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# Empowering Youth for the Future of Work: **Addressing Challenges and Enabling Opportunities**

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## **CHAIR OF ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON YOUTH AFFAIRS, JO GIDEON MP**

There are many rites of passage on the journey from child to young person to adult. At some point, the question “What do you want to be when you grow up?” is no longer about what you could be, full of dreams and imagination; it is no longer about being ambitious. Before you know it, it becomes a daunting question that requires a fully formed plan for a perfectly mapped out career. For some, this is easy. They have always known that they will be a teacher or a writer. However, many of us remember how vital that decision felt and the dread of not knowing what steps to take.

Added to the personal challenge are the skills employers need, both now and in the future. We currently face a ‘Skills Gap’, which will impact our ability to attain the green jobs of the future. This is combined with the challenge of being an ageing society where, in coming decades, more people will retire than there will be young people starting their careers. Further, we need to consider the impact that Artificial Intelligence (AI) will have on jobs.

The APPG for Youth Affairs started this inquiry in the hope of identifying ways that the Government can empower young people to meet the world of work and challenges now and in the future. I am incredibly grateful to all the Experts, Charities and Organisations who have submitted written evidence as well as those who have kindly attended evidence sessions in Parliament. We have gained so much from hearing your thoughts. We also wanted to hear as much as possible from young people and were delighted to be joined by our three youth advisors as well as conducting polling from 16 to 24-year-olds, to ensure that young people’s voices are central to our thinking.

We have identified key themes, ideas, and opportunities. Yet, these recommendations are only the first steps to meeting the challenge of bridging education and the world of work, and empowering young people to meet that challenge.

**Jo Gideon MP**

*Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs*

# YOUTH ADVISORS FOREWORD

Young people have been at the heart of this inquiry into what the future of work could and should look like for them. At every step, from launching the inquiry, to deciding on polling questions, to writing this final report, young people have been consulted by the British Youth Council and YMCA England and Wales to ensure the findings presented are truly youth-centred.

During inquiry sessions, we discussed the skills required to ensure young people can access a range of employment opportunities that are both fulfilling to their own abilities and to the needs of employers and society more generally. We also discussed what the UK government could do with its influence, to provide young people with the policies they believe would increase their chances of success in employment. It was fantastic to be inside rooms with key organisations in this space, politicians from a range of parties, and other young people to collaborate on this important topic.

For us, the key takeaway of this report is the importance of meaningful work experience for all young people. Work experience has the potential to ignite a young person's passion for an industry that will carry them through their entire career; it has the potential to introduce young people to mentors who will support them for years to come; it has the potential to dispel myths about professions that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds deselect themselves from; it has the potential to integrate youth voice into companies; and it has the potential to even the playing field between young people. However, at the moment, work experience is not a legal right of all school pupils. This inquiry highlighted the power of work experience, which we already knew to be true, and we hope our findings will impact new thinking about career education in schools across the UK.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the APPG on Youth Affairs inquiry. We are grateful to have had input from diverse stakeholders on this topic to ensure the findings and recommendations can be applied to as many young people as possible.

**Amy Murray, Harriett Noon** and **Tiegan Bingham-Roberts**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Long gone are the days of one job or career for life. The world of work is constantly changing. Yet the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to disrupt the world of work cannot be underestimated. The skills needed for the world of work today and those in the future have the potential to be very different. Young people need to be adaptable and given the tools to thrive without a clear map of what the future will look like.

The skills gap relates to the skills needed for the jobs available and the workforce's skills. This can lead to lacking the necessary skills to do the tasks, impacting productivity or roles remaining vacant as the role cannot be filled with available candidates. It has been estimated that the UK skills shortage will cost the country £120 billion by 2030.<sup>1</sup>

The world of work is rapidly changing, from AI to adapting to Net zero. To meet our Net Zero Strategy goals, we need a green workforce. We need a green workforce to meet the UK government's 2020 commitment of 2 million green jobs by 2030. Yet for there to be a green workforce, we need to inspire young people today to study green skills and become technically able to undertake these roles.

Traditionally apprenticeships have been seen as an option for young people to take the first steps in their careers. Yet the number of young people taking apprenticeships is declining, with under-19s accounting for 28.4% (55,580) of all apprenticeships started.<sup>2</sup> Young people struggle to receive the best career advice needed to make the right career choices and the best opportunities for work experience. They also face the barriers of not having the softer skills needed to thrive in a complex, rapidly changing world of work, and growing mental health becomes a barrier.

We must ensure that we empower young people to develop and provide as many opportunities as possible to thrive in the ever-changing world of work.

### APPG Inquiry Recommendations:

1. Publish a Long-term National Skills strategy.
2. Futureproof training and education to ensure it monitors and adjusts to developments in Artificial Intelligence and the needs of the Green Economy. To ensure young people are given opportunities to thrive.
3. Review the Apprenticeship levy.
4. Produce a public campaign on technical education into apprenticeships net zero, future green jobs, and the importance of STEM Skills.
5. Establish a statutory duty to ensure all young people should be given work experience during secondary education (including further education colleges and academy schools) and relevant career advice.
6. Invest in Youth Services to provide extracurricular activities to support young people's development and strengthen partnership, collaboration and coordination between schools and youth providers.
7. Invest in services supporting Young People's Mental health.

# METHODOLOGY

The APPG launched a call for evidence on 28 March 2023, the APPG hoped to explore the barriers to youth employment, the impact of skills gaps and identify potential solutions for the Government and other partners.

The inquiry set out to consider the following issues:

- Skills gaps
- Training
- Apprenticeships
- Careers advice
- Social mobility
- Barriers to starting careers
- Future of work
- Impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The inquiry set its scope through a public meeting of the APPG, an estimated 116 young people attended to outline what they thought it should focus on.

The APPG conducted five oral evidence sessions in parliament over two hours on two separate days, hearing from 16 witnesses from the world of business, charity, providers, think tanks and experts.

The APPG received 27 written submissions, which investigated the key barriers and potential solutions.

## Youth voice

The APPG co-designed the delivery of the inquiry with young people at its heart. The APPG was delighted to be joined by three Youth Advisors throughout the Inquiry who were connected to YMCA England & Wales and the British Youth Council. They could share with MPs their experiences of taking those tentative first steps into the world of work and ask questions of the expert witnesses during the evidence sessions held in parliament.

They helped identify questions for polling young people to find out their thoughts. And shared their thoughts on the recommendations with parliamentarians.

The APPG is tremendously grateful to Amy Murray, Harriett Noon and Tiegan Bingham-Roberts for all their efforts in ensuring this inquiry was co-produced with young people.

# 1 BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Youth unemployment and economic inactivity

From February to April 2023, the youth unemployment rate was 10.9%, while the unemployment rate stood at 3.8% for the whole population.<sup>3</sup> This represents 465,000 unemployed young people aged 16 to 24 from February to April 2023.<sup>4</sup>

It has been estimated that the fiscal cost of youth unemployment, in the form of lower tax revenue and higher benefits spending, was £2.9 billion in 2022.<sup>5</sup> However, as an ageing society, over the next 17 years, 1.4 million more people will retire than young people will enter the workforce.<sup>6</sup>

Between November 2022 and January 2023, 2.61 million young people (aged 16 to 24) were economically inactive according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Labour Force survey. The inactivity rate for young people has risen from a pre-pandemic rate of 37.1% to 38.2%.<sup>7</sup> The largest relative increases in economic inactivity due to long-term sickness between 2019 and 2022 were among those aged 16 to 24 and those aged 25 to 34. There was a 29% increase in economic inactivity among those aged 16 to 24 and a 42% increase among those aged 25 to 34.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.2 Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET)

In 2022, 12.3% of England's population (aged 16-24) are defined as 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET).<sup>9</sup> The number of young people not in employment, full-time education or training (1,014,000) is up by 81,000 in the last quarter, or 8.7%. Unemployment among 16-24-year-olds is still significantly higher than the overall working-age population at a time when the number of job vacancies is high. However, 68% of young people not in full-time education or employment are economically inactive, rather than unemployed.<sup>10</sup> Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) found in 2022 that there was a potential £38bn boost to UK GDP from reducing the NEET rate of 20-24-year-olds to the same levels as Germany.<sup>11</sup>

The 'Power of Potential' report found that young women are more likely to be economically inactive than young men, they were either not looking or unable to work due to family responsibilities.<sup>12</sup> Research investigating young women's experiences of employment opportunities found that young women with multiple, intersectional experiences are most impacted by barriers, such as care experience, long-term physical or mental health problems, and being from racially minoritised communities. In contrast, young men are more likely to be unemployed but looking for work and are slightly more likely to be inactive due to sickness or disability.

Labour Force Survey (LFS) data from 2021 shows that a quarter (25 per cent) of young people who are NEET experience some form of mental health problem, compared with 9% of those in employment.<sup>13</sup>

## 2 WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT CURRENTLY DOING?

### 2.1 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) in Schools, Academies and Colleges

Since September 2012, local-authority-maintained schools became subject to a statutory duty to provide impartial career guidance to pupils in years 9 to 11. In September 2013, this statutory duty was expanded to cover pupils in school years 8 (12-13-year-olds) to 13 (17-18-year-olds). In September 2022, following the passage of the Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Act 2022, this duty was extended to children in years 7 and to academy schools.<sup>14</sup> The Baker Clause requires every state school since January 2018 to give training providers and colleges access to pupils aged 8 to 13 to discuss technical education and apprenticeships. Ofsted Inspectors are required to establish how effectively this is being delivered in schools.<sup>15</sup>

### 2.2 Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC)

The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) is England's national body for careers education, supporting schools and colleges to deliver modern careers education. This includes training and supporting careers leaders. Bringing employers, educators, and providers together through a network of Careers Hubs, and sharing practical digital tools and resources. The Government has invested £30 million in the Careers Enterprise Company (CEC) to support delivering careers programmes for pupils.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.3 Department for Work and Pensions Provision

The Department for Work And Pension's Youth Offer provides individually tailored Work Coach support to young people aged 16 to 24. They are in the Universal Credit Intensive Work Search group. This includes the Youth Employment Programme, Youth Employability Coaches for young people with additional employment barriers, and Youth Hubs across Great Britain, which provide young people access to enter a variety of work-related support, including Sector-based Work Academy Programmes, work experience, Mentoring Circles, apprenticeships, employer engagement, careers advice and traineeships.

## 3 INQUIRY KEY FINDINGS

### Section 1 Skills gap and long-term national plan

#### Evidencing the skills gap

'Skills gap' is a term used to describe the mismatch between the skills that employers require and the skills that job seekers possess. The skill gap might mean the employee cannot complete the tasks associated with the job they are currently working in. A Learning and Work Institute (L&W) report found that the UK skills shortage will cost the country £120 billion by 2030. Overall, there will be a shortfall of 2.5 million highly skilled workers and an oversupply of 8.1 million people with traditionally intermediate or low skills.<sup>17</sup> The skills gap also means employers may be unable to find a candidate to fill the vacancy. ONS found that in September-November 2022, there were 1.19 million vacancies in the UK.<sup>18</sup> According to the Government, over eighty per cent of all jobs advertised in the UK now require digital skills. However, employers say the lack of available talent is the biggest factor holding back growth.<sup>19</sup>

Economic modelling for the Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC) found a 10% spike in demand in the economy and the labour market restricted by shortages last year. The UK economy would shrink between 1.2% and 1.6% by 2027, relative to where it would be without these shortages. This could cost the economy anywhere between £30 billion and £39 billion annually.<sup>20</sup>

The skills gap is particularly acute in various sectors, from Construction, Digital Sector, Engineering, Health, and Manufacturing. The Royal College of Nursing estimates that there will be a shortfall of 140,600 nurses in the NHS in England by 2030/31.<sup>21</sup> Part of the skills gap is due to schools lacking Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subject skills training. By 2030 basic digital skills are likely to be considerably advanced. In total, 5 million workers could become acutely under-skilled in basic

digital skills by 2030, with up to two-thirds of the workforce facing some level of under-skilling.<sup>22</sup> Digital skills are reported as being essential, but the number of young people taking IT subjects at GCSE has dropped by 40% since 2015.<sup>23</sup>

The Open University's 2022 Business Barometer estimated that 78% of UK organisations suffered a decline in output, profitability or growth due to a lack of available skills. In response, 52% of large organisations and 47% of SMEs plan to invest more in staff training next year.<sup>24</sup>

The Government has recognised the importance of Skills for economic growth. The Government established the Skills and productivity board in November 2020, which was later dissolved when the Unit for Future Skills was launched in May 2022.<sup>25</sup> The UFS was set up to improve the quality, availability and accessibility of data on skills and jobs, and to become a centre of expertise on future skills. The Government also published a White paper for Skills in January 2021.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt, in the Autumn 2022 Budget, tasked Sir Michael Barber with advising the Government on skills reforms.

This role has been extended until December 2023.<sup>27</sup> Skills partnership have argued not just of a 'skills gap', but also a 'skills trap'. This is due to the disadvantage, and a lack of opportunities to build essential skills lead to a lack of value placed upon them, limited future opportunities, lower skill score, lower income, and lower life satisfaction. Following research for Skills Builder Partnership conducted by KPMG, they suggest that (about 17% of full-time workers) Skills Trap Proper Individuals start from a position of disadvantage that they do not manage to break out of a cycle of low education, basic skills, and essential skills.<sup>28</sup>

## The need for a Long-term National Strategy on Skills

Representations were made to the APPG advocating for a long-term national strategy on skills. Speakers for Schools called on the Government to develop a long-term skills strategy to provide a joined-up skills ecosystem that brings together the Government departments currently working in silos.

Youth Futures Foundation argued that the skills landscape is complex. They advocate for the Government to produce a long-term national strategy on skills, in collaboration with the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Education and the Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities in partnership with Sir Michael Barber, the Unit for Future Skills, local authorities and Employer Representative Bodies in charge of Local Skills Improvement Plans. Youth Futures Foundation advocates that the strategy should detail Ministerial and cross-departmental accountability for delivering the plan to tackle skills gaps within government, key aims of the strategy, alongside cost and measurability of outcomes.

The House of Lord's Youth Unemployment Committee previously recommended a long-term plan, in its report Skills for every young person.<sup>29</sup> The Unemployment Committee outlined that:

The Government must develop a long-term national plan for identifying, measuring and addressing skills mismatches with a focus on anticipating and meeting the needs of emerging and growth sectors such as those of the digital and green economy. It must update and publish this strategy annually. Bodies producing Local Skills Improvement Plans should do the same at the local level and be responsible for securing an adequate local supply of training places for young people. As part of the Government's plan, it must:

- Make public the findings of the Skills and Productivity Board and commit to publishing data on skills gaps and shortages on an annual basis;
- Support the promotion of places available in training courses for those sectors identified as experiencing existing and emerging shortages; and
- Review the teaching of sustainability, climate change and green technologies as part of the Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy promised in the Net Zero Strategy and recently published in draft, with a view to ensuring that the skills needed to support the development of the green economy are established from an early stage. The commitments set out in the draft strategy are welcome, but more concrete measures are needed to ensure skills development in the green economy is properly embedded in the education and training system.<sup>30</sup>

The Association of Colleges further supported the idea of a long-term strategy. However, they argued for a ten-year strategy for post-16 education and training, to enable individuals of all abilities and circumstances to continue to learn and reskill throughout their lives. The strategy should explain how every young person and adult will be supported to attain and maintain the skills they need throughout their lives. The strategy will set national priorities for building a high-quality and inclusive system, for key sectors where most change will, and to align education and skills within wider ambitions (for example, public health and social inclusion). This ten-year vision should be developed in partnership with the key stakeholders (employers, education institutions, and local government) across England to support inclusive economic development and community well-being.

### Recommendation 1:

The Government should publish a Long-term National Skills strategy.



## Section 2 Jobs of the future

Lack of awareness of green jobs despite concern for climate change, Engineering UK shared their concern that the workforce scale needed for tomorrow's challenges will not be met with the current levels of young people undertaking the roles.

They estimate that the Energy Sector will need 400,000 jobs by 2050. Many of the 260,000 new roles will have engineering elements.<sup>31</sup> In the buildings sector, retrofitting is predicted to require the training of 45,000 technicians each year at its peak in 5 to 10 years, 30,000 each year in fabric improvement and 15,000 each year in heat pump installation.<sup>32</sup> Engineering UK advocated that the Government use young people's enthusiasm and passion for tackling the climate crisis and explain the link between practical engineering skills in subjects such as Design and Technology, leading to engineering careers that would play a key role in achieving net zero. Engineering UK explained in the evidence session that young people are concerned about climate change and need to know more about green jobs' potential solutions.

Learning and Work Institute echoed this, that young people are unaware of how to get involved in green jobs and what green skills are. Their evidence argued that many young people are highly motivated to combat climate change and recognised the importance of digital skills but are unsure how this should affect their career choices.

They have uncovered a disconnect between increasing employer demand for green skills and young people's knowledge of what they are: 63% of those surveyed said they had never heard of green skills.<sup>33</sup> This lack of information and advice is a major barrier to young people, particularly young women. Urgent action is needed to counteract this if the UK is to create the workforce of the

future successfully. Learning and Work Institute advocated for careers advocacy programmes at devolved administration and national levels that should inspire young people for the roles of the future by helping schools, colleges, and universities signpost to the education and training pathways that are available.

This is further supported by polling conducted for the APPG by YMCA England & Wales, which identified that only 10% of young people are considering working in Green/Renewable energy.<sup>34</sup>



Engineering UK argued that needing more young people to enter STEM careers had led to an opportunity for STEM to diversify their workforce. Engineering UK 18% of first-year undergraduates in engineering and technology are women, compared to 57% across all subject areas.<sup>35</sup> Currently, only 8% of young women that study maths and physics at A-Level progress to study engineering and technology at university compared to 23% of all young men. Based on current rates, there would need to be an increase of 115,000 young women studying maths and/or physics at A-Level to achieve gender parity in higher education (HE) engineering and technology courses<sup>36</sup>. This is further supported by polling conducted for the APPG by YMCA England & Wales that identified 42% of girls who said they do not want to work in STEM roles compared to 26% of boys.<sup>37</sup>

### Artificial Intelligence (AI)

There have been increasing advancements in Artificial Intelligence alongside a constant

stream in the press about Artificial intelligence's challenges.

In the first three months of this year, \$11 billion has been invested in reaching Artificial General Intelligence.<sup>38</sup> On May 1, 2023, IBM announced to pause their hiring and plan to replace 7,800 jobs with AI.<sup>39</sup> Sir Patrick Vallance, the Former Chief Scientific Adviser to the UK Government, told the Science, Information and Technology Committee that, "there will be a big impact on jobs. And that impact could be as big as the industrial revolution."<sup>40</sup>

Onward UK, a think tank explains, that Generative AI will tremendously impact work. To manage the economic shock of AI. They recommend that the Treasury prepare measures to shift the tax burden from labour to capital in the medium term. In addition, the Government should help workers train in tomorrow's skills through more accurate skills forecasting, an expanded retraining offer, and more

high-level STEM qualifications.<sup>41</sup>

The APPG was joined by Ali Merali, co-author of Onward UK The Generative AI Revolution, Opportunities, Shocks and Risks, at an evidence session. Ali Merali believes there will be a large amount of job displacement, but it could provide opportunities for those from less traditional backgrounds. Going on to explain that information on skills and demand will help young people identify their career choices. Arguing that young people change their career choice when given more information on salary potential.

Dr Erin Chao Ling, Lecturer in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Future of Work from the University of Surrey argued that AI and automation are most useful in conjunction with human roles. Dr Erin Chao Ling explained that the media is very negative about AI's impact, leading to fear that people will lose their jobs. Historically, new technology leads to new careers that will become apparent in the coming years. Yet we need to be quicker at adapting to change.

Technology changes very quickly, but policy on how to use technology is very slow. University has previously focused on subject-based, not multi-disciplined, AI is multi-disciplined. That will require different knowledge.

### **Recommendation 2:**

The Government should futureproof training and education to ensure it monitors and adjusts to developments in Artificial Intelligence and the needs of the Green Economy. To ensure young people are given opportunities to thrive.





## Section 3

### Maximising vocational and technical education

#### Take up of apprenticeships and training

Apprenticeships have historically been a good route into employment for young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Figures for the 2022/23 academic year show Apprenticeship starts were down by 4.1% to 195,600 compared to 203,990 for 2021/22 academic year. Under-19s accounted for 28.4% of starts, equating to 55,580 young people starting an apprenticeship. Advanced apprenticeships accounted for 43.3% of starts (84,650), while higher apprenticeships accounted for a third (33.2% or 64,890).

Higher apprenticeships continue to grow in 2022/23. Higher apprenticeship starts increased by 7.1% to 64,890 compared to 60,570 in the same period last year.<sup>43</sup>

However, data shows that the proportion of learners over 25 starting apprenticeships has increased from 44% in 2015/16 to 47.4% in 2021/22, with the proportion of apprenticeship starts for under 19-year-olds falling from 25.8% in 2015/16 to 22.2% in 2021/22.<sup>44</sup>

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR) raised concerns about T Levels. They explained that many young people currently studying technical and vocational qualifications, which T Levels will soon replace, do not meet T Level higher entry requirements. Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR) believes this could lead many young people to become NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Young people without higher entry requirements cannot continue technical or vocational education through T levels or T Levels Transition courses. An alternative qualification is needed to address the needs of young people unable to meet T-level entry

requirements, or transition courses should have accessible entry requirements and be prepared for large enrolments.

Use of the apprenticeship levy Apprenticeships have fallen significantly since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2016, with a shift from entry-level apprenticeships for young people to higher apprenticeships for older members of the existing workforce.<sup>45</sup> Learning and Work Institute, suggested that the levy system has relatively few incentives for employers to invest in training for young people or those with the fewest qualifications, and, therefore, some reforms are needed to boost employer investment.

Since the levy was introduced, spending on Level 6 and 7 apprenticeships has risen from £44 million

in 2017/18 to £506 million in 2021/22. Hitting £1.325 billion in total over that period.<sup>46</sup>

Starts on level 2 apprenticeships dropped by 53 per cent from 374,400 in 2017/18 to 175,400 in 2021/22, while starts at level 3 fell by 11 per cent from 372,400 in 2017/18 to 330,400 in 2021/22 over the same period.<sup>47</sup>

The Learning and Work Institute advocated for support for young people to stay on in education. The Government should adopt the ambition of 75% of young people to have a level 3 qualification by 2035. As literacy and numeracy are so strongly associated with good employment outcomes, the Government should oblige young people who don't have a level 2 qualification in these subjects to study them until they are 18.

The Government have increased the apprenticeship funding to £2.7 billion by 2024-25.<sup>48</sup> However, the Department for Education's employer skills surveys indicates that employers' spending on workforce training per employee fell from £1,710 in 2011 to £1,530 in 2019. The 2021 employer skills survey found that 52% of the workforce had received some training during the year, the lowest proportion since the first survey in 2011.<sup>49</sup> Leading the Public Accounts Committee in their Developing workforce skills for a strong economy report, recommended the Department for Education, working with other government departments, to review how it incentivises employers to invest in skills development, including through the apprenticeship levy, and, in light of its findings, take action to improve the effectiveness of the incentives.<sup>50</sup>

The APPG has found that many organisations have been calling for changes to the levy system for some time. While their recommendations may not fully align, many feel the system is not delivering. Retraining existing workers and adult learners is important, yet this cannot come at the expense of providing opportunities and routes into careers for young people and those without experience.

The Learning and Work Institute (L&W) advocates that The Government needs to make more apprentice places available and take steps to increase apprenticeship completion rates, which currently stand at 51%—increasing apprenticeships for young people, funding apprenticeships for 16–18-year-olds outside the levy at £450 million per year, removing the requirement for SMEs to pay 5% of the cost for 19–24-year-old apprentices, looking at an apprentice premium or ringfencing some levy funds for apprenticeships for young people.<sup>51</sup> Ringfencing half the levy for spending on younger people and allowing some of this to





be spent on wage costs for young apprentices.<sup>52</sup> They recommend that the Government should also look at increasing the levy's scope by raising the contribution rate or the number of employers involved, and by widening the types of training eligible.<sup>53</sup>

Youth Futures Foundation advocated reforming the Apprenticeship Levy to create opportunities for young people. Removing Level 7 apprenticeships from the scope of the Apprenticeship Levy, with priority given to supporting young people trying to start their careers rather than older workers who already have secured positions. 10% of all Apprenticeship Levy expenditure since 2017/18 has been on Level 7 programmes<sup>54</sup>. YouthFutures Foundation argues that removing Level 7 programmes from the levy will result in an annual saving of £270 million a year from 2024/25<sup>55</sup>, which can be invested in apprenticeships aimed at younger learners. Including high-quality Level 2 and 3 programmes.

The Prince's Trust advocates for urgent intervention to ensure that apprenticeships remain a route into work and to support the development of skills in young people, particularly in the face of a shift to a higher-skilled Labour market. The Prince's Trust proposes increasing flexibility in the levy spending rules, which enables employers to spend up to 10% of funds on pre-apprenticeship programmes that support young, inexperienced people into apprenticeships, and the introduction of financial incentives to support and encourage employers to hire young apprentices.

YMCA England & Wales have also called on the Government to reform apprenticeships and the apprenticeship levy so that businesses are better incentivised to offer apprenticeships to young people and funded to support young people to achieve Level 2 Maths and English as part of their apprenticeship if they don't already have these qualifications.

### Awareness of Apprenticeships

The APPG heard throughout the evidence sessions that despite the Baker's clause, to ensure that young people are given information about apprenticeships and technical training paths, the status and dominance of University as the desired career path still largely prevails. Only 1 in 4 (25.6%) young people said they had heard about apprenticeships five times or more.<sup>56</sup>

The Sutton Trust highlights differences in guidance given to students on academic and technical routes. Nearly half of 17- and 18-year-olds currently in Year 13 at both state and private schools say they have received a "large amount" of information on university routes during their education, compared with just 10 per cent who say the same for apprenticeships.<sup>57</sup> The Sutton Trust calls for better support and guidance should be made available

for schools and colleges on apprenticeships, with better enforcement of statutory requirements in their Paving the Way 2022 report. The Sutton Trust advocates for more investment in national information sources and programmes on technical education routes to improve the advice available. They also argue that evidence suggests that too many schools are not meeting their statutory requirements under the 'Baker Clause'.<sup>58</sup>

### Recommendation 3 & 4:

The Government should:

- review the Apprenticeship levy.
- produce a public campaign on technical education into apprenticeships net zero, future green jobs, and the importance of STEM Skills.



## Section 4

### Barriers for young people to meeting their potential

#### Access to careers advice

The Department for Education's 2017 Careers Strategy adopted the benchmarks of good careers guidance developed by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation. Initially, schools were expected to adopt the benchmarks by January 2018 to improve their career provision. Since 2020, the Government has expected schools to work toward achieving all 8 benchmarks, including that all young people should have a careers interview by age 16 and an additional interview by age 18.<sup>59</sup>

The Government's current Careers Strategy was published in December 2017. It set out a series of measures to be implemented between 2018 and 2020 to improve careers guidance in England. This included using the Gatsby Benchmark to improve careers provision. For each school and college to publish a careers program, naming a Careers Leader for each school and college providing information about T-Levels, apprenticeships, and technical information to pupils collecting and publishing data on student destinations, improving the National Careers Service website, ensuring every child has at least one encounter a year with an employer, including Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) employers.<sup>60</sup>

#### Equal access to careers advice in Schools

Careers and Enterprise Company explained that 90% (4,499) of schools and colleges in England were part of a Careers Hub in December 2022. A Career hub is a group of schools, colleges, employers and providers within a local area working together to improve Careers practice<sup>61</sup> There is a 20 per cent reduction in NEETs when the most disadvantaged schools meet all eight Gatsby Benchmarks.<sup>62</sup> However, Only 30% of schools and colleges achieved Gatsby Benchmark 1, a stable career programme in 2020.<sup>63</sup> However, according

to Careers and Enterprise Company's research, completing all 8 Gatsby Benchmarks is only achieved by 12% of schools and colleges.<sup>64</sup>



Engineering UK shared their concerns that "Career provision across the country is patchy" and a comprehensive career strategy was needed. The last Careers Strategy was published in 2017<sup>65</sup> and only gave direction until 2020. This is further supported by the 2022 Youth Voice Census, which found that only 29.7% of young people rated the career advice they received as 'Good' or 'Excellent'.<sup>66</sup> Engineering UK argued that schools with higher free school meal levels tend to have poorer career provisions. This is supported by Sutton Trust's research showing that 40% of working-class

students did not participate in a range of CEIAG activities, including open days, work experience placements and employer talks. They noted that this is 6% higher than those from middle-class backgrounds.<sup>67</sup> The Sutton Trust found that 21% of schools in deprived areas have career advice delivered by non-specialists, compared with 14% of schools in more affluent areas.<sup>68</sup>

Arguing the government should develop a new national strategy for career education. The provision would benefit from a clear overarching strategy now that the government's 2017 careers strategy has lapsed.<sup>69</sup> According to The Sutton Trust, the strategy should sit primarily in the Department for Education, but with strong cross-departmental links, to join up the system's currently disparate elements. The strategy should look at the start of a child's education, throughout the workplace. It should be formed in partnership with employers, with a view to help prepare young

people for future work trends, and link clearly into the government's levelling up strategy.<sup>70</sup>

The Skills for Jobs white paper only offered limited insights into what the government wants to do next to support career provision in schools and colleges. It contains no information about the funding that will be made available for careers provision in schools, nor does it provide any timelines for delivery, and there is no detail about STEM-specific careers provision and the government's plans to improve this across all secondary education. Learning and Work Institute, believe that the Government needs to invest in high-quality and integrated career information, advice and guidance that map career pathways and support young people to progress towards employment in local growth sectors.

Sir John Holman, reviewed Careers advice for the Department of Education. Sir John Holman urged



Ministers to ensure the 9 principles are visible in a future Careers Strategy.<sup>71</sup> The APPG also notes that the Education Committee is currently conducting an inquiry on Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)<sup>72</sup>



Young people need help identifying their future career paths in the world of work. Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) argued that young people are basing their career aspirations on the media due to a lack of role models in different careers. Basing their knowledge on popular shows, young people think they know the role of investment bankers or lawyers but do not understand what is involved in those careers. The APPG heard many advocating the importance of engagement with business leaders and employers. Including the importance of work experience in gaining knowledge about work from business and other external speakers is vital throughout young people's time at school.

The Careers and Enterprise Company's data shows that only 56% of schools in 2021/22 students left with workplace experience by the end of year 11.<sup>73</sup> Polling conducted for the APPG by YMCA England & Wales shows that 57% had two weeks of work experience. However, 43% of those that did not have the option of work experience felt it would have been useful.<sup>74</sup>

Youth Futures Foundation argued that there were regional differences in the provision of work experience, and the research showed that schools with a larger proportion of lower socioeconomic groups were less likely to receive work experience and have the same experience as peers. They argued that this is due to work experience no longer being a statutory requirement for schools, and given the tight budgets that schools currently face, this will not change without a change in the law. The Sutton Trust supports Youth Futures Foundation's opinion that all pupils should have access to work experience between the ages of 14 and 16. Experience in the workplace can be extremely impactful for students, allowing them to gain important insights into the world of work and



develop essential skills, with support given to help them find relevant placements. This should also be accompanied by additional funding for schools, to allow them to pay for the staff time needed to support students to organise good quality placements.<sup>75</sup>

Speakers for Schools outlined that access to high-quality work experience is limited and not accessible to those from diverse backgrounds. Arguing that there must be universal access to high-quality work experience. Long-term work experience is needed rather than the traditional two-week model. A November 2022 report by Speakers for Schools found that only a third of teenagers aged 16-18 participated in work experience, and only half of 14-16-year-olds did. Pupils from independent schools were twice as

likely to have done multiple work placements as their state-educated peers. Young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have participated in multiple work experience opportunities.<sup>76</sup> Speakers for Schools launched a Work Experience For All campaign<sup>77</sup>, calling for all young people at state schools to have two meaningful work experiences before they finish their formal schooling.

#### **Recommendation 5:**

The Government should establish a statutory duty to ensure all young people should be given work experience during secondary education (including further education colleges and academy schools) and relevant career advice.

## Opportunities to build soft skills

Demos found that 60% of employers struggle to hire young people with sufficient technical skills, while 50% say they struggle to hire young people with sufficient transferable skills like leadership, teamwork and emotional resilience. However, transferable skills are important for young people's employability. 57% of employers told Demos they value transferable skills over technical skills, compared to just 10% who say they value technical skills more.<sup>78</sup> Demos argued that extracurricular activities can play a part in gaining soft skills. And that sustained funding in extracurricular activities so those in deprived areas can access enrichment activities to develop their skills.

Skills Builder Partnership argued that it was important that all young people were given opportunities to develop soft skills to ensure well-rounded young people can adapt to future workplace changes. They explained how Drama lessons can help develop a better understanding of English Literature.

Engineering UK further supported this, which argued that academic subjects had caused artistic subjects like drama and music to be removed from the school day. And not having Design and Technology, a hands-on subject, led to young people not gaining those experiences.



## Youth sector can support provision of extracurricular activities

An estimated two-million young people participate in a youth service at least once a week, including youth clubs, uniformed organisations and other organised community groups, equating to over one-third (35%) of young people within the secondary education age range (ages 11–19).<sup>79</sup>

London Youth raised evidence that young Black, Black African, Black British or Caribbean respondents were over 3 times more likely to say they did not feel welcome in their secondary school.<sup>80</sup> London Youth advocated that this group may potentially prefer exploring future ambitions outside of school with trusted adults such as youth workers.

Demos argued that National and local governments should provide extracurricular organisations with additional funding to widen access to extracurricular activities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds so that all young people can access the skills that can support their employability.<sup>81</sup>

Young people feel they develop soft skills through social interaction. Research shows that young people feel increasingly isolated since the lockdowns and feel uncertainty over their ability to maintain and build friendships.<sup>82</sup> Enrichment activities are essential for developing soft skills, but access to them is not equal, with young people from more advantaged backgrounds more likely to engage in them.<sup>83</sup>

The Duke of Edinburgh Award and the National Citizen Service Trust both advocated for an enrichment guarantee. Schools, in partnership with specialist youth providers, would facilitate and enable this. This would ensure that every pupil has access to a minimum level of enrichment. It will be delivered both in and out of schools and complement the National Youth Guarantee. This will strengthen collaboration between the education and youth sectors and improve equity of access to high-quality enrichment provision for young people. It could be funded through an "electives premium", as The Times Education Commission recommended.<sup>84</sup> This would strengthen partnership, collaboration and coordination between schools and youth providers. Leveraging existing resources and infrastructure to connect young people with quality enrichment opportunities in and out of school. This could be achieved through dedicated Partnerships Coordinators, schools as enrichment 'hubs', and establishing digital platforms where schools can more easily find out about local youth provision.

A framework for recognising enrichment achievements and experiences includes accredited, non-accredited, and certified enrichment activities. This will increase the credit and visibility of young people's enrichment experiences and achievements, including for employers and FE providers. Common benchmarks

for the impact of enrichment and non-formal learning. A consistent framework to assess, monitor and evaluate the positive impacts of enrichment across a wide range of outcomes. This would allow for better data collection and comparison between a range of NFL programmes and approaches - supporting young people, families, and the Government to make informed decisions on where to invest time and resources to deliver the greatest impact.

In their recent report, 'Better Together: Youth Work with Schools', National Youth Agency also outlines the benefit of youth services supporting schools to act as facilitators of enrichment activities rather than delivering them all themselves. Developing local youth partnerships nationwide to bring schools, youth work settings and other providers together locally to meet young people's needs. Demonstrating the ways in which schools and youth organisations can work together to improve their youth offer in and out of school.

### Recommendation 6:

Invest in Youth Services to provide extracurricular activities to support young people's development and strengthen partnership, collaboration and coordination between schools and youth providers.





### Worsening mental health

One of the key barriers and challenges facing young people currently is rising mental ill health, increasingly reported by young people during the recent economic shocks of the pandemic and the Cost-of-Living Crisis,<sup>86</sup> which is a key driver of growing economic inactivity and disengagement from the labour market and education<sup>87</sup>. Youth Employment UK's Youth Voice Census 2022 found that 51% of people aged 19+ thought mental health challenges were their biggest barrier to accessing work now or in the future<sup>88</sup>. Approximately 20% of young people who were NEET in 2022<sup>89</sup> had a mental health condition, and longer periods of unemployment can harm mental health and wellbeing, such as anxiety, fear of missing out and lower confidence levels. Labour Force Survey (LFS) data from 2021 shows that a quarter (25%) of young people who are NEET experience some form of mental health problem, compared with 9% of those in employment.<sup>90</sup>

There has been a near doubling of young people not working due to ill health, from 94,000 in 2012 to 185,000 in 2022. Almost one in four (23 per cent) workless young people are inactive because of ill health, up from less than one in ten (8 per cent) in 2012.<sup>91</sup> Four in five (79 per cent) of 18-24-year-olds who do not work due to ill health only have qualifications at GCSE level or below, compared to one-third of all young people.<sup>92</sup>

Between November 2022 and January 2023, 2.61 million young people (aged 16 to 24) were economically inactive according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Labour Force survey. The inactivity rate for young people has risen from a pre-pandemic rate of 37.1% to 38.2%.<sup>93</sup> According to the ONS Labour Force Survey, the largest relative increases in economic inactivity due to long-term sickness between 2019 and 2022 were among those aged 16 to 24 and those aged 25 to 34. There was a 29% increase in economic inactivity among those aged 16 to 24 and a 42% increase among those aged 25 to 34.<sup>94</sup>

London Youth calls for the Government to grasp the need for a long-term Mental Health Strategy for young people. Learning and Work Institute further support this, advocating investing in increasing access to mental health support for young people. Youth Futures Foundation also called for the Government to increase mental health funding to ensure young people have access to mental health support. Prince's Trust raised concerns about mental health pressures on young people and schools.

#### Recommendation 7:

Invest in services supporting Young People's Mental health.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## The Government should:

### 1. Publish a Long-term National Skills strategy

The APPG believes that it is essential that all young people have the skills they need for a modern economy. That includes both the skills they will need today but also for the future of work as they progress into their careers. The APPG recommends that the Government should publish a long-term national skills strategy.

This would set out the Government's plan to address today's skills gaps and detail how the Government, Schools, Colleges, Business Sectors and others can help meet the skills gap challenges of the future workforce.

The Government have already taken steps to ensure the priority of Skills in the Department for Education. By creating the Unit for Future Skills. The APPG believes that this strategy could build on the work of Sir Michael Barber on skills policy delivery. And provide a clear direction of travel for the years ahead.

### 2. Futureproof training and education to ensure it monitors and adjusts to developments in Artificial Intelligence and the needs of the Green Economy. To ensure young people are given opportunities to thrive.

The APPG believes AI will greatly impact work and the world of work in the coming years and decades. Young people must be given the opportunity to thrive. The Government must continue to monitor AI developments and quickly introduce changes. The UK needs a green workforce to meet UK's Net Zero Targets, which is essential for the economy's long-term success.

### 3. Review the Apprenticeship levy

The APPG believes the apprenticeship levy should enable all workers to gain skills and retrain. However, this should not be at the expense of young workers starting their careers. The Government must ensure that the apprenticeship levy maximises the opportunities that businesses and others can provide young people to start their careers. This could be pre-apprenticeship level 2 and 3 training in addition to apprenticeships.

### 4. Produce a public campaign on technical education into apprenticeships net zero, future green jobs, and the importance of STEM Skills.

The APPG believes that more young people need to be aware of the links between STEM Skills and the link to Green Jobs to help meet UK's Net Zero Targets. A National Government Campaign on future green careers would help encourage more young people to undertake these roles and have clear information on the career pathways.

The APPG believes that the status of the University routes to careers still prevails. Many young people are unaware of the routes to different exciting careers via apprenticeships and that a national government campaign would spread awareness.

### 5. Establish a statutory duty to ensure that all young people are given work experience during secondary education (including further education colleges and academy schools), and relevant career advice.

The APPG believes all young people should undertake work experience during secondary education. This would help provide a real-life experience for thinking about careers and work to plan for their future roles. Allowing young people, the chance to experience the world of work and start to plan.

### 6. Invest in Youth Services to provide extracurricular activities to support young people's development and strengthen partnership, collaboration and coordination between schools and youth providers.

The APPG believes that many schools struggle to provide extracurricular or enrichment activities that help build soft skills like leadership, communication, and confidence. This should not be the sole role of schools to build fully rounded young people with the skills to take on future work challenges. The government should enable the youth sector to actively support schools to deliver extracurricular or enrichment activities.

### 7. Invest in services supporting Young People's Mental health

The APPG believes that young people's mental health has been impacted over the last few years, and the Government should offer greater support for young people's mental health. This should take the form of preventative measures, such as youth work, to build resilience and wellbeing amongst young people and provide additional direct support to reduce the number of young people on the waiting list needing crisis support.

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