the appropriate services at a local level.
- The Department for Education should have clear responsibility and duty of tracking NEET young people up to 18 and up to 25 if the young person has an EHC. Once young people reach their 18th birthday they should be transferred to the Department of Work and Pensions who should be responsible for reporting and supporting NEET young people 18+.

Funding:

Government should ensure that there is adequate and flexible funding available to local authorities to support the needs of young people in their local areas.

- The long-lasting impact of COVID 19 and young people missing out on school should be reflected in local authority funding allocations to meet the increasing demand and complexity of the support needs for school leavers in the next 2-3 years.
- Funding streams to local authorities for youth services and youth employment support should be streamlined to allow for improved coordination and management from local authorities in commissioning services for young people at a local level.
- Local Authorities should be able to access flexible funding with less restrictive funding terms and conditions to allow them to respond to the needs of the young people in their areas.
- Employers should be given more scope to ‘flex’ their apprenticeship levy funding to respond to the needs of local labour markets and provide training that is suitable for young people in their areas.
- Funding should be available to commission evidence of “what works” at a place based level to tackle youth unemployment.

Local Authority Level:

Local authorities are well placed to understand the needs of their communities and provide oversight, leadership and coordination of local services. Local authorities should be given the opportunity and confidence to play a pivotal role in addressing youth unemployment in their local areas.

- Local authorities should lead on and improve the coordination of services available to young people at a local level. There are numerous service providers operating in the youth employment space including education providers, local authorities, charities, employers and other 'social' services such as health, childcare etc. These organisations need better coordination so they can work together to meet the needs of young people in their areas.
- Local authorities should be involved in the work of Local Skills Improvement Plans to understand the skill needs of their local areas and help shape provision to match employer needs.
- Local authorities must ensure that there is good transition support available to all young people in their local areas, particularly those at greatest risk of becoming NEET, with support for young people accessible in their local communities.
- Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance should be enhanced a local level so local authorities can ensure young people in their areas receive advice and information pertinent to their local labour markets and labour needs and that reflects the needs and aspirations of the young people in their areas.

Youth Voice:

For any solution to be viable Youth Voice must be at the heart. Youth Voice should be a structured part of any place based solution and young people should have a say on the services they need.

Appendices: Written Evidence

Appendix i: Babbasa - supported by Impetus

Written evidence to the APPG for Youth Employment submitted by Babbasa, supported by Impetus.

Executive summary

- Babbasa's place-based approach:
 - Time taken to assess the most important issues in the local community.
 - Collaborative approach that involves local stakeholders.
 - Interventions that aim to develop a young person's skills, while tapping into their desire to make a positive difference in their community.
 - Strong relationships built with local employers.
 - A team that reflects the local community Babbasa serves.
 - Creation of a 'hub' space that supports outreach and offers a welcoming space for young people from the local community.

Introduction

Babbasa is an award-winning organisation, delivering an evidence-backed programme in Bristol. Their mission is to inspire and support young people from low income and ethnic minority communities to pursue their professional ambitions. Babbasa provides youth empowerment programmes which support young people to improve their confidence, pursue their professional ambitions and become economically active.

Impetus is a charity which transforms the lives of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, by making sure they get the right support to succeed in school, work and life. Impetus works with Babbasa to help refine their intervention, develop a blueprint for their impact and develop their income generation so they can further address Bristol's underserved ethnic minority population.

The demographics of the young people Babbasa are working with:

- Young people (aged 15-30) from low-income households and underrepresented communities.
- In 2021/22 76% of the young people we worked with were from an ethnic minority background.

The barriers those young people face to entering the workplace:

a) The Bristol challenge

- Bristol is the economic powerhouse of the West of England region and has consistently reported higher than average economic growth over the last 15 years. However, not all of its citizens share in this success.
- Bristol has 41 areas in the most deprived 10% in England, including 3 in the most deprived 1% in the South and Inner City parts of Bristol. Almost 60% of Bristol's ethnic

minority populations live in areas of economic disadvantage, two-thirds of whom live in Bristol's most deprived inner-city wards.

- Bristol is also marked as the 7th worst of 348 districts in England & Wales for black and ethnic minority communities to live and thrive, with equality gaps failing to improve since 2001.

b) The barriers specifically faced by minoritised young people

- Lack of role models and positive peer networks - this affects their confidence and ability to be actually able to see themselves in the roles they want to get into, as well as their ability to grow via learning from their peers.

"The young person should have a buddy - not just a manager - someone they can talk to about things and feel heard. Within reason, someone they have things in common with e.g age, personality type, sociocultural background etc" -- YP4

- Their inability to exercise agency due to structural and systemic discrimination - this affects their ability to access the roles/workplaces they want to, or the level they are able to get to within those workplaces.

"I was hired at this newspaper company. In my first week - editor-in-chief came over and said, 'I was poor growing up, so I know how it feels so you don't need to worry about being different. You can talk to me". -- YP3

- Lack of experiential and relevant workplace skills - this affects their career development, ability to interact properly within a workplace, and their ability to get roles in the first place due to lack of relevant/transferable skills.
- Lack of access to 1:1 support and progression opportunities - this affects their ability to craft compelling CVs and cover letters, as well as their access to the knowledge which can help them create informed choices.
- Lack of access to professional networks (social capital) - this affects their ability to access a particular industry sectors, and to progress within professions. Our young people are particularly interested in the creative and built environment sectors, but those can often be some of the most 'closed' careers with the most pronounced class/cultural barriers to entry.

What place based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training, and employment opportunities?

How Babbasa helps in a 'place based' way:

- We take the time to understand the most important issues and opportunities in the local communities we operate within in Bristol as a fundamental starting point for developing delivery plans, and seek to collaborate with local actors to make an impact in each place.
- We take an experiential and collaborative approach to developing talent - involving the young person's community, local professionals, employers and staff in a way that

provides the effective interaction needed to improve the learning efficacy for the young person.

- Our 'Challenge' programme is aimed at aspirational young people (16-25) with limited knowledge about career options, or access to professional networks, but a desire to make a positive difference in their community, while developing their professional and leadership skills.
- This programme provides participants, called Youth Ambassadors (YAs), with skills training, experiential challenges and professional mentors to develop their pitching skills, confidence and understanding of the workplace.

City of Change campaign 2020 - <https://babbasa.com/city-of-change/> - YAs ended up persuading 43 businesses to offer an employment opportunity for a young person within the next 12 months - all done in the height of lockdown.

Our Bristol Our World Conference 2019 -

<https://babbasa.com/events/our-bristol-our-world-youth-conference/> 200 people attended (half professionals, half young people).

- Our BRIS placement recruitment services link local employers with the young people who access our youth empowerment programmes. We support them to actively recruit from this place-based talent pool. This service attracts the most exciting, sought-after employers locally - people like Aardman Animations and the University of Bristol - to inspire young people and show them their talents are valued by the best in their fields.
- Our workforce reflects the community we serve. Our staff teams represent the diverse young people we support, with people of colour making up 54% of our workforce, and 67% of our team identifying as female. This allows the team to use their lived experiences to engender trust and mirror service users' cultural experiences.
- Our Bristol 'hub' offers a welcoming and inclusive space for young people to access. We're very much based in the local community we serve, via this 'hub' and the outreach we undertake.

Appendix ii: Business in the Community

Business in the Community's response to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Employment's inquiry: Place based approaches to tackling youth unemployment

Introduction

Business in the Community (BITC) is the largest and most influential responsible business network. BITC currently works with businesses that employ 20% of the UK workforce and campaigns on a range of issues including climate action, race and gender equality, employment and skills and wellbeing. BITC also works across all UK nations and regions, with nine place-based programmes currently ongoing in Blackpool, Bradford, Coventry, Lowestoft, Newport, Norwich, Rochdale, Sheffield and Wisbech, with an ambition to have 50 place programmes over the next few years.

Executive Summary

- Business involvement is crucial to tackling youth unemployment. However, there is no one-size fits all approach to supporting young people find employment. That's why it's incredibly important for businesses to work with stakeholders such as education providers and take a place-based approach to tackling youth unemployment.
- To help businesses understand the societal issues impacting people across the UK, BITC runs the Seeing is Believing programme, which brings employers into communities so they can hear first-hand how they can support people living in left behind communities, including the barriers people face when trying to find employment. The programme aims to inspire employers to take action, whether that be in their own organisations or communities, to help remove barriers that are preventing some people from finding employment.
- BITC supports businesses in building partnerships with schools. Since 2013, BITC has worked with Barclays to run the Barclays LifeSkills programme. The LifeSkills programme supports young people to build the core transferable skills that employers are looking for. Between 2016 to 2022, Barclays LifeSkills and BITC has supported more than 77,400 young people in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. The programme supports young people in areas where they face barriers to employment.

What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment?

BITC works in communities across the UK to help remove the barriers to work that many people face. For example, in Blackpool BITC, alongside other stakeholders, support a number of young people who are NEET (not in employment, education or training) living in Claremont, Blackpool. Claremont suffers from severe socio-economic deprivation, including high levels of unemployment, poorer health, and lower life expectancy than the national averages. The issues that some of these young people experience include:

- There is not a clear way to access further education and adult learning for those over 18, especially for those furthest from the labour market.
- COVID has had a lingering effect with many young people already spending two years as NEET due to the pandemic.
- An important structural issue reported by workers was that many young people struggled going from being unemployed for a prolonged period of time to then going to full time work or education.
- There has been evidence that young people are not prioritised by organisations supporting people out of work.
- Young people are aware of their lack of both qualifications and experience and rule themselves out of jobs because of it.

The work that BITC does alongside other stakeholders brings together a multi-agency team of workers from different backgrounds to offer a variety of support across Blackpool Including:

- Befriending
- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Information, Advice and Guidance
- Youth work
- Sports development

The importance of a place-based approach has been evident in this work which has led to the following benefits of community action:

- More charity organisations in Blackpool are showing an interest in how to collectively develop this approach to help people into work.
- The work has developed partnerships with other organisations in Blackpool outside of those participating working with similar young people.
- The workers advocating on behalf of young people have built up relationships with local employers who have been willing to try new ways of working to engage young people such as visits, projects and two hour working days.

From our work in Blackpool it is clear that the issues facing young people are interconnected with poor housing, a lack of affordable public transport options, and high levels of crime form part of a wider picture relating to high levels of unemployment. The Blackpool Pride of Place Board is business led and takes a place-based approach by looking at these challenges as being interconnected. The *Blackpool Town Prospectus* sets out how Pride of Place approaches all these issues setting out ambitions on housing, health, education, skills, employment, digital and communities.

Who are the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place based level?

What impact does place/location have on a young person’s access to employment, training and education opportunities?

The statistics in Figure 1 set out the percentage of people who are NEET aged 16 to 24. The disparities across the regions in England suggests that a young person’s location will have a significant impact on their access to employment, training, and education opportunities. For instance, in 2022, the North East had the highest NEET rate of 17.2% for those aged between 16 and 24, which is around five percentage points higher than the English average of 12.3%. In contrast, the South West had a NEET rate of 7.8%, which is around 4.5 percentage points lower than the national average. The statistics also suggest that whilst the overall NEET rate has increased, the disparities between some regions has widened with the East Midlands, London and the South West all having lower NEET rates than in 2016 with the other English regions all seeing the NEET rate increase.

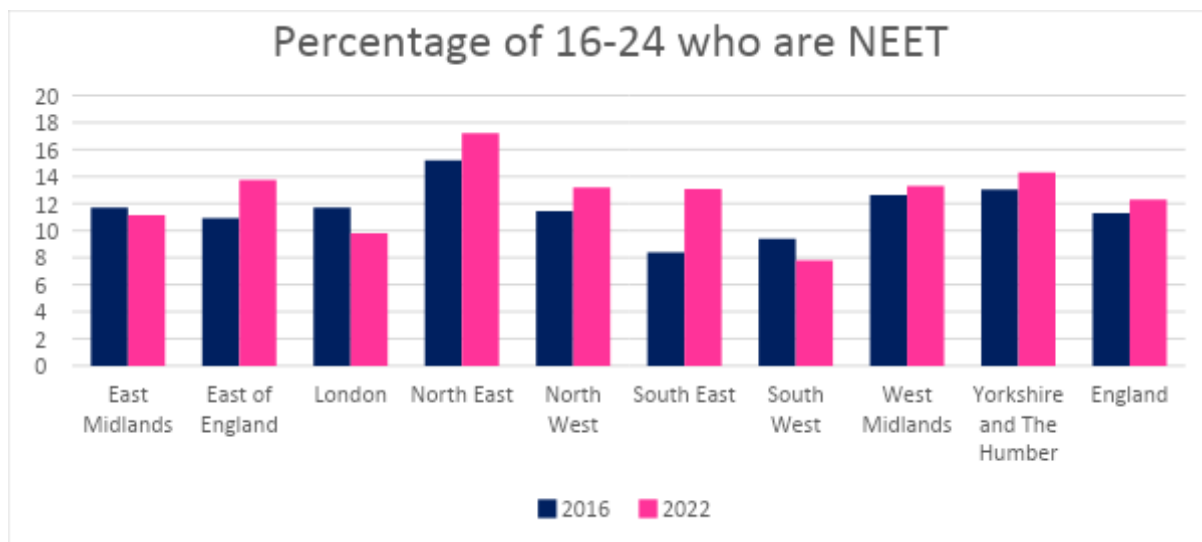


Figure 1 Department for Education: NEET age 16 to 24, Calendar year 2022

What place based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities?

The Prince's Seeing is Believing program was established in 1990 by the then Prince of Wales. The programme takes business leaders out to communities to show the unique contribution business can make when working in partnership with others on an issue or in a community. Over 25,000 business leaders have been involved in the programme so far and have helped address issues such as homelessness, social mobility, education, and skills for over 30 years.

In 2022, the Seeing is Believing program conducted a visit to Coventry, led by John Allan CBE, Chairman of Tesco plc and Barratt Developments plc. During the visit, business leaders visited the Positive Youth Foundation, a charity that supports young people ages 8-25 in the Coventry area. Following the visit, senior business leaders from Salesforce committed to a long-term engagement plan with the Positive Youth Foundation to provide digital skills programmes and volunteering opportunities.

On another visit in 2022, to Rochdale, the Co-op became committed to a long term review of employment practices to remove barriers to entry and ensure working parents can stay in jobs. The impact of these visits are collated in the *Seeing is Believing Annual Review*, and they provide a great example of how businesses can take action to address societal issues such as removing barriers to work. BITC works to create greater business involvement in the education system, as this can be extremely valuable to students in preparing them for the world of work. A BITC research report *Business Working Within the Curriculum*, found that lower achieving, disadvantaged, and under confident students can particularly benefit from sustained engagement with businesses.

BITC's *Partnerships in Place: the business of levelling up* report also highlights the importance of businesses working collaboratively within their communities by working with stakeholders to identify inequalities that exist within their places and utilise their skills to tackle them. Businesses are well informed on what education is likely to lead to a more productive society, and they are central to questions of employability and investment. An example of business action in this area is Anglian Water, which developed two new courses at the College of West Anglia. Along with five members of their supply chain, they identified that there was a need for more mechanical and electrical engineers, and so qualifications in Mechanical and Electrical Engineering and in Construction and Utility Operations were developed. All students that complete these courses are guaranteed a job interview at Anglian Water and their partner companies. This is a great example of how businesses can work with local education providers to ensure that there are the right courses locally that will lead to employment in the area.

To ensure success, it's crucial to prioritise long-term partnerships, whether it's Salesforce's commitment to supporting the Positive Youth Foundation or business partnerships with schools. It's not enough for businesses to provide sporadic support; they must be committed for the long haul.

Who do these solutions work for, what does the evidence tell us about the demographics of young people benefitting from successful intervention?

What is the role of local government and national government in tackling youth unemployment at a place based level?

Involving UK businesses is crucial to any effective place-based solution to youth unemployment. National and local governments must recognise that businesses not only have a transactional role to play in providing employment, training and education opportunities for young people but also a strategic one. Businesses understand the labour

market and the issues impacting it better than most and this expertise should be utilised by both local and national government.

Appendix iii: Career Connect

Career Connect's response to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Employment's inquiry: Place based approaches to tackling youth unemployment

About Career Connect

We are a charity committed to helping young people and adults realise their potential. We deliver high quality and professional careers, employment, and training services in schools, in the community and in prisons. We are passionate about social mobility and helping the most disadvantaged to create a better future.

In 2022/23, we worked with over 67,000 young people and adults to support them in their journey towards education and work.

We are grateful for the opportunity to submit evidence to this inquiry. Our responses to the inquiry questions draw upon data from some of the areas where we provide support to young people, and insights provided by our teams that are providing that support. We hope that is a useful addition to this important inquiry.

Sheila Clark
Chief Executive Officer

Executive Summary

- There are substantial inequities in the number of young people that are NEET at the local and hyper-local levels, with around one third of young people in local authorities providing almost two-thirds of the number of young people who are NEET.
- Those most at risk of being NEET are young people with SEND, care leavers, those engaged with youth offending services (YOS), and young mothers. The size of the most at risk cohort is increasing, in part resulting from the disruptions to school attendance brought about by the covid pandemic.
- There is a very high unmet demand for good quality (further) education, training, apprenticeships, and employment in the localities with the highest levels of NEET and there has been a reduction in suitable provision to meet this demand.
- Key success factors in programmes to reduce place-based NEET are:
 - Intervening early with good quality CEIAG and building relationships with young people before they transition from compulsory education
 - Sustained contact and support over a longer-time period, rather than the 'revolving door' of short-term, reactive, interventions
 - Strong partnerships and coordination between local authorities, CEIAG providers, employers, voluntary & community sector, and wider support services
 - Reducing and removing barriers to accessing provision
 - Flexibility and bespoke support to individuals and families
- Key recommendations to local government are:
 - Invest more in targeted, proactive careers interventions from KS4 for those at risk of NEET, in concert with careers provision provided by schools.

- o Invest in programmes over a longer-time period.
- o Work in partnership with providers and employers to broaden the scope and lower barriers to provision.
- o Engage families and young people in the design of services and provide more support that has a family focus.
- o Greater sharing and learning from each other about what works in tackling place--based NEET.
- Key recommendations for national government are:
 - o Ensure adequate funding flows to local and regional authorities and appropriate autonomy in how that funding is allocated.
 - o Bring forward the people and skills element of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and maintain current levels of funding formerly available through the European Social Fund (ESF).
 - o Scale up initiatives to address supply shortages of provision that takes a long-term perspective, addressing personal and social development as part of skill and employment pathways.
 - o Enhance efforts to understand and provide services for young people that are outside of mainstream education.
 - o Expanding employment programmes to young people who are not in receipt of benefits will make an impact on the localities with the highest levels of NEET among young people.
 - o Provide greater opportunities for local authorities to learn from each other about effective practices in tackling place-based unemployment.

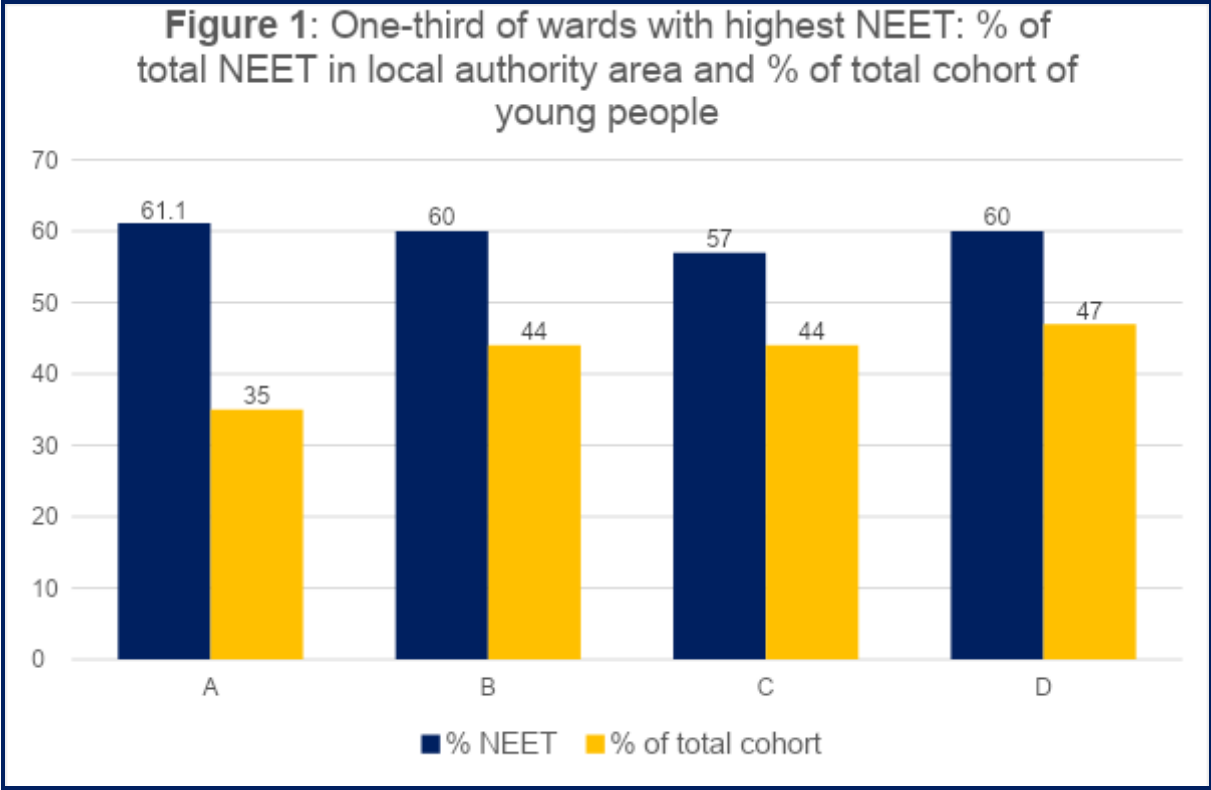
1. What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment? Who are the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place-based level?

Our response gives major focus to the wider issue of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET), rather than focusing specifically on unemployment. Young people being NEET is associated with negative outcomes later in life, such as lower earnings, higher risk of unemployment, and mental ill health (Bell et al., 2018). The longer a young person is NEET, the more difficult it becomes for them to enter the labour market and longer periods of NEET status are associated with lower earnings and an increased risk of unemployment (Public Health England, 2014).

Extent to which NEET is place-based.

We have analysed data from four areas where we support young people during post-16 transitions and find significant disparities in NEET rates between wards. Some wards have up to 10 times the number of young people who are NEET compared to their neighbouring wards. In each of the four areas we looked at, around one-third of wards account for about 60% of the total number of NEET young people (see Figure 1). Additionally, the ward with the highest NEET rate in each local authority area alone contributes as much as 15% of the total number of NEET young people.

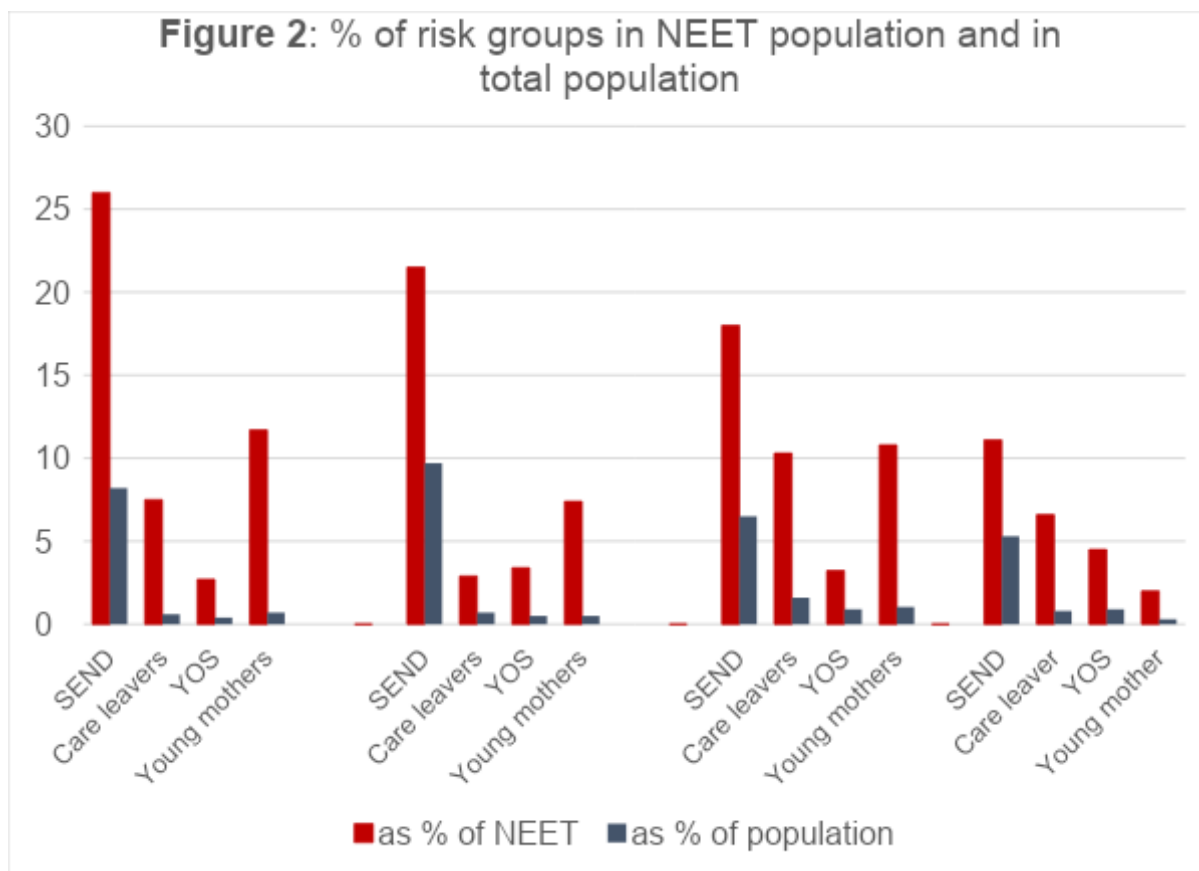
The differences in the number of young people who are NEET between wards cannot be solely explained by the size of the youth population in those areas. Although the one-third of wards with the highest levels of NEET contribute to about 60% of the total NEET population, they only make up between 35% and 47% of the total number of young people in the local authority (see Figure 1).



Who are the most disadvantaged and most at risk?

Given what we know about factors that are associated with young people being NEET, we examined risk factors that are routinely recorded during service delivery. We found that young people who are SEND, care leavers, in contact with Youth Offending Services (YOS), and young mothers are overrepresented in the NEET population. In other words, these groups are more likely to be NEET compared to young people without these risk factors (see Figure 2).

In the areas that we looked at, the proportion of young people who are SEND is 2-3 times higher among those who are NEET than among the total 16-17-year-old cohort. Care leavers are between 5-10 times higher in the NEET population than among the total cohort. Those engaged with youth offending services are between 3-5 times higher, and young mothers are between 5-10 times higher in the NEET population than among the total cohort.



Other factors that we see as being over-represented among the NEET population than among the total young person cohort are⁴:

- Suspended from school (45% of NEET, 15% of cohort)
- Having a penalty notice for not attending school (27.2% of NEET, 11% of cohort)
- Social worker involvement (21.2% of NEET, 6.2% of cohort)
- Early Help involvement (14.5% of NEET, 3.5% of cohort)
- Mental health challenges (6.6% of NEET, 0.6% of cohort)

In line with analysis of national data (Resolution Foundation, 2018) we found that young men are over-represented among young people that are NEET (53%-64% of those that are NEET, but approximately 50% of total youth cohort).

All of this points to the complexity of need among young people in wards with high NEET rates and underscores the need for a wider range of services to support them, beyond just good quality CEIAG (Careers Education, Information, Advice, and Guidance).

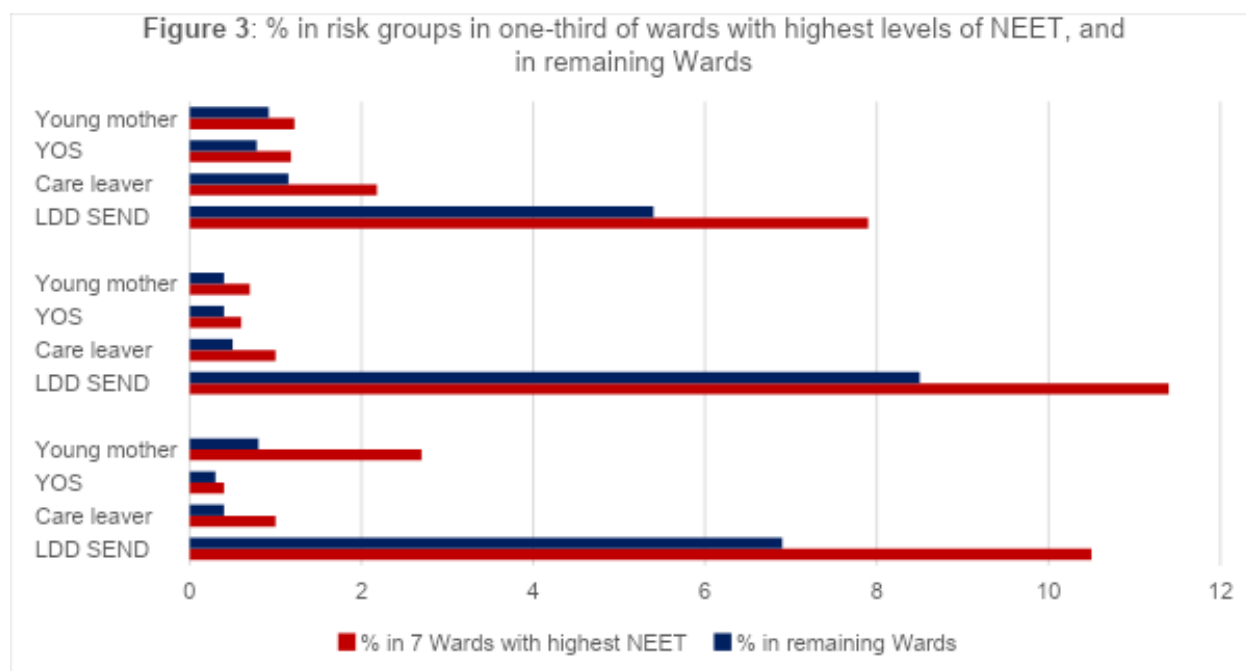
This is a snapshot of the current profile of young people outside of EET provision, but we are also seeing a rapid rise in the number of young people that are higher risk of NEET, particularly those that are categorised as SEND and have Education Healthcare Plans (EHCP). The number of young people in NEET risk groups has increased by over 50% since 2019 and we expect this rise to continue over coming years. The Covid pandemic required young people to be outside of school for an 18-month period and we foresee long-term consequences of this in terms of the personal and social development of young people and their readiness for more independent living in later teenage years.

To what extent are risk factors geographically clustered?

⁴ Information on these factors are not collected consistently across all four areas.

We wanted to see if risk factors that are associated with young people being NEET are more common in areas with higher levels of NEET young people. To do this, we compared the prevalence of these risk factors in areas where a high proportion of young people are NEET with areas where a lower proportion are NEET. We found that all four risk factors we looked at (SEND, YOS, being a care leaver, and being a young mother) were more common in areas with higher levels of NEET. Figure 3 shows this trend across three local authority areas. The degree of difference varied across the areas, but it was significant in all of them for each of the risk groups.

This clustering of young people with a higher risk of NEET in certain geographical areas helps explain why NEET levels are disproportionately high in those areas. It highlights the importance of targeting services and resources to those areas and populations that are at greatest risk of being NEET and the need for early intervention.



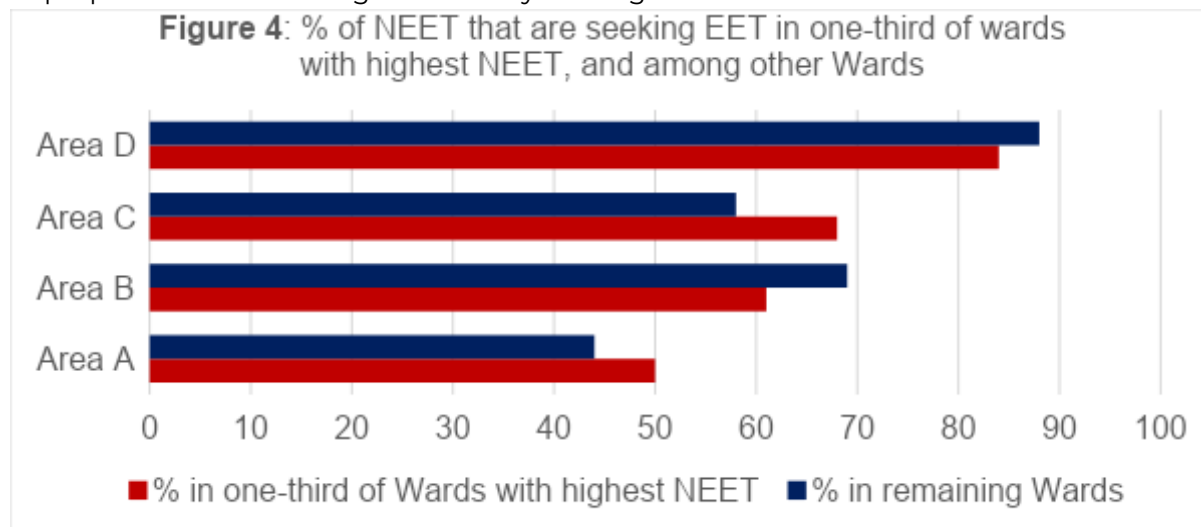
What is the extent of unmet need for good quality education, employment, and training provision?

The recent trend in NEET among young people suggests that "inactivity" rather than unemployment is the main reason for being NEET, which is often due to ill health, particularly mental ill health (Resolution Foundation, 2022; Princes' Trust, 2022). This makes engaging with and supporting young people who are NEET more challenging, and they tend to spend longer periods outside of education, training, or employment. In the local authorities that the study examined, around one-third of young people who were NEET had been so for longer than six months.

We also looked at the extent to which young people seek employment, education, or training (EET) across wards with different levels of NEET to see if demand for provision varies across wards⁵. In two of the four local authorities, a higher proportion of young people in wards with the highest levels of NEET were seeking EET compared to the remaining wards. In the other two local authorities, 61% and 84% of young people that are NEET are seeking employment,

⁵ Not seeking is defined as 'not sought EET in the past 1 month and not likely to seek EET in the next 1 month'.

education, or training. Therefore, there is a significant unmet demand for good quality EET provision among wards with the highest NEET rates, and there is little evidence of disproportionate clustering of 'inactivity' among these wards.



Accessibility of provision

Many young people are unable or unwilling to travel outside their local areas for services, due to various reasons such as transport issues, safety concerns, and financial barriers. Looking at provision at the local authority level can miss gaps in provision in specific localities where unmet need may be greatest.

In areas of high need, we have observed the following:

- Reductions in quality Further Education opportunities through campus closures or relocations
- Reduction of courses/qualifications available, including distance learning, particularly for young people without L4 grades in English and Maths.
- Cessation of ESF funded programmes targeted at those most at risk.
- Other personal and social development programmes no longer enrolling new participants.
- Geographical shifting of provision to neighbouring areas, reducing accessibility
- Over-subscription to provision that remains accessible.
- High barriers to accessing provision (e.g., the need to have been NEET for 12 months to qualify for enrolment), excluding many young people from provision that would be suitable for them.

Therefore, provision needs to be examined at the hyper-local level and encompass appropriate education, apprenticeships, employment with training, and wider support for those with complex needs who are not yet ready for EET.

2. What place-based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training, and employment opportunities?

Targeted programs, both in terms of geography and those in greatest need have the greatest impact. Programmes need to be tailored to specific local needs and circumstances, and flexible to the needs of individual young people being supported, but the following are what we see as key components of effective programmes in tackling place-based NEET.

i) Intervening early, proactively, and targeting those that are underserved by mainstream provision.

We see that Targeted early intervention of CEIAG (Careers Education, Information, Advice, and Guidance) support from KS4 is shown to be effective in increasing the percentage of those most at risk who are moving into good quality EET provision post 16 and reducing the number of days spent NEET. Support that includes those in alternative provision and those who have elected to home educate, many of whom have done so reluctantly, is also impactful in establishing young people on pathways to employment in later life.

Early intervention allows for positive relationships to be established between providers of support, young people, and their families. These relationships are critical for pathways to be developed with them that reduce the likelihood of being NEET post-16. Our work shows that early intervention is particularly effective for young people that are at greatest risk.

Programmes such as the ESF (European Social Fund) funded Connect To Your Future (CTYF), in the Greater Manchester area, which in part targets those pre-16, are also producing positive results. A full evaluation of CTYF will be available later in 2023, but targeted early intervention and provision is a key part of CTYF, as is targeting those furthest from EET.

Programmes such as the Community Renewal Fund *Pathways to Employment* programme in St. Helens, expanded support to young people not currently served by mainstream and enhanced provision to underserved groups. An independent programme evaluation concluded that the programme was effective in supporting the most vulnerable young people towards employment (Metro Dynamics, 2023)

Our own work tells us about the importance of having a proactive and preventative approach to NEET among young people. Reacting ad hoc to young people becoming NEET makes it more difficult to sustain young people in good quality training, education, or employment.

ii) Sustained contact and support

For the growing cohort of young people with more complex support needs, sustained support relationships over the longer-term are required. Evidence highlights the fact that many young people are reluctant to engage in a “revolving door” of interventions (See evaluation of CRF programme in St Helens, Metro Dynamics, 2023). Pathways into employment can be long, and support is needed over that period to ensure that more young people are attaining employment outcomes rather than just moving closer to being job ready. Short-term programmes and funding that have an expectation of quick progress into work will likely fail to meet these expectations. (See evaluation of Hidden Talent programme, Manchester, 2022).

Early interventions, geographically targeted, that sustain support over time will be needed to reduce the number of young people that are NEET between age 16-24, and longer-term unemployment and inactivity.

iii) Strong partnerships and coordination between local authorities, CEIAG providers, employers, voluntary & community sector, and wider support services

Early and targeted interventions are key, but they are most effective when delivered in partnership with employers, training providers, and wider support services that address complex needs. Good quality CEIAG alone will not be sufficient – a local provision landscape that better caters for the broad needs of young people will be required.

We see that several Intermediate Labour Market programmes (ILMs) have been a highly effective route for removing barriers to employment among the most marginalised young people. Examples such as the 6–12-month wage subsidised jobs & apprenticeships provided by Knowsley local authority as part of wider European Social Fund programme, is an excellent example of this approach.

We see the success of the St.Helens CRF programme coming from the combination of multiple strands of targeted interventions, including:

- Bespoke, intensive support and mentoring to NEET young people
- Volunteer brokerage and matching service and collaboration with community organisations to transition volunteers into paid employees.
- Job Creation Stimulus funding.
- Bridging Grants for those transitioning from benefits to employment.
- Enhancements to the local employment, targeting support to the most marginalised groups by a network of local VCS organisations.

The programme evaluation notes that the project made a significant, positive impact (Metro Dynamics, 2023). In large part this is down to removing the assumption that 18- and 19-year-olds can navigate adult services, when many struggle.

Experiences of work that are linked with personal development in terms of training and skills building are also effective. The Wythenshawe Pathways initiative is a good example of this. This is a partnership between Career Connect, the local Authority, and a local Training Provider. It targets young people who are unable to successfully compete for apprenticeships but who would also struggle in FE (Further Education) provision. Participants work for 6 months on the maintenance of green spaces and public areas in and around Wythenshawe. Participants are paid the Real Living Wage and attend training one day a week with the Training Provider to complete Literacy/Numeracy Functional Skills and Employability qualifications. All the young people will also be supported throughout the programme by a Career Connect careers adviser to ensure that they have progression opportunities arranged for the end of their period of training and employment.

iv) Reducing and removing barriers to accessing provision

Education, training, and employment opportunities that are accessible to those most at risk of being NEET and long-term unemployed are effective. We see too many programmes where entrance requirements in terms of qualifications, benefits status and attendance, or very specific referral pathways, are barriers. Programmes that work with providers to reduce barriers are effective at widening engagement with young people that would not otherwise have access. The Job Creation Stimulus funding component of the St.Helens CRF programme is a good example of this. It provided employers with incentive or wage subsidy funding to support residents who were ineligible for existing provision that exists via DWP, Kick Start, Restart etc.

While EET outcomes are the ultimate measure of success, programmes that prioritise these outcomes – particularly in the short-term - over widening participation, lead to a focus on those that are easiest to move into EET, rather than those most in need and with more complex barriers.

v) Flexibility and bespoke support to individuals and families

Programmes and approaches that provide bespoke, flexible support that meets both longer-term and more immediate barriers to accessing provision are key to success. Cookie cutter solutions are unlikely to address the needs of individuals and programmes that offer individualised pathways are most effective. The evaluation of the St.Helens CRF programme noted that its success was in part down to removing the assumption that 18- and 19-year-olds can navigate adult services straight away when actually many struggle to do so. The project really helped young people navigate adult services in a way they were previously unable to, as they were supported through the process of getting and benefitting from support.

The bespoke nature of support and mentoring was a key component in success, with a focus on personal development, informed decision making, preparation and experience through work placements. Feedback from beneficiaries was that it gave young people a sense of hope that they'd lost and presented options they didn't know were available. The programme made them feel that they were not "given up on" even if they missed an appointment or deadline, and they felt supported and cared about. They also noted that they felt listened to and liked that they were engaged with on their own terms.

Very practical support via discretionary funds for travel, ID, work clothes etc, are effective when combined with good quality advice, guidance, and support. The discretionary fund component of the St.Helens CRF programme, and the CTYF programme in Manchester, are both areas of success. The CRF evaluation specifically identifies that the 'Beneficiary Fund' removed barriers, without which they would have been unable to move forwards to employment (Metro Dynamics, 2023).

Support to whole families through the Supporting Families programme (previously Troubled Families programme) also shows a lot of promise. The focus of the programme on building the resilience of vulnerable families, and on driving system change so that every area has joined up, efficient local services that are able to identify families in need and provide the right support at the right time.

3. Recommendations: what should the role of local and national governments be?

Local government

The long-lasting impact of young people missing out on school during the Covid pandemic will need to be reflected in local authority funding allocations. The increasing complexity of the support needs of school leavers over the past 2-3 years will very likely continue, meaning that there will be a greater number of people that need intensive support, and that a large part of this need will be clustered in very particular localities within local authorities. Youth employment can struggle to be prioritised alongside other competing priorities but tackling place-based NEET will require resource allocations that reflect the growing number of young people that are at risk of NEET and longer-term unemployment.

Authorities should invest more in targeted, proactive careers interventions from KS4 for those at risk of NEET, in concert with careers provision provided by schools. Waiting until young people become NEET at 16 years of age is a huge lost opportunity to get young people who are most at risk on to pathways that will support them into employment. Geographical targeting to reduce place-based risk will be a necessary part of this.

Authorities should look to invest in programmes over a longer-time period. Even good quality, relevant interventions and programmes that are short term? are unlikely to make an impact in the localities with greatest need, given the complexity of the challenges faced by many young people in these areas. Support services, particularly those that engage young people in activities that address their social and personal development and mental health challenges, will need to be in place. The forthcoming UK Shared Prosperity Fund, replacing ESF, will offer opportunities for local authorities to widen provision. This should be done learning from evidence from ESF funded programmes, much of which showed promise in tackling place-based NEET.

Support to young people can only have results if there is relevant and accessible provision in wards with the highest levels of NEET. Both the suitability and location of provision needs to be a consideration for local authorities. Good quality provision that meets needs is in short supply and local authorities should be working in partnership with providers to broaden the scope and lower barriers to provision. At the moment, much provision is too narrow in scope or imposes requirements in terms of qualifications or qualifying conditions, that exclude many young people that are seeking opportunities.

There is a need to engage families and young people in the design of services and we think that greater family focused support will increase impact. Authorities can also expand funding available for young people and families through the national Supporting Families Programme (2022-2025, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities).

We would encourage local authorities to share and learn from what works in tackling place-based NEET. The current diversity in service design and commissioning does not always reflect diversity of need. Greater sharing of information can lead to quicker uptake of impactful approaches. This covers a range of issues from resourcing, targeting, timing and intensity of interventions, partnership with providers of opportunities for young people, KPIs that are effective in driving performance, and the sharing of data to target and track impactful practice. We see excellent practice in all these areas, but it is not shared or taken up as widely as it could or should be.

National Government

National government has a key role to play in ensuring adequate funding flows to local and regional authorities and appropriate autonomy in how that funding is allocated, responding to local need. The long-lasting effects of school closures during the Covid pandemic needs action by both national and local government.

We are supportive of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and the decision to bring forward the people and skills element, although concerned that funding could be reduced overall. This will enable the continuation of effective approaches currently being funded through the ESF. We are also supportive of the Supporting Families programme and approaches that tackle wider family disadvantage. Place-based unemployment is often a result of deeper family challenges as it is individualised ones.

Initiatives to address supply shortages of provision that takes a long-term perspective, addressing personal and social development as part of skill and employment pathways should be scaled up. There is much unmet need for such support among a growing cohort of young people. Part of this provision should be financial support to employers, particularly SMEs, for apprenticeships and employment with training, to mitigate financial risks.

National government should enhance efforts to understand and provide services for young people that are outside of mainstream education. Enhanced services for young people in alternative education provision, and the rapidly growing number of young people that are 'electively' home educating, many of whom are receiving no professional CEIAG support, should be a priority (Career Connect 2022; Centre for Social Justice, 2022). There is no register of home educating young people and little or nothing is known about their geographical distribution. It is likely that these young people also cluster geographically and, without good quality support services, many of these will be at risk of becoming NEET when they turn 16.

National level support should come through replacements for Traineeships and Kickstart programmes, which offer tangible and attractive pathways to EET for young people.

Expanding programmes to young people who are not in receipt of benefits will make an impact on the localities with the highest levels of NEET among young people.

National governments should provide greater opportunities for local authorities to learn from each other about effective practices in tackling place-based NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Our view is that much good practice currently remains too localized and the impact is not always being scaled effectively. Related to this, national governments should continue to support the funding of innovation and evidence generation through What Works Foundations. While there is a fair amount of generic evidence about effective practices in reducing NEET, there is much less specific evidence on what works in particular circumstances, or why it works. Getting evidence of what works quickly to commissioners of programs is key. Long-term evaluations with robust evidence are important, but lower-level evidence that shows promise should be shared quickly to inform design and commissioning.

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Appendix iv: Centrepoint

Centrepoint response to APPG for Youth Employment: Employment inquiry

May 2023

Centrepoint is the leading national charity working with homeless young people aged 16 to 25. We are a registered social housing provider, a charity enterprise and a company limited by guarantee. Established nearly 50 years ago, we provide accommodation and support to help homeless young people get their lives back on track.

Every year, alongside our partner organisations, we work with over 9,000 young people, providing tailored support to help them address their support needs, with a particular focus on health, learning, housing and employment. In doing this we aim to help young people to explore their aspirations, achieve their goals and lead meaningful lives.

Unemployment and the inaccessibility of meaningful work are major issues for young people accessing Centrepoint's services. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation, and are happy that the APPG is taking the time to examine issues related to employment, particularly those experienced by disadvantaged groups such as vulnerable young people. We comment on some of the questions in the call for evidence below.

Summary

- Young people living in supported accommodation are regularly discouraged from accessing employment and gaining work experiences because their Housing Benefit is tapered at a faster rate than Universal Credit.
- Public transport infrastructure inhibits opportunities to access education, employment and training differently depending on where young people live. However, irrespective of these differences, many vulnerable young people feel unable to travel for work.
- A dearth of entry level opportunities in multiple sectors means that young people, particularly those with educational trauma and who have experienced homelessness, regularly find it difficult to access employment.
- Paid training and work experience opportunities are vital in enabling young people, particularly those with educational trauma, to re-engage with training and education and, subsequently, find employment.

1. What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment?

1.1: Disincentive to work while living in supported housing – the earnings of young people who work while living in supported housing are tapered at 55p per pound until they reach £111.32 per week under Universal Credit rules. After this point, their Universal Credit is tapered to nil and they are no longer passported to a full Housing Benefit claim. Money earned is, therefore, assessed under the much stricter Housing Benefit rules which mean that their earnings are tapered at 55p in every pound after they reach their applicable amount, minus a £5 disregard, of £66.05. This means young people's wages are tapered at a higher rate than their peers who are in receipt of Universal Credit and who are living in social housing etc. As such, young people living in supported housing are disincentivised from working because of the risk of entering into rent arrears and no longer being able to afford the high costs of supported housing.

Centrepoint staff highlight that this is a no-win situation for young people living in supported housing as, once they accept paid employment, they can easily end up in rent arrears because of the rate that the government sets supported housing service charges. Moreover, it means that many young people living in Centrepoint supported housing across the country are having to reject opportunities to gain work experience. For example, Centrepoint staff describe a situation in Sunderland where 6 young people were unable to take up paid work with a local employer – who offered them opportunities despite their lack of functional skills – because of the impact on their benefits and rent.

1.2: Issues with transport infrastructure and cost – In County Durham, the public transport infrastructure poses a major barrier for young people in accessing employment and training opportunities. Centrepont colleagues suggest that they can have work experience and paid opportunities lined up for young people in this region, yet difficulties getting to work mean that young people find it difficult to sustain their apprenticeships, training or employment.

For instance, young people might have opportunities to work in construction – meaning that they will have a 7.30am start. However, difficulties with public transport often mean that they have to decline or give up these roles, or indeed face negative repercussions from employers because of lateness/missed work days. This is because public transport might be delayed and, therefore, start later in the morning. Equally, even when public transport is running on time, it might take young people 2 or 3 buses to get somewhere in the same county.

Centrepont staff also report issues in Bradford, wherein young people are resistant to travelling very far – due, in part, to cost and the inefficiencies of the local travel network –resulting in young people giving themselves a 2 and half mile radius of places they will travel to. Moreover, in London, transport cost disadvantages vulnerable young people who are looking for/in work – disincentivising those who are already struggling to pay their rent, particularly if they are living in supported housing.

1.3: Variations in quality of Job Centre Plus service provision – Colleagues tell us that Jobcentre Plus Staff often have different levels of knowledge regarding the support they can provide to young people with experiences of homelessness. Staff state that this is particularly evident in terms of funding pots young people can access for interview clothes or travel costs: with some young people being told that DWP does not provide monetary support in this way. Equally, there are variations in quality with some young people experiencing potential sanctions because they are in education/training, despite recording this in their journal. As such, Centrepont staff are frequently having to advocate on behalf of vulnerable young people to ensure that they are not sanctioned. It is, thus, argued that there is a distinct lack of consistency between Jobcentre Plus Offices and staff members – and that, irrespective of conversations with local area managers, colleagues experience continuous difficulties when interacting with front line DWP staff.

Despite the recent implementation of Youth Employment Coaches, Centrepont staff are continuing to observe significant barriers for young people who are seeking to access meaningful employment. These coaches were introduced to support some of the hardest to reach young people, yet colleagues suggest that they, like other DWP employees, are not given the time and flexibility to work constructively with young people.

Furthermore, issues around digital exclusion can mean that young people, who are not in work and have limited access to money, can find it difficult to engage in job searches – and are, therefore, at risk of being sanctioned. Staff state that many young people do not prioritise internet access if living independently and that, for those living in supported accommodation, access to devices such as laptops or phones is not always guaranteed. Equally, if young people are using their phones to search for employment, they are frequently having to access expensive hotspots and use data.

1.4: Lack of access to childcare provision – Centrepont staff argue that young parents are at a significant disadvantage when searching for employment and accessing education and/or training. This is because it is very difficult for them to find suitable venues that accommodate for and will look after their children. Staff suggest that service providers need to think about how they can co-locate training provision with childcare services – using locations that have crèche rooms and trained childcare workers that are adjacent to where the parents are learning. This co-location is deemed to be vital as colleagues suggest that young parents

often find it difficult to leave their children with others who are not previously known to them, and that they struggle to find and access suitable child care that they can trust.

1.5: Lack of entry level jobs - Centrepont staff in London suggest that there a lack of level 1 jobs in areas such as hospitality, relative to the number of young people who are using Centrepont services and are ready to move into employment. They also say that young people do not necessarily have an awareness of the entry level jobs that are out there, beyond roles in catering or the service industry generally. Moreover, there are distinct barriers to young people, who have had an interrupted education, experienced homelessness and/or or disadvantaged in other ways, due to the high qualification criteria required by many entry level jobs. These types of jobs often require GCSE's and A levels as minimum qualifications – yet many of the young people that Centrepont support have not had opportunities to attain these credentials. Furthermore, many of these young people find it difficult to gain functional skills in later life while using services offered by organisations like Centrepont. Nevertheless, Centrepont staff state that these young people are sufficiently capable to access and thrive in entry level employment, and that they just need to be given a chance. This issue is also noticed in apprenticeships, with young people who have not been able to sustain education and achieve outcomes such as GCSEs and A Levels being blocked from accessing a significant proportion of these roles.

1.6: Lack of training opportunities – Centrepont staff state that in Barnsley there are a dearth of free training opportunities that young people can access. This is particularly evident in respect of courses that many young people aspire to accessing such as childcare or forklift truck driving. By contrast, in Bradford, staff highlight that there are a number of free training opportunities for their young people. As such, Centrepont staff argue that access to training opportunities is a postcode lottery.

a. Who are the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place based level?

1.7: Young people living in supported housing – Young people living in supported housing aspire to access employment and develop careers, but while they are in supported housing they can't advance on these goals – and if they do they frequently end up spiralling into issues with arrears and potential eviction. One reason for this is that the types of jobs they go for aren't well paid – meaning that their earnings can't make up for their reduced housing benefit allowance and they are, consequently, put in significantly precarious positions with their rent. Centrepont staff can mitigate for this by trying to help young people to get better paid work or support them with budgeting. However, these actions are often not as effective as young people not working and, thus, receiving their full Housing Benefit allowance.

1.8: Young people with experience of gang activity – Colleagues in Lambeth highlight that vulnerable young people previously engaged in gang activity suffer from difficulties reintegrating into employment due to rates of pay in entry level jobs. Centrepont staff also suggest that men involved in/on the periphery of gang related activity can become invisible to support services because of the significantly diminished range of places and activities in which they can travel and be involved. For example, young people in London are often unable to participate in training activities wherein they would gain skills in scaffolding or forklift truck driving because the opportunities are in neighbouring areas or boroughs. Similarly, vulnerable young people can find it difficult to engage with services, the Jobcentre and/or social care when their offices are in neighbouring areas or boroughs.

1.9: Young people who have had difficult experiences of education - Young people using Centrepont services frequently struggle to re-engage in education at later points in their lives, i.e., when engaging with Centrepont while living in Supported housing and/or taking part in CP Works programmes wherein they might participate in functional skills Maths and

English classes. This is often because of the extent of the educational trauma experienced by young people in both primary and secondary schooling.

Colleagues also report that it can be difficult to promote the value of functional skills like maths and English to young people who have experienced educational trauma. This can be because opportunities for learning at later points in life are not associated with progression and are not, therefore, considered to be rewarding – comparative to other opportunities such as zero-hours contracts. Accordingly, Centrepoint staff suggest that young people should be motivated to reengage with education – by offering work experiences and opportunities for paid employment as a result of learning.

2. What place based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities?

2.1: Centrepoint's Independent Living Programme – in areas of Manchester and London, Centrepoint have developed their own Independent Living accommodation – a type of fixed term and genuinely affordable housing offered to people who would otherwise struggle to access tenures in the private and social rented sectors. Tenants living in Independent Living accommodation pay a third of their annual earned income towards their rent and have to be in work or an apprenticeship as a condition of their tenancies. This combination of deflated rents and focus on employment/ apprenticeships means that young people living in Independent Living accommodation in Manchester and London can move beyond relying on benefits and/or precarious & zero-hour employment. This is because Independent Living provides a stable basis from which young people can begin developing themselves and planning for their futures.

2.2: Centrepoint's Get set go programme – This programme offers young people 3 weeks in a classroom where learning is grounded in the skills needed to successfully take on jobs in a sector/with a specific employer. Classroom learning is designed in collaboration with employers such as Kier – a construction company – enabling the participating young people to attain relevant training. Moreover, the programme enables young people to gain relevant real-world experience, by taking them outside of the classroom and into the workplace.

Additionally, employers will come into the classroom and talk about their industry, enabling young people to have a real-world understanding of what the workplace is like. This type of activity also enables young people to develop rapport with staff, thereby promoting the capacity to relate to staff members. In this way, young people may develop an understanding that a job in the industry/with the employer is possible.

At the end of the programme, all participating young people will have a minimum of a reference from the employer – someone with cache in the industry - and a guaranteed interview if a suitable vacancy is available. In the North East, this model has enabled 24 young people to get roles in the construction industry.

2.3: Paid and supportive work experience opportunities – Centrepoint staff highlight that Pret regularly provide vulnerable young people with opportunities to access employment. To achieve this, Pret have a week long induction & experience period wherein young people gain experiences of roles and an understanding of whether they are suitable and/or desirable. After this, Pret provide a paid 12 week training programme, called the Rising Stars Programme. Centrepoint staff state that there should be more programmes similar to the Rising Star Programme so that young people can have an established route from learning to paid employment.

Colleagues highlight that Old Roastery Coffee in London also provide paid training and employment experiences for young people, as well as the British Heart Foundation which

provide paid traineeships to vulnerable young people. Similarly in the construction industry, Centrepont work with Travis Perkins who provide young people with paid placements from which they can work for the company or enter into the wider sector.

2.4: The accessibility of opportunities/being able to see diverse staff – enabling young people to see that employers take on people from similar backgrounds to them. For example, Centrepont work with a construction organisation whose female staff come to Centrepont services and talk to young people about their roles – enabling the young women who Centrepont support to understand that they can work in the sector. This example suggests that organisations need to showcase that they have diverse array of staff so that young people in the areas in which they operate will aspire to work for them. To do this, these organisations need to go to community centres and youth hubs, preferably as a way of showcasing that women and people from ethnic minority backgrounds work for them, encouraging young people from diverse backgrounds to apply for roles.

Appendix v: City and Guilds

Submission from City & Guilds to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment inquiry on Place based approaches to tackling youth unemployment

About us

For over 140 years we have worked with people, organisations and economies to help them identify and develop the skills they need to thrive. We understand the life changing link between skills development, social mobility, prosperity and success.

We're a Royal Chartered Institute and a registered charity, everything we do is charitable. We invest our surplus into expanding and enhancing our solutions across all of our brands, to meet the changing needs of organisations and industries. And through our City & Guilds Foundation we amplify our purpose by focusing on high impact social investment, recognition and advocacy programmes which remove barriers to getting a job, celebrate best practice on the job and advocate for jobs of the future.

We are committed to helping young people in whatever way we can, and our submission to the APPG's inquiry will focus on both our work as an organisation in tackling youth unemployment as well as findings from our recent report, Youth Misspent.

From our own work, we are committed to helping young people through the following:

Skills awarding and training

1. We are extensively invested in making a success of the new T-Level qualifications – high quality, technical qualifications for talented young people which allow them to go straight into the workplace, go onto apprenticeships or gain UCAS points to go on to university. City & Guilds has won eight T-Level contracts to date.
2. We were involved in multiple apprenticeship trailblazer groups, supporting the creation of the new occupational standards and now offer 60 apprenticeship standards across a range of sectors.

3. We provide qualifications, traineeships, apprenticeships and bootcamps, targeted at young people, across a whole range of sectors in high demand skill areas; including engineering, transport, business, information technology (IT), education, manufacturing, construction. We also work with industry to develop qualifications in emerging skill areas, e.g. electric vehicle charging installation and retrofitting.

4. We have supported the Business in the Community Skills Exchange/Job Coach scheme and a scheme providing credentials for employer mentors. This is aimed at young people who do not have support networks and designed to connect local employers to local young people.

5. We are creating a network of City & Guilds training providers across the country that will help to drive up quality, increase innovation and better meet skills demand – particularly in industries where there is high and often unmet demand for highly skilled workers.

City & Guilds Foundation

1. Our charitable Foundation works to remove barriers to entry to the workplace for young people, via a programme which includes social investment, bursaries, and investment in prison education.

2. Through our partnership with IBM, our Foundation has been given special access to IBM Skills Build – a learning platform that offers new and curated digital learning content to allow young people to upskill for the digital economy or take the first steps towards a new career.

3. Our Foundation recognises organisations which deliver excellent workplace training via our Princess Royal Training Awards.

Executive summary

This is a submission from City & Guilds to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment inquiry on place based approaches to tackling youth unemployment. The submission covers:

- Our research insights on who the most disadvantaged groups are
- Insights on what impact place/location has and suggested actions to tackle this
- Proposals to unlock better career opportunities and achieve young people's ambitions
- Recommendations for national government to tackle youth unemployment

Submission

Our Youth Misspent report, published in December 2022 is based on a survey of 5,000 18-24-year-olds living in the UK, many of the findings are used in the below responses.

1. What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment?

a. Who are the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place based level?

According to our Youth Misspent research, 16% of 18-24-year-olds are currently not in employment or education. That's roughly 859,000 young people out of work. Coupled with that, research from think tank The Work Foundation finds that young people who are working are more likely to be in insecure work (43% of 16-24-year-olds compared to 17% of 25-65-year-olds), putting them at higher risk of redundancy as the country enters into a recession.

Examining those young people who are most disadvantaged our research found:

- Of those who are currently studying or unemployed, 9% told us that they never intend to start working.
- Of those young people that are working, 41% are in part-time jobs, with 6% working only eight hours or less a week. They are also typically working in lower income and less stable industries – with accommodation and food services, education, and human health and social care being the top three areas of youth employment.
- Almost half (46%) of young adults are still receiving financial support from their family. With more than two in five (42%) young people who are working still receiving financial support from their family. Those living in London (50%) and the South East of England (49%) are most likely to receive such support – underlining both the highest costs of living, but also the likelihood of their family to be able to provide such support.
- 3% of 18-24-year-olds have no formal qualifications. A further 25% have a level 1 or 2 (GCSE or lower) as their highest level of qualification. With young men significantly more likely to have achieved a lower level of education than young women.
- Two out of every five 18-24-year-olds (38%) received free school meals at some point during their education. Those living in the North East of England (42%) are most likely to have received free school meals when looking across regions. Young people from some minority heritage backgrounds (58% Bangladeshi; 55% Caribbean; 46% white and black mixed heritage) are also more likely than average to have received free school meals, as are those with autism or ADHD (49% and 48% respectively).
- 45% of 18-24-year-olds who are currently unemployed received free school meals at some point during their education. When looking at other hardships facing young people, we found that one in ten (10%) have been in the care system at some point during their lives. This is the same regardless of their socio-economic background, with more young men (15%) than young women (6%) affected.
- One in five (19%) young people have been, or still are, a carer for a relative – this figure is slightly higher for young men (21%) than it is for young women (17%). Perhaps unsurprisingly, being a carer at a young age is impacting the education and employment trajectory for these young people, with 28% of young carers working less than eight hours a week.
- One in twenty (5%) young people have already been through the prison system. This is more likely to be the case for young men (9%) than young women (2%) and a large proportion of those who have been through the prison system were also in receipt of free school meals (59%).
- Almost a third (30%) of young people don't think they will ever be able to achieve their career ambitions. This is highest amongst those who are currently not working (35%) and those who have faced difficulties in their early lives, notably those who have been in the prison system (59%), been a refugee (54%) or been through the care system (44%).

b. What impact does place/location have on a young person's access to employment, training and education opportunities?

Our research revealed that young people are, on the whole, optimistic when looking to their ambitions for the future. More than half (57%) of the young people we spoke to expect they will be working in a better or more interesting job within the next five years and two fifths (41%) expect they will be promoted into a management position.

When young people were asked specifically what they believed was holding them back from achieving their career ambitions, the most popular answer was that they simply didn't feel confident or mentally ready.

At the same time, there is seemingly a lack of opportunities for young people, with one in five (19%) telling us that there simply aren't the jobs available in their local area. This was highest

for those living in the North West of England (21%) and lowest for those living in London and the South East (16%). With one in six (16%) saying there aren't enough opportunities for work experience or internships, the issue around job availability clearly persists before young people can even get their foot onto the jobs ladder.

Taking the above into consideration, it is clear that place does have an impact on access to training and employment opportunities and creates a strong case for devolution to local areas on budgets for skills and employment solutions.

2. What place based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities?

a. Who do these solutions work for, what does the evidence tell us about the demographics of young people benefitting from successful intervention?

We asked young people about some of the biggest challenges they faced specifically when it came to applying for jobs. The most popular response, for almost a third (30%) of all young people, was that they had been put off applying for a job advertised as entry-level due a lack of relevant work experience. A similar proportion (29%) said that they had struggled to even get interviews for jobs they applied to.

One in five (21%) young people told us that they had found it difficult to understand how to successfully apply for jobs, which rose to one in four in women (24%). As few as one in ten (13%) young people said that they found it easy to find jobs that they wanted to apply for.

When asked about the support they received from businesses when applying for jobs, only 13% of young people said they had accessed such a resource. This was highest for those based in London (16%) and lowest for those in the North West (12%) and North East (13%).

It is clear that a lack of access to work experience and support from employers is holding young people back from successfully applying to jobs, even those advertised as being entry-level.

When asked our respondents about what would help them to unlock better career opportunities and achieve their ambitions, the top responses were all centred around the need for more employer support and opportunities for work experience. Increased support from employers (33%), more internships with a guaranteed salary (32%) and a more welcoming workplace for young people (32%) were listed as the top elements that would help young people progress in their working lives. They also highly ranked a desire for more advice and support when applying for jobs (31%), more apprenticeship opportunities (30%) and better, more accessible careers advice and guidance (29%).

Unsurprisingly in the current economic climate, better financial support was also an important factor for young people. More than a third prioritised a desire for reduced university tuition fees (36%) and more financial support with travel and expenses for work experience, internships and training (34%).

Looking specifically at the application and interview process, young people have a clear wish list for employers. Two in five young people think employers should offer more work experience (40%), give young people better interview feedback (39%), and allow young people to use their life experiences as well as career experiences in job applications (38%).

3. What is the role of local government and national government in tackling youth unemployment at a place based level?

According to our research, only a quarter (26%) believe the Government is doing enough to support young people into work and a third (33%) believe employers are doing enough to

support them. Those who are currently unemployed are also the least likely to believe that the Government (19%) and employers (23%) are doing enough to support them. While this may be an expected observation, it highlights the need for government intervention to support those out of work – and demonstrates to employers the need to broaden their horizons and consider opportunities for upskilling and supporting those currently out of work to join the workforce.

Employers, education providers and Government all need to do a lot more to understand the unique challenges faced by young carers so they can better support them and ensure a fairer and more inclusive start as they move into the world of work.

Therefore our recommendations to government in tackling youth unemployment are:

Work with educators and employers to optimise existing skills interventions and fully utilise funding pots.

- Government should work with employers and educators to effect meaningful change now to ensure the skills system better meets employer needs, whilst also supporting the future of the Apprenticeship Levy.
- It is essential that the Levy (which is underspent by £2bn since it was introduced) and other skills and education funds, such as the Adult Education Budget, are allocated in the right places, and that unnecessary red tape is removed. This will ensure that funds can be spent as intended so more young people get the skills interventions they need to get into work.
- In the short term, apprenticeship underspend should be used to incentivise the adoption of apprenticeships, for example by reintroducing incentive payments for younger apprentices – which is a tried and tested solution.

Improve careers guidance and education from early years through to adulthood.

- Support and strongly encourage schools, from primary level, to embed careers content that's informed by labour market and job vacancy data and shows the breadth of opportunity across all sectors, salaries and the opportunities available in the local area.
- Introduce a high quality all-age digital careers service that helps people to understand what jobs are available – this should incorporate real time labour market data and have input from employers.

Put integrated interventions in place that specifically support disadvantaged young people to access education and careers.

- Provide more high quality and industry recognised training opportunities to offenders in prison to improve employment prospects and decrease reoffending.
- Provide more wrap-around support for young people leaving the care system to help them transition into work, for instance through improved access to mentors and/or coaches.
- Create more opportunities for people with low or no qualifications to get back into the education system and gain more qualifications.

Create an independent, objective Skills and Productivity Commissioner to keep the Government on track and committed to its proposals to deliver in lifelong learning – and provide stability for the sector. They should additionally have responsibility for:

- Ensuring that success measures are implemented in all new skills policy.
- Developing a Value for Money framework for that also takes into consideration equitable outcomes.

- Creating an evidence base for the skills sector and embedding impact assessment within programme design to avoid repeating previous mistakes.

Appendix vi: Duke of Edinburgh's Award

DofE Response to All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment inquiry into Place based approaches to tackling youth unemployment.

About DofE

For over 65 years we have been helping young people build life-long belief in themselves and the experience gained through DofE Awards has helped millions develop the essential skills they need for life and work.

The DofE is open to any young person aged 14-24. Each young person builds their own DofE programme – picking their own activities and choosing which cause to volunteer for – in order to achieve a Bronze, Silver or Gold DofE Award. The DofE is run in schools, youth clubs, hospitals, fostering agencies, prisons, sports clubs and more, all over the UK. Find out more at DofE.org.

Introduction

This consultation response was put together using evidence from DofE youth ambassadors, Operations Officers, and experts from both the youth and education sectors.

Our CEO Ruth Marvel is very happy to provide oral evidence to the APPG as part of this inquiry.

Summary

Young people face a unique set of challenges. They still feel the enduring impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on their mental health, and they face uncertainty about how their education will equip them with the necessary skills to access the jobs market. We believe that enrichment is crucial for ensuring that young people are equipped with the soft skills and positive mindset required to excel in the workplace. Young people also might not access enrichment activities due to their cost or perceived cost, and due to a lack of engagement with education (which leads to young people missing out on career-enhancing activities delivered by schools).

The Challenge

The CBI has reported that two in five of its members believe young people are not ready to enter the workplace after leaving school. Their report cites factors such as character, behaviour and attributes as key reasons why young people do not have the soft skills needed to succeed at work.⁶ Yet the answer to this problem may not be as straightforward as increasing the rigor of academic courses. The 2022 Tes Staff Wellbeing Report found that 67% of UK teachers believed that their current workload is simply unmanageable – much higher than the 36% international average.⁷ Ensuring young people can access enrichment activities through a variety of accessible settings (not just schools) may be a more realistic solution, rather than increasing teacher workload.

Case Study: Matt and Tish

⁶ CBI (November 2019), Education and learning for the modern world: CBI/Pearson Education and Skill Survey report 2019

⁷ Tes (February 2022), Tes Staff Wellbeing Report

Young people are more likely to access training opportunities if they are delivered in settings that they are comfortable in and by professionals that they trust. Take the example of Matt and Tish – a teenage couple who met at the YMCA in Darlington and both took part in The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award (DofE). Matt was kicked out of his home and Tish had suffered from childhood trauma. They were both living at the YMCA when they accessed the DofE, which was run by Darlington’s Engagement and Justice Service. The Award brought together young people living in the YMCA, young people in the court systems and victims of crime. Matt was able to gain a construction certificate through his Award, and him and Tish now live independently in a private rented flat. Matt works as a labourer and Tish works in healthcare.

Strengths of DofE

One of the strengths of the DofE is its highly localised structure. Most young people will access the Award through a licensed organisation rather than doing it under the direct supervision of the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award (although provision for this does exist in the form of DofE Direct). These organisations can be schools, local authorities, youth clubs, charities, religious groups, and a variety of other community organisations. This allows young people to access the DofE in a setting where they are already comfortable, allowing them to better ease in to participating in the Award.

DofE Business

DofE Business was set up in 2007 to provide young people in work with opportunities to take part in the Gold level of the Award as part of their employment. Currently, the following employers deliver the Award for their staff who are 24-years old or younger:

- Abellio UK
- Amey Group Services Ltd
- Balfour Beatty
- DFS Furniture Group
- First Group plc
- Heathrow Airport Limited
- Royal Mail Group Ltd
- RSM UK
- Schneider Electric Ltd UK
- St James's Place Management Services Limited
- The Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC)
- UK Power Networks (Operations) Ltd
- Vinci PLC

Between April 2022 and March 2023, 147 young people started on a DofE Business Gold Award. 35% of these young people lived in an area which ranked between 1 and 3 on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Within this particular cohort, 37% of the young people were from an ethnic minority background and 8% of them had an additional need. DofE Business benefits from a yearly completion rate of between 80% and 90% - young people benefit from the hands-on support offered by their employer, who help them to identify volunteering opportunities for their Award, as well as offering relevant activities within their own organisation. While DofE Business is not designed as a route into work, it encourages young people to develop within their own organisation and to gain key transferable skills that will help them sustain and enhance their employment over the long run. Young people taking part in DofE Business are all provided with a high standard of support, regardless of background.

Recommendation

We would like to see an enrichment guarantee for all young people. This would ensure that all young people can access enrichment opportunities that they can benefit from personally and professionally. This presents an opportunity to work with a combination of national and local stakeholders to ensure that all young people are able to access a minimum level of enrichment, providing all young people with the opportunity to gain vital skills for future employment.

Appendix vii: Future Voices Group - Youth Futures Foundation

Written Evidence Submitted by the Future Voices Group

About the Future Voices Group

The Future Voices Group (FVG) is part of the Youth Futures Foundation. The FVG puts youth voice at the heart of Youth Futures. It is made up of twenty young people who are 'experts by experience' when it comes to youth unemployment, acting as ambassadors for Youth Futures and advocates for young people across England on the issue of employment. We are a diverse, highly committed and passionate group who seek to dismantle the barriers that we have faced in our lives so far.

This consultation has been curated by the FVG's Systems Change sub-group, on behalf of the broader FVG. We decided to submit a response after being made aware of the APPG consultation by Youth Futures Foundation, as we felt that an independent, youth-led response was a key opportunity to maximise the impact of our youth voice.

This submission is based on a focus group which we facilitated, alongside the innovative use of an online Jamboard to collect direct feedback and thoughts from the broader FVG. Furthermore, we included our collective views as part of the Systems Change sub-group in the submission. In total, we engaged ten FVG members throughout the process.

As the FVG's Systems Change sub-group, our three core values are that we are **inclusive**, **optimistic** and **passionate**. This ethos frames our approach to the consultation response, and we welcome the opportunity to feed into future solutions that could effectively improve employment outcomes and livelihood for all young people in the UK.

Executive Summary

1. What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment?

- a. Who are the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place based level?
 - i. Marginalisation at a place based level is largely on par with the groups of young people who are systematically disadvantaged elsewhere. In particular, the FVG highlighted that young people of colour (especially in white-dominated areas), disabled individuals, young people with a criminal record, young people who have been out of education for a long time and young people who have been sectioned under the

Mental Health Act face additional barriers when accessing opportunities in their local areas. These barriers are compounded when the local authorities do not have the resourcing to provide targeted support.

- b. What impact does place/location have on a young person's access to employment, training and education opportunities?
 - i. Numerous members noted that opportunities are concentrated around London and the South, resulting in young people “constantly looking for opportunities down south”. This creates a host of accessibility issues for young people who do not live in these regions, limiting the extent to which they can fulfil their potential and worsening the North-South divide. There is also heavy oversubscription for good roles in cities where there are fewer opportunities per capita, e.g. Birmingham.
 - ii. The need to travel to access opportunities creates an uneven playing field for young people gaining employment or work experience. Members from North Devon and the East Midlands flagged high public transport fares which consume a significant portion of a day's minimum wage pay: a cost which would have to be fronted by the young person if completing training or work experience.

Members from rural areas noted that unreliable public transport infrastructure makes it more difficult for young people to take jobs with rigid shift patterns, limiting the opportunities available. There was also concern that young people with disabilities - e.g. with medical needs that prevent them driving, neurodiversity needs that make public transport unviable at commuting hours - would be excluded from opportunities that rely on in-person attendance.

- iii. In addition, local economies influence the nature of employment on offer in each location, and therefore the young people who might be included or excluded from it. In North Devon, for instance, employment is heavily seasonal and oriented around the retail and hospitality sectors. This creates insecure and potentially physically inaccessible work for young people, with few alternative options.

2. What place based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities?

- a. Who do these solutions work for, what does the evidence tell us about the demographics of young people benefitting from successful intervention?
 - i. Amongst the recollections of members of the FVG, there are several place based solutions that were noted, yet members reflected that these were relatively unsuccessful due to other barriers. The 2 common barriers of effectiveness for most place based solutions are the **lack of accessibility** and **over-generalisation** of the approaches that were adopted across the board.
 - ii. One of the examples of a place based solution that members of the FVG were aware of is the local job centre (i.e. in North Devon). However, the

lack of promotion of the functions of the job centre, alongside the logistical accessibility of the facility (not reachable by public transports, i.e. bus; and the centre being located uphill) became significant hurdles for members to meaningfully utilise all the relevant resources that could have been provided by the job centre.

- iii. Careers services that were provided in (certain) schools (highly dependent on the location/city that they were situated in) were one of the helpful resources for young people and FVG members to access employment training and opportunities as early as possible (starting from year 9). Unsurprisingly, the services may not be consistent depending on their location, but some schools in areas like Reading provided additional funding for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to access further support (i.e. the Morrisby Careers Test), which is helpful for them to better understand how they can plan ahead for their careers based on their personality and interest.
- iv. For schools that actually implemented effective careers support, members of the FVG benefitted from having a dedicated careers consultant who were able to provide specialised career guidance and advice. Besides, work experiences (especially when young people are fairly paid) organised by the careers services were also very helpful for students to gain significant understanding and experience in the workplace, whilst making good use of the spare time they had during the gap prior to starting their classes in university. Employment support for certain apprenticeship programmes were also useful for young people to consider various career options and professional development routes.
- v. However, the downside of *point iv* mentioned above, again fall under the scrutiny of their inconsistencies - specifically on the quality of support that young people actually receive in their respective schools. Some common issues include (but not limited to): **restrictive apprenticeship options** based on the location (i.e. only construction, mechanics, hair and beauty, etc areas of work are provided in North Devon), **limited consultation sessions** with careers consultant (i.e. only having one 30 minutes session in year 9 and year 12), **irrational prioritisation** of university over apprenticeship from teachers in schools (i.e. a Head Teacher of a member telling them: “you should aim higher and just go to university instead of doing an apprenticeship”). Most careers services are also **highly generalised**, thus young people felt that their individual experiences, expertises, disabilities and interests are not being taken into account seriously when receiving job advice or guidance.

3. What is the role of local government and national government in tackling youth unemployment at a place based level?

- a. The young people we spoke to could readily tell us the problems and hardship they faced in their areas in terms of accessing opportunities. However, they were much less forthcoming when discussing place based solutions, and even less so when considering the role of local and national government in tackling

the issue. Crucially, this means that the solutions on offer and the role that the government might be playing are **not visible** to those of us on the frontlines of the youth unemployment crisis. If we can't identify them, we can't use them: this means that current place based approaches are ineffective.

- b. On a local level, government should include significant and tangible efforts to better understand the relevant demographics of young people in the region, alongside the job opportunities that are realistically available for them. Any funding and plans to provide meaningful careers support and guidance should then be motivated by the statistics and information accurately collected by the local government to ensure they are **specific and highly relevant** to young people locally. This could ideally help resolve the underlying inconsistency of careers training and support, alongside the risks of over-generalising youth employment resources commonly provided through local job centres or careers services in schools.
- c. Nationally, the government should also work closely with **student-led groups** and **youth employment/social mobility charities** that are actively involved in closing the employment gap, especially across marginalised groups (i.e. from low-socioeconomic and ethnically diverse backgrounds) such as the Social Mobility Foundation and the Sponsors for Education Opportunities London in order to better understand areas that require further policy changes/fundings and how all parties can collaboratively improve youth employment prospects holistically across all parts of the country (including Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland).
- d. Further considerations for **better employment regulations** to protect the rights of young people (i.e. mental health and contractual rights of young people working in zero hours' contracts, banning unpaid work experience, etc) should also be focussed on by the national government to ensure young people feel respected and empowered to take full control of their career development positively.
- e. In short, the government - on both a local and national level - should therefore strengthen the way in which it tackles the youth unemployment crisis, and we support Youth Futures Foundation's policy recommendations and exemplar programme as a means of doing so.
- f. It is also essential that the government centres youth voice in its approach to tackling the issue. Whilst we are glad to submit this consultation response, we are acutely aware that similar consultations are indeed a mystified process, riddled with jargon and barriers to accessibility. Marginalised young people then become excluded from contributing their expertise, which is vital to developing an effective and holistic policy solution. We urge the government to broaden the scope of its role to better engage those at the heart of the issue.

Appendix viii: Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Written evidence provided by Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Rates of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), as well as the size of the cohort overall, have risen within Greater Manchester (GM) post-pandemic, with a concerning trend of young people unavailable through ill health and a general reduction in 'work readiness'.
- Young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), Care Leavers, those from workless households, the Electively Home Educated cohort, unaccompanied international arrivals and those living in poverty, supported accommodation, or those who are 'sofa surfing' are generally the most in need of support.
- Place is a critical element as to how young people perceive themselves and their future opportunities. Focusing on place based solutions can unlock the huge potential of trusted local organisations, networks and partnerships and ensure responsiveness and synchronicity between education, careers and employment support services to engender a 'whole person, whole system' approach.
- Place based solutions, which involve working at a city-region level to review intelligence, design local policy and respond to national initiatives such as Youth Hubs, ensure a holistic approach, with a 'no wrong door' policy critical to ensuring young people are not discouraged. Delivering to young people in their communities reduces significant barriers.
- Government should retain control of large-scale universal programmes, which are often geared toward more 'light touch' support and where volumes and resources outstrip what local government could reasonably deliver. Local government should be involved with co-design activity and driving tailored policy, programmes and interventions – recognising the unique needs of their place – and utilising local connections to serve those who national provision struggles to meaningfully engage.

ABOUT GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) is made up of the ten Greater Manchester councils (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) and the Mayor of Greater Manchester.

GMCA is run jointly by the ten council leaders and the Mayor of Greater Manchester. A variety of boards, panels and committees address specific areas like education, skills and work; digital; transport; health and social care; planning; and housing. The ten councils have voluntarily worked together for many years, predating the formation of the GMCA, on issues affecting the region.

1) What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment?

Young people and young adults are facing a range of issues and barriers – some individual, some systemic – the roots of which are evident before young people enter the labour market.

In January 2023, 5.6% of GM 16 and 17 year olds were not in education, employment or training (NEET) or not known, an increase from 5.1% 12 months earlier, mainly driven by 17 year olds. Of

particular concern, though, is the reason for becoming NEET: the proportion of young people 'unavailable' for education, training or work due to health conditions increased by around two thirds from December 2020 to December 2022.

Greater Manchester's (GM) local authorities have consistently fed back that health is increasingly a significant barrier for young people (YP), an issue which, for some, has been exacerbated by the pandemic and long treatment waiting times, increasing anxiety and reducing motivation, resilience, willingness to travel and positive outcomes in terms of employment and education.

Recognising these interdependencies, GM has undertaken longitudinal research at scale into young people's optimism for the future, skills, careers education and plans post-Year 11 through the #BeeWell programme⁸. Whilst there are encouraging indications about levels of optimism are returning to pre-pandemic levels, 1 in 5 year 10 pupils do not have hope and optimism about the future, and even the positive findings mask some significant variations and inequalities persist:

- there is a 15 percentage point gap in confidence in skills for girls and boys
- SEND young people are less likely to feel they will have equality of opportunity in their careers
- For young people that identify as LGBTQ+ there is around a 20% difference compared to their peers in wellbeing and life/work readiness indicators such as optimism, confidence, coping, feeling in control, as well as in feeling prepared after education (13% difference), and job prospects (c.10% difference).

Longer standing entrenched issues such as variable educational outcomes, lack of work experience (the pandemic saw significant reductions in the number of work-related opportunities being offered by employers and levels have not yet fully recovered) and soft skills desired by employers – which can often be inter-generational trends – are also significant. This is particularly telling for young people who are not following the established route to higher education, with knowledge of alternative route less well understood.

This shortage of soft skills is not confined to young adults with low/no qualifications; one of the effects of the pandemic has been that some young people remained in education, including higher education, for longer than they might otherwise, leading to a cohort of highly qualified young adults whose 'work readiness' is not commensurate with their qualification levels. As a result, many have taken entry level roles that might otherwise have been suited to their lower qualified peers, displacing non-graduates and making it more difficult for them to compete. This trend was seen, for example, in Kickstart; the policy intent was to support young people at risk of long-term unemployment but beneficiaries included graduates.

Disadvantage linked to worklessness can also be a factor for several reasons, ranging from the relative shortage of family members and wider role models demonstrating the benefits of employment, through to the reduced 'social capital' through which young people can access opportunities like vital employer encounters and workplace experiences that are known to increase employability and work readiness. In 2021 96,000 children (<16) in Greater

⁸ Building on the GM Life Readiness Survey, which was rolled out to schools by the GMCA between 2018 and 2020, #BeeWell is a programme that combines youth-led change and academic expertise to make the wellbeing of young people everybody's business. The programme originated in Greater Manchester (GM) from a collaboration between the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and #BeeWell national founding partners; University of Manchester, Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families and the Gregson Family Foundation. In two years, the #BeeWell survey has heard from 60,000 young people across 187 secondary schools in Greater Manchester.

Manchester were growing up in workless households – almost one in seven (15.5%) compared to one in ten nationally (10.2%)⁹.

These barriers can be exacerbated by further structural issues such as a lack of suitable and affordable housing, debt and spatial distance from opportunities, which has been worsened by a reduction in entry-level provision such as Level 2 Apprenticeships and Traineeships, due in part to changes in working patterns; shifts towards more home-based and hybrid working has meant that it can be difficult for employers to offer the additional support, supervision and training that younger/less experienced employers need and recruiters might favour candidates seen as more self-sufficient.

Whilst there have been many youth employment programmes and initiatives over recent years, too often they are short term and funding is precarious so even where there are successful projects and services, very few are resourced in ways that enable them to be embedded and rolled out as part of the employment support landscape for young people and young adults.

a) Who are the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place based level?

YP with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) consistently face significant barriers. Neurodiverse young people can experience more challenges and barriers accessing jobs and education opportunities, even when they have extensively engaged with employability skills provision. Changes in employer awareness, attitudes and employment practices are required to improve outcomes for this cohort, for example through the Disability Confident scheme and other employer-focused initiatives, and programmes such as the supported employment/ supported internships schemes that have been tested in GM.

Care Leavers have long been a priority group for GM provision and without sufficient support, this group consistently experience significantly worse labour market outcomes. This has driven the development of a GM Care Leavers Guarantee and a range of bespoke support developed for this cohort, including a dedicated app through which to access support and services and a digital inclusion package.

As discussed, young people from workless households or with family members who cannot work or do not actively encourage work as the norm can experience unintended disincentives, for example, reductions in family benefits if their child left education or began earning. This has been raised in relation to apprenticeships: whilst attractive for an individual to earn while they learn, they can have an adverse impact on household finances. This cohort often also lacks qualifications and work experience, which can become a self-fulfilling barrier.

GM's local authorities are increasingly reporting increased rates of NEET YP amongst the Electively Home Educated cohort, which has grown following the pandemic. Engagement with these YP poses challenges in that they inherently have limited interaction with the local authority and with other employability-related experiences/support offered through schools. This group are often lacking the employability skills, qualifications and socialisation which inform self-confidence and soft skills. This trend has also been replicated to a lesser extent within school educated YP who missed out on in education in traditional settings during the pandemic.

⁹ [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk)

International new arrivals, who can be unaccompanied, are often far away from the labour market and may not have sufficient language proficiency or other essential skills to enable access to employment or provision, other than ESOL, in which demand outstrips capacity.

Those living in poverty, supported accommodation, or those who are 'sofa surfing' – the latter of which anecdotally GMCA is hearing is increasing in GM – face significant barriers. These circumstances also often give rise to anxiety, mental health challenges and emotional health concerns, either diagnosed or undiagnosed, which is a barrier within itself.

b) What impact does place/location have on a young person's access to employment, training and education opportunities?

Place is critical to how young people think about themselves, not only in the present but who they imagine themselves to become in the future, including, but not limited to, career aspirations. A city-region like Greater Manchester can offer some incredible education and employment opportunities, that are specific to place.

There can be huge systemic benefits, such as more timely, granular and comprehensive labour market information for use within education, careers and employment support services, as well as locally developed brokerage, signposting and other platforms that join the dots across a range of public services and policy areas to help young people explore and access opportunities. Operating these services for young people and young adults in a place, particularly at city-region level, offers a deeper connection to a functional economic area, while striking a balance between sufficient scale to be effective yet sufficiently local to be relevant and responsive.

One of the most positive aspects of place/location is the many examples of trusted local organisations, networks and partnerships that are developing and delivering education and employment support to young people and young adults, particularly those facing complex barriers or otherwise furthest from the labour market. For some residents, these models will offer far better access to education, training and work than national alternatives as they are able to take a more holistic approach across a number of areas which can impact a young person, such as transport, health and social care.

However, it is vital that young people can see/feel a connection to place based opportunities; they must feel accessible, relevant and achievable, which relies on a stronger connection between what is taught in schools, the FE/HE/work-based training pathways, and the employment opportunities available in a place.

The factors described previously all contribute to a wider picture of spatial socio-economic inequalities, many of which are long-standing and require a 'whole system' approach to redress. Recent analysis of participation in GM-commissioned skills and work programmes has, unsurprisingly, shown that participation in certain types of education and training is not evenly distributed across the city-region footprint, nor are neighbourhoods in which residents appear to share comparable levels of education or employment disadvantage participating equally. However, these variations are often masked by data, particularly on national interventions where data is only available at LA level. Where the factors that impact labour market access/participation are hyper-local, the evidence/data must also be available at that level.

On a practical level, transport links and the cost and time to access employment opportunities are clear barriers for young people, with those who are struggling to engage

with education or employment often living highly localised lives, lacking the resources, confidence, willingness or (especially for those with caring responsibilities) the flexibility to travel. Travel to learn and travel to work patterns, for example, show that residents with low/no qualifications are less likely to travel outside of their district or even their neighbourhood for education, training or employment opportunities, and with the exception of community-based provision, education/training infrastructure is often concentrated in town/city centres.

The impact of place/location is not solely confined to residents who are unemployed, economically inactive or who have low qualification levels but also for those who have taken out loans for higher technical qualifications or degrees. Following publication of the government's HE Policy Paper and associated consultation on the reform of access to/eligibility for HE student finance, DfE's own impact analysis¹⁰ made some positive findings but also indicated that negative impacts and higher lifetime repayments "*are more likely than average to have characteristics of white or black ethnicity, from disadvantaged backgrounds, or reside in the North, Midlands, South-West or Yorkshire and the Humber*". Positive impacts are most likely to be felt by the highest earners, those from advantaged backgrounds/areas (including independently schooled and from high HE participation areas), and those living in London after graduation. There is a clear unintended policy consequence that will see talented young people from disadvantaged areas and the North moving to places with typically higher salaries in order to service debts arising from their education, perpetuating 'brain drain' cycles of the past.

2) What place based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities?

Place based approaches can help mitigate the effects of structural inequalities and improve outcomes and by taking a holistic approach – bringing together a 'whole person, whole system' approach which builds on existing services, assets and networks – including trusted grassroots, neighbourhood level organisations - to tackle disadvantage, as opposed to focussing on the individual 'problems' of YP. Although the programme has now concluded, VCSE led activity such as GM Hidden Talent (funded by UKCRF, building on the legacy of the earlier Big Lottery funded GM Talent Match) saw good results in supporting YP and young adults, often with multiple/complex barriers, who were not engaged with 'core' services offered by JCP. A highly personalised approach, with support delivered by work coaches based in local organisations, was key to the positive evaluation and job/education & training outcomes. Other insights included:

- Despite efforts by the DWP to improve take-up of Benefits and active engagement as a project partner, both young people and stakeholders had negative perceptions of the experience of making a claim for Universal Credit (or other Benefits) and attending the Job Centre. Barriers to claim included the social stigma associated with being a claimant, an inaccessibility in making and sustaining a Benefits claim, and fears about the repercussions of sanctions. With fears of poverty increasing, this low take-up of entitled Benefits is an urgent problem.
- Mental health issues for young people are increasing, exacerbated by the pandemic. Mental health and wellbeing are an important factor in the development of young people's sustainable employability and need to be recognised in any youth employment programme. Mental health conditions often intersect with other barriers such as being a care leaver, ex-offender, having a disability or being homeless.

¹⁰ [Higher education policy statement & reform consultation equality analysis \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- Structurally, youth employment programmes should ideally have permanent, secure funding. Despite the good outcomes achieved by the project, there were serious misgivings about such important work being allocated short-term funding.

GMCA's work on Youth Hubs and consultation with GM Youth Network has highlighted the importance of support and provision in one place – a 'no wrong door' approach which brings together provision relating to housing, mental health etc – that can also tap into YP's interests and build confidence. Youth Hubs within GM have successfully conducted sessions on beauty, landscaping, and street art to engage YP. Whilst there is space for co-existence of approaches which encompasses short appointments with a work coach at Job Centre Plus (JCP) locations for those who need the least support, there must also be a culture that allows for work coaches dealing with disaffected young people to spend the time they need to both encourage trust and rapport (with recognition that continuity in the job coach is central to this). Doing so delivers added value for the young person and increases the ability of the work coach to unpick often complex barriers.

Programmes such as Kickstart were well received by LAs and young people, with examples of placements being made permanent, although it is worth noting that this caused some displacement of learners understandably attracted by the offer of paid employment away from other provision such as Traineeships and, overall, the scheme under delivered on envisaged volumes. It should also be noted that, in DWP not providing granular, timely local data about the programme and its performance, opportunities were lost for local partners to amplify the reach and impact. Similar offers under ESF offering work experience alongside a salary or payment have been successful, particularly in the public sector.

Supported internships have been well received by local authorities hoping to give workplace experience to neurodiverse young people.

a) Who do these solutions work for, what does the evidence tell us about the demographics of young people benefitting from successful intervention?

Place based provision helps those living in some of the most disadvantaged areas and those that have several interlinked barriers. GM's experience is that place based delivery also supports geographical diversity and can address hyper local issues relating to the individuality of a place or community that has not been well served by national provision. Evidence tells us that assets previously under used or resourced can also benefit and become hubs of meaningful activity.

Feedback from LAs on the types of YP who are attending engagement events or engaging with this kind of provision are those who are experiencing mental health issues; are living independently; care leavers; attending alternative provision; and have SEN needs with or without an EHCP.

3) What is the role of local government and national government in tackling youth unemployment at a place based level?

Neither local nor national alone can deliver the nature and scale of activity needed. The challenge of tackling youth unemployment, wider labour market inequalities and enabling inclusive growth and productivity gains will require a combination of policy and interventions that must be undertaken at sufficient scale to have impact, balanced with activities that are flexible and responsive enough to tackle complex barriers:

- National: large-scale universal policy and programmes where volumes and resources required can only reasonably be led by central Government, or where a lighter touch approach to support is adequate to achieve a positive outcome for the individual. These national programmes must, nonetheless, work in the local context.
- Co-designed: partnership activity in which national policy and resourcing at scale are necessary but local needs can be met and alignment ensured through co-design of policy and/or co-commissioning of programmes with localities. In this way places can help government to target/view the interaction and interdependencies of skills, work and health policies and programmes in a place. Sharing of real-time data between sub-regional and national government to inform future policy would be valuable.
- Local: tailored policy, programmes and interventions designed and implemented locally for residents requiring more intensive or bespoke education, training and employment support and for whom core services or organisations do not work, enabling greater alignment of policy, programmes/funding streams and reduction in silo working.

GMCA and its 10 LAs have a convening role in bringing together stakeholders including JCP, further education (FE), providers, VCSE sector organisations etc. Local government is also key in shaping and directing provision in partnership with local stakeholders and specialists, as far as possible, so that it compliments rather than displaces other provision, focuses finite resources in the areas of greatest need, and drives forward strategic aims.

Local government, with its connections to people, place, employers, and third sector networks, is best placed to understand the needs of their local communities at a granular level, to identify gaps in support, and to develop programmes and initiatives that will address the specific challenges facing their YP. This doesn't just include skills and employment support, but all services that can help tackle wider inequalities. Local government provides important checks and balances on commissioned programmes, holding for-profit providers accountable, and also providing a more strategic steer to tackle issues holistically in a place, identifying gaps and wider system issues, and ensuring a role for employers and other stakeholders.

At local and national level, government must ensure scrutiny and appropriate resources to enable the levers and statutory duties which improve outcomes for young people, not just limited to the NEET policy space, but also taking into account broader policy areas such as youth justice and health. This will also drive greater integration between relevant policy agendas.

We recognise the need for oversight and that both local and national government must be held to account – including through the Greater Manchester Trailblazer deeper devolution deal. Nor should the burden of support for young people and young adults fall solely to localities: many of the barriers and challenges go far beyond what local government can or should tackle. But a place based 'whole system, whole person' approach, which is inherently local, would deliver better outcomes for jobs and employment support by responding flexibly to local need and utilising existing networks, relationships, and knowledge in a place. Landing national programmes that clash with or duplicate/displace local activity is inefficient and unsustainable. Consistently cited as a barrier is the complex eligibility criteria of national programmes – for example, requiring an EHCP to access supported internships, excluding many other young people who would benefit from this support – which does not usefully correlate with the often disordered lives of the YP in need.

This would afford Government space for a stronger focus on using legislative powers to create opportunities and a conducive environment for employment, for example by tackling

national issues with childcare, mental health treatment, reducing unintended disincentives to work through the benefits system, or incentivising businesses to employ and upskill young people.

Appendix ix: Local Government Association

LGA submission to the APPG for Youth Employment inquiry into place-based approaches to youth employment

1. About the Local Government Association (LGA)

- 1.1. The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. We are a politically led, cross-party membership organisation, representing councils from England and Wales.
- 1.2. Our role is to support, promote and improve local government, and raise national awareness of the work of councils. Our ultimate ambition is to support councils to deliver local solutions to national problems.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Councils want to ensure that every young person, no matter their background, has the tools and support to progress in life and reach their potential. Local government as democratically elected leaders of place, also play a key role in stimulating local economies and want to ensure that employers have a supply of skilled workforce to meet the current and future business demands in local areas.
- 2.2 The Local Government Association (LGA) works strategically with all tiers of local government across England and Wales. The response to the inquiry is based on our discussions with councils and combined authorities and their respective engagement with partners and VCS organisation in their local areas.
- 2.3 As part of their wider role in supporting children and young people and in shaping their local skills and employment system, councils have several statutory duties relating to ensuring all young people up to the age of 18 (25 for those with learning difficulties) participate in education or training. Despite having these wide-ranging responsibilities that demand close working with local providers, partners and employers, councils have very few formal levers over commissioning or co-ordination of provision to ensure their statutory duties are met. This makes it extremely challenging for local government to provide place leadership and coordinate, plan, target and join-up provision, or build in the right wider support for those with complex or additional needs.
- 2.4 Despite these challenges, councils are leading from the front in terms of supporting participation in education, employment and training through commissioning devolved and local discretionary provision, and by joining-up and adding value to national schemes.
- 2.5 Place makes a difference in young people's life chances, access to support and economic opportunities. Every area has its own unique labour market and economy, including a mix of jobs, qualification levels, unemployment, vacancies, levels of deprivation and geographic challenges, with often as many differences within regions as between them. A national one-size-fits-all approach cannot therefore deliver on areas diverse needs.

- 2.6 Councils and combined authorities, with the right powers and resources, could do more to bring together decisions around the economy, job creation, transport, skills and employment support and wider support services, to create a joined-up offer for young people and adults around the needs of place. The LGA's Work Local model is a ready-made blueprint for making this happen. By giving democratically elected local leaders the power and funding to work with local partners – businesses, training providers, the education system –to join up careers advice and guidance, employment, skills, apprenticeships, business support services and outreach in the community, they could deliver improved outcomes for young people at reduced cost. Work Local would allow councils to effectively deliver their statutory duties and provide the wraparound support for those with complex needs and those experiencing disadvantage.
- 2.7 To tackle many of the barriers young people are facing, there needs to be a joined-up, cross-Government approach to addressing vulnerability and supporting young people facing disadvantage. This must be backed by sustainable investment in the national benefits system to ensure it meets households essential living costs and investment in the local public services young people rely on, including SEND services, mental health services, children's services and youth services.

3. Issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment

- a) The most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place-based level**
b) The impact of place/location on a young person's access to employment, training, and education opportunities

- 3.1. One of the biggest issues facing young people is high levels of deprivation. Many of the barriers to employment experienced by young people are linked to deprivation and are inter-dependent, including health deprivation and low educational outcomes.
- 3.2. The most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place-based level continue to be those young people who have vulnerable characteristics. For example, care leavers, young people who have received social care interventions, those who have had an involvement with youth justice, young people with English as a second language or those who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Often a combination of these factors blends to magnify a young person's level of labour market deprivation.

Careers education, information, advice and guidance

- 3.3 Poor-quality and insufficient careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) remains a key barrier to youth employment. At present, provision of CEIAG is complex, patchy and fragmented. In any one area, schools, colleges, councils and national agencies like the National Careers Service (NCS), Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), Job Centre Plus, and Education and Skills Funding Agency deliver initiatives for different age ranges and groups, with no one organisation responsible or accountable for coordinating it with the local jobs market. Recent years have seen a plethora of new policies, initiatives and new bodies, some of which have proved counter-productive. While in schools, careers advice has been identified to be often inconsistent, not independent, and not start early enough.
- 3.4 Poor CEIAG risks disproportionately impacting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, as they are potentially less likely to benefit from resources and advice from family and friends about the breadth of career options.
- 3.5 Quality, locally tailored and independent CEIAG is vital to ensure young people are fully informed of the full range of careers and pathways available to them, including vocational

and technical education and training options, apprenticeships, and university degrees. It also plays an important role in raising aspirations.

- 3.6 It is important that CEIAG informs young people about the local and national job market, which industries/ sectors are growing, and which skills are in demand to support young people into quality jobs. Too often, young people finish training and struggle to find suitable employment or take up low-paid or insecure jobs that do not match their skills or interests. This can lead to frustration, disillusionment, and a lack of motivation to pursue further education or training.

Low educational attainment

- 3.7 Education and skills are a foundation for a young person's future career prospects and opportunities. Unfortunately, many young people leave school with no or few qualifications, leaving them without the qualifications needed to undertake further education or training. In 2021/22 only 82.9 per cent of young people by the age of 19-years-old were qualified to Level 2 and 74.9 per cent achieved Level 2 in English and maths respectively. According to the Department of Education (DfE), the Key Stage 4 disadvantage gap index (the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and all other pupils) has widened compared to 2020/21, from 3.79 to 3.84. It is now at its highest level since 2012.

- 3.3. Educational attainment also varies regionally. The DfE post 16 education and labour market activities, pathways and outcomes (LEO) research report reveals that post-16 education outcomes differ according to individual characteristics and regions. For example, individuals from London were more likely to move through further and higher education than individuals from North East and East Midlands after leaving school.

Mental health

- 3.4. Research by the Prince's Trusts identified that the most common reason why NEET young people are struggling to find a job or not looking for work is due to a mental health problem or disability (39 per cent). This is echoed anecdotally by council services which work with young people.
- 3.5. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing issues in relation to mental ill-health. This is illustrated in many councils' local NEET data, which shows a significant growth in the number of young people who are not active in the labour market due to ill-health; with mental ill-health being a prominent factor. Somerset County Council report that at the start of this academic year 429 young people, nearly 9.0 per cent, (from a cohort of approx. 5,300) have withdrawn from their college courses. Some of these have found new destinations but over 65.0 per cent (283) are now NEET / Not Known. This is an increase from this time last year and the main reasons for withdrawal are mental health/anxiety/not coping with the course (these figures are based on local college data).
- 3.6. Councils' family and youth services report that the pandemic had a significant impact on many young people's development, from which some young people have not yet recovered. This has shown up in a variety of ways including increased social anxiety, more young people finding it difficult to engage with people outside of their family unit and having lower levels of motivation in school.

Transport connectivity

- 3.7. Transport is fundamental to connecting young people with education, training, job opportunities and support services. The high cost of public transport, lack of transport and long journey times in some areas. Inadequate transport connectivity is costing regions, for

example, poor public transport connections in cities in the North of England result in a loss of productivity worth more than £16 billion a year. Transport is a key barrier to youth employment in many rural areas. Furthermore, provider costs in rural areas are often higher due to similar issues as for young people, for example, the travel distance, poor transport links, low population density, hence low numbers of learner, that can consequently result in more limited provision for young people in those areas.

- 3.8. Supporting under 25-year-olds with transport costs is vital to maintain equitable access to further education. Many councils are supporting young people with costs and transport issues in innovative ways, for example, [Derbyshire Wheels to Work](#) offers help to young people who are experiencing transport issues which are preventing them from getting to work, through a loan scheme providing young people with bikes, e-bikes and mopeds. Meanwhile, in the North East a 'Flexibility' smartcard has been introduced by Go North East and Co-Wheels that can be used for bus journeys and for access to a car club.

Digital connectivity

- 3.9. Good digital skills, accessible equipment and reliable digital connectivity are crucial to enable young people to fully participate in society and engage in education and employment systems. A lack of digital skills and digital access can severely impact on people's lives, restricting access to training, education and job opportunities, and leading to lower health outcomes, increased loneliness and social isolation.
- 3.10. Digital exclusion has three main causative drivers; access (people who do not have access to a digital connection at home); affordability (those who cannot afford a device, data or broadband connection) and ability (those who are excluded from digital access to a lack of skills or confidence). Digital exclusion due to affordability is more likely to be experienced by those from low-income households and is linked to other forms of deprivation. The cost-of-living crisis risks increasing digital exclusion and deepening the inequalities faced by the most disadvantaged young people in society.
- 3.11. [About 300 thousand young people lack digital skills and 700 thousand young people lack access to computer or tablet at home](#), with young people who are already vulnerable more likely to be digitally excluded. Research by [Three UK in December 2022](#) found that 49 percent of young people they surveyed did not have access to an adequate digital technology at home, with 33 percent not having access to a laptop or computer. Of those without access to a laptop or computer, the survey found that over two thirds (71 percent) found it difficult to do schoolwork or apply for jobs.
- 3.12. A recent LGA commissioned report on [the role of councils in tackling digital exclusion](#), found that whilst there has been important progress in closing the digital connectivity gap, some areas are being left behind in mobile coverage. There is also a substantial gap between rural and urban areas in gigabit coverage. [Analysis from the County Councils Network](#) shows just 21 per cent of premises in county areas have access to gigabit broadband. Ofcom Connected Nations Data shows educational attainment at Key Stage 4 tends to be higher in areas with higher fixed broadband access, which highlights the importance of a reliable broadband connection to supporting young people's educational attainment and future career prospects.

The impact of place on a young person's access to employment, training, and education opportunities

- 3.13. Many of the issues and barriers young people face are closely linked or exacerbated by deprivation, which is worsening with the rising cost of living. While there are pockets of deprivation in every community, certain regions and local areas of the country are more acutely affected.

- 3.14. Place does make a difference. Every area has its own unique labour market and economy, including a mix of jobs, qualification levels, unemployment and vacancies, with often as many differences *within* regions as between them – highlighting that a national one-size-fits-all approach will not deliver on areas diverse needs.
- 3.15. Young people in urban and rural areas also face different challenges. Learners and job seekers in rural areas often cite long journey times, cost of transport, scarcity of childcare, and accessible job opportunities for those with caring responsibilities as reasons for dropping out of a course or struggling to secure work. The Government should explore a rural premium to unlock talent, to allow councils to top-up providers where programmes may not be otherwise financially viable due to low participant numbers and large geographical areas. In urban areas, the largest disparities and greater socio-economic challenges will also need addressing.
- 3.16. Research for the LGA in 2021 found that labour force participation and jobs demand varies greatly across areas. However, there are also some common themes and patterns, most notably:
- 3.6.1 Low participation and low vacancies – experienced often in coastal areas.
 - 3.6.2 High participation and high vacancies – more common in the south.
 - 3.6.3 High participation and low vacancies – common in parts of London and the South-East.
 - 3.6.4 Strong growth in vacancies but low rates of economic activity – common in parts of the Midlands and North-West
 - 3.6.5 Areas that are close to the national average in terms of participation and vacancy rate – evenly spread across the Regions
- 3.17. This analysis showed that virtually without exception, all five area types are represented across all eight of the ONS-classified statistically similar areas – highlighting that a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to skills and employment support cannot be expected to meet areas diverse needs.
- 3.18. The Cities Outlook 2023 shows the employment rate, jobs, qualifications, and unemployment in cities in England. It also ranks cities with highest and lowest rates according to these metrics which demonstrates that place matters when it comes to employment and skills opportunities in an area.

4. Place-based solutions to removing barriers for young people accessing education, training, and employment opportunities

- 4.1. Young people were one of the groups worst impacted by COVID-19, both in terms of their participation in the labour market and the impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Youth unemployment can have significant long-term effects, with periods of unemployment having a ‘scarring’ effect on young people’s future employability and wage potential. Therefore, it is important to ensure that young people can access timely employment support to avoid long-lasting adverse impacts.
- 4.2. Councils, despite having wide-range statutory responsibilities for young people, have very few formal levers over commissioning or co-ordination of provision to meet them. Our research shows that the skills and employment system remain highly complex and fragmented – delivered across 49 employment and skills-related schemes or services across England, managed by multiple Whitehall departments and agencies, and delivered over different boundaries by various providers – with no one local point of coordination. This is echoed by a National Audit Office report which highlighted that there are a growing number of national skills programmes which are disjointed and hard for learners, employers and training providers to navigate.

- 4.3. Funding for skills and employment support is short-term, fragmented and held centrally, and powers to affect change are too remote, unless a council is situated in an area with a devolution deal. This makes it extremely challenging for local government to provide place leadership and coordinate, plan, target and join-up provision, or build in the right wider support for those with complex or additional needs.
- 4.4. Despite these challenges, councils continue to work hard to support participation in education, employment and training through commissioning devolved and local discretionary provision, and by joining-up and adding value to national schemes.
- 4.5. Many councils have put in place targeted initiatives and developed pathways to successfully support young people who face additional barriers or have complex needs into work or further training. This includes targeted work with young people with special educational needs, young offender backgrounds, those from ethnic minority groups, and those with experience of the care system. Such interventions are additional to standard national initiatives and are typically financed through council funding or through a range of external funding bids. For example:
- Hackney Borough Council has designed a number of programmes focussed on an inclusive approach to employment which engages and supports those experiencing disadvantage in the area, including, care leavers, young people with disabilities, and young black males. This includes their supported internships programme that provides a stepping-stone to employment for young people with SEND. Five years ago, the council also established 'Hackney Council Apprenticeships' to create new placements within the council. The scheme proactively recruits underrepresented groups and ensures that those that may not normally get invited to interview are given a first interview opportunity.
 - Devon County Council offers mental health support through the Devon Youth Hub / Exeter Works. The programme provides open access support, 1:1 bespoke support for young people, and group work tailored to LGBTQ young people, young carers, children in care, care leavers, those experience mental health issues.
 - Bristol has developed Bristol Works, a programme dedicated to providing work experience, mentoring and skills development to children and young people who are most at risk of becoming NEET. The programme has supported the delivery of:
 - o Career Coach: a bespoke five-year coaching programme that matches children in care with local employer mentors. It matches volunteer coaches with young people, aged 13 or 14 and looked after by the local authority, with inspirational local professionals, based on their interests and preferred ways of learning.
 - o Bristol WORKS for Everyone: tailored provision for SEND young people that starts from year 9 with careers exploration and moves beyond year 11 with progression planning and supported mentoring into paid employment.
 - o Realising Talent: provides additional support to SEND 14-16 year -olds in need of support to improve their opportunities at, and transitions to Post-16 education and training.
 - South Gloucestershire Council have established its Community Learning and Skills Service which provides both learning and career coaching and mentoring opportunities for residents. Working closely with other providers and business, and as part of the West of England Combined Authority it is bringing together adult community learning, employment support and post 16 and pre-16 transitions support, to create a coherent local offer which is available for residents of all ages through a 'one-stop shop' model.

- [Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils](#) provide a tailored support offer for young people facing additional barriers to further education, training and employment through a number of initiatives. At the [Thrive Project](#), a multi-disciplinary team of qualified youth workers, teachers, curriculum experts, SEND experts and social, emotional and mental health experts, provides tailored alternative provision with 1:1 mentoring, coaching, personal careers advice and guidance and wider bespoke support.
- [DurhamEnable](#) is a Durham County Council led Supported Employment Service for individuals who are aged 18 and above and have learning, physical, and/or mental health barriers to employment. The council is also addressing its skills needs through apprenticeships and has linked the council's ambition for a thriving economy with more and better jobs to an [Apprenticeship Strategy](#).
- [East Sussex County Council 'ESTAR'](#) team, based within the employment and skills team, worked with community sector partners to identify ways of delivering bespoke and tailored inclusive provision to those who are homeless and devised and trialled the [Moving on Up initiative](#).
- [West Yorkshire CA](#) launched its new Green Jobs and Careers support on their award-winning all-age careers platform [Future Goals](#). The website was created to support young people (as well as their teachers, educators and carers) and adults in their decision making around upskilling, retraining and find available apprenticeship and employment opportunities. The website also hosts a West Yorkshire jobs listing, access to free digital training, SEND support and case studies and confidently surpassed its targets reaching 3.2 million people in the 2021/22 financial year. The Combined Authority also created a Green Jobs Taskforce and a [Manufacturing Taskforce](#), developing strategic recommendations and priorities to create and future-proof our workforce with the right skills.

5. The role of local government and national government in tackling youth unemployment at a place-based level?

- 5.1. With the right powers and resources, councils in every area could do more to bring together decisions around economy, job creation, transport, skills and employment support and wider support services, to create a joined-up offer for young people and adults. [Work Local](#), our plan for a devolved and integrated skills and employment system is the blueprint for making this happen. Work Local would give democratically elected local leaders the power and funding to work with partners, such as schools, colleges, further education providers and local employers, to join up careers' advice and guidance, employment, skills, apprenticeships, business support services and outreach in the community.
- 5.2. With one pot of funding to plan and commission provision, a Work Local approach would enable councils to create services tailored to the needs of their local youth population and build in wraparound support for those with complex barriers.
- 5.3. The underpinning principles of Work Local are:
 - a 'one stop' service rooted in place
 - with clear and responsive local leadership
 - that is driven by local opportunities and needs
 - within a common national framework for devolution of strategy, financing and delivery of employment and skills
 - underpinned by Devolved Employment and Skills Agreements (DESA)
 - delivering better outcomes at lower cost

- 5.4. Devolution of skills and employment support services to all areas is vital to accelerate and expand place-based approaches that have proven effective. It would also allow local government to take a whole-systems approach, aligning decisions around infrastructure and capital investment with learning, skills and employment to ensure young people benefit from new investment and job opportunities, including ensuring young people are equipped to move into emerging industries in the green and digital sectors where there are skills gaps.
- 5.5. As conveners of place, councils are the only organisation that has the access to local data and intelligence and the existing relationships with local partners (schools, providers, businesses and other partners, such as the voluntary and community sector) to plan and commission a tailored, integrated offer, which builds in wrap-around support and joins up the supply and demand side of skills and employment programmes.
- 5.6. This includes identifying and re-engaging NEET young people with early support; providing careers advice and guidance to those who are vulnerable to support effective post-16 transitions and promote the well-being of all children and young people. It would also allow councils to join up progression pathways across their place, align provision with local and national skills demand and job opportunities and take into account travel and access to training and work opportunities, which can act as a key barrier to access particularly in rural areas.
- 5.7. Our independent cost benefit analysis found that for a typical medium sized authority, introducing a Work Local Model could improve employment and skills outcomes by about 15 per cent, meaning an extra 2,260 people improving their skills each year and an extra 1,650 people moving into work. This would boost the local economy by £35 million per year and save the taxpayer an extra £25 million per year.

Careers education

- 5.8. The LGA have long called for a radical overhaul of careers advice, to end the current inconsistent patchwork of careers activity. As part of a Work Local model, we are calling on Government to devolve careers education, information, advice and guidance to local areas.
- 5.9. Locally commissioning a comprehensive careers service for all ages, would help to close the gaps in the current system and ensure that all young people have access to high quality information, advice and guidance to make the right decisions about their future.

The role of national government

- 5.10. To tackle many of the barriers young people are facing, there needs to be a joined-up, cross-Government approach to addressing vulnerability and supporting young people facing disadvantage. Crucially, this must be backed by sustainable investment in the national benefits system and the local public services young people rely on, including SEND services, mental health services, children's services and youth services.
- 5.11. In February this year, research released by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Trussell Trust found that Universal Credit allowance falls £140 short a month of the cost of food, energy and other essentials. The most effective intervention to tackle childhood poverty and disadvantage, and to reduce the barriers young people face to education and employment due to deprivation, would be to reform and adequately resource the national benefits system so that it meets true living costs.
- 5.12. Government must shift to a whole system approach to prevention, intervention and treatment to improve young people's mental health, meet current unmet mental health needs and tackle service waiting times. This will require investment in all parts of the mental health system, investment in community provision and the wider services that support

wellbeing and tackle the socio-economic drivers of mental ill-health, such as housing and welfare support. We also are calling on Government to roll out early support hubs nationwide to help the increasing number of young people who are struggling with mental health issues. These hubs allow young people to access mental health support in the community without a referral.

- 5.13. Young people with SEND are significantly less likely to be in work and, on average, have much lower earnings 15 years after Key Stage 4. The Government have now published their SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan which we responded to. In our response we welcomed the proposed national standards, which will clarify the support available and who will be responsible for delivering it, as well as the focus on early identification of needs and support. The focus on improving levels of mainstream inclusion is also welcome and will be crucial to improving outcomes for children. We are however concerned the proposals set out in the improvement plan do not go far enough. To improve support for young people with SEND we are calling on Government to give councils additional powers to lead local SEND systems and hold partners (such as health partners) to account for their work to support children and young people with special needs.
- 5.14. Councils continue to see significant pressure on their SEND budgets, with demand for support growing by almost a quarter in the last year alone. Therefore, while the SEND reforms are being implemented councils urgently need additional support to manage down and eliminate their growing high needs deficits, to ensure all children and young people receive timely support.
- 5.15. An intervention that has been shown to help the employment outcomes for young people with learning disabilities is supported internships (structured, work-based study programmes for 16 to 24-year-olds who have an Education Health and Care Plan). Councils would be better equipped to increase investment in these type of programmes with devolved and sustainable funding.

Apprenticeships/ T Levels

- 5.16. Local Authorities are major employers in England with a workforce of over 1.2 million. As a significant employer and apprenticeship levy payer councils provide support for young people to gain access to employment with their local council. The LGA has been providing improvement support to councils as employers to help them create more apprenticeship and T level Industry Placement (IP) opportunities.
- 5.17. All councils in England have active apprenticeship programmes and since the launch of T levels in 2020 councils have been providing IPs where training providers exist. More of course can be done and having the appropriate brokerage in place to help all employers work successfully with providers is essential. Although we welcome the additional investment in provider support for example to help increase T level placements, direct employer incentives have a greater impact in changing employer behaviour and consideration should be given to how and when incentives can be used to increase more young people accessing opportunities.
- 5.18. In a recent LGA T level survey of councils the majority said they would provide more Industry placements if incentives remained in place to help with the additional capacity needed to provide placements for young people. The LGA is committed to working with DfE to promote how T levels and apprenticeships can continue to be a positive experience for young people to gain long term employment.

Appendix x: London Councils

London Councils response to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment Inquiry

London Councils represents London's 32 borough councils and the City of London. It is a cross-party organisation that works on behalf of all its member authorities to make the case for powers, freedoms and resources to best serve the needs of London's residents and businesses.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 London's labour market is still experiencing a slow recovery post-pandemic, with the UK's highest unemployment rate (4.7%), and youth unemployment rates 4.2pp higher than pre-pandemic levels and 0.9pp higher than the UK rate.
- 1.2 Young black Londoners are twice as likely to be unemployed as their white counterparts. There is a widening disability employment gap, and education, training and employment (EET) outcomes are also poorer for young care experienced Londoners, amongst others with complex barriers into work.
- 1.3 Youth 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET) and unemployment figures vary greatly by borough, demonstrating the disparity between outcomes at both the regional and borough level.
- 1.4 High housing and transport costs disproportionately affect young people in London, with outer London suffering from poor connectivity issues. When limited to their local area, pressures such as threat of gang violence can prevent young people from accessing opportunities. A multi-agency, place based approach to youth provision in London is needed to bring opportunities closer to young people rather than expecting them to overcome these multiple barriers.
- 1.5 London's boroughs and Sub Regional Partnerships (SRPs) are leading the way in addressing youth unemployment challenges. We highlight approaches at a subregional, borough, and ward / estate level, that are effective in removing barriers for young people in accessing EET opportunities. These include providing and enabling a multi-agency approach; tailoring services to work for young people at a borough level, developing specialist and more intense support for vulnerable groups of young people, listening to young people and actively co-designing services with them, and pursuing hyper-local approaches at a ward or neighbourhood level.
- 1.6 With unique knowledge of the youth makeup in their localities, coupled with relationships with local employment, health, housing and social care providers and employers, boroughs are well placed to provide tailored solutions to support young Londoners who are furthest from the labour market into education or work.
- 1.7 However, borough and other local youth employment services, particularly those provided by the voluntary and community sector, are heavily reliant on Section 106 and European Social Fund (ESF) funding. They face a future of uncertainty as these funding routes wind down.

- 1.8 For boroughs to be able to fully serve young Londoners, and provide integrated wraparound support for young people with multiple and complex barriers, there should be further devolution of employment and skills provision.
- 1.9 This would encompass a fully devolved, 'local first' approach to all employment support services, where services are provided at the most feasibly local level, enabling join up with other local services.
- 1.10 National government should continue to work closely with councils, SRPs and community groups to improve data at a granular level. Devolved programmes clearly evidence the importance of data sharing to better identify, support, and target young residents, especially those from complex/disadvantaged backgrounds.

2 What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment?

- A. *Who are the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place based level?*
- B. *What impact does place/location have on a young person's access to employment, training and education opportunities?*
- 1.2 London's labour market was hard hit during the pandemic and is still experiencing slower recovery in comparison to some of the UK regions. London has the highest unemployment rate (4.7%) among the regions and for the last quarter London's unemployment rate remained 0.9pp above the average for the UK.¹¹
- 1.3 Some groups of Londoners are more significantly affected than others. Young Londoners continue to experience high unemployment levels. For the three months ending in February 2023, the youth unemployment rate in London was 16.3% which is 4.2pp higher than the pre-pandemic unemployment rate and accounts for 70,512 young unemployed Londoners. In comparison, youth unemployment rates for the whole of the UK were 11.4% in December 2022.
- 1.4 Young black Londoners are twice as likely to be unemployed as their white counterparts.¹² . ONS figures obtained by the Evening Standard show that 37.4% of black Londoners aged 16-24 who are economically active are unemployed, compared to 17.5% of white and 20.6% of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi youths. Research also showed that¹³ disabled people in London are more than twice as likely to be unemployed, due to social exclusion, segregated educational settings and a lack of support.
- 1.5 The Learning & Work Institute (2022) estimates that 41% of care-experienced young people are NEET, around three times the rate of all young people. Other groups of young people at higher risk of becoming NEET include young women, certain ethnic groups, those with physical and mental ill health, those with lower qualification levels, and those who experience socio-economic disadvantage.

¹¹ ONS LFS, April 2023.

¹² Source [here](#).

¹³ Source [here](#).

- 1.6 ONS data released in February 2023 estimate the proportion of London's 16-24 year olds that are NEET to be 11.5%.¹⁴ A key challenge in identifying who and where the most disadvantaged young people are in London is that data on NEET young people is not reliable or granular enough at a regional and borough level. Data releases are sporadic and are quickly out-of-date, meaning boroughs and local providers often struggle to point to these as evidence when designing provision.
- 1.7 London's NEET or 'Not known' 16-17 population in December 2022 is currently equal to 3.4%, which accounts for 184,680 16-17 year olds.¹⁵ However, boroughs vary greatly, with the largest proportions in Hammersmith & Fulham (9.2%), Haringey (5.7%) and Enfield (5.6%), compared to the lowest proportions in Harrow (1.9%), Barnet (1.5%), and Bromley (1.5%). The borough in which a young person is raised can have a profound difference on their outcomes.
- 1.8 Youth unemployment figures also vary greatly by borough, again illustrating the difference that place/location has on a young person's access to EET opportunities. Most recent figures for youth unemployment by borough in London show that the highest rates of unemployment for 18-24 year olds are in Croydon (15.8%), Barking and Dagenham (15%) and Lewisham (14.5%), with the lowest rates in Westminster (6.3%) and Camden (6.2%).¹⁶
- 1.9 London is one of the most expensive cities in the world, especially when considering public transport and housing¹⁷. Recent cost of living pressures disproportionately affect young people, who are some of the lowest paid workers. The rate of 18-21 year olds paid below the real Living Wage in London is 62.8%, compared to 49.5% in the UK as a whole.¹⁸
- 1.10 High-cost housing forces young Londoners into the outskirts of the city or poor housing. London's house price to earnings ratio has grown to 12.5 compared to a national average of 7.7. There has been a 15% rise in average asking rents over the past year. High costs of transport limit young Londoners' ability to travel around the city and access EET opportunities. London's outer boroughs also suffer from poor connectivity issues, compounding the problem.
- 1.11 According to recent polling conducted in March 2023, 99.8% of young people stated that affordability of living in London (the cost of living and the cost of housing) was the biggest reason that they would be unable to live in London in future, and therefore access its EET opportunities.¹⁹ One in five said that accessing work or studying opportunities was harder because of where they lived in London. Not only does London as a whole present challenges, but also the individual boroughs in which young people live.

¹⁴ Source [here](#).

¹⁵ Source [here](#).

¹⁶ Source [here](#).

¹⁷ Source [here](#).

¹⁸ Source [here](#).

¹⁹ Source [here](#).

1.12 When polled, 54.6% of young Londoners were most likely to want to work in the arts, entertainment, or recreation sector. 39.8% mentioned professional, real estate, scientific and technical activities, followed by education (32.4%). The mismatch between the work available in the arts (2.8% of jobs in London) and young Londoners' desires presents a challenge. Careers information, advice and guidance (IAG) should address this by highlighting the availability of non-'creative' jobs in creative sectors.²⁰

1.13 There is a disproportionate effect of gangs and gang related violence on a small proportion of young Londoners' access to EET opportunities. The majority of youth homicide victims are male (93%) and black (61%). Deprivation metrics, school suspensions/absence, and low youth employment are all predictors of most serious youth violence; Tower Hamlets and Croydon have some of the highest levels of deprivation in London, and recorded the highest ranks and increases in knife crime and serious youth violence offences in 2021 respectively.²¹ Prevalence of gang related activity prevents some young people from travelling through some estates and spaces to access EET opportunities, which in turn lowers their outcomes and puts them more at risk of exposure to such activity. Local authorities exploring how to improve employment outcomes for care experienced young people stressed the importance of taking services to where young people are and already accessing support, rather than an expectation that they will come to providers.

1.14 ore broadly, co-location of youth EET opportunities and providers (e.g youth hubs) within colleges, job centres and other anchor institutions, for example, risks catering to the same group of young people, rather than those most at need, and least likely to access provision when located in a space they distrust. A place based, multi agency approach is needed to mitigate the impacts that place / location can have on young people's access to EET opportunities.

3. What place based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities?

Who do these solutions work for, what does the evidence tell us about the demographics of young people benefitting from successful intervention?

2.1 London's boroughs and SRPs have been addressing these youth employment challenges since the start of the pandemic and they have a key role to play in economic recovery. The different services offered below demonstrate how place based interventions can take on different aspects according to the barriers young people face in a given area. These include providing and enabling a multi-agency approach; tailoring services to work for young people at a borough level, developing specialist and more intense support for vulnerable groups of young people, listening to young people and actively co-designing services with them, and pursuing hyper-local approaches at a ward or neighbourhood level.

2.2 Two London SRPs are coordinating employment and skills provision for young Londoners under 25 as part of the 'No Wrong Door' programme, which tackles the fragmentation of provision across London. West London Alliance's programme has

²⁰ Source [here](#).

²¹ Source [here](#)

developed a digital platform for young Londoners under 25 in North and West London to access EET support.²² Local London, delivering across East and South East London, has undertaken listening exercises with its youth advisers to ascertain best practice and local training gaps, and who their local customer is (what their day-to-day needs are and the challenges presented in meeting these needs). It will now seek to tailor provision to be uniquely accessible to young people in the local area. The differing SRP approaches to coordinating youth provision reflects the strengths of a place based approach.

- 2.3 At the borough level, Lambeth's 'Lambeth Made' programme and Greenwich's 'Building Green Skills' Youth Training Camp are examples of place based solutions that remove barriers for its young people through a multi-agency approach to increase young people's opportunities and mental well-being.
- 2.4 Lambeth Made's Youth Hubs have been effective in removing barriers for all young people in Lambeth (aged 16-30). From their five hyper-local locations across the borough, 291 young people registered within the first year, with 26 progressing into an education or training outcome, and 51 progressing into employment. *Steps to Success*, its care leaver employability programme, supports participants with skills, confidence building and goal setting to enable them to go into sustained EET. In its last contract period the programme supported 103 care experienced young people, with 25 progressing into education or training, and 15 into employment. *Unheard Voices* targets 16-30 year olds who are NEET, young offenders, young
- 2.1 people with SEND, and young mothers, and aims to move them closer to the labour market. It has a hyper-local focus on providing opportunities in areas of Lambeth that have low employment support provision. As of July 2022 it had engaged 64 young people, with 10 successfully gaining employment through the programme.
- 2.2 Responding to shortages in the sector, Greenwich developed a pilot youth (18-29) training camp to educate them on green skills and enable them to compete for jobs created through local retrofit programmes and future regeneration schemes. It developed a six week pre-employment bootcamp focused on low carbon construction methods, heat pumps, solar PV, battery storage and LED lighting. Learners gained a CSCS card qualification in addition to meeting contractors and attending site visits to see green construction methods first-hand. 17 learners completed the two bootcamps, gaining a level 1 in Health & Safety and passing the CSCS. 11 participants went on to secure ongoing employment, eight of whom were employed in construction.
- 2.3 Another example of a hyper-local place based solution can be found in Lewisham. It has begun a programme to tackle youth unemployment in its ward, Downham. Deprivation is high, and the support is targeted at a neighbourhood level, the Downham estate, in which outcomes for young people are particularly poor. 2011 census data showed that 31% of Downham's population was under 19 (24% nationally), and 47% were from a BAME background. Young people feel detached from the wider London economy, educational outcomes are low and the rates of poverty high. Deprivation is compounded by the design of, and the lack of access to, services which could improve opportunities.
- 2.4 To combat this, Lewisham have appointed 14 Youth Ambassadors from the area, who will lead the project and design a new employment solution for young people in Downham. Separately, the council plan to galvanise public services, including colleagues

²² Source [here](#).

from housing associations, primary care and community health partners, youth organisations and residents. By joining up community engagement and outreach, improving pathways between services, and working towards greater integration for residents navigating public services in the area, Lewisham aims to fully understand and begin to address the intersectional impacts on young people leading to poorer employment outcomes on the Downham estate.

4. What is the role of local government and national government in tackling youth unemployment at a place based level?

- 4.1 London's boroughs are at the frontline of tackling youth unemployment. As can be seen above, they have a key role to play in supporting young people into work. A London Councils survey showed that in 2022/23, 88% of London boroughs provided a local employment service, many with tailored programmes to ensure young people can benefit.²³ Boroughs have formed more links with employers and are looking to deepen these relationships. Many boroughs use their own contracts with employers to create job opportunities and social value and are developing pathways into employment for disadvantaged young people with specific employers. With unique knowledge of the youth makeup in their localities, coupled with relationships with local employment, health, housing and social care providers, and employers, boroughs are well placed to provide tailored solutions to support young Londoners who are furthest from the labour market into education or work.
- 4.2 Investment in borough employment services has increased on 2021/22 levels. However, with boroughs identifying Section 106 (69%) and the European Social Fund (59%) as key sources of funding for their employment services, they and other local employment services, particularly those provided by the voluntary and community sector, face a future of uncertainty as ESF winds down. London Councils welcomes the government's decision to bring forward the People & Skills strand of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) by a year, yet the timing of this announcement just before the start of the 2023/24 financial year makes bringing the money forward challenging. Furthermore, the government will not allow areas to reprofile their UKSPF spending – another challenge to address the funding gap left behind by ESF.
- 4.3 London's boroughs and SRPs are working hard to knit together the fragmented employment and skills services for the benefits of their residents. London's boroughs also have experience of collaborating within their SRPs on delegated programmes that do not fully realise the potential of devolved services. For boroughs to be able to fully serve their young residents, and provide integrated wraparound support for young people, further devolution of employment and skills provision is needed. This should encompass a fully devolved, 'local first' approach to all employment support services, where services are provided at the most feasibly local level, enabling join up with other local services. Boroughs would develop local gateways into careers, employment and skills provision, leveraging local relationships that they already have but cannot maximise in the current system.
- 4.4 National government should continue to work closely with SRPs, local councils and community groups to identify and better target excluded young people. Learning from devolved programmes has shown the importance of data sharing to better tailor the identification, support, and targeting of young residents, especially for the most

²³ Source [here](#).

vulnerable. London Councils has been discussing greater data sharing with DWP officials, specifically around key employment programmes such as Restart. Government should share the numbers and characteristics of people participating in the main national employment programmes at a borough level. This should be real-time data as official statistics are often at least several months behind. This can help local government better integrate DWP provision with locally commissioned provision and ensure unemployed residents get the right support. It can also help identify gaps in provision and help work with skills providers to shape a more effective employability and reskilling offer for young people.

Appendix xi: National Citizen Service

APPG for Youth Employment Inquiry: Place based approaches to tackling youth unemployment - NCS Submission

An overview of youth unemployment in the UK

There are currently 788,000 young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the UK.²⁴ Disadvantaged young people are twice as likely to fall into this category than their better-off peers. There are also key regional differences in youth unemployment rates - in the three months to February 2023, the unemployment rate for young people aged 16-24 stood at 16.3% in London, 13.9% in the North East, 13.8% in the North, and 13.3% in the West Midlands, compared with the UK average of 10.8%.²⁵ This regional-level data also hides pockets of increased local youth unemployment in the most deprived areas.

Yet, almost half a million NEET young people are able to and want to work, signalling a huge missed opportunity and untapped potential.²⁶ Their ability to do so is challenged by the ever-growing skills gap. Just 22% of young people say they feel confident in their future career, and 24% worry that they do not have the skills for the jobs that are available to them.²⁷ This feeling is also shared by UK employers - an estimated 80% believe that graduates do not have the skills they need to be work ready. The UK skills deficit will cost the country £120 billion by 2030.

Opportunities for young people to develop the skills they need to feel world and work-ready are critical to addressing this skills deficit and preventing young people from becoming NEET. Additionally, in an era of post-Covid social isolation and heightened feelings of loneliness among young people,²⁸ place-based approaches to tackling youth unemployment can also help to strengthen local communities, with potential positive impacts on social action, cohesion, and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Access to quality, non-formal learning experiences is not distributed equally - this is a key barrier to young people's skills development and employability opportunities

Ensuring all young people have access to a variety of quality enrichment and skills development activities, as part of a broad and balanced education, can facilitate successful

²⁴ ONS Dataset (February 2023) [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\)](#)

²⁵ <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn05871/>
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/280326/uk-youth-unemployment-rate-by-region/>

²⁶ The Learning and Work Institute and The Prince's Trust (2022) [The Power of Potential](#)

²⁷ The Prince's Trust (2021) [Confidence Crossroads: The Path Ahead for Young People](#).

²⁸ Youth Employment UK (2022) [Youth Voice Census](#)

transitions into further education, training, and employment.²⁹ Studies have indicated that involvement in most non-formal learning activities is positively correlated with securing a job after secondary school (for those who do not go into further or higher education),³⁰ and 67% of employers report better employability skills among young people who have participated in social action activities such as volunteering.³¹

However, there are significant disparities in enrichment provision and participation across the UK. Determining factors include the schools that children and young people attend, the areas they grow up in, and their socio-economic background.³² This results in an unequal provision of opportunities for young people to benefit from enrichment.

The Social Mobility Commission has identified that household income is by far the most significant factor driving gaps in participation, with children from the poorest households much less likely to participate in youth services and extra-curricular activities. Alongside this a key driver was the type of school attended, with independent schools more likely to offer a wider breadth and range of activities compared to state schools. The link between where families live and their household income is also clearly demonstrated, with the latest data showing that families from the West Midlands (£507) had the lowest median income before housing costs in 2019/20 to 2021/22, while London (£662) had the highest³³.

A national, flexible offer such as NCS offers the opportunity for more equal distribution of quality skills development and non-formal learning opportunities

The original conception of NCS was as a rite of passage that provides a universal, open-to-all opportunity for young people to develop their skills and support their communities. The need for a universal offer, commissioned with a national view in mind, is needed to help tackle the reality that where young people live affects their employment and skills development opportunities. This offer can complement and support truly local and more targeted based provision.

Today, the world is a different place for young people to what it was when NCS was founded in 2009. A long shadow was left by COVID-19 along with significant advances in technology, a changing labour market, and the growing importance of volunteering for young people. Young people across the country are facing significant challenges, with a mental health crisis, employment skills gap and challenging job market, inequality in life outcomes, and a divisive society.

From 2023 onwards, NCS Trust is evolving its experiences for young people. These services will be delivered by a new network of partners, including local and youth sector partner organisations. NCS provides away-from-home, online, and community experiences to:

- Develop young people's life skills and support independent living
- Build employability and work-readiness
- Provide opportunities for volunteering and social action
- Enable social mixing of young people from all backgrounds

²⁹ The Centre for Education and Youth with National Citizen Service Trust (2021) [Enriching Education Recovery](#): The role of non-formal learning, extra-curricular and enrichment activities in driving a transformational catch-up experience for children and young people.

³⁰ Joseph, N.A. (2009). Exploring the Relationship between Extracurricular Participation and Probability of Employment for High School Graduates.

³¹ CIPD. (2015). Unlock New Talent: How can you integrate social action into employment?

³² The Social Mobility Commission (2019) [An Unequal Playing Field: Extra-Curricular Activities, Soft Skills, and Social Mobility](#). Department for Education and Institute for Policy Research, University of Bath.

³³ <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7484/>

In the transformed 2023 offer, young people are able to choose how they want to engage in NCS experiences - whether that's signing up for a five day adventure away from home, attending their local community experience year-round, or engaging in online activities on a laptop or smartphone from their own home.

All experiences offer a mix of fun activities, opportunities to develop skills for life and work, and the chance to make new friends from many different locations and backgrounds. This will be achieved through a new delivery model which uses a combination of procurement and grant funding routes. NCS will operate as an outcomes-based commissioner providing greater flexibility to a range of youth sector partners, at local and national level, and young people themselves to take agency over their NCS journey.

NCS will continue to be a universal programme, open to all young people in all places, whilst also commissioning targeted community experiences through grants to increase the provision of services to underserved young people. This means that support can be targeted to the young people who need it most, at a hyper local level, and that local organisations are supported to make an even bigger impact in their communities.

NCS' away-from-home places will also be prioritised for 53 priority areas based on the government's indices of multiple deprivation (IMD). This recognises the need for a more place-based approach, prioritising resources for those areas most in need. A bursary scheme will offer completely free places to young people most in need, while all community and online experiences will be free for all young people to access.

NCS has a demonstrated, positive impact on a range of skills development and employability outcomes for young people, particularly the most disadvantaged:

- **Skills and employability:** Two years after doing the NCS programme, participants were still ahead of peers on key work skills like teamwork, communication and leadership.³⁴ Two in three NCS participants felt more confident about getting a job in the future as a result of participating in the programme.³⁵
- **Social mobility:** In the long-term, the entry rates for NCS graduates into higher education were, on average, 12% higher than for non-NCS graduates, and are significantly higher for those living in poorer areas.³⁶
- **Social mixing:** 78% of participants felt more positive about people from different backgrounds after taking part in NCS.³⁷ In 2019, 29% of NCS participants were from BAME backgrounds and 6.2% of participants were young people with SEND.
- **Community-based social action:** Through NCS' 2020 Keep Doing Good summer programme, 95% of young people said they enjoyed feeling part of a wider team of young people coming together to support their community. Since NCS began, more than 18 million hours of community-based volunteering and social action have been completed by young people through NCS experiences.

How UK Year of Service, an NCS initiative, has been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities

³⁴ Ipsos MORI (2017) National Citizen Service 2013 Evaluation – Two Years On: Main Report

³⁵ Kantar and London Economics for DCMS (2021) [National Citizen Service 2019 Summer Evaluation: Main Report](#).

³⁶ Jump Projects LTD and Simetrica (2017) [A wellbeing and human capital value for money analysis of the NCS 2015 programme](#).

³⁷ Kantar and DCMS (2020) National Citizen Service 2018 Evaluation

UK Year of Service is a unique employability programme that helps young people aged 18-24 get work ready and world ready. UK Year of Service's 9-12 month programmes have three core elements:

- Paid work placements of 30-35 hours per week
- Essential skills training
- Enrichment both within and beyond placement, and support for exit routes into further education or employment.

The service placements are diverse, inclusive and accessible to all young people. They are embedded in the local community, focusing on the healthcare, public service, and green sectors. By engaging young people in a way that is compelling, and supporting employers and technical training providers to develop underlying essential skills, UK Year of Service ensures that young people not only access, but also stick with, long term employment and technical skills development.

From 2021 to 2023, UK Year of Service delivered over 330 placements to young people, which were paid at the real Living Wage, for 9+ months in socially beneficial roles and community-based organisations. During recruitment, those who faced significant barriers to employability or specific sectors were prioritised. 53% of programme members were claiming government benefits before participating in the *UK Year of Service* programme. 69% were actively seeking employment before the programme, and 23% were from Black, Asian or Ethnic Minority backgrounds.

The 2021 and 2022 cohorts had a heavy weighting of job placement roles in the North West, in recognition of the employability needs and areas of deprivation in the Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region combined authorities. For the 2022 cohort, a job placement partner was targeted and engaged in recognition of a gap in youth employment provision in the region, which is one of the lowest ranking areas for social mobility. The successful partner provided a variety of roles across Dorset and the wider South West, working in particular to tackle issues around transport (due to rurality) and raise employment aspirations among young people locally. Finally, where the role placement duties allowed, home-based opportunities were provided. This increased access and inclusion for young people who were rurally based with travel challenges or caring responsibilities, as well as those for whom severe anxiety was a barrier to work.

Participants in the UK Year of Service Pilot by Region



Figure 1: Number of participants in the UK Year of Service Pilot by Region

Partner-reported post-placement outcome data for UK Year of Service suggest that over 80% of members go directly into education, employment, or training following their placement. The key mechanisms through which this is achieved include through members developing their essential skills (e.g. communication, teamwork), expanding professional networks, increased awareness of available opportunities, and work readiness.

How NCS is partnering with 1 Million Mentors to improve young people's career chances and strengthen local communities

One Million Mentors (1MM) is a unique community-based mentoring programme (currently incubated within the charity UpRising Leadership), quickly growing roots around the UK. The aim is to transform young lives by connecting one million young people with one million mentors. 1MM backs the talents of young people to improve their career chances, while at the same time strengthening local communities. 1MM was founded on the belief that through personal, one-to-one mentoring, more young people can grow the knowledge, networks, skills and confidence they need to succeed.

Mentoring can provide a much-needed, though currently undervalued, intervention which links individuals with high social capital to young people who have low social capital, in an effort to accelerate social mobility. Through the provision of trained volunteer mentors from within the business world and community, 1MM boosts support and advice for young people in the areas of education, employment and social action.

From 2022 - 2024, NCS is partnering with 1MM to deliver mentoring services to young people aged 15-17 in 'priority areas' of East London, Greater Manchester and West Midlands. These priority areas have been identified as locations where young people are experiencing higher rates of unemployment and lower rates of school achievement. The mentors act as trusted adults who support young people to navigate their transition into further education, training or employment pathways. Mentors also support young people to engage with opportunities in their local communities, and grow the knowledge, networks, skills and confidence they need to succeed.

About NCS

NCS offers a range of experiences for young people that support them to become world-ready and work-ready — through growing their confidence, independence and skills; connecting them with people from all walks of life; and empowering them to make a difference in their communities and wider society.

Our vision is a country of connected, confident, caring citizens where everyone feels at home. Through NCS experiences, we support young people to:

- Become work-ready and world-ready
- Have greater confidence, resilience, and wellbeing
- Feel able to have an impact on their world
- Have respect and tolerance for difference and diversity

Young people will engage with NCS experiences in different ways - through trips away from home, programmes that take place in their community, and through online activities. Whatever their experience, they will have the opportunity to build skills for work and life, get involved in social action and volunteering, and meet a diverse range of people. All whilst having a great time.

Through having an NCS experience at a pivotal moment in their lives, we aim to support a generation of young people to seize opportunities and face the future with confidence, to have an appreciation and tolerance of different views and perspectives, and to be more actively engaged in civic life. These are the ingredients of a more socially cohesive society.

NCS is managed and supported by NCS Trust, our central team who are constantly working to make sure that NCS delivers impactful experiences to as many young people as possible. NCS is funded by the UK Government through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as a core part of the [National Youth Guarantee](#).

Appendix xii: Prince's Trust

Place based approaches to tackling youth unemployment- The Prince's Trust Response

Young people are disproportionately more likely to be unemployed and the impacts of labour market challenges are not felt evenly, requiring a nuanced approach to employment support

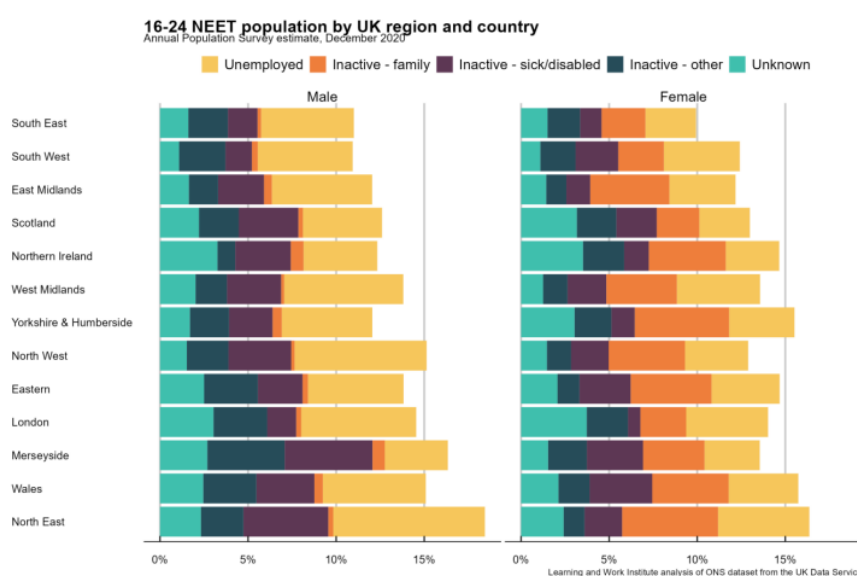
1. The number of young people who are not in employment, full-time education, or training (NEET) has risen above 1 million. This looks like it's being driven by fewer young people in full-time education, and those young people not necessarily finding, or looking for, work. This is concerning given the high number of job vacancies, as it suggests there are barriers to young people benefitting from the opportunities available in the labour market.
2. The latest ONS release finds there are 1,015,000 young people who are NEET; 692,000 of whom are economically inactive³⁸. A growing challenge in efforts to reduce NEET levels is

³⁸<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/datasets/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneetable1>

the increase in economic inactivity, which now represents 68% of young people who are NEET compared to 41% in 2011³⁹. Tackling this rise is crucial in reducing the overall numbers of young people who are NEET.

- To successfully support young people who are NEET, it is vital to understand the variations within NEET figures. Furthermore, there are substantial geographical differences (**see figure 5**) both in proportion and the different types of economic inactivity. This strong subregional variation highlights the importance of locality on NEET status and the role for Levelling Up in support for these young people. **The degree of nuance within NEET statistics requires a tailored and individualised approach to employment support for young people, as a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to work. This should be reflected in the training of Careers Guidance professionals and Work Coaches.**

Figure 5: NEET status by region and country, 2018-2020



- There appear to be place-based factors driving the reasons for economic inactivity across regions, which indicates the importance of addressing inactivity as part of a broader levelling up approach. For example, for young men there are comparatively high rates of economic inactivity due to sickness or disability in the North East of England (3.5%), Merseyside (4.1%) and Wales (3.4%). Similarly, there is a large variation in the proportion of young women who are inactive due to family responsibilities, ranging from 5.4% in the North East of England and Yorkshire & Humberside, to 2.4% in Scotland.
- According to analysis from the Power of Potential report, when the number of inactive young people who would like to work is combined with the number of unemployed young people, we find that there are almost half a million (484,000) NEET young people who are able to and want to work - just over half of the total NEET population.
- The Prince's Trust HSBC Power of Potential report found young people who are NEET identified mental health problems as the most common reason they are finding it difficult to find a job or are not currently looking for work⁴⁰. NHS figures show that 1 in 6 young people aged 16-25 have a probable mental health disorder, rising to 1 in 4 young people

³⁹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/datasets/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneettable1>

⁴⁰ <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/research-policies-reports/the-power-of-potential-supporting-the-future-of-young-people>

aged 16-17. Other research has found that 51% of young people looking for work thought their anxiety was the biggest barrier to accessing work⁴¹. Polling for the Prince's Trust NatWest 2023 Youth Index revealed that a third of young people said that worrying about money during the cost-of-living crisis has made their mental health worse, rising to 45% among those from poorer backgrounds⁴². More than a third of young women responding to the 2023 Youth Index feel a lack of self-confidence is one of the biggest barriers to achieving their career aspirations, compared to 31% of young men⁴³ - underlining the need for action around mental health and wellbeing. **A focus on supporting young people into work and education alongside provision of mental health support could help to prevent them becoming trapped in a negative cycle.**

7. Anecdotally, through delivery of our programmes in the North East and Tees Valley we have observed young people presenting with more severe mental health related conditions- seemingly across demographics. Different forms of anxiety are having an effect on young people's ability to look for and apply for jobs, compounded by employers who may not have the time or capacity to offer extra pastoral support that is needed.
8. We have received consistent feedback (mainly from Local Authorities and community organisations) that young people are highly unlikely to travel between boroughs, or even sometimes within boroughs, to access provision. Travel can be a barrier for a number of reasons: affordability is a significant challenge facing young people, particularly those that The Prince's Trust aims to support who are from some of the most disadvantaged backgrounds; many young people don't feel safe on public transport due to hate crimes or the risk of gang violence; others struggle with motivation and aspiration, making the journey to delivery too overwhelming. It is an interesting piece of feedback, which should be considered when thinking how to engage young people beyond school age, when the services become non-statutory.
9. Aspiration is important which is why it is concerning that Prince's Trust research in 2018 found that 15 per cent of young people claim they do not have any role models, increasing to a quarter (26%) of NEETs⁴⁴. In areas where there are fewer opportunities in the labour market, young people may be disadvantaged by a more limited range of role models, or by lacking real-life examples of career pathways that they can aspire to. The same survey found that one in five young people have never met someone who does a job they would like to do, underlining how crucial the visibility of diverse role models is. Experiences of the workplace, inspirational talks and locally informed careers guidance can all play a role here, and there is also a role for mentoring as a part of a high-quality system of CEIAG. We also know that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have access to comprehensive careers advice amongst their family networks⁴⁵, meaning they rely more on schools to provide them with the information they need to plan for their future – underlining the need for access to high quality CEIAG for these pupils in particular.
10. Whilst young people are disadvantaged in the labour market, barriers to entry are not felt equally, with demographic characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, care experience, disability, and risk of youth violence all further disadvantaging young people- and intersectional experiences even more so⁴⁶. Findings from our Facing the Future report showed that, over the lockdowns, BME young people were twice as likely to be

⁴¹ <https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/youth-voice-census-report-2022-young-people-in-a-state-of-mental-health-emergency/>

⁴² <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/news-views/princestrustnatwestyouthindex2023>

⁴³ <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/news-views/princestrustnatwestyouthindex2023>

⁴⁴ [Futures at Stake 2018 | Research, policies and reports | About The Trust | The Prince's Trust \(princes-trust.org.uk\)](https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/news-views/princestrustnatwestyouthindex2023)

⁴⁵ [youth-voice-census-report-2021.pdf \(youthemployment.org.uk\)](https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/youth-voice-census-report-2021.pdf)

⁴⁶ <https://www.youngwomenstrust.org/our-research/one-size-fits-no-one/>

unemployed than their white peers⁴⁷, whilst Black young people saw a 49% fall in hours worked compared to a 16% drop experienced by white young people during the pandemic⁴⁸. The pandemic exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities rather than creating a new crisis in itself.

11. Care experience was highlighted consistently by delivery as a group in urgent need of improved, holistic, support. After 21, care leavers are still facing issues around housing, living independently and some of the life skills needed to progress. As such, practitioners working with them often have to spend a lot of one-to-one time supporting on a much wider range of issues – beyond helping them to find and access work.
12. Polling revealed that the most common support needs listed by young people looking for employment were flexibility in hours (42%) followed by location (39%) and pay (37%). Given the diversity of barriers and support needs, it is important that Work Coaches have the capacity to tailor the support they provide young people, particularly those with mental health conditions. The increase in the number of work coaches by 13,500 deployed during the pandemic was very welcome and helped to support those young people who were not protected by the furlough scheme. While we know that this increase has not been maintained, research has shown that lower staffing numbers can limit the time available to Work Coaches to develop tailored knowledge of the job seeker they are working with, as well as the time required to support new skills development. **The DWP should consider this when setting staffing and recruitment targets in the future.**
13. Young people are facing back-to-back crises, with little reprieve. The long-term consequences of isolation have implications for young people's resilience, during a time when resilience is needed more than ever. The 2023 Youth Index found that 63% of young people feel scared for their future. As our research shows, young people who are NEET are one of these groups, indicating that supporting young people employment, education, and training is likely part of the solution.

The third sector is well placed to support young people most distanced from the labour market

14. Youth services such as those delivered by The Prince's Trust drive positive outcomes for young people. The characteristics of young people who regularly come into contact with youth services (for example those who are NEET or from poorer households) are also associated with poor mental wellbeing⁴⁹. The Prince's Trust programmes focus on wellbeing throughout and prioritise personal development and the skills and confidence young people need to thrive in life and work. Over the last five years, the outcomes rate has remained stable with three out of four young people moving into education, employment, training or volunteering three months after completing a Trust programme.
15. We believe that funding for employability support programmes should have a clear focus on engaging those young people furthest from the labour market who may need additional interventions to succeed in the labour market. **This might include additional outreach arrangements, confidence boosting and personal development activities, as well as ongoing support when they move into the workplace to ensure retention.**

⁴⁷ [Young workers are being hit hardest, and some more than others | TUC](#)

⁴⁸ [Facing the future: employment prospects for young people after coronavirus \(princes-trust.org.uk\)](#)

⁴⁹ <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/news-views/princes-trust-education-policy-institute-report>

16. In Greater Manchester, we initially faced challenges with the delivery of our Future Work Force Fund Initiative (FWF- case study below) as the majority of our programmes are run from our centre in Ancoats, but young people were not willing to travel to take part. One of the ways we were able to overcome this was to commission external organisations to run activity for young people where they are – funding local organisations to deliver programmes which aligned to our aims under our banner. These organisations were often embedded in communities, well-known and visible – removing some of the access issues faced by young people. One such organisation was Rochdale Training Association. Their delivery base is in Rochdale Central, one of the most deprived wards in Greater Manchester. They have a strong reputation in the area and were able to pull on localised marketing and outreach. They consistently supported full courses of young people, with outcomes into jobs and apprenticeships around the 80% mark.
17. Commissioned delivery was also key in supporting the FWF to tailor interventions to align more closely with local labour market priorities. We made effective use of existing Prince's Trust relationships with national employers and delivered new employer relationships, including with small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), in new and growth sectors, with some interventions supporting direct pathways into employment.
18. Encouraging private sector investment in key localities is critical to help young people secure employment. The Prince's Trust's *Future Workforce Fund* initiative is a tried and tested intervention (see below).

Case Study – Future Workforce Fund – Greater Manchester

In 2018 HM Treasury, working through the DfE and GMCA, awarded The Prince's Trust £7million which it matched with £7million from the private sector to support young people into work. Future Workforce Fund (FWF) ran for three years from September 2019 to September 2022.

It helped almost 6,500 young people and delivered more than 7,800 interventions across Greater Manchester to support young people who were NEET, or at risk of becoming NEET, to develop personal, social and emotional skills, improve their work readiness and to raise their career aspirations.

The proportion of 16-17-year-olds who were NEET when they joined FWF was much higher than levels of NEET in the local population. Young people from low-income families and care experienced young people were also well represented.

The conclusion of the cost benefit analysis is that the fiscal savings to the Exchequer from FWF outweigh the costs. When taking into account the additional economic benefits, the programme can be viewed in an even more positive light, with overall benefits to society outweighing the costs to society. Overall, for every £1 spent, there is an economic and social return on investment of £2.54.

19. FWF used a range of recruitment approaches across different boroughs in Greater Manchester. Staff described how face-to-face outreach and marketing in the street in different areas of Greater Manchester had been effective in reaching young people who may be experiencing digital poverty or were not actively seeking opportunities.
20. Evaluation of the programme found that the largest improvements were in work readiness. Young people developed transferable and sector-specific skills and said that they had a better understanding of the workplace, of the jobs and sectors they wanted to work in, and how to access these.

21. As the Government considers how to support those struggling with the transition from education to employment, and who are slipping through gaps in national provision, the *Future Workforce Fund* demonstrates a tried and tested practical solution which can be replicated in other Combined Authority areas.
22. Youth Hubs can provide a youth-friendly alternative to jobcentres, that have good potential for outreach due to their proximity to spaces young people are normally in. The combined provision available, such as through the presence of mental health support, means they have the potential to make a huge difference to young people by being able to address multifaceted support needs. However, we believe more can be done to improve their accessibility to young people, for example through expanding the eligibility criteria beyond young people claiming Universal Credit and publicising a centralised list of locations so young people can find them. **A dedicated Youth Hub budget would help Hubs to build local partnerships; their capacity for outreach; and training of staff. This fund could run alongside, or be incorporated with, a proportion of the Flexible Support Fund in each JCP district to fund additional programmes of support for young people facing specific barriers to work.**
23. As mentioned above, a strength of Youth Hubs is their presence in places young people can access. The Prince's Trust Centre in Manchester is currently co-located with a Youth Hub, to great success. Trust staff let them know what courses are available and the JCP advisors refer young people onto our programmes where applicable. The set-up aids smooth transitions as The Trust is on hand to answer any queries and to meet the young person straight away to move them onto a programme, which we hope will boost retention.
24. An example of successful partnership working was a pilot we carried out in Greater Manchester. The Prince's Trust worked with Greater Manchester Combined Authority to extend their free bus travel offer to care leavers. Based on feedback around travel being a barrier to accessing provision, we administered free bus travel passes for care leavers up to the age of 25 (the GM offer previously, was up to 21). If employability support is aimed at young people up to the age of 25, then linked travel incentives should be matched to this, if possible.

But the government must take a long-term approach to address the structural place-based issues that address youth unemployment

25. Whilst the 13-week intensive support through the Youth Offer is a welcome recognition from government of the unique challenges facing young people in the labour market and a positive development in efforts to create more opportunities for them, more is needed to address the full scale of the challenge. **As part of the Youth Employment Group, we have called for the government to implement an 'Opportunity Guarantee' whereby no young person reaches six months of unemployment without being given a high-quality education, training, or apprenticeship opportunity. Priority should be given to learners on low incomes, those working below level 3 and groups who face disadvantages or discrimination.**
26. The expansion of the Youth Offer to those not in the all-work related requirements group is also a positive move that will help to ensure that more young people are able to access the support they need to get into work and access opportunities for development. Understanding the impact of this change on groups who have faced additional barriers to

employment, and the extent to which they are accessing this support, will be important for future policy decisions and should be closely monitored.

27. The Levelling Up White Paper acknowledges the importance of skills development in left behind areas. Although the paper did not mention apprenticeships, their role in skills development, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, makes them an important tool as Government seeks to achieve its missions – and pay is a key part of this discussion. We believe that over time, the minimum apprenticeship wage rate should be increased to be equal to 80% of the NLW for adults. An uplift to the apprentice rate could incentivise take up by making it affordable for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to access apprenticeships, consequently facilitating both social mobility and skills shortages.
28. There are large swathes of the population without the basic skills necessary for employment, and this is concentrated in some regions of the country as opposed to being widely spread. Analysis by the Centre for Progressive Policy found that in some parts of England the proportion of people without any formal qualifications is as low as one in 40 compared to others where it is as much as one in five⁵⁰. They estimate that the total employment cost of inequality in basic skills in England is between 348,000 and 573,000 jobs. Tackling the basic skill shortage is therefore an urgent priority, to drive up employment and reduce poverty **The government's focus on 'levelling up' and addressing regional inequalities must have a major focus on education and skills to help address long-term challenges in the labour force.**
29. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is now an important feature of any discussion on regional skills development. The bringing forward of the People and Skills element of the funding was a welcome decision that will help to minimise gaps between the end of EU funding and the original planned timeline but ensuring that economically aligned skills development opportunities for young people at a local and regional level are widely available will be key. The UKSPF has a wide range of aims, covering interventions that address a breadth of challenges at a local level – but work will be needed to ensure that provision that supports youth employability remains accessible and widely offered. As an organisation with a national footprint, The Prince's Trust is also aware of some challenges that can be presented by full devolution of funding for these kind of interventions – with benefits of efficiency and economies of scale curtailed by this model. As UKSPF becomes more established, this is something that should be considered to ensure that as many young people as possible are able to access the support they need.
30. Any discussion on developing basic skills must also look at education and experiences in school. We know that regional disparities in access to good quality education contribute to regional skills shortages and increase unemployment. Improving the quality of schools across the country is an important early intervention for many reasons, and particularly when considering how to increase the number of young people with formal qualifications and basic skills – underlining the wide-reaching structural changes that are needed to move the UK closer to a more highly-skilled population.
31. Skills demand in the labour market is ever changing and unpredictable. One of the best ways to address this is to ensure that young people have the skills and confidence to learn, both early in their careers and also so that they are able to easily retrain to meet demand. Adult education funding is essential to facilitate this – both through targeted specific skills development and for programmes that work to boost basic skills and

⁵⁰ CPP | [Skill up to level up \(progressive-policy.net\)](https://www.progressive-policy.net)

re-engage individuals in learning or work. As such, **AEB funding should be increased – both at a national and devolved level through relevant combined authorities.** This would enable providers to ensure high-quality provision, and to effectively deliver intensive programmes to learners who are NEET or harder to engage.

The Prince's Trust
May 2023

Appendix xiii: Southwark Council

APPG Youth Employment inquiry

Place-based approaches to tackling youth unemployment

Written evidence submitted by Southwark Council (London Borough of Southwark)

Background

- The London Borough of Southwark is a densely populated, diverse and vibrant area situated on the south bank of the River Thames. The borough is home to over 306,000 people⁵¹, and of these 37,949 are young people aged 16-24, making up 12.4% of the total population⁵².
- Southwark is a young borough, with an average age of 32.4 years, more than two years younger than the average for London and seven years younger than the average for England.⁵³ In addition, 40% of the population is under 30, compared to 39% in London and 36% in England.
- Southwark is also a very ethnically diverse borough, with almost half of those living here coming from an ethnic minority background. Over 40% of residents were born outside the UK, Channel Islands and Ireland, of which 11% were born in Africa and over 8% were born in the Americas or the Caribbean⁵⁴.
- A significant proportion of young people in the borough have faced deprivation growing up, with 43% of those under 16s in Southwark living in households in poverty after housing costs are accounted for⁵⁵.

Executive Summary

- Southwark Council is committed to providing opportunities and improving outcomes for young people in the borough, including through meaningful local employment. As well as providing internal opportunities for young people through council apprenticeships and internships, the council delivers wraparound support to vulnerable young people into jobs and apprenticeships through programmes such as Southwark Works.

⁵¹ ONS Population Estimates 2021, available at: [Population estimates for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/population-demography/population/population-estimates-for-the-uk-england-wales-scotland-and-northern-ireland)

⁵² ONS Population Estimates 2021, available at: [Population estimates for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/population-demography/population/population-estimates-for-the-uk-england-wales-scotland-and-northern-ireland)

⁵³ Census 2021, available at: [Census 2021 results - Census 2021](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2021-census)

⁵⁴ Census 2021, available at: [Census 2021 results - Census 2021](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2021-census)

⁵⁵ Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs, 2019/20 (Hirsch/Stone), available at: [Local-child-poverty-indicators-report-MAY-2021_FINAL.pdf \(endchildpoverty.org.uk\)](https://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Local-child-poverty-indicators-report-MAY-2021_FINAL.pdf)

- The council also supports young entrepreneurs to start and sustain their businesses through the Southwark Pioneers Fund and ensures that young people know about the employment options open to them in the borough through One Hub and the youth opportunities newsletter.
- This has been underpinned by the achievements of the council's Youth New Deal, launched in July 2021 in response to the pandemic. This put young people at the heart of decision-making, providing them with the support and opportunities they need to progress and flourish as we recover from the pandemic, including vital investment in mental health support.
- However, local government's impact is limited by the squeezing of council budgets by over a decade of cuts. £142 million has already been cut from Southwark's government grant funding since 2010, representing 63% of our central funding. This makes it increasingly difficult for councils like Southwark to dedicate resources to non-statutory obligations. The national government, therefore, have a vital role to play in tackling youth unemployment.

To better tackle youth unemployment, Southwark Council believes the Government should:

- 1. Allocate sufficient funding for Councils to bolster their youth employment support services, which in turn will allow local authorities to tackle the drivers of poor mental health through community-based early intervention services and by integrating mental health and employment support.**
- 2. Grant local authorities increased responsibility for delivery of skills and employment locally, for example, further devolved powers (and funding) to grant Council's the power to establish and provide a joined- up careers advice and guidance, employment, skills and apprenticeships for young people at a local level.**
- 3. Permit a more flexible use of the Apprenticeship Levy, including meeting the full costs of apprenticeship programmes and administration and allowing spending on pre-apprenticeship training.**

Q1. What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment?

a. Background

In Southwark, correlations can be seen at a hyper-local level between youth unemployment and other markers of household disadvantage. Youth unemployment also appears to be concentrated in areas of the borough with higher non-white populations, reflecting disadvantages that young people from ethnic minorities experience nationally in relation to employment.

For example, Impetus' Youth Jobs research found that Southwark has a NEET (not in education, employment or training) rate of 19%, higher than the London rate of 15% and England rate of 14%⁵⁶. While the research found that 44% of NEET young people in Southwark were from disadvantaged backgrounds, which makes them over-represented in the NEET

⁵⁶ The Employment Gap in London, Impetus (2020), available at: [Research-Briefing-8-Report_AW_online-FINAL.pdf \(impetus.org.uk\)](https://www.impetus.org.uk/research-briefing-8-report-aw-online-final.pdf)

population by a factor of 1.12, this over-representation is lower than the rate in both London (1.3) and significantly lower than the rate in England as a whole (1.77)⁵⁷.

The prevalence of youth unemployment across Southwark, however, is not uniform and is more concentrated in areas where other measures of deprivation are more prevalent. When the areas in the borough where 18 to 24-year-olds are living are reviewed against youth unemployment gap data from the Urban Health Index, it suggests that youth unemployment may be particularly prominent around the central 'belt' of Walworth-Camberwell, North Peckham, Old Kent Road and Nunhead⁵⁸. These are among the areas in the borough where levels of household disadvantage are highest. According to the 2021 Census, the proportion of households disadvantaged in two or more dimensions⁵⁹ is over a third (35%) in areas around the Old Kent Road, North Walworth and Nunhead, compared to 19% in Southwark as a whole⁶⁰.

These are also areas with high ethnic minority populations, with non-white residents making up between 57.9% population in Nunhead and Queens Road and 71.2% population in Peckham. This is higher than the Southwark average of 45.8% and the London average of 40.2%⁶¹. Youth Futures Foundation research has found that young people aged 16-24 from minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to be in low-paid, insecure employment than their white peers, as well as experiencing higher unemployment overall⁶². This is also reflected in 2022 ONS figures show that young people aged 16-24 from ethnic minority backgrounds are twice as likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts⁶³.

b. Mental Health

We also know that poor mental health is an issue impacting young people in Southwark. A November 2018 Joint Review of Emotional Wellbeing and Children's and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) by Southwark Council and Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) found that Southwark has a higher prevalence of mental health needs among children and young people than the national average.

It also highlighted a gap in provision for children and young people who do not need specialist mental health provision, but who do need more than can be provided by schools and/or GPs.⁶⁴ This led to the commissioning of Southwark's open-access mental health hub the Nest (see question 2).

The COVID-19 pandemic also had demonstrable effects on young people's mental health. The NHS' Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2021 survey found that rates of probable mental disorders among 17- to 19-year-olds had increased from one in ten (10.1%) to one in six (17.4%) since 2017⁶⁵. This trend can also be seen in young people's reflections on their mental health. A YoungMinds survey of young people aged 13-25 from January 2021

⁵⁷ The Employment Gap in London, Impetus (2020), available at: [Research-Briefing-8-Report_AW_online-FINAL.pdf \(impetus.org.uk\)](#)

⁵⁸ Southwark Economic Evidence Base (2022), available at: [SOUTHWARK economic EVIDENCE BASE COMPLETE DRAFT \(FOOTNOTES TBA\)](#)

⁵⁹ The dimensions measured by the Census are employment, education, health and disability, and housing.

⁶⁰ Census 2021, available at: [Census 2021 results - Census 2021](#)

⁶¹ Southwark JSNA Ward Profiles 2019, available at: [Southwark profile - Southwark Council](#)

⁶² Narrowing the gap: tackling ethnic disparities in youth employment, Youth Futures Foundation, available at: [Youth-Futures-Foundation-Narrowing-the-gap-tackling-ethnic-disparities.pdf \(youthfuturesfoundation.org\)](#)

⁶³ ONS Annual Population Survey microdata (2022), available at: [SN06385.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#)

⁶⁴ Mental Wellbeing of Young People in Southwark (2018), available at: [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Health and Wellbeing Board, 21/11/2018 18:00 \(southwark.gov.uk\)](#)

⁶⁵ Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2021 - wave 2 follow up to the 2017 survey, available at: [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2021 - wave 2 follow up to the 2017 survey - NDRS \(digital.nhs.uk\)](#)

found that 67% believed that the pandemic would have a long-term negative effect on their mental health⁶⁶.

Poor mental health and well-being in our borough are therefore significant barriers for many young people in finding employment or undergoing training. A July 2022 joint report from the Prince's Trust and Learning and Work Institute found that the most common reasons that young people were finding it difficult to find a job or were not currently looking for work were mental health problems or disability (39%). In addition, 23% cited a lack of confidence in work as a reason for unemployment⁶⁷.

Q2. What place-based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities?

Southwark Council supports several borough-wide programmes and support services for young people, which both directly and indirectly support them in education, employment and training, including:

a. Southwark Works

Southwark Works is the council's longstanding employment support programme. It is formed of a network of providers who offer a range of tailored employment support services based on residents' underlying needs.

The service works directly with those young people who are most vulnerable and furthest away from the labour market, or who may struggle to access both the council's apprenticeship opportunities (see question 3) and those of our partners. Southwark Works also directly engages employers to open up new job and apprenticeship opportunities for our young residents and provides in-person support and online resources for young people to access, including CV templates and tips.

Southwark Works' support for young people has a specific focus on young people with SEND and learning difficulties, young people involved with the criminal justice system, and those at risk of long-term unemployment such as care leavers. Providers work with young people to provide 1:1 employment support and match the candidates up with courses, as well as providing more wrap around support, including supporting with housing and mental health concerns.

In December 2022, the shadow Minister for Alison McGovern toured Southwark Works and Southwark Skills Centre to look at how their commitment to repurposing Jobcentres might work in practice to deliver bridge that gap between jobcentres and the local knowledge of councils and employers. The commitment on

Cllr Kieron Williams, the leader of Southwark Council commented at the time that Southwark Council authority had to in effect build schemes such as Southwark Works, a free employment support service for residents, in order to bridge the gap:

The challenge we face with the nationally provided programmes is they're not connected with the local employment market. They don't see where the opportunities are to create more employment, or the skills gaps exist, and how you fill them.

⁶⁶ The impact of Covid-19 on young people with mental health needs, January 2021 survey, available at: [Covid Impact On Young People With Mental Health Needs | YoungMinds](#)

⁶⁷ The Power of Potential: Supporting the future of 'NEET' young people, Prince's Trust (2022), available at: [The Power of Potential supporting the future of NEET young people | Research, policies and reports | About The Trust | The Prince's Trust \(princes-trust.org.uk\)](#)

We have a separate works programme, ensuring that you've got a real focus on those groups of people who are most likely to be excluded from work, getting the additional support they need to get into employment. What's really important there is that that's connected back to the community."

b. One Hub

One thing that young people fed back to the council when the Youth New Deal was being developed, was that it was that it's difficult for them to find information about services and opportunities open to them in the borough. To address this, the council developed a new digital information hub called One Hub. It was built with input from young people throughout and tested by them.

One Hub is Southwark's one-stop-shop website for young people to access employment and training opportunities. One Hub advertises job, internship and apprenticeship opportunities in the borough, as well as signposting young people to the grants and bursaries available to them. It also helps young people access other services in the borough such as youth services and mental health support.

The launch of One Hub was promoted via paid advertising- largely on Snapchat- which was highly successful. Snapchat has a much higher cut through to the 16-25 age cohort which One Hub is targeted to and whom the council were attempting to reach. The Snapchat campaign ran for 6 weeks from August 2022, resulting in 10,040 swipe-ups on the advert.

c. Youth Opportunities bulletin

Southwark Council also publishes a monthly youth opportunities bulletin, which pulls together employment, training, and education and career support opportunities from across the borough advertising these to over 4,000 local subscribers including young people and their parent and guardians. As well as advertising the council's apprenticeships and internships, the newsletter also advertises national Government apprenticeships, and the council maintains a good relationship with organisations like the Prince's Trust to promote their opportunities.

d. The Nest

The Nest was established as a key part of Southwark Council's ambition to ensure that 100% of children and young people in Southwark have access to the emotional well-being and mental health support they need.

The Nest is an open-access service for young people based in Peckham, commissioned by the council and delivered by Groundwork London. The service, which opened in May 2020, is aimed at young people, designed by young people, is available at the point of need and is a physical place where young people can attend. The Nest provides support without the need for a professional referral and offers early intervention and prevention for emotional issues and low-level mental health such as worries, anxieties and stress.

In 2021 the council also provided funding under the Youth New Deal to allow the Nest to deliver services directly to schools, with over half of schools in the borough now using Nest services.

Q3. What is the role of local government and national government in tackling youth unemployment at a place-based level?

Local government can play a key role in tackling youth unemployment at a place-based level, by offering both internal employment and training opportunities for young people and providing support to young talent, as well as encouraging local employers to offer apprenticeships to local young people.

As the Local Government Association (LGA) has highlighted, funding for skills and employment support is 'short-term, fragmented and held centrally'⁶⁸. This makes it hard for local government to provide joined-up, place-based place leadership on youth employment.

Southwark Council is supportive of the LGA's Work Local plan for a devolved and integrated skills and employment system, which would give democratically elected local leaders the power and funding to work with partners, such as schools, colleges, further education providers and local employers, to join up careers' advice and guidance, employment, skills, apprenticeships, business support services and outreach in the community.

Southwark Council Apprenticeships

Local authorities like Southwark can help tackle youth unemployment at a place-based level by providing employment opportunities within their workforce for local young people.

Southwark has always prioritised apprenticeships as a local authority. We are committed to delivering another 2,000 apprenticeships by 2026, through our internal delivery, partnerships and supply chain. This builds on the 2,157 apprenticeship opportunities for Southwark businesses and residents we are proud to have created between 2018-2022.

Over the last year, we have made changes to Southwark Council's apprenticeship programme to emphasise 'early talent'. This means focusing on creating opportunities for young people who wish to pursue a career within Southwark Council and supporting the entire pathway of young people while employed. Compared to the previous year, in 2022-3 we saw a 94% increase in the number of apprenticeships delivered as part of our Southwark Council scheme.

This year, our spring apprenticeship campaign going live in May 2023 will be advertising 25 vacancies across the council. These include civil engineering and town planning roles. We prioritise finding young and diverse apprentices, including through Snapchat marketing campaigns tailored to Southwark residents aged 16-24. We also offer assessment centres that assess the whole candidate well beyond what can be learnt in a 20-minute interview with set questions. The assessment day is structured so that even candidates who are unsuccessful at the assessment have learnt valuable employability skills to take with them when applying for future positions.

Southwark Council internships

Since May 2022, Southwark Council have created 78 paid internships at London Living Wage to give young residents aged 16-24 a great first stepping stone into the world of work. Southwark Council's internal internship programmes run for 12 weeks and provide paid work experience, as well as master classes and a group project. For our most recent cohort of interns, there were opportunities available in nine service areas across the council, from climate change to all-age disability. The Council also works with the best employers in the borough to create additional paid internship opportunities for young people.

Encouraging more apprenticeships locally

⁶⁸ [LGA submission to the APPG for Youth Employment Committee inquiry into 'How is mental health affecting young people accessing the Labour Market and Quality Work?' | Local Government Association](#)

As well as the opportunities we provide to young people internally, Southwark Council has seen success in the borough by encouraging more apprenticeships locally and making it easier for local businesses to take on apprentices.

We have launched a partnership with the London Progression Collaboration, where we have pledged to use our unspent Apprenticeship Levy to benefit Southwark residents and businesses. Local Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Southwark that pay the London Living Wage can apply for a transferred levy, which can be used to train Southwark residents.

We are prioritising those employers that commit to recruiting young and diverse Londoners, with our assessment criteria favouring organisations that take on:

- Care leavers
- Young people not in education, employment or training
- Those aged 16-24
- Those who come from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds

However, we have found that a significant barrier for SMEs taking on apprentices is the inflexibility of the apprenticeship levy. At the moment, we can only transfer the apprenticeship levy for training costs, which means that SMEs still need to cover costs themselves- including salaries- when taking on apprentices. We would therefore echo the LGA's calls for the Government to permit more flexible use of the Levy, including meeting the full costs of apprenticeship programmes and administration and allowing spending on pre-apprenticeship training.

We also set ambitious targets for our developers and contractors to deliver apprenticeships. For our Section 106 requirements, we require one apprenticeship start for every 2,000 sqm of a new build. In addition, as part of our new Southwark Fairer Future Procurement Framework, we require 1 apprenticeship for every 1 million spent by contractors. This has delivered some great results over the last few years.

In partnership with Lendlease, we opened the Southwark Construction Skills Centre in Elephant Park in 2016 to support skills training for the construction sector, which to date has delivered over 400 apprenticeships.

Likewise, we partnered with London South Bank University (LSBU) to open the Passmore Centre in 2018, to create a new accessible centre for apprenticeships for residents and businesses in the borough.

Finally, we are currently working with partners that sit on our Southwark Anchor Network to maximise support for local, young and diverse residents to access opportunities within their workforces and get the most out of our shared investment in apprenticeships.

Supporting young entrepreneurs

The Southwark Pioneers Fund supports local businesses in Southwark to start up and grow. The Southwark Pioneers Fund: Launchpad programme focuses on businesses in their early stages, working with the entrepreneurs behind them to test their ideas, improve their business skills, identify target markets and build their businesses. The programme also offers one-to-one business coaching, advice surgeries, networking events and masterclasses. Businesses that participate in the programme can apply for grants of up to £5,000 towards taking their business forward.

Since launching in the autumn of 2022, the Launchpad has supported 18 young entrepreneurs aged 16-25.

Appendix xiv: Think Forward

Youth Unemployment APPG - Written evidence submitted by ThinkForward

Executive summary bullet points:

- We want to use our own knowledge and evidence to advocate for change to address the crucial gap between school and employment, during which young people often have limited support.
- We particularly have evidence for what works for young people who face challenges such as living in poverty, being excluded from school and those with SEND in London, Kent, Nottingham and Warwickshire.
- We have evidence that interventions that are long-term (5 years) and tailored to the young person's individual needs that support them through the gap between school and employment are the most effective at reducing the likelihood of them becoming NEET.
- We recommend the government invests in programmes to support young people during their transition from school to employment, particularly focusing on those most in-need of extra support, such as those with SEND or who face other forms of disadvantage such as living in poverty.

Introduction about organisation:

ThinkForward is submitting evidence to the Youth Unemployment APPG because we want to use our knowledge and evidence to advocate for change to address the crucial gap between school and employment, during which young people often have limited support.

ThinkForward exists to prevent the next generation of youth unemployment. Our three long-term coaching programmes work with young people at a key stage in their lives, enabling them to gain the confidence, independence, and skills they need to make a successful transition from school into employment. The young people we work with face barriers such as lack of opportunities, growing up in poverty, having a learning disability or being at risk of exclusion. Our coaches work closely with schools and local communities to provide the consistent support young people need to overcome these barriers and increase their readiness for work.

One-to-one coaching and exposure to workplaces encourage young people to develop their career goals and work readiness skills. Youth participation opportunities raise the voices of young people and enable them to make a positive change in their local communities.

We know education providers support young people to the age of 16 and there is also assistance for employers to employ young people once they are 18. Our work is unique in that we work with young people long-term and support their transition from education to employment. We work in regions that face above-average issues that can lead to unemployment, such as Kent and Nottingham, and we have a proven successful record of supporting young people in these areas into employment. 83% of our FutureMe Post-16 students are in Education, Training or Employment. The national government statistic for the most comparable group of young people is 62.8%. Additionally, we have successfully tailored our programmes to support groups of young people who require support the most, including young people with SEND and black male students who have been excluded from mainstream school. We are submitting our evidence so programmes like these can be

expanded across the whole country to ensure the most in-need groups of young people receive the support they require. We want the government to invest in and scale up youth support programmes to address the gap between school, college and employment in order to tackle youth unemployment.

1. What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper local level that drive youth unemployment?

At ThinkForward, we work with underserved young people to support them to transition from school to further education or employment. We operate in London, Nottingham, Kent and the West Midlands so have firsthand knowledge of the issues our young people face at a local level. For our evidence we will use evidence from our work in Kent and specifically in Margate, Dover, Maidstone, Gillingham and New Romney, from the experiences of young black men in London who have been excluded from mainstream education and from young people with SEND in Warwickshire.

Youth unemployment (18-24 years old) in Kent is 18.3%, higher than the UK average of 17.2%.⁶⁹

The Covid-19 pandemic led to an increase in the levels of youth unemployment; 2021 the rate was 12.77%, compared with 11.04% in 2019. Many students who were seeking to enter employment during the pandemic have been impacted which will continue for coming years. This effect is clear in the December 2022 youth unemployment rate which was 11.3%, which is still higher than it was pre-pandemic. During the pandemic it was very difficult for students to gain the necessary work experience as companies weren't looking to add to their workforce. This has meant that students who are ready to enter the workforce lack the experience and skills employers require.

The Covid-19 pandemic affected all industries but particularly hospitality, retail, entertainment, the arts, and entry-level administration. This further puts a strain on young people looking to join these sectors. The four leading industries in Kent are wholesale, retail and repair (14.7%), human health and social work (14.3%), construction (11%) and education (10.1%). All of which require a certain level of skill, qualification, or experience.

Another issue that drives youth unemployment in Kent is that many jobs are seasonal due to tourism. Kent attracts tourists during the summer months due to their seaside resorts, historic castles and cathedrals as well as many transport links across the English Channel. This creates job concentration during those months and then fewer opportunities in the winter and autumn months.

Youth unemployment is also driven by limited job opportunities, lack of investment and business closures. In November and December 2022, 57 businesses went into administration in Kent, 16% of those across the whole of England and Wales.⁷⁰ This is 31% higher than the previous quarter.⁷¹

While there are job openings in Kent, not all are suitable for young people looking for work. This is because they lack the skills needed to perform the job or the qualifications needed. This issue however can be tackled by working with local organisations such as ThinkForward

⁶⁹ https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/148457/Unemployment-in-Kent-bulletin.pdf

⁷⁰

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/company-insolvency-statistics-october-to-december-2022/commentary-company-insolvency-statistics-october-to-december-2022>

⁷¹

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/company-insolvency-statistics-october-to-december-2022/commentary-company-insolvency-statistics-october-to-december-2022>

as well as the schools, local councils and employers to provide them with the skills and experience opportunities that they need to succeed, as well as tackling the barriers hindering them.

Another issue is the lack of confidence or experience of businesses who are hesitant about employing young people. Research found that 1 in 5 employers in the UK did not hire any 22-25 year olds in the past year.⁷² They also found that around a quarter of employers have no experience hiring young people who face disadvantage.

a. Who are the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place-based level?

There are many disadvantages a young person can face, which are more likely in areas of deprivation where there is a lack of jobs and opportunities. The most disadvantaged are:

- Young people from low-income households, as they may face obstacles accessing education and training, as well as finding secure employment which allows them to break the poverty cycle. Thanet has the highest number of children living in absolute low-income families in Kent at 18%. Four local authorities in Kent are above the national average (15.1%), these are Thanet, Gravesham (17.1%), Folkstone and Hythe (16.9%), and Dover (16.3%).⁷³
- Those with physical or learning disabilities as they require additional support. They may face several difficulties that can hinder their opportunities to finding employment or continuing their education such as discrimination, lack of confidence, lack of experience and lack of support. The most affected area in Kent for mental health is Thanet with 18% of their population over the age of 16 facing common mental health problems. Additionally, the percentage of pupils with EHC plans in Kent is 4.8%, compared to 4% of pupils in the UK⁷⁴. 13.2% of pupils in Medway receive SEN support, compared to 12.6% in the UK.⁷⁵
- Young people who are at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness as they lack permanent housing and access to basic needs. This will make it substantially more difficult for them to find education and employment opportunities. In Kent (6935) the most assessments made on homelessness came from Thanet with 1245 in 2020/2021.⁷⁶
- Those who have been in the care system, it can be difficult for them to navigate the transition to adulthood and the working world as they gain more independence and they may require additional support. Thanet has high levels of children who are in local authority care.⁷⁷
- Young people who have a lack of support at home, for example due to having caring responsibilities or parents who work long hours.
- Those with English as a second language.
- Those who are at risk of being groomed or have gang affiliations. This is particularly common in cities, but with the increase in county lines operations this is now becoming a risk for young people who live in more rural locations too.

⁷² <https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/bridging-gap>

⁷³ https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/7956/Children-in-poverty.pdf

⁷⁴

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/e02b018b-dff7-4ff7-16eb-08da47b0392d>

⁷⁵ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>

⁷⁶ https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/7349/Homelessness-in-Kent.pdf

⁷⁷ https://www.kpho.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/106010/2019_Annual_Public_Health_Report.pdf

b. What impact does location have on young people access to employment, training, and education opportunities?

Location plays a huge role in ensuring that young people can get to their jobs, school, university or other education and training opportunities. Young people from rural and remote areas may find it difficult to access the same range of opportunities as those living in more urban areas. There is a shortage of bus drivers in Kent due to Stagecoach having problems with staff recruitment. This is leading to buses being cancelled and stopping the service along routes at short notice. This seriously impacts students trying to get to school and other members of the public trying to get to work as many people rely on their service to get around.

Kent County Council who helps to fund these routes has said that the cut back is due to “financial pressures for rising costs and lower passenger numbers”. The council is working with the pupils and their families to try to alleviate the impact this will have on them by the end of the school year. The council has unveiled plans to cut the free school transportation for children up to the age of 16 coming into effect in the next school year. This will mean in the next academic year more children will be affected leading to more late arrivals to school and students not attending school because their parents won't be able to afford the transport costs as well as the limited access to transport if it is available to them. It will cost parents £500 per child for a bus pass which many parents cannot afford.

Those who live in remote or isolated areas can also struggle to secure employment. Many of our young people who live in New Romney, Kent, report not having the confidence to travel to further cities or towns to find employment. They also report that it is the norm to stay in their local area and not travel or move further afield. They therefore often struggle to envisage a successful future for themselves where they work in a fulfilling career. Our coaches have reported that some parents and carers feel uneasy about their children travelling to nearby towns or cities for work opportunities, and therefore do not allow them to do so. In New Romney, the secondary school is the second largest employer in the area, highlighting the lack of jobs available in the local community.

2. What place based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities?

We believe interventions that are long-term and tailored to the young person's individual needs are the most effective.

Our coaches work with the same young people for five years, from the age of 13 until they are 18, allowing them to build a trusted relationship with an adult who supports them to come up with their own solutions to the challenges they face.

As well as coaching, we support young people by broadening their experiences through work insight visits, social action and youth voice projects, and a business mentoring programme. We take young people on trips to visit workplaces and gain an insight into various roles and career pathways. This builds their confidence to travel and increases their understanding of the world of work. Additionally, our business mentoring programme enables young people to meet with professionals who mentor them and offer advice. They also learn how to create their own CV and cover letter, empowering them to apply for job opportunities.

As a result of our intervention, 83% of our young people are in Education, Employment or Training, proving its effectiveness. We believe there are a lack of interventions like this that are long-term and bridge the gap between education and employment.

We also provide aid via hardship grants through one of our funders for items to help young people start work or training. These grants have been successful in helping young people to access opportunities that they would have lacked the financial resources to do so.

Kodie said, “I am so grateful to be given these grants to help me with my college work and my life. They have helped me so much – without them, I certainly wouldn’t have been able to complete my Art course or look online for a job - which I am now doing.”

Another student, Katie, was studying L3 Hairdressing and her career ambition was to become a mobile hairdresser. Katie received a £500 grant to buy hairdressing equipment so that she could set herself up as a mobile hairdresser. Items included scissors, brushes and combs, electrical appliances such as curling tongs and a hairdryer. This hugely helped Katie to pursue her career goal.

Other examples of the grants assisting young people on their career and education paths include the purchase of a football academy annual membership and kit, boxing equipment and a club subscription, college textbooks, monthly travel cards and revision guides.

a. Who do these solutions work for, what does the evidence tell us about the demographics of young people benefitting from successful intervention?

Our FutureMe programme works with young people who face barriers to employment such as lack of opportunities, growing up in poverty or difficult home lives. Of the young people we work with in Kent, the majority are on free school meals (63%) and pupil premium (66%), and over 50% have special educational needs. However, 89% (99 out of 111) of our young people in Kent are in education, employment or training, compared to 62.8%⁷⁸ for the most comparable group⁷⁹ of young people in the UK. This clearly demonstrates that our intervention is successful for young people who face these types of challenges.

Our DFN-MoveForward programme works with young people who have mild to moderate learning difficulties from the age of 16 until they secure paid employment, up to the age of 25. In Kent, 75% of these young people are in Education, Employment or Training which compares highly favourably to the UK average of just 4.8% of adults with learning disabilities being in paid work.⁸⁰ This demonstrates that a long-term intervention working with young people with SEND that provides one-to-one coaching, work insight trips and work experience opportunities is highly successful in supporting young people into paid employment.

We are running a placement pilot programme with DHL, a Kent-based employer, to offer work experience tailored to the specific needs of post-16 young people diagnosed with a learning disability. Unfortunately, opportunities for young people with SEND to engage in work experience are sparse. Some employers struggle as they don't have access to the specialist skills and knowledge needed to support the development of work placements for young people with additional needs. This puts young people with SEND at risk of missing out on the opportunity to gain experience, develop their work readiness skills and access future paid sustainable employment. The pilot will co-design bespoke work placements which create effective pathways into entry-level jobs and map to funded skills programmes

⁷⁸

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/4b0b2642-b703-4b3f-ab0f-0ef077a39d58>

⁷⁹ Government destination data for post-16 to 18 year olds who have not achieved Key Stage 4 English & Maths, grades 9-4 and are defined as disadvantaged, meeting at least one of the following criteria: a) Have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the previous six years; b) Have been looked after by their local authority for at least 1 day; c) Have left care through adoption, a special guardianship order, or a child arrangements order (previously known as a residence order).

⁸⁰ <https://www.base-uk.org/employment-rates>

(traineeships, inclusive apprenticeships, supported internships), deliver training to employers and supervisors to develop their understanding of the support needs of SEND young people and to further support more inclusive recruitment practices and offer guidance on designing suitable employment opportunities for SEND young people, focusing on the skills, level of support and preparation needed for them to engage meaningfully in the workplace. We believe the government should provide funding for more of these schemes.

Our Future Leaders programme supports black male Year 10 and 11 students in London who are at risk of being excluded or have been excluded from mainstream school. In London, black students are more likely to be excluded from school than white British students and young black men experience high unemployment rates despite educational attainment having increased. Young black men on our programme have reported feeling like opportunities aren't available to them, one stated that they felt like music or sport were the only careers they were allowed to pursue. Many of them reported feeling like being on the programme and attending trips had opened their eyes to a huge variety of careers that they didn't know were available. Additionally, many referenced previous mistakes they had made or 'bad pathways' they had gone down or felt tempted to go down, they then reported that being on the programme and the support from their coach had developed their skills, mindset and awareness of opportunities and now felt motivated not to go down these negative routes and to pursue a career instead.

3. What is the role of local government and national government in tackling youth unemployment at a place based level?

1. The government should help by working with schools, colleges, training providers and charities to ensure that all young people have access to programmes that will provide them with the skills they need to transition to the working world. This can be done by investing in different programmes that support young people who are most in-need of extra support.
2. The local government in Kent should help with internship and work experience placements by working with the schools and local businesses to allow these young people the opportunity to gain vital real-world experience and exposure. Research found that 1 in 5 employers in the UK did not hire any 22-25 year olds in the past year.⁸¹ They also found that around a quarter of employers have no experience hiring young people who face disadvantage. This highlights the importance of education and training for employers on this subject.
3. The government should help to create job opportunities in particular communities by attracting new businesses to areas, investing in local projects and supporting local businesses.
4. The government should also invest in training and initiatives for employers, for example providing training on how to work with young people with special educational needs. For example, opportunities similar to our pilot programme with DHL mentioned above.
5. The government should work closely with local authorities to provide employment and training opportunities for young people.

⁸¹ <https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/bridging-gap>

Appendix xv: Whizz Kids

Written evidence submitted by Whizz-Kidz

1. Whizz-Kidz

1.1 Whizz-Kidz is the UK's leading charity for young wheelchair users. We support children and young people across the UK by providing wheelchairs and mobility equipment to develop independence and confidence at no cost to the beneficiary. We also provide confidence-building activities, wheelchair skills training and employability programmes to empower young wheelchair users with the skills, tools and opportunities for inclusion in all aspects of life and society.

1.2 This inquiry is informed by the children, young people and families we work with. It is also informed by a small scale research project conducted by our Kidz Board, a group of young wheelchair users from around the UK who are at the heart of every decision Whizz-Kidz makes.

1.3 We are submitting evidence to this inquiry as we want to ensure that consideration is given to young wheelchair users and the specific and compounded barriers they face accessing employment at a local level.

2. Evidence Summary

2.1 Barriers of youth unemployment are often complex and being a young wheelchair user exacerbates these barriers. In addition to barriers such as confidence, school experience, family circumstances etc, young wheelchair users have to deal with health and equipment needs, lack of accessibility (both physical and societal), stigma, negative attitudes, and assumptions. Young wheelchair users do not only face barriers to employment but face complex disadvantages.

3. Inquiry Response

3.1 What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment?

3.2 Physical and Practical Issues

3.2.1 Equipment that promotes independence: Many children and young people are not getting the mobility equipment they need through NHS wheelchair services to be independent. This can negatively impact the health and social outcomes of young wheelchair users including being able to access work and employment opportunities. There are inconsistencies in NHS wheelchair services across the country in terms of how the eligibility criteria for specific equipment is applied.

3.2.2 Enter-ability and Accessibility: The built environment and the enter-ability of buildings can be a barrier for a lot of young wheelchair users in their local areas. If transport and infrastructure is not accessible, then young wheelchair users are unable to participate in work or further learning. In addition, there are some careers that young people have told us that they feel are not accessible to them such as medicine, law, chef, teaching etc. Young wheelchair users not only need support to gain confidence to work towards their aspirations but to develop wider aspirations, not just aim for careers that are perceived as accessible.

3.2.3 Public transport: The ability for young people to use their disabled bus pass before 9:30am is at the discretion of local authorities. Initiatives such as turn up and go at train stations is great progress but if the local and surrounding train stations are inaccessible and unmanned then it is not an option for young wheelchair users. One young person said *“I only use the stations I know are accessible in advance and would never use them on my own as the trains are never level with the platform and there is always a big gap which is hard jump... I did once miss this jump so my wheels fell in to the gap. I then fell out of my chair onto the train”*.

3.3 Attitudes and Adjustments

3.1.Relevant support: Knowing about, and accessing, relevant support is difficult for young wheelchair users as support is usually focused on person centered delivery. As such, young wheelchair users are reliant on education staff, careers advisors and work coaches in their local area knowing about, and how to access, relevant support such as the Access to Work Scheme, the Equality Act or Reasonable Adjustments to inform young people.

3.2.Reasonable adjustments: Employers need to be supported to provide reasonable adjustments and to have those conversations with young wheelchair users. One young person said employers should *“have open communication about adjustments and not presume anything”*. Employers not understanding their duties, responsibilities to implement reasonable adjustments and support such as the Access to Work scheme may deter employers from employing young wheelchair users.

3.3.Attitudes: The young people we work with describe the attitudes of support staff (such as school staff and careers advisors) as being can't do rather than can do, that they don't always feel listened to and are unable to build on their strengths. In the Kidz Board research, people making assumptions about their capabilities based on their disabilities, and attitudes of employers were the top two worries young people said they have about entering the world of work.

3.4 Education and Preparation

3.4.1 Qualifications and ‘Catching Up’: One-quarter (24.9%) of disabled people aged 21 to 64 years in the UK had a degree as their highest qualification compared with 42.7% of non-disabled people; 13.3% of disabled people had no qualifications compared with 4.6% of non-disabled people (year ending June 2021)⁸². Some young wheelchair users may miss a lot of school and may be unable to sit their GCSEs due to their disabilities. Resitting key exams is reliant on the local offer.

3.4.2 Opportunities to develop work related skills: Young wheelchair users tell us that they have had limited, if any, valuable work-related education in school. Young people are often provided with limited options; *‘[their] school only offered him experiences in cooking and art’*. They face can't do rather than can do attitudes from staff and can be told *‘you can't do that because you are in a wheelchair and it will be too difficult to sort out’*. Employability and work-related skills is reliant on the local offer.

3.4.3 Pathways and entry level work: Young wheelchair users are reliant on further education and training being delivered accessibly in their local areas. Entry level work also feels inaccessible to some young wheelchair users, one young person told us *‘Typical entry level or Saturday jobs for most sixth formers aren't suitable for wheelchair users e.g. waiters, stacking shelves on shop floors. If there is anything specific for disabled people, which I haven't seen, the jobs are basic and not well paid if at all’*.

⁸² [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

4. Who are the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place-based level?

4.1 Young wheelchair users are a group of disadvantaged young people at a local and hyper-local level.

4.2 Disabled Young People are more likely to be NEET: High level statistics show that in 2020, the proportion of 16-24 year olds who were NEET was higher for those with disabilities (28%) than those without (8%)⁸³.

4.3 The Disability Employment Gap: The disability employment gap was 29.8 percentage points in July to September 2022⁸⁴. Between July and September 2021, 53.5% of disabled people aged 16 to 64 years in the UK were employed compared with 81.6% of non-disabled people⁸⁵.

4.4 The Disability Pay Gap: In 2021, the disability pay gap was 13.8% with disabled employees earning a median of £12.10 per hour and non-disabled employees a median of £14.03 per hour⁸⁶. The disability pay gap is larger in some English regions than others. In the East of England the disability pay gap is 16.1% and in the North East is 6.4%⁸⁷.

4.5 Type of Employment: Disabled people were more likely than non-disabled people to be working in lower-skilled occupations⁸⁸. Disabled workers (11.2%) are more likely than their non-disabled counterparts (8.5%) to be employed in Elementary occupations⁸⁹. The disability pay gap for elementary occupations is 4.1%. The pay gap for managers, directors and senior officials is 10.1%⁹⁰.

4.6 Looking at the disability pay gap in more detail shows the disparities at local level. These factors impact on aspirations of young people and the assumptions and attitudes of local employers and support staff.

5. What impact does place/location have on a young person's access to employment, training and education opportunities?

5.1 Compounded Barriers

5.1.1 Relevant support: Young people are not always aware of the support that is available to them, or how to access it. Young wheelchair users need to be aware of additional information such as the Access to Work Scheme or identifying Disability Confident Employers, not knowing can impact on confidence and aspirations leading to disengagement. This is further compounded by the accessibility of processes to access relevant support.

5.1.2 Stigma and Assumptions: Young people not in education, training or employment may face stigma and negative assumptions about their work ethic and capabilities. For young wheelchair users this is compounded by additional negative assumptions based on their disabilities. This impacts young wheelchair users' confidence and can lead them to feeling undervalued and patronised. It may also lead to young people having limited options for work related activities or employers not willing to employ them because of perceived additional support needed.

⁸³ [SN06705.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#)

⁸⁴ [Employment of disabled people 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸⁵ [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸⁶ [Disability pay gaps in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸⁷ [Raw pay gaps by disability, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸⁸ [Employment of disabled people 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸⁹ [Disability and employment - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁹⁰ [Disability pay gaps in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

5.2 Disadvantage

5.2.1 No or Limited Independence: Not having wheelchair equipment that provides independence holds young people back from fulfilling their potential. Where young people are provided with independent equipment this can be as older teenagers and so they may not have had opportunities to develop confidence, social skills, and knowledge to enter the world of work. Providing independent wheelchair equipment at all ages enables the natural progression of life skills to prepare young people for work, alongside their nondisabled peers.

5.2.2 Public Transport: The limitations of using public buses and issues with reliability of train assistance, if available, leave young wheelchair users facing significant disadvantage in participating in education or work. Most workplaces and education establishments start before 9:30 and it depends on local authorities if a disabled bus pass can be used before this time. Simply going to work or study incurs yet another cost to the disabled community who, on average, face additional costs of £583 a month⁹¹ compared to their non-disabled counterparts.

5.2.3 Reasonable adjustments: Employers, education providers and support staff need more support and knowledge around the Equality Act and Reasonable adjustments. This information can then be passed on to young wheelchair users and can empower employers. Young wheelchair users not knowing their rights and employers not being confident to implement reasonable adjustments may lead to ostracising disabled people and long waits for reasonable adjustments may mean people will leave.

5.2.4 Careers inaccessibility: The combination of can't do rather than can do attitudes from adults combined with low confidence, missed school or exams and limited work-related skills development is further compounded by some areas of work being inaccessible for young wheelchair users. If specific industries are, or perceived to be, inaccessible then this will limit young wheelchair user's aspirations and hopes for the future.

6 What place-based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities?

6.1 Whizz-Kidz provides Employability Skills Days (ESDs) and Work Placements for Young Wheelchair Users.

6.2 Employability Skills Days are sessions run by employers for young wheelchair users and cover topics such as Rights in the workplace, developing a CV, applying for jobs and interview skills.

6.3 Work Placements place young wheelchair users with employers. Young people are supported on a 1-1 basis to identify work placements that are young person focused and delivered within their own needs and goals.

6.4 Pre-placements meetings are held between the young person and the employer prior to the placement starting. These act as a 'getting to know you' sessions and provide the opportunity to discuss what to expect and address any issues or concerns.

7. Who do these solutions work for, what does the evidence tell us about the demographics of young people benefitting from successful intervention?

7.1 Impact for Young People: It provides young people with opportunities to develop skills, knowledge, confidence and raise their aspirations. One young person said it 'feels like that there is a job there for me' another said about the programme that 'hopefully, many more

⁹¹ Scope (2019). *The Disability Price Tag 2019*. Available at: <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/extra-costs/disability-price-tag/>

young people from Whizz-Kidz will get a similar opportunity as me and potentially get full-time employment’.

7.2 Impact for Employers: Employers gain increased understanding around employing young wheelchair users. One employer told us ‘it makes us more aware of what wheelchair users are able to do rather than what they are unable to do’. It also promotes inclusive practice, ‘understanding how to make our organisation more accessible and accommodating to wheelchair users’.

7.3 Building Relationships: The inclusion of 1-1 coaching and pre-placement meetings has meant young people and employers were able to come together to discuss outcomes and address any issues or adjustments. Young people found that employers were ‘very understandable, and considerate to our needs. I found them all very helpful’. Employers found that ‘it broadens our understanding of diversity and inclusion and how to be more inclusive’.

7.4 The success of this approach demonstrates the need for disability-inclusive youth employment programmes where staff listen to young people, focus on their strengths and foster working relationships between young wheelchair users and employers. More support and understanding of young wheelchair users for employers and professionals will address perceived barriers and empower young wheelchair users to realise that ‘I can do anything I want, not just cooking and art. There are things out there for me’.

8. What is the role of local government and national government in tackling youth unemployment at a place-based level?

8.1 Recommendations for local government

8.1.1 Working with Employers and Town Centres: Local authorities are well placed to raise awareness of the issues young wheelchair users face when accessing education or employment through their relationships with local businesses, employers, and education establishments. Local authorities could share information on the Equality Act, reasonable adjustments, how to implement them, the Access to Work Scheme and promote the Employing disabled people and people with health conditions⁹².

8.1.2 Disability-Inclusive Youth Employment Programmes: Initiatives that encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training should incorporate a disability-specific delivery strand. This will ensure the needs of young wheelchair users are heard, they are aware of their Rights at work and are informed of what support is available. ‘I think there should be career advisors who are understanding of disabilities and websites that help disabled people get work’.

8.1.3 Equality Objectives: Equality objectives set as part of the Public Sector Equality Duty could incorporate issues that young wheelchair users face in work and education to encourage targeted approaches. It could also include disadvantages in local areas such as transport, accessibility and fostering good relations between young wheelchair users and employers. Equality analysis undertaken, including for equality impact assessments, should also include disabled young people.

8.1.4 Reviewing Public Transport: Local authorities in England should offer free bus transport at any time and work with local transport providers to support knowledge sharing and understanding to improve accessibility of public transport so it does not limit the opportunities for young wheelchair users to engage in education or work.

⁹² [Employing disabled people and people with health conditions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/employing-disabled-people-and-people-with-health-conditions)

8.2 Recommendations for National Government

8.2.1 Disability Pay Gap Reporting: Making this mandatory would help focus on areas where there is significant disparities and work towards identifying the barriers and initiatives that could be implemented. Although inclusion and equality cannot only be measured through this type of reporting, it will at least provide a baseline and a platform to explore how to build more inclusive practices.

8.2.2 Training For DWP Staff: Initiatives to support disabled people into work, including the new Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper⁹³, is reliant on delivery by Work Coaches. As such, training for Work Coaches that takes into account the needs of young wheelchair users should be included to enable successful implementation.

8.2.3 Reasonable Adjustments Accountability: the role of Work Coaches should incorporate working with employers in implementing reasonable adjustments young wheelchair users may need to find and stay in work. This should be accompanied by sufficient training and support for staff.

8.2.4 Accessible Transport: Disabled bus pass holders in England should be able to travel at all times, in line with Wales and Scotland, removing the unnecessary barrier of public bus travel. Trains and accessibility booking needs to be reliable so that young wheelchair users are confident they can travel to their place of work or education.

8.2.5 Work with Industries: An evaluation of the inclusivity of specific industries needs to be undertaken to identify if and how they may be inaccessible for young wheelchair users. Collaborative working between national government and industries typically seen as inaccessible including law, engineering and medicine would start relevant discussions on the barriers and initiatives that could be implemented so all industries can become more inclusive.

8.2.6 NHS Wheelchair Criteria: Assessments for NHS wheelchairs need to focus on promoting independence at all ages. This should start with children under 5 years old, who are only typically provided with a buggy, to enable young wheelchair users to develop the confidence, independence and life skills to enter the world of work.

8.2.7 Barriers to youth unemployment is a complex area and for young wheelchair users these complex issues are compounded by disadvantages. The number of people reporting a long-term health condition or classed as disabled continues to rise⁹⁴ and so understanding and applying inclusive practices will not only benefit more people but ensure better preparedness for the future.

Appendix xvi: Young Enterprise

Written evidence submission by Young Enterprise

Executive Summary

- Young Enterprise has worked actively for 60 years to improve young people's prospects, including promoting sustainable employment and careers.
- We have increasingly worked with cohorts of young people in more deprived parts of the country, committed to place based approaches, and acknowledging that

⁹³ [Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/white-papers/transforming-support-the-health-and-disability-white-paper)

⁹⁴ [Employment of disabled people 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/white-papers/employment-of-disabled-people-2022)

differences exist around access to opportunities, particularly relating to enterprise and financial education.

- Young Enterprise encourages the APPG for Youth Employment to recognise the importance of skills, competencies and mindsets in shaping young people's prospects and employment, and that opportunities for young people to develop in these areas require targeted intervention to reduce inequalities.

Introduction to Young Enterprise

Young Enterprise is a national financial and enterprise education charity that motivates young people to succeed in the changing world of work by equipping them with the work skills, knowledge and confidence they need. Each year we provide learning opportunities to over 400,000 young people.

We believe that no young person should be left behind. Our vision is that every young person is provided with the opportunity to learn the vital skills needed to earn and look after their money, develop an enterprising mindset and make a valuable contribution to their communities and wider society.

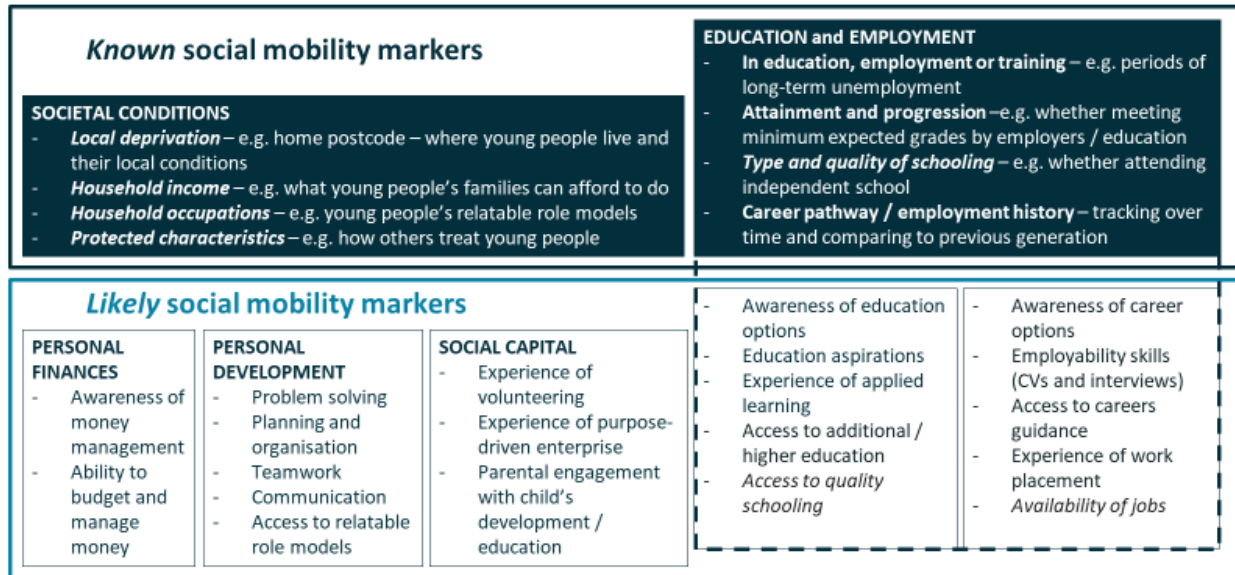
Our mission is to empower young people to discover, develop and celebrate their skills and potential. All our programmes and services are designed to provide young people with real and relevant learning opportunities. These opportunities focus on developing the skills, competencies and mindset required to navigate complex and changeable future pathways successfully. Academic attainment on its own is not enough for many young people. Young Enterprise provides the real-life scenarios in which learning can be applied in practical ways and, in doing so, supports the development of crucial skills, competencies and mindsets.

1. What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment?

Young Enterprise is especially concerned with supporting young people who do not have access to opportunities to prepare them for the world of work and adult life, and who may require support to achieve appropriate **skills, competencies and mindsets**.

Young Enterprise recently commissioned external research into contributing factors affecting young people's social mobility (Traverse, 2022), and this identified **deprivation level** at the local scale as one of the main markers of differing prospects between groups of young people, and this could reasonably be extended to their chances of securing sustainable employment.

As well as established indicators like household income and academic attainment, the research also found that young people's preparedness for their working life can be variously affected by their personal development, their emergent social capital, and their financial capability, as well as their understanding around how to progress in education and employment. Young Enterprise is currently exploring and testing the significance of some of the indicators associated with these issues (see Figure below).



Source: Young Enterprise / Traverse, 2022

a. Who are the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place based level?

Young Enterprise views the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place based level as **those who do not have access to opportunities and support to develop their skills, competencies and mindsets**, particularly relating to key enterprise and financial educational topics. In our experience, these groups are at greatest risk of not fulfilling their potential and future social mobility.

b. What impact does place/location have on a young person’s access to employment, training and education opportunities?

In terms of access to opportunities in a school setting, Young Enterprise finds that schools in more disadvantaged areas face additional barriers to delivering enterprise and financial education, which have a consequent negative effect on the likelihood of their pupils having opportunities, and on the quality of those opportunities.

Outside of the school setting, e.g. in the home environment, young people’s likelihood of having opportunities differs in several ways, including exposure to role models, applied learning in extra-curricular settings, parental engagement, and community involvement. Some of the trends affecting access to opportunities at a local level are stubbornly hard to break.

2. What place based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities?

Young Enterprise has been working closely with schools in more deprived areas across the country and targeting young people who have reduced access to opportunities. For example, our Company Programme which has been running for 60 years builds connections between schools and local business volunteers so that young people have access to relatable role models who share their own experiences having come from similar upbringings and backgrounds, and who can advise them around different ways to improve their prospects, including beyond traditional academic routes. By having the opportunity to run their own business with their peers, young people have the opportunity for ‘learning by doing’ which gives them the skills and confidence to enter the world of work better prepared. Without

intervention, the lack of relevant skills and confidence can be a significant barrier to their future prospects.

Our most recent [Company Programme Impact Report](#) highlights how 85% of learners have used their experience to reflect on the skills they need for the future, 84% now have a greater understanding of the world of work, and 72% have improved their work-readiness. One of the most impactful ways we can prepare young people for their future careers is to provide with them with these applied learning experiences of the working world and to offer them advice and guidance in a real-life context.

Young Enterprise has also developed two programmes to specifically support careers advice and guidance in schools (Learn to Earn and the Employability Masterclass), focusing on increasing skills and confidence.

- a. Who do these solutions work for, what does the evidence tell us about the demographics of young people benefitting from successful intervention?

Our surveys of young people find that, on average, those attending schools in more deprived areas are less well prepared for the world of work according to measures around knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Through our targeted work with these schools however, we are beginning to see positive impacts to address this. We are finding that learners at more deprived schools who participate in our Company Programme and Employability Masterclass catch up with and overtake their peers at other schools according to key employability capabilities.

Our enterprise and financial education programmes therefore work best for young people who would not otherwise have opportunities for this learning inside or outside of school, rather than being related to their demographics or personal background. For example, having a clear understanding of CV writing and interview is a very significant factor in young people's preparedness for the future, and this appears to be under-represented among young people in more deprived areas.

3. What is the role of local government and national government in tackling youth unemployment at a place based level?

Our recent intervention in three areas of the country (Worcestershire, Hertfordshire and Dorset) funded by the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) has presented a significant boost to these areas in preparing their young people for employability and careers. This is one example of local and national government working together to improve place-based employment prospects. Young Enterprise would support more skills-based local investments like this, including through the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), as a means of scaling up our proven programmes and support. We would ideally like this financial support to be guided into those coldspot areas where young people are at greater risk of reduced access to opportunities.

Appendix xvii: Youth Employment UK

About Youth Employment UK

Youth Employment UK is an independent, not-for-profit social enterprise founded in 2012 to tackle youth unemployment. Today we are one of the leading youth employment experts in the UK, supporting young people, employers, government and policy makers. Youth Employment UK is the Secretariat to the [All-Party Parliamentary Group \(APPG\) for Youth](#)

[Employment](#),⁹⁵ a Co-Chair of the [Youth Employment Group](#)⁹⁶, and has led a number of independent research projects including the annual [Youth Voice Census](#)⁹⁷.

We are actively tackling youth unemployment by:

- Giving young people a voice on the youth employment issues that affect them
- Supporting young people with the skills and careers support they need to progress
- Supporting employers to develop and be recognised for their youth-friendly employment practice
- Connecting young people to Youth Friendly Employers
- Providing expert insight across all youth employment policy areas

Our response

Methodology

Our evidence has been taken from the following sources:

- [Youth Voice Census 2022](#) - The Youth Voice Census is a weighted and representative annual survey conducted by Youth Employment UK. It explores the views and experiences of young people in the UK between the ages of 11 - 30. The 2022 Youth Voice Census was completed by over 4,000 young people and was open between March and April 2022.
- Youth Ambassadors - Youth Employment UK Youth Ambassadors provide first-hand experience of issues surrounding employment. Youth Ambassadors regularly share their experiences and expertise in both formal and informal settings to ensure that young people's voices are heard.

1. What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment?

- a. Who are the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place based level?**
- b. What impact does place/location have on a young person's access to employment, training and education opportunities?**

In 2022 our Youth Voice Census provided rich insight about the impact of place on young people's education, training and employment opportunities but also their perceptions of safety, services and social and cultural capital. It was clear through this evidence that place matters. Young people have very different experiences whether they live in cities, towns, rural or coastal areas. Place matters at a hyper local level too, postcodes made a difference to where you could go and what opportunities you thought you could access. In both cases differences are significant with opportunity, access and support appearing unequal. Most stark in our findings was that in addition to where you live, who you are matters, those young

⁹⁵ APPG Youth Employment, [APPG For Youth Employment - Youth Employment UK](#)

⁹⁶ Youth Employment UK, The Youth Employment Group
<https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/about-us/youth-employment-group/>

⁹⁷ Youth Employment UK, Youth Voice Census Report 2022
<https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/youth-voice-census/>

people with protected characteristics, carers and care leavers felt left behind in communities across the country.

When it comes to accessing provision, local services and feeling safe, those with protected characteristics, carers and care leavers are most disadvantaged. These groups feel that they have less access to quality work, local services, mental health support and Youth Hubs in their local area, they are also more likely to feel unsafe than respondents without protected characteristics.

Whilst we know that support, training, education and employment opportunities vary for young people locally, when they are available and young people know about them we still have issues with access:

Safety

The Youth Voice Census 2022 makes it clear that safety isn't a privilege for all. Respondents who are transgender, eligible for free school meals, have English as a second language, care leavers and carers were all significantly more likely to feel 'unsafe' and 'very unsafe' in their local areas. In addition, young women and those from the LGBTQ+ community felt threatened by physical or sexual violence. Examples of not feeling safe range from a significant minority feeling unable to leave their homes all together but a majority of these groups feeling unable to access support and provision and commonly feeling unsafe to undertake work that was available to them. The types of work available to young people will most often be hospitality, retail, warehousing and care roles all leave these groups feeling vulnerable in travelling at anti-social times.

Transport

Young people have told us through the Youth Voice Census and Youth Ambassador roundtables that accessing transport locally is an issue for them being able to access work and support. For those young people in rural communities the availability and frequency of services was an issue stopping them from being able to access work and training opportunities but for those with protected characteristics, carers and care leavers this is exacerbated.

- When asked about all factors relating to local public transport Black, Black British, Caribbean or African respondents, young people in care, young people with English as a second language and those with additional needs were twice or three times more likely to rate all factors as 'very poor'.
- Non-binary, unsure/questioning and transgender respondents were at least 10% more likely to rate the reliability and cost of services as 'poor'.
- Young people currently in care were the most likely to rate services as 'very poor': they were also twice as likely to rate the availability, safety and cost of services as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Our most recent Youth Ambassador roundtables indicate these issues are becoming heightened by the cost of living crisis and recent strike action, those from a free school meal background and single parent families are feeling this most acutely.

Youth Clubs and Youth Hubs

Youth clubs and Youth Hubs can be places where young people can develop skills and build networks in their local area. Young people who have access to youth clubs and Youth Hubs in their local area have told us through Youth Ambassador roundtables how useful and helpful they can be, however access to them is limited in different areas of the country and for those with protected characteristics, carers and care leavers they have been more difficult to access:

- Young people eligible for free school meals were 6% less likely to have access to a Youth Hub.
- Young people with English as a second language were 11.8% less likely to have access to a youth club (28.4%).
- Young people currently in care were at least 10% less likely to have access to a youth club (29.2% compared to 45.5% care leavers and 40.1% of those with no experience of the care system).
- 22.7% of care leavers have access to a youth hub compared to 11.4% of those with no experience of the care system and 15.6% of those currently in care.

Mental Health support

The Youth Voice Census 2022 found that young people are currently in a mental health emergency, but for those with protected characteristics, carers and care leavers this has been exacerbated:

- 25.7% of young people think they can access support for their mental health problems locally.
- 51.8% of those who were unsure/questioning 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that they could access support locally compared to 47.4% of those who are non-binary, 43.8% of transgender respondents', 33.3% of those who prefer not to say, 28.1% of girls and 17.4% of boys.
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African respondents and Mixed or multiple ethnic groups were twice as likely to 'strongly disagree' that they can get support for their mental health problems locally.
- Care leavers were at least 5% more likely to agree that they can access mental health support locally (28.6% compared to 23% of those currently in care and 20% of those with no experience of care).

Accessing work locally:

Place and location has a significant impact on employment, training and education opportunities, to access opportunities you have to first know what is there, for many years young people have told us that they do think there are quality work opportunities where they live leaving just 14.2% of young people were 'confident' or 'extremely confident' that there are quality jobs available to them in their local area.

Those with protected characteristics, carers and care leavers find accessing quality work local to them face more disadvantage. When it comes to finding good quality work in their local area:

- 56.7% of respondents who selected Other ethnic groups and Black, Black British, Caribbean or African respondents were 'not confident' or 'not confident at all' compared to 43.1% of Mixed or multiple ethnic groups, 38.3% of White respondents and 32.5% of Asian or Asian British respondents.
- 45.3% of students who were eligible for free school meals were 'not confident' or 'not confident at all' compared to 37.5% of students who were not eligible.
- 47% of young people with additional needs are 'not confident' or 'not confident at all' compared to 27% of young people without additional needs.
- 45.1% of young people with English as a second language are 'not confident' or 'not confident at all' compared to 39% of those without.
- 53.3% of gay or lesbian respondents were 'not confident' or 'not confident at all' this compares to 50.1% of transgender respondents, 44% of bi respondents, 38.8% of those unsure/questioning, 36.9% of straight or heterosexual respondents and 28.7% of those who selected 'I prefer not to say'.

When we asked those in work what their biggest barrier to accessing opportunities had been 43.6% said that travel and location was one of their previous challenges when applying for work.

2. What place based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities?

More evidence is growing that a place based approach to youth employment and the challenges and barriers presented by young people are more likely to be addressed at a hyper local level. This can be seen through the work of our partner organisations such as Darlington Borough Council (DBC) who are using our national tools to address local challenges.

DBC are encouraging employers to sign up to the Good Youth Employment Charter and create more quality opportunities for young people, particularly for those who are most marginalised. These opportunities are then being showcased on the [DBC Digital Hub](#) where young people can access careers information, advice, develop their skills and confidence and get signposting support to local services.

Similar services are being utilised by the [West Midland Combined Authority](#) and the [Greater London Authority through their digital careers campaign](#).

3. What is the role of local government and national

The examples of Darlington Borough Council, West Midlands Combined Authority and the GLA show that Local Authorities have an important role to play in convening partners, employers and providers at a local level and in also having responsibility for supporting young people across their communities.

As we better understand the barriers young people are experiencing it is clear to see that many of these issues will sit within the purview of local authorities and support services. However, through a range of policy changes, government priorities, austerity cuts, ESF funding closure and the creation of additional services such as Local Enterprise Partnerships local landscapes have become very complex and budget poor, whilst at the same time there has been an increase in the challenges and barriers young people face.

It is our view that devolving more responsibility to local authorities is what is now required to shift the dial on youth employment. However, we believe that more responsibility should come with more accountability. And that the central government has an important role in setting a national youth employment framework and determining what data and evidence it requires from leading local authorities.

This framework should have enough flexibility that places can create the most appropriate services for the needs of their communities but provides robust data and insight to build a national picture of where young people are at, what is working and what is not working to continue to inform national decisions.

In addition this, localised work cannot be done without a significant investment in levelling up places; education, training and employment opportunities need to be boosted along with support for families, community enrichment, safety and good transport and health and wellbeing services.

Effective youth employment programmes for young people, particularly those with multiple and complex needs are expensive. Good programmes are able to deeply personalise the services available to young people including a range of support such as counselling, mentoring and work experience that last for as long as the young person needs them.

Recommendations:

- 1. Creation of a national youth employment strategy and framework with devolved powers to local authorities** - the strategy and framework should be co-created across DWP, DfE, DCMS, MOJ, DHSC, DBT and DLUC to ensure it is addressing some of the biggest challenges facing young people. The strategy and framework should be steeped in the evidence of what works and what young people and employers need at local levels, using this evidence to build an accountability and reporting framework for the local authorities.. This work should also have a focus on the data that is collected around young people to ensure that at national and local levels key actors know where young people are at, at all times and stages.
- 2. Ensure adequate funding for a nationally rolled out youth employment strategy** - investing in the big issues identified throughout this submission will provide future cost savings by reducing youth unemployment and ensuring that employers can access the skills and talent they need to drive innovation and productivity.
- 3. Support the development and utilisation of the Youth Employment UK skills and**

careers platform - to ensure that all young people wherever they are can access localised career, skills and employment and training opportunities as well as being signposted to key services. This will ensure that no young person is without the help and support of digital information.

4. **Youth Voice** - our belief is that young people need to be at the centre of youth employment policy and service design. Youth Voice should be a structured part of any place based solution and young people should have a say on the services they need.
5. **Good Youth Employment Benchmark** - employers need support to develop good quality opportunities for young people. Understanding the barriers unintentionally created within the engagement, recruitment and development of young people allows for improved services and more inclusive opportunities. We recommend that the Good Youth Employment Benchmark be used as a national evidence based standard for employers on what works for youth employment.

Appendix xviii: Youth Futures Foundation

Written evidence submission by Youth Futures Foundation

Introduction to Youth Futures

Youth Futures Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit organisation established in 2019 with an initial £90m endowment from the Dormant Assets Scheme. Our mission is to narrow the employment gap for young people from marginalised backgrounds. As the accredited What Works Centre for youth employment, we do this by generating and sharing evidence on 'what works' to get young people facing disadvantage and discrimination into good work, and working with a wide range of partners to drive long-term systemic change.

Where young people live affects their experience of the youth employment system. We know that places with significant levels of deprivation experience higher levels of youth unemployment, with certain groups of young people more likely to face disadvantage and discrimination than others.

To address this challenge, we are currently investing £19m to develop and test place-based solutions to youth unemployment in nine places across England. By identifying what works to change systems locally and scaling learning nationally, we hope to narrow employment gaps facing marginalised groups of young people.

Our flagship £16m Connected Futures Fund is our most important place-based approach to date. It is currently funding local partnerships in seven places (with further places to be brought into the programme later this year), with funding provided over two phases. The first phase is exploratory, giving the partnerships time and resources to work with young people and other stakeholders to better understand the challenges facing marginalised cohorts in their local 'system' and mobilise around a shared ambition for change. In the first phase, Youth Futures has commissioned three research and analysis projects to provide essential expert support to make sure the partnerships have the evidence they need to fully understand youth employment in their place. In the second phase, Youth Futures will fund collective efforts to deliver on the shared ambitions generated by the partnerships.

Executive summary

- Youth employment outcomes differ significantly both between and within places (i.e. when comparing outcomes for different groups of young people). More high quality data and evidence (and the skills and resources to analyse it) is essential to understand the issues facing young people at the local level.
- The key factors driving place-based differences in youth employment outcomes include:
 - Funding and service provision available in different areas (and extent to which services are 'joined-up')
 - Local labour markets and the alignment of skills and opportunities in places, in particular apprenticeship opportunities
 - Prejudice, discrimination and hostility facing certain groups of young people
 - Socio-economic conditions and deprivation
 - Quality of careers advice provision in relation to local labour markets
- Youth Futures Foundation's Connected Futures Fund aims to generate evaluable, scalable place-based solutions, broadening our understanding of what works and for who.
- Whilst more evidence is needed, promising place-based solutions include the Youth Hub model and supported internships (for young people with learning difficulties). Youth Hub eligibility should be expanded to better support the most marginalised young people, including those experiencing mental ill-health.
- National and local government have a big part to play in unlocking place-based solutions to tackle youth unemployment. This submission includes detailed recommendations. Broadly, these focus on:
 - Partnership working
 - Sharing and disseminating best practice
 - Investing in evidence, insights and analytical skills and the local level
 - Aligning local stakeholders given complex funding flows
 - Investing Dormant Assets in youth employment for places that need it most

Evidence submission

1. **What are the issues facing young people at a local and hyper-local level that drive youth unemployment?**
 - a. **Who are the most disadvantaged groups of young people at a place based level?**
 - b. **What impact does place/location have on a young person's access to employment, training and education opportunities?**

Youth employment outcomes differ significantly between places

We know that access to education, employment and training opportunities is dependent on where you live, with persistent regional disparities in employment outcomes. Looking at NEET rates in different places can give the clearest sense of where in England young people face the most disadvantage in their journey to work. ONS data⁹⁸ for October-December 2022 shows that:

- The North East has the highest NEET rate in England (17.2%) for 16-24 year olds, and experienced the largest annual increase
- Only three regions were estimated to have experienced a decreasing NEET rate: East Midlands, London and South West
- Based on the data, a young person in the North East is more than twice as likely to be NEET than a young person in the South West

Certain cohorts of young people consistently fare worse across the country

Some cohorts consistently have worse youth employment outcomes than others, across the country. These include young people:

- **With experience of the care system:** 41% of care leavers aged 19-21 in England were NEET in 2021, compared to around 9% of the age group as a whole⁹⁹
- **With experience of the criminal justice system:** only 15.5% of 21-24 year olds are in employment six months after leaving custody¹⁰⁰
- **With autism or learning disabilities:** 26.6% of adults with severe or specific learning difficulties and 29% with autism are in employment (compared to 80% of non-disabled adults)¹⁰¹
- **With mental ill-health:** the prevalence of mental health conditions amongst NEET young people is more than double the prevalence rate in the general population¹⁰²
- **From certain ethnic minority backgrounds,** including Black, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people, all of whom face different youth employment challenges

High quality evidence is essential to understand the issues facing young people at the local level

In order to understand the drivers of youth unemployment at a local and hyper-local level, decision-makers need to have access to high quality evidence and the means to analyse it

⁹⁸ ONS, [NEET age 16 to 24 \(LFS\)](#) (2023)

⁹⁹ AYPH, [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\)](#) (website link)

¹⁰⁰ MoJ, [Community Performance Annual](#) (2022)

¹⁰¹ ONS, [Disability and employment \(APS\)](#) (2021)

¹⁰² ONS, [NEET age 16 to 24 \(LFS\)](#) (2023)

effectively. We are providing our funded place-based partnerships with evidence support for their work, including detailed local labour market information relevant to the geography they're working on, and an expert 'learning partner' to support their understanding and analysis.

Places across the country need more support to identify and tackle unique local challenges. Data and insights should be provided on the most localised footprint available, to make them relevant to decision-makers at a range of levels.

The key factors driving place-based differences in youth employment outcomes

A) Funding and service provision

Young people have been severely affected by challenges around funding for and provision of local support services. Whilst there have been various funding avenues available to local places for youth employment in recent years, the landscape is complex. Emerging findings from our Connected Futures places highlight challenges around age cut-offs and transitions (particularly around age 19), local governance structures (in the context of patchwork devolution in England) and short-term funding timescales. Additionally, where funding requirements are set centrally (externally to places themselves), this can limit the ability of providers to offer localised responses tailored to specific young people and their contexts.

It is also important to recognise risks around the transition to UKSPF funding: despite the recent change bringing forward investment in people and skills, provision in many places will have closed, creating a gap in delivery for young people who need support the most.

B) Local labour markets

In part, differences are informed by the nature of local labour markets and the quality of jobs available where a young person lives – if the skills and qualifications young people possess don't match up with opportunities available, then they will struggle to get into good quality work. This is particularly true for the most marginalised cohorts of young people, who face additional disadvantages and discrimination that keep them further from the labour market than peers. Even where support is available, less privileged young people have more limited knowledge of career options and tend to be less confident about reaching out to careers services¹⁰³.

In some places, this challenge occurs because of a lack of good quality opportunity: for example, our analysis shows that for every 10 jobs in Hastings, there are more than 17 people of working age, one of the worst ratios in the country. It is striking that only 14.2% of young people reported being confident that they could find quality work where they lived in the Youth Voice Census 2022¹⁰⁴.

On the other hand, in some places, certain cohorts of young people struggle to access good work despite greater availability of opportunities. For example, our work in Brent focuses on three estates where young Black people are not progressing into good work, despite high levels of academic attainment and good physical access to opportunities. In this case, we need to think differently, including exploring how racism and discrimination may affect access to work.

¹⁰³ EDSK, [Finding a NEET Solution](#) (2022)

¹⁰⁴ Youth Employment UK, [Youth Voice Census](#) (2022)

C) Other factors

Youth Futures Foundation's Youth Employment System Map¹⁰⁵ highlights the complex and diverse factors affecting marginalised young people's access to good work. The system map highlights factors that could drive differences in local places, including:

- Fragmentation and misalignment between different services providing support to young people
- The impact of prejudice, discrimination and hostility towards specific groups
- Socio-economic challenges relating to housing availability, poverty and access to work
- The extent to which knowledge about careers and career pathways is shared with young people, including through careers advice provision

Youth Futures is also concerned with the decline in clear pathways to work for young people, especially at Level 2. In particular, data shows a 37% drop in apprenticeship starts (all levels) for under 19s from 2016/17 to 2021/22, and a 54% drop in intermediate (up to Level 2) starts for under 19s from 2016/17 to 2021/22. With uncertainty over the future of traineeships, this raises questions about pathways to work outside of academia for many young people. More attention should be paid to employer incentives to employ young apprentices, with clear targets to hold different stakeholders to account.

¹⁰⁵ Youth Futures Foundation, [Youth Employment System Map](#) (2021)

2. What place based solutions have been effective in removing barriers for young people accessing education, training and employment opportunities?

a. Who do these solutions work for, what does the evidence tell us about the demographics of young people benefitting from successful intervention?

Local action to tackle systemic barriers

Changing the youth employment system for the most marginalised groups of young people requires local action, addressing the local institutions, services and practices that they interact with on their journey to work.

2021 research into the systemic barriers experienced by young people seeking good work¹⁰⁶ identified many barriers which would require local action to resolve. These include:

- For young care leavers: access to secure and supported housing; consistent support delivered between services
- For young people with experience of the criminal justice system: unsupportive school environments; individual stereotyping
- For young people from Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds: support to enter into non-academic pathways; visible role models (or lack thereof) and representation in the workplace; prejudice, including Islamophobia.

Partnership working and youth voice

Scoping work for an ongoing research project, looking at what works in systems change, identified two main themes of interest at a place-based level, to be explored in more detail:

- Partnership working: effective partnership working is likely to be key to any successful system change, particularly for marginalised young people who often have more regular touchpoints with the formal 'system' (e.g. support services). In view of this, Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are a positive idea, and there is the need for investment in evaluating the success and lessons learnt from the LSIP approach, with partnership working at its core.
- Structures to engage service users and give them a voice in the design and delivery of services that are there to support them. Young people know what is available locally and the specific barriers or enablers might exist in the local system.

Specific place-based solutions with potential

A joined-up youth employment system, focused on key areas of economic disadvantage, will be better placed to get more young people into opportunities. Youth Futures has found considerable potential in the **Youth Hub model** to support marginalised young people into work and support other positive outcomes, where rolled out in partnership with local authorities, employers and the youth employment sector. However, more investment is needed to maximise the impact of Youth Hubs, alongside robust evaluation to support future decision-making about their design and delivery.

Many Youth Hubs still require a young person to be claiming Universal Credit before they can be referred to their local Hub¹⁰⁷. To better support all young people, particularly those experiencing mental ill-health, eligibility criteria for Youth Hubs should be reformed to

¹⁰⁶ Youth Futures Foundation, [Youth Employment System Map](#) (2021)

¹⁰⁷ DWP [Guidance](#) (2021)

include those who are not UC claimants. As mental health services can be signposted by Youth Hubs, this could remove a barrier to support for many young people.

For young people with learning difficulties, **supported internships** (that provide a structured 6-12 month study programme) have been found to be successful in supporting progression to paid employment or further education or training¹⁰⁸. Policymakers should consider how supported internships, delivered with the support of local training providers and employers, can be delivered in response to opportunities within local labour markets. Kirklees Council, who work with DFN Project SEARCH to deliver supported internships to young people with learning disabilities and/or autism, noted the importance of 'leading from the front' in their local employment landscape¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁸ DfE, [Supported internship trial for 16 to 24 year old learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities: An evaluation](#) (2013)

¹⁰⁹ DFN Project Search, [Kirklees Council Case Study](#)

3. What is the role of local government and national government in tackling youth unemployment at a place based level?

This section will outline recommendations for local and national government to tackle youth unemployment at a place-based level.

Partnership working

Partnership working is essential to deliver a whole system response to youth unemployment in places – moving beyond isolated interventions by bringing in more individuals and organisations to make the system work better for young people.

Local and national government should commit to continuing to work in partnership across the system to tackle youth unemployment. Our Connected Futures Fund and LSIPs are two examples of approaches which convene diverse partnerships of decision-makers and stakeholders, to tackle issues including youth employment. Partnerships including employers, local intermediary organisations, housing providers and others alongside local and national government ensure the whole ‘system’ can come together to find solutions to complex issues.

National government should evaluate or measure how LSIPs are working across England, specifically looking at how they are supporting marginalised young people into good work. By summer 2023, most of England will have an LSIP developed and approved by the Secretary of State. Employer Representative Bodies leading the process will then work regularly with partners to review and update their LSIP, ensuring it remains relevant to their area¹¹⁰.

Local and national government should provide holistic support for certain marginalised groups of young people (e.g. those with experience of the criminal justice system). We note that holistic support is particularly important for some of the most marginalised groups of young people. For example, programmes aimed at young people who have been in contact with the criminal justice system must provide wraparound services alongside employment support, including help with accommodation, managing finances and navigating the benefits system.

Sharing and disseminating best practice

Sharing evidence on best practice is essential to scale successful local innovations across the country. Through investment in Youth Futures Foundation - the What Works Centre for youth employment - national government has committed to generating and sharing evidence about tackling youth unemployment – including place-based approaches.

National government should continue to invest in generating and sharing evidence, including by providing more funding to enable places to innovate and learn what works (e.g. through our established Connected Futures Fund). Particularly, there is a clear need for further testing, trialing and evaluating of interventions to improve employment outcomes for young people from ethnic minority communities across England.

Local government should build in opportunities to evaluate emerging local best practice for youth employment, including by planning for evaluation in the design of services.

¹¹⁰ DfE, [Local skills improvement plans \(LSIPs\) and strategic development funding \(SDF\) policy paper](#) (2022)

Investing in evidence, insights and analytical skills at the local level

A range of evidence and insights are produced at a national level for local use e.g. the DfE's Local Skills Dashboard¹¹¹. Youth Futures is shortly releasing our Data Dashboard, which will provide more data that local decision-makers can use to understand and address youth unemployment in their areas.

National government should invest in local capacity to use and analyse data to inform decision-making about youth employment. Local government (and other decision-makers) need greater capacity to interpret and analyse data and insights to come up with practical solutions.

National and local government should ensure published datasets give detailed breakdowns about marginalised groups, particularly ethnic breakdowns. This will improve our collective understanding of the progress and outcomes of marginalised groups of young people.

Aligning local stakeholders given complex funding flows

Local government should co-ordinate with local, regional and national stakeholders to better align interests around local funding flows for youth employment. As part of the Connected Futures programme, we commissioned two case studies focused on local funding flows in selected Connected Futures areas. These case studies map how funds aiming to address youth unemployment flow from national funding pots, to local decision-makers. The case studies showed the importance of local partners working in a co-ordinated way, linking in with national and regional stakeholders. The funding that currently exists is often channeled to places in complex ways, with no clear shared overview within places of funds that are either in receipt or available to bid for. Whilst complexity varies in different places across England, more co-ordination should allow better alignment of interests to deliver better youth employment outcomes.

Investing Dormant Assets in youth employment for places that need it most

National government should continue to support the use of the Dormant Assets scheme to support youth and youth employment. The Dormant Assets scheme has been essential in enabling investment in innovative place-based work highlighted above. Through investment in the youth sector, including in Youth Futures Foundation, focused on the places and cohorts that need it most, the scheme has the potential to unlock the kind of partnership working and evidence generation that can tackle a structural, long-term issue like youth unemployment.

¹¹¹ DfE, [Local skills dashboard](#) (2022)

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