



The Found Generation

Tackling Youth Unemployment and Preventing a 'Lost Generation'.

Written Evidence for House of Lords Select Committee on Social Mobility **The Found Generation – September 2015**

Introduction

The Found Generation is a youth-led, cross-party, not for profit campaign group set up in 2012 which aims to tackle Britain's youth unemployment crisis and prevent the creation of a so-called "*lost generation*" of unemployed young people. We are a group of young people from a range of backgrounds – many of us have personal experience of youth unemployment – and we run The Found Generation on a voluntary basis in our spare time.

Our purpose is to campaign on behalf of young people for local and national politicians to implement policies to reduce and prevent youth unemployment. We have received awards from the British Youth Council for our campaigning efforts as well as running or supporting a number of successful campaigns. Examples of our campaigning work include:

- Attending and contributing to various debates, seminars, conferences and other events on youth unemployment, providing a 'youth voice' at these events which would often be missing otherwise. In particular, we have given speeches or run workshops at a number of events including the Oxford Education Conference (2014), the Youth Employment Convention (2014) and the Youth Employment Summit (2015).
- Meeting and discussing youth unemployment with various MPs and Lords (including current and former Government Ministers) as well as other stakeholders including local councils, employers, think-tanks, charities, voluntary sector organisations and other young people.
- Providing evidence to the British Youth Council's Youth Select Committee on 'A Curriculum for Life' (2013) and the National Union of Students' Commission on the Future of Work (2014), publishing a report on 'Practical Solutions to UK Youth Unemployment' (2014), which was cited in a House of Commons Westminster Hall debate in July 2014, and preparing a comprehensive Manifesto for Youth Employment (2015) before the last General Election.
- Actively promoting greater cross-party consensus on youth unemployment across the major political parties. For example, we were one of the only organisations to campaign for the establishment of an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Youth Employment in the UK Parliament, which has since been established and which we are working closely with.
- Supporting, advising and working in partnership with the 'Youth Employment UK' campaign.

You can find out more on our website – <http://www.thefoundgeneration.co.uk> – or follow us on Twitter at [@TheFoundGenUK](https://twitter.com/TheFoundGenUK)

1. What are the most significant factors that affect the social mobility and employment outcomes of young people in the transition from school into the work place?

Social mobility describes the relationship between an individual's starting point and where they end up as adults; usually in terms of their occupational status, individual earnings or household income¹.

We believe that there are many significant factors which affect the social mobility and employment outcomes of young people with regard to the transition from school to the workplace, or more broadly from education into employment. Three of the most significant are as follows:

- **The personal situation and background of the young person.** This includes their family situation; how much their parents earn; what sort of area they live in; whether or not they have any illnesses, disabilities, learning difficulties or other challenges which put them at an additional disadvantage. For example, recent research suggests that, on average, children from lower income families or those with less advantaged social class backgrounds do not perform as well in a series of cognitive tests taken at age 5 as children from higher income families or those from advantaged social class backgrounds.²
- **The role played by employers.** For example, other recent research has also found that, despite efforts to improve social mobility, "elite" law and accountancy firms continue to be heavily dominated at entry level by people from more privileged socio-economic backgrounds.

This is in large part due to a tendency to recruit the majority of new entrants to these firms from a narrow group of elite universities, where students are more likely to have attended selective or fee-paying schools, and/or come from relatively affluent backgrounds. In addition, these elite firms often define 'talent' according to a number of factors such as drive, resilience, strong communication skills and in particular confidence and 'polish', which participants in the research acknowledged can be mapped on to middle-class status and socialisation.³

- **The extent to which the education system prepares – or does not prepare – young people for adult life, including but not limited to employment or self-employment.** This is probably the most important of the three, as the education system can to a large extent overcome the disadvantages faced by young people from certain backgrounds and prejudice or entrenched attitudes from employers. For example, a young person from a disadvantaged background is much more likely to make a successful transition from the education system into the workplace if they have had proper careers advice and guidance; work experience opportunities; employer engagement; networking opportunities (such as access to alumni networks from their school or other institution); extra-curricular/voluntary opportunities; and have developed key soft skills or employability skills such as self-confidence.

¹https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/447575/Downward_mobility_opportunity_hoarding_and_the_glass_floor.pdf

²https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/447575/Downward_mobility_opportunity_hoarding_and_the_glass_floor.pdf

³https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/434791/A_qualitative_evaluation_of_non-educational_barriers_to_the_elite_professions.pdf

2. There is a group of young people aged 14-24 who do not follow the A-Level and higher education route, and are not classified as NEET. What is known about the young people in this group– who are they, why are they in this position and what are their career trajectories?

This question can be better answered in evidence from other organisations, but we would just briefly observe that these young people are not one homogenous group. Some young people, for example, may be undertaking apprenticeships or traineeships. Some may have left school and gone straight into a job. Others may be setting up a business or working for a family business, or may be working in a temporary job while working out what they wish to do for a career.

3. Does the current transition system support young people who do not follow the A-Level and higher education route to perform better in terms of employment outcomes? If not, why not? What challenges do these young people face in their ability to transition successfully into the workplace?

The current transition system does not provide enough support to young people who do not follow the A-Level/higher education route to perform better on employment outcomes.

This is, in essence, because there are not enough opportunities for young people who do not wish to go down the higher education route, and young people are not properly prepared by the education system for the opportunities which are available.

As the Prime Minister, David Cameron MP, has argued: *“I want us to have as a new norm the idea that in school, everybody, everyone who can, either takes that path on to university, or takes that path on to an apprenticeship. You should be doing one or the other.”*⁴

It is therefore clear that the Government sees apprenticeships (as well as traineeships, which are often intended to prepare young people for apprenticeships) as the main alternative to A-Levels/higher education/university. However, much of the growth in apprenticeship numbers in recent years has been among people aged 25 and over, rather than among apprentices who are under 25.⁵ Much more therefore needs to be done to encourage young people to do apprenticeships and to encourage and incentivise employers to offer apprenticeships to young people⁶ and the Government should act to ensure that apprenticeships for young people are a majority of the 3 million apprenticeships which they hope will be created in the next few years.

Much more also needs to be done to ensure young people are taught about apprenticeships and that they are properly covered within careers advice in schools. There have been a number of recent concerns raised – including from the Prime Minister himself – about careers advice and apprenticeships, suggesting that schools are failing to tell young people about apprenticeships when giving careers advice, or even that schools are actively steering young people away from apprenticeships and warning them not to become apprentices.⁷

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/apprenticeship-speech-delivered-by-prime-minister-david-cameron-in-milton-keynes>

⁵ See for example <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06113/SN06113.pdf>

⁶ See our ideas on this subject as set out here: <http://thefoundgeneration.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/The-Found-Generation-Manifesto-for-Youth-Employment-FINAL-16.04.15.pdf>

⁷ See <http://www.ncfe.org.uk/media/661817/Call%20for%20careers%20advice%20on%20apprenticeships.pdf> and <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/jobs/10573567/Woeful-careers-advice-for-apprentices-condemned.html> and <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/11420718/David-Cameron-urges-teachers-to-do-more-on-apprenticeships.html>

4. How can the transition from school to work be improved for all young people, particularly for those who do not go on to study A-Levels and higher education? How can employers be encouraged to employ more young people from this group?

There are a number of ways in which the transition to work can be improved for young people and a number of ways in which employers can be encouraged to employ more young people, particularly those who do not take the A-Levels/higher education route (we also believe that more can be done to help young people start up their own businesses, rather than just going into employment).

Our recent Manifesto for Youth Employment⁸, a cross-party report prepared by our young volunteers, contains a list of 32 reasoned policy proposals for the next Government to act on in order to scrap youth unemployment, and covered these topics in considerable depth. Although we believe the Committee would find it useful to read the Manifesto in full, we enclose a brief list of the key policies from the Manifesto below:

Improving the transition from school to work

- Requiring every state secondary school to embed enterprise education into their curriculum
- Creating more enterprise societies, business start-up schemes and optional enterprise courses across the education system
- Improving the way literacy and numeracy are taught in primary and secondary schools
- Embedding employability skills and character education into secondary schools
- Increasing the number of University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools and adopting best practice from these institutions in mainstream secondary schools
- Encouraging more young people to get involved in extra-curricular activities or voluntary work
- Ensuring all young people receive high quality, face to face careers advice, particularly in schools
- Improving work experience opportunities for young people in schools and colleges
- Setting up an active alumni community in every state secondary school and college
- Making schools properly accountable for preparing young people for the world of work
- Encouraging and supporting unemployed young people to undertake voluntary work, work experience or internships
- Setting up a network of Youth Employment Centres across the country

Encouraging employers to employ more young people

- Offering more generous financial grants and other support to SMEs for hiring young apprentices
- Improving the reputation and brand of apprenticeships
- Increasing the number of apprenticeships for young people in the public sector
- Reducing the financial costs to employers of hiring young people
- Expanding the use of public sector procurement to create more jobs and other opportunities for young people
- Creating or backing a nationally recognisable 'kitemark' for "youth friendly" employers

⁸ <http://thefoundgeneration.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/The-Found-Generation-Manifesto-for-Youth-Employment-FINAL-16.04.15.pdf>

5. Who should be responsible for improving the system to support the transition into work for school leavers?

The primary responsibility for this should fall to the UK Government, working in conjunction with appropriate stakeholders, including in particular local councils, employers and schools. However, this will need to be co-ordinated and managed properly, both locally and nationally.

Our Manifesto for Youth Employment⁹ and our earlier report on Practical Solutions to UK Youth Unemployment from July 2014¹⁰ both made two key proposals which the Committee may find of interest.

Firstly, we propose that the Government should, to improve co-ordination of policy and initiatives on youth unemployment, appoint a “*Minister for Youth Employment*”. This could be done either as a new stand-alone cross-departmental post, similar to the post of “*Minister for Youth Employment*” which existed in the Scottish Government in recent years, or it could be an addition to the Minister for Employment role at the Department for Work and Pensions – similar to the ‘add-on’ Minister for Cities post operated by the UK Government.

Whoever held this post would be responsible for co-ordinating government policies on youth unemployment across Government departments, including with regard to supporting the transition to the workplace for school leavers, and would be supported by a cross-departmental unit or agency which had input from a range of departments, in particular the Department for Education (DfE), the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), and the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS). This Minister would also be responsible for ensuring young people are properly consulted on youth unemployment policy and that the effects of policy changes on young people in this area are properly assessed and considered by the Government.

Secondly, we propose that the Government should encourage and incentivise the creation of local partnerships to co-ordinate action to tackle youth unemployment at a local level. These could be set up along on the basis of the formal Youth Employment Partnerships proposed by the ACEVO Commission on Youth Unemployment, or on a more informal basis, taking inspiration from existing successful local partnership initiatives such as Ladder for London, the Birmingham Bacclaireate or Norwich for Jobs. These partnerships should include representation for young people and relevant stakeholders in local communities, but should be designed and run locally managed to encourage involvement from local stakeholders such as local councils, MPs, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Jobcentre Plus, employers, educational institutions and voluntary sector organisations. Where possible, these local partnerships should be offered additional powers or funding by the Government to help them undertake certain initiatives.

⁹ <http://thefoundgeneration.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/The-Found-Generation-Manifesto-for-Youth-Employment-FINAL-16.04.15.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://thefoundgeneration.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/The-Found-Generation-Practical-Solutions-to-Youth-Unemployment-FINAL.pdf>