## The Young Person's Guarantee



Youth Employment Group













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### Introduction

From the widespread adoption of smartphones to the advent of equal marriage – much has moved forward in Britain since the turn of the century. But something that hasn't is the proportion of young people in our economy that do not have a job, education, or training opportunity.

In 2000, 13.7% of young people aged 18-24 were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in England. In 2023, that figure still stands at 13.8%. This phenomenon is not without consequences. There is strong evidence that being NEET has a scarring effect on young people's outcomes. Spending time unemployed under the age of 23 has been linked to lower wages even twenty years on and those who are NEET between the ages of 18 to 19 are 20% more likely to be unemployed even ten years later. This indicates that the effects of time spent neither learning nor earning are a prospective restraint on an individual's potential across the span of their working life.

Troublingly, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are significantly more likely than their better-off peers to be NEET. This means the negative effects of time spent neither learning nor earning are disproportionately borne by this group, with clear consequences for social mobility.

Now, in the light of political consensus that Britain must improve economic growth, this status quo has become unsustainable. In order to raise our shared prosperity, in order to improve living standards, thrive economically, and position ourselves to take full advantage of the opportunities proffered by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, things must change. In times of prosperity, we as a society have been too willing to accept the status quo, but we can no longer afford to leave the potential of so many young people on the table.

This paper emerges from a broad series of conversations, discussions, and consultative sessions and is shaped by a range of experts, organisations, and perspectives. On this basis, we propose a transformational offer for our young people: The Young Person's Guarantee.

The Guarantee is both a vote of confidence in the potential of our young people and our national ability to change the story and do better by them, to all our benefits. We underpin the Guarantee with five key policy recommendations to jumpstart our progress and bring about positive changes that will permanently bring down the number of young people who find themselves neither learning nor earning with the far-reaching consequences that status entails.

In this paper, we focus in particular on England. This is in part because other regions of the UK are already progressing towards similar measures, with the Scottish Developing Young Workforce Strategy<sup>1</sup> and the Welsh Young Person's Guarantee.<sup>2</sup> However, we do below propose some Britain-wide policies which can help make Scotland and Wales' efforts a success.

<sup>1</sup> Website: "Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)", Education Scotland, <u>https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/scottish-education/policy-drivers/developing-the-young-workforce-dyw</u>.

<sup>2 &</sup>quot;The Young Person's Guarantee", Gov.Wales, <u>https://www.gov.wales/young-persons-guarantee-html#:~:text=The%20Young%20</u> Person%27s%20Guarantee%20(YPG,into%20work%20or%20self%2Demployment.

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### **Core Principles**

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The Young Person's Guarantee is directly informed by these three principles:

### No young person left behind.

The Young Person's Guarantee aims to deliver for all young people. While the majority of young people are in full-time education or work, the Guarantee particularly exists for young people who face additional barriers to work and other opportunities, and to alleviate the factors that have seen the proportion of young people who are NEET in England remain largely unchanged for the past two decades.



#### Committed to the long-term.

The Young Person's Guarantee is not proposed as a time-limited, one-off initiative, but rather aims to permanently transform our national offer to young people making the transition from education to employment through structural changes and the development of new services and ways of working.





### Delivered together.

The Young Person's Guarantee is designed to be delivered by a national collaboration that, coordinated by central government, includes multiple government departments, local authorities, and employers.



The Guarantee



### **Success Factors**

National and international research into the delivery and implementation of the European Youth Guarantee, earlier youth guarantees, and UK programmes focused on youth employment and unemployment reveal key, interlinking lessons in good practice. Important and similar insights also emerged from the consultation process. These are synthesised to reveal four evidence-backed Success Factors that underpin the proposal of a UK Young Person's Guarantee.



Below is a summary of how evidence, good practice and insights from the consultation have drawn together to comprise these Success Factors.



#### 1. Early intervention raises effectiveness.

The timeliness of measures attempting to reach NEET or at-risk of NEET young people is important, as longer-term unemployment carries established risks, including specifically for young people.<sup>3</sup>

Evidence also shows the benefit of giving young people who are at risk of NEET but still in full-time education support, particularly at key transition points, including early during Key Stage 4.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, there is practice indicating that action can be taken in primary school, when NEET risk factors such as poor attendance are already apparent.<sup>5</sup>

The importance of early intervention also emerged strongly throughout the consultation phase with external experts and subgroup members expressing concerns that currently, young people at risk of NEET receive help too late.

In terms of identifying those young people who are risk of being NEET, there was a consensus in favour of pre-GCSE risk-profiling though variation in terms of whether that should take place in primary school, entry into Year 7 or at the beginning of GCSEs: *"it takes time to build up the trust and aspiration with young people. 16 is too late...Earlier is better."* (Member, Disability Subgroup).

Importantly, there was a clear sense across the consultation that the factors that raise a young person's risk of being NEET – including being excluded and poor attainment – are well-understood and much of the relevant data is already being collected: "Schools have this data, the key question is how you interpret and what you do with this data." (Member, Ethnic Disparities Subgroup).

- 3 Hämäläinen et. al, "The labour market impacts of a youth guarantee: lessons for Europe?", Government Institute for Economic Research, https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=07809709700112106809500401509211709802600805502706206303102608 2093116084067095002074110126018097001111053098090098112087083010007011088000015102024118000120006000005003018024 085005091120007108096069027077083114065073026016031107089098006066125004115024&EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE (2014).
- 4 McCrone and Bamford, "NEET Prevention: Keeping Students Engaged at Key Stage 4: Final Case Study Report", National Foundation for Educational Research (2016).
- 5 Public Health England, "Local action on health inequalities: Reducing the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).", *Health Equity Evidence Review* (2014).

It was also raised, in both the Ethnic Disparities and Disability Subgroups, that a national attempt to identify young people at risk of NEET in school and mount an intervention does run the risk of bias and discrimination, underlining the need for careful delivery and monitoring: "There are challenges around pre-determined pathways for young people with SEND...around stereotyped pathways." (Multiple members, Disability Subgroup).

#### 2. Individualised, one-to-one support is vital.

Evidence from the European Youth Guarantee<sup>6</sup> and earlier youth guarantees, such as the UK's New Deal for Young People,<sup>7</sup> underline the importance of personalised support in delivering a successful employment programme. This is most often delivered by a provider in a work coach or counsellor-type role.

Similarly, evidence also indicates that customised, counsellor-led support is especially necessary in NEET prevention programmes aimed at young people in full-time education<sup>8</sup> with a high level of need and at a high risk of NEET. This includes evidence highlighting the role of personalised, coach-led support as key to an effective intervention from evaluation of UKbased programmes<sup>9</sup> and previous interventions, including the Youth Employment Initiative.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, evaluation of a highly targeted mentoring scheme now being rolled out nationally across Scotland shows that 81.6% of care experienced young people who underwent

a school-coordinated mentoring programme – delivered by volunteer, non-specialist mentors - went on to a positive destination at age 16, in comparison with 56.3% who did not receive the mentoring intervention.<sup>11</sup>

For an older age group, the consultation also revealed consensus on the indispensable role of coaching as part of employment activation programme for young people out of full-time education, particularly an intensive model that builds a relationship of trust between a young person and a professional in a coaching role.

Particularly in the context of young people who may have been NEET for an extended period, evidence also shows the benefit of providing support to that goes beyond activation or work placement to offer in-work support aimed at helping those young people to surmount any initial barriers they experience early on in their employment.<sup>12</sup>

The value of this support also emerged strongly in the consultation, particularly highlighting potential difficulties around how to escalate problems, building relationships with line managers, and the wait for the first salary payment: "Support is necessary for these young people in that first month on the job where there are pinch points." (Member, Ethnic Disparities Subgroup).

- 6 Escudero and López Mourelo, "The European Youth Guarantee: A systematic review of its implementation across countries", Working Paper No.21, International Labour Office (2017).
- 7 Blundell et. al, "Evaluating the employment impact of a mandatory job search program", Journal of the European Economic Association (2004). https://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctp39a/Blundell\_et\_al\_jeea\_June\_2004.pdf
- 8 McCrone and Bamford, "NEET Prevention: Keeping Students Engaged at Key Stage 4: Final Case Study Report", National Foundation for Educational Research (2016); "Evidence review: What works to support 15 to 24-year olds at risk of becoming NEET?", Learning and Work Institute (2020).
- 9 L. Bennett et al, "MyGo Evaluation: Final Report", Learning and Work Institute (2018). https://learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/ uploads/2020/04/MyGo-Evalulation-Final-report-summary-September-2018.pdf
- 10 "Youth Employment Initiative Impact Evaluation", Department for Work and Pensions (2022).
- 11 "MCR Pathways Social Bridging Finance Initiative for Educational Outcomes Evaluation Report", ScotCen (2019). https://www. therobertsontrust.org.uk/media/bxxfooey/scotcen\_mcr\_pathways\_evaluation\_report.pdf
- 12 L. Bennett et al, "MyGo Evaluation: Final Report", Learning and Work Institute (2018). https://learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/ uploads/2020/04/MyGo-Evalulation-Final-report-summary-September-2018.pdf

### 3. Public employment services are central.

Public employment services that can offer tailored support to different groups of young people and effectively signpost or refer young people to other services or opportunities are key. The central role of public employment services is clear when viewed in the context of the above point, the need to provide individualised, one-to-one support for young unemployed people and young NEET out of full-time education. Public employment services are part of the framework and infrastructure through which such provision is delivered.<sup>13</sup>

While evidence shows that the effectiveness of age non-specific job activation programmes administered through public employment services can be boosted by mandatory participation,<sup>14</sup> it is simultaneously the case that these elements can have serious negative consequences, including specifically for young people. These negative consequences are most notable in motivating the take up of work that is low paid or low quality in some other way with quality research that finds this effect both for young people<sup>15</sup> and more generally.<sup>16</sup>

The risk of young people feeling overwhelmed and disengaging with interventions, particularly where they must engage with multiple teams or programmes, was raised across the consultation.

#### These considerations must be carefully balanced in creating an offer that both nudges young people to engage with public

employment services and is effective in maintaining their positive engagement.

### 4. Place-based and nationally coordinated.

It is important that interventions are delivered in a locally specific, tailored way. This is partly because of the nature of youth unemployment and inactivity in the UK, with significant variation in levels of youth economic inactivity and unemployment within and between regions.<sup>17</sup>

The Department for Work and Pensions' evaluation of the Youth Employment Initiative highlights use of local data and intelligence as a key factor that was consistently found to underpin effectiveness and impact.<sup>18</sup> Successful elements of the delivery of the European Youth Guarantee also show an emphasis on local decision making and the need for collaboration with local partners.<sup>19</sup> Emphasis on the value of drawing on the insight of local partners, including employers, also emerged in the subgroup consultation and a broader case for a place-based approach to NEET rates in particular has been made in government.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, accountability and collaboration that is coordinated across geographical or organisational boundaries is necessary. This is key both for tracking progress<sup>21</sup> and building up a data-driven evidence base to establish what works in getting young people to positive destinations and moving them from NEET to EET.

- 13 Blundell et. al, "Evaluating the employment impact of a mandatory job search program", Journal of the European Economic Association (2004). <u>https://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctp39a/Blundell\_et\_al\_jeea\_June\_2004.pdf</u>
- 14 Graversen and van Ours, "How a Mandatory Activation Programme Reduces Unemployment Durations: The Effects of Distance", Institute for the Study of Labour (2009).
- 15 Van den Berg, Uhlendorff and Wolff, "The Impact of Sanctions for Young Welfare Recipients on Transitions to Work and Wages, and on Dropping Out", *Economica* (2021)
- 16 Hoynes, Joyce and Waters, "Benefits and tax credits", IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities (2023).
- 17 Gadsby, "The Employment Gap in the North West", Impetus (2019).
- 18 "Youth Employment Initiative Impact Evaluation", Department for Work and Pensions (2022).
- 19 Orlando and Wilson, "Improving outcomes for young people Lessons from Europe", The Health Foundation and Institute for Employment Studies (2022).
- 20 Public Health England, "Local action on health inequalities: Reducing the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).", Health Equity Evidence Review (2014).
- 21 Public Health England, "Local action on health inequalities: Reducing the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).", *Health Equity Evidence Review* (2014).

### Understanding the major challenges

Informed by the three core principles and by the four Success Factors we laid out above, we propose a Young Person's Guarantee:

Within four months of leaving employment or education, all young people aged under 25 will receive support to access employment, training, or education opportunities.

 We lack targeted, national employment support for young people who are long-term NEET. Young people who have been NEET for an extended period of time accrue scarring that can negatively impact important outcomes – including salary and chances of progression – in the long-term. These young people can be affected by numerous factors, such from low confidence to CV gaps, that act to further pull them away from the labour market. These young people are also more likely to struggle upon entering the workforce and so are at a heightened risk of leaving a job soon after successfully securing it.

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2. We lack a national NEET early intervention prevention programme. Research has clearly identified both that early intervention is efficacious in preventing young people from becoming NEET and also the factors that raise a young person's risk of becoming NEET in the future. Local councils already have a statutory duty to track the young people in their area who are at-risk-of-NEET.

Despite this evidence and existing repository of information, we lack a national, preventative programme aimed expressly at these young people, which could play a key role in permanently decreasing the proportion of young people who are NEET in the UK.

- 3. Availability of youth employment and skills support services is currently highly variable. Many Youth Hubs offer high quality employment support, but this is restricted to young people who are claimants of Universal Credit and the extent of the Youth Hub roll-out nationally is unclear. Some local authorities are offering employment support to some groups of young people who not claimants of Universal Credit, but this too is highly variable in terms of both availability and target population.
- 4. There is not the necessary volume and quality of provision and opportunities for young people post-16. Our post-16 offer for young people – particularly those who are not work ready, have low levels of experience and qualification, or face barriers – is not broad enough or of a high enough quality. Post-16 transitions can also be complicated for young people, who are faced with an array of options that include A Levels, apprenticeships, BTECs, T Levels, and T Level transition years, and with particular uncertainties as reforms are implemented.

Research shows that for young people who do not achieve a pass in English and Maths GCSE – a significant minority of around 30% of young people – this post-16 transition is especially complex, with a majority not going on to achieve a Level 3 qualification by the



age of 19.<sup>22</sup> This is of concern because young people who do not attain English and Maths GCSE are already more likely to become NEET than those who do receive these qualifications.<sup>23</sup>

We have also, since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, seen apprenticeships starts at Level 2 and Level 3 – more likely to be taken by young people – decline, and higher apprenticeship starts – more likely to be taken by older people – rise.<sup>24</sup> This points to a narrowing of this crucial apprenticeship pathway for many young people.

5. Responsibility for youth unemployment is fragmented, particularly between the Department for Education and the Department for Work and Pensions. This arrangement particularly under-serves economically inactive young people, as they are not the responsibility of the Department for Work and Pensions because they do not receive social security, and not the responsibility of the Department for Education because they are aged over 18.

At the same time, while good practice is clear that a place-based approach is effective for supporting young people, there is no authority with an express remit to co-ordinate youth-focused employment interventions across geographical and organisational boundaries. There is a need for hands-off accountability and a politically-centred authority that can also drive the dissemination of guidance and good practice, while centrally co-ordinating the data generated from local interventions to build the evidence base in terms of what works to move young people into work.

<sup>22 &</sup>quot;Post-16 transitions for 'lower attainers'", Nuffield Foundation (2021).

<sup>23</sup> B Gadsby, "Youth Jobs Gap research briefing: The impact of English and maths" (2020).

<sup>24 &</sup>quot;Apprenticeships and Traineeships – Academic year 2022/23" (2023). <u>https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-</u> statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/2022-23#dataBlock-d9ee0fc4-41ee-4578-f375-08dae4de5c32-tables

# Towards the Young Person's Guarantee: policy proposals

To jumpstart the progress necessary to meet the standard of The Young Person's Guarantee, we outline below five policy proposals. Each of the proposals aims to tackle a different part of the challenge of improving youth employment identified in the previous section.



Below, we lay out each policy proposal, explaining the challenges each seeks to meet and providing greater detail.

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### 1. Proactively support young people in education who are at high risk of NEET.

**The challenge:** We lack a national, preventionfocused programme that is expressly designed to support young people in full-time education who are at high risk of NEET.

**Core proposal:** Pilot a targeted, in-school support scheme for young people in education who are at a high risk of NEET.

We recommend a multi-year pilot scheme that offers preventative and proactive approach to helping young people who are at high risk of becoming NEET while they are still in school. The pilot should take place in an area with high levels / numbers of young people who are NEET, such as the North East of England, where 20% of young people aged 18-24 were NEET at the end of 2022, in comparison with 14.5% across England.

The Department for Education and Department for Work and Pensions should consult on the precise parameters and substance of the pilot scheme, the scheme should:

- be designed by a partnership of local authorities, schools, employers, organisations working to support young people and families, and the Department for Education and the Department for Work and Pensions;
- develop and test data-driven systems to identify and target young people at risk of NEET;
- comprise personalised 1:1 support for young people to help them engage in school and proactively tackle the barriers they mace face in moving into education, employment and training, including through improved pathway guidance;
- deliver an intervention that to be received by young people from when they are aged 14-16 by dedicated specialist teams within schools.

Running for multiple years, with follow-on tracking of outcomes, this pilot will deploy data and evidence to develop and test a targeted preventative intervention that can demonstrate outcomes for young people in a region where young people are disproportionately likely to become NEET, and develop a roadmap for national roll-out.

### 2. Extend and re-commit to Youth Hubs.

**The challenge:** Availability of youth employment and skills support services is currently highly variable.

**Core proposal:** Extend the roll-out of Youth Hubs to every local authority across Britain, expand the support they offer to all unemployed and economically inactive 18-24-year-olds, regardless of whether they claim Universal Credit, and create a Success Charter to help disseminate and drive good practice.

Currently, Youth Hubs offer support to unemployed young people in receipt of social security support via regular, one-on-one sessions with work coaches, and signposting to services.

We propose that Youth Hubs expand similar support to 18-24-year-olds who are economically inactive or unemployed, except where there is a local authority employment service co-located with the Youth Hub that already serves this group.

As part of meeting the needs of this expanded cohort of young people, the Department for Work and Pensions should more strongly encourage local authorities to co-locate cross-disciplinary support and partners at Youth Hubs, particularly local charities, colleges, and employer representatives.

Overall, the support Youth Hubs should offer to this expanded group of young people should be based on what Universal Credits claimants currently receive, but more flexible. This may include, depending on young peoples' level of need:

- Potential 'self-service' access to onsite Youth Hub resources and signposting tools.
- Access to virtual support and coaching coordinated by the Youth Hub.

Finally, based on an evaluation of existing Youth Hub provision, the Department for Work and Pensions should create a Success Charter for Youth Hubs that draws together key lessons learned from existing Youth Hubs and turns them into a replicable set of guidance that can be implemented in a tailored way in each local authority.



#### 3. Establish a new joint ministerial brief between the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Education.

**The challenge:** Responsibility for youth employment is fragmented.

**Core proposal:** A new ministerial portfolio, the Minister for Youth Opportunity, should be created.

A new ministerial role held jointly between the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Education should be created – the Minister for Youth Opportunity.

Responsibilities in this new portfolio should include:

- Overseeing and coordinating the delivery of UK Young Person's Guarantee and accountability for that delivery, including a formal obligation to report on the progress of the Guarantee annually to the Work and Pensions Select Committee and the Education Select Committee.
- Youth Offer (currently held in the portfolio of the Minister for Social Mobility, Youth and Progression, the Department for Work and Pensions).

• Reducing the number of young people not in employment, education, or training (currently held in the portfolio of the Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships, and Higher Education, the Department for Education).

We further recommend that the Minister for Youth Opportunity should sponsor and chair a new Young Person's Guarantee taskforce. With the overarching goal of improving the delivery of the Guarantee, the group should:

- Be a cross-government venture with a core membership that includes representation from the: Department for Work and Pensions; the Department for Education; the Treasury; Department for Health and Social Care; Ministry of Justice; Department for Culture, Media and Sport; Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities; and the Cabinet Office.
- Include an advisory membership, with representation from relevant civil society actors, employment support providers, and formal youth voice representation.
- Be responsible for commissioning the gathering, monitoring and analysis of data produced by local interventions working towards The Young Person's Guarantee.

The Guarantee

#### 4. Pilot a new, targeted placement scheme for young people who are long-term NEET.

The challenge: We lack targeted, national employment support for young people who are long-term NEET.

**Core proposal:** Establish a year-long Gateway Placement Scheme for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who have been NEET for at least a year, to be delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Following on from the success of the Kickstart Scheme, the Britain-wide Gateway Placement Scheme should target young people who:

- have been NEET for at least a year;
- are non-graduates;
- are work ready.

The Gateway Placement Scheme will provide eligible young people with:

- a paid six month-long work placement;
- regular check-in support throughout the placement with a more intense period of support in the first three months of the placement to maximise the chance of a positive on-boarding experience both for the young person and employer.

The Gateway Placement Scheme will provide Gateway Employers with:

- a 100% wage subsidy for the full duration of a young person's placement, at the minimum wage level;
- initial training in what it means to be a good youth employer;
- access to a DWP-run helpline for guidance.

Only large businesses with 250 or more employees, or businesses that show experience of youth employment, such as through apprenticeship contracts, should be able to apply to be Gateway Employers and provide a placement. This is because of the need for HR resource and experience to ensure that each placement is a success.



### 5. Strengthen and broaden the range of Level 2 and Level 3 pathways available to young people.

The challenge: Our post-16 offer for young people lacks the necessary volume and quality of provision to help all progress.

**Core proposal:** Strengthen the range of Level 2 and Level 3 pathways available to young people by maintaining a broad range of qualification options, incentivising their employment, and re-orientating the apprenticeship system to prioritise them.

We recommend that in order to improve the post-16 offer to young people, the Government:

- Place a moratorium on cuts to Vocational Technical Qualifications until the T-Level roll out is complete in all areas.
- Adopt targets for Level 2 and Level 3 apprenticeship starts for young people aged under 25 to meet pre-Apprenticeship Levy levels.
- Introduce incentives for employers to employ young people with disabilities and long-term health conditions.
- Consider increasing the flexibility in the spending of the Apprenticeship Levy.

Introducing these reforms will improve young people's routes into employment, qualifications, and skills development widened. This will see more young people able to progress either towards a further qualification or employment, reducing the number of young people who find themselves neither learning nor earning.

### Accountability

In policy proposal 5 above, we recommend the establishment of a new joint ministerial brief between the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Education and that this minister should be responsible for monitoring and overseeing the delivery of the Guarantee. We also recommend this includes an obligation to annually report on the Guarantee's progress to the Work and Pensions Select Committee and the Education Select Committee.

This ministerial-level accountability for delivering the Guarantee should also translate through to a local level. The most suitable mechanism for achieving local accountability is likely through on-the-ground employment services, but how this is best delivered is contingent on devolution plans and the shape of public services. In addition to these formal accountability mechanisms, it is also our strong belief that civil society organisations have a major role to play, not only in helping to deliver the Guarantee, but in monitoring and evaluating its progress. To that end, the Youth Employment Group will commit to publishing a constructive and publicly available report on the progress of the Guarantee annually.



#### Youth Employment Group











To find out more about the Youth Employment Group and the Young Person's Guarantee, visit www.impetus.org.uk/youthemployment-group or get in touch with us on yegsecretariat@ youthfuturesfoundation.org

