

17 September 2019

Youth Participation

Purpose

For discussion and direction on the development of a youth participation policy.

Summary

This paper provides a brief context on youth participation policy and provision. It sets out the core areas of focus for this policy: careers advice and guidance, technical education (T levels) and NEETs. A draft policy position for lobbying, along with a summary action plan on how this piece of policy work will be developed. This work forms part of our wider Work Local ambition.

The youth participation policy work will be jointly developed by this board, People and Places, and Children and Young People Boards to ensure read-across.

Recommendations

That the City Regions Board:

1. Consider the draft youth participation policy position and provide comments on its scope and contents (**paras 21-38**).
2. Provide a steer to officers on whether the policy, action plan and next steps are moving in the right direction (**paras 39-45**).

Action

Officers to further develop our policy position in line with Members' steer.

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Introduction

1. Analysis for the LGA Work Local offer reveal growing skills gaps. By 2024, it is predicted there will be a shortage of four million high skilled people and a surplus of eight million intermediate or low skilled workers to available jobs. This could risk up to four percent of future economic growth, or £90 billion loss of economic output.
2. There are 700,000¹ or 11 percent of 16-24 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This is concerning for councils both from an economic and community welfare perspective, as the cost of NEETs are significant, particularly over a lifetime. Being unemployed when young leads to a higher likelihood of long-term 'scarring' in later life in terms of subsequent lower pay, higher chances of unemployment and reduced life chances.
3. Councils as leaders of place play a key role in stimulating local economies and ensuring employers have a supply of a skilled workforce to meet business demands. Young people's engagement in education and employment as the future workforce is vital for local areas and the economy. Councils have a number of statutory duties relating to youth participation, including ensuring all young people up to the age of 18 (25 for those with learning difficulties) are engaged in high quality education and training. Despite these responsibilities councils have very few formal levers over commissioning or co-ordination of provision to meet them, which has become increasingly centralised and fragmented. Councils know the needs of young people in their area and are committed to delivering a joined-up approach, which works best for this group.
4. The LGA's previous [Hidden Talents](#) work highlighted the fragmented and centralised offer for young people, and called instead for a simplified, joined up and devolved offer. Whitehall's position has remained unchanged. Since then, the LGA's [Work Local: Making our vision a reality](#) proposal sets out broadly how the system should work for young people and adults. Specifically on young people, it sets out LGA calls for the Government to:
 - 4.1. **devolve powers and sufficient funding so councils can fulfil their statutory duties to support all young people**, including those at risk of, or who are NEET, care leavers, disadvantaged groups and those with special educational needs;
 - 4.2. **enable councils and combined authorities to start planning now for a post-16 local offer** so young people have a coherent picture of locally available options (A levels, T levels, Apprenticeships) and that T level reforms are a success; and
 - 4.3. **co-design the development of a locally relevant careers advice offer** for young people and adults and progressive devolution of the Careers and Enterprise Company and National Careers Service funding.

¹ ONS May 2019

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5. There is now merit in the LGA developing further work to explore how young people can be better supported. We intend to build on this work and develop a programme of supporting activity, to enhance and build on policy contained within our Work Local campaign. This work will centre on pre-16 and post-16 (up to 25) and young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), as early engagement with careers advice and guidance service can significantly impact the education and employment outcomes for young people.

A case to improve youth participation: an overview of the current system

6. Youth participation policy and provision spans a number of Whitehall departments, with Department of Education and (DfE) Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) sharing the main responsibility. Having a centralised approach with array of programmes has led to a confusing and fragmented offer for young people. Interventions designed by a national system alone fail to address the unique economic and social challenges within places and limit the impact of local opportunities.
7. The Government's ambition is for every young person after core academic studies to the age of 16 should be presented with two choices: the academic or the technical option. Councils share this ambition and are committed to ensure that young people are given the opportunity to pursue the most appropriate option for them.
8. The traditional academic route (A levels) is well recognised and understood by individuals and parents. But for others this is neither relevant nor an appropriate course of study to equip them with the right skills to secure a job. This mismatch is often echoed by businesses from all sectors who value technical and 'softer' skills above traditional academic achievement. The traditional vocational offer lacked parity of esteem compared with the academic qualifications.

Apprenticeships

9. The reformed Apprenticeships programme was introduced as an improved vocational offer, providing an alternative to the academic route. One of the key objectives of the Government's apprenticeship reforms was to drive up the volume of apprenticeships to address skills gaps. But there is concern that the current system is not delivering effectively for young people as figures in a recent CIPD [report](#) show that the number of younger apprentices (aged 19 and under) has remained relatively static since 2002.

T Levels

10. As part of Government's broader skills agenda, T Levels were launched in 2017 to meet the needs of employers and establish parity between academic and technical routes. [T Levels](#) are a two year technical programme at level 3 and above, with a mixture of study and industrial placement. They will be rolled out from 2020 academic year and will be available alongside apprenticeships.
11. As part of the T Level rollout the Government plans to simplify the complicated qualifications system and withdraw funding for 'poor quality' qualifications. While improvements in quality of vocational education are welcome, there are concerns from the sector about provision for the disadvantaged or with special educational needs. There is a lack of employer awareness, particularly amongst SMEs, of the new qualifications.

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12. Providing an academic and vocational post-16 option is positive but making a choice between an Apprenticeship and A Level is a difficult for any young person; this decision is going to become potentially even more difficult once T Levels are fully rolled out. This highlights the need for impartial advice and guidance providing a young person with a coherent picture of all post-16 options. There should be also be appropriate bridging courses to make movement between the two options easily accessible.
13. Since the launch of the T Levels the LGA has continued to engage through an officer level with the Department for Education (DfE) T level delivery and development team, the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), and the sector to ensure the development and rollout respond to local needs.

Careers advice and guidance

14. It is important to have a careers system that provides impartial information, advice and guidance and a coherent picture of all post-16 pathways for young people to make the right choice for their career and to match the skills needs of the economy.
15. There are a number of organisations and providers involved in careers provision, including the National Careers Service, Jobcentre Plus, councils, schools and colleges. Many of these organisations are working in areas with limited and often no local coordination, resulting in a complex and fragmented system of advice and guidance.
16. In 2017 the LGA published a [position paper: principles underpinning good careers advice and guidance](#). Since then, the LGA has continued to engage with the sector and stakeholder. Most recently the [LGA Skills Taskforce held a roundtable](#) which brought together stakeholders to discuss and build consensus on relevant areas. The [summary](#) shows there is a broad consensus for an improved all age system.

Careers Strategy and Careers Hubs

17. The Government's 2017 [Careers strategy](#) and the follow up Implementation Plan produced by the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) introduced ways of making the careers system more effective (for instance stepping up employer engagement; scaling up the [Gatsby Benchmarks](#) and Careers Leaders), however it fails to identify a role for councils, and there is no one organisation coordinating activity at national or local level, risking further fragmentation and duplication. Therefore the LGA is calling for a locally co-designed careers advice offer.
18. As part of its Implementation Plan, the CEC is investing £5 million to set up 20 [Careers Hubs](#) to improve careers education and guidance. In response to the high levels of interest 18 new and two expanded Careers Hubs will start in September 2019. While the investment in this initiative is welcome, more than 3000 schools and post-16 institutions will not benefit from this programme, resulting in a fragmented and patchy landscape for young people.
19. **Officers are looking to develop our work on these initiatives, therefore any information or an update on your local activity in preparation of T levels implementation or careers hubs, would be welcome.**

Funding uncertainty

20. Many of the support programmes for young people, in particular the disadvantaged or NEETs are funded through European Social Fund (ESF). With European funding programmes coming to an end and limited detail on the successor UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) there is uncertainty about the continuation of many of these initiatives.

LGA policy position

21. We want to support the government to ensure that every young person is learning or earning and contributing to the economy. To achieve this the education, employment and training, including careers advice and guidance offer in an area needs to match the specific needs of individuals and the skills demands of businesses. Securing full devolution of powers and sufficient funding for councils to plan, commission and co-ordinate employment and skills provision for both young people and adults remains our strong ambition.
22. Based on the analysis of the youth participation landscape and discussions with councils, The following section sets out the opportunities at a national and local level that the LGA seeks to address with a refreshed youth participation policy. It highlights that with support from Government, councils could be enabled to work with local and national partners to deliver better outcomes for young people. This is set out in [Work Local: making out vision a reality](#). A range of case studies are provided in **Annex A** to demonstrate councils' ambition to undertake this role and responsibility.

More joined-up national leadership

23. There are a number of Whitehall departments, including DfE, DWP, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHLG) and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) responsible for youth provision, with DfE and DWP having prime responsibility for education, employment and training services. There is limited co-ordination across Whitehall and the absence of a youth participation strategy and action plan to bring together the work of different departments demonstrates an ineffective use of limited resources.
24. There is no single source of information on good practice and cases studies on how best to engage and support young people, including those who are NEET, into education, training and employment. The quality of evaluation where it exists varies considerably.
25. A **cross-departmental taskforce** should be established to review Whitehall departments' work, relating to employment and skills policies and provision for young people. The taskforce should examine the complexities and duplication of the system across different departments. As part of the review it should explore co-designing of provision with councils. The review should inform **a youth participation strategy and action plan**, developed with councils and their partners, to guide improvements to the system.
26. To support the strategy and action plan a **repository of data from all programmes** needs to be set up. This should have open access to enable good practice to be replicated easily by providers.

A more strategic approach to local delivery

27. Councils have a number of statutory duties relating to youth participation and very few formal levers over commissioning or co-ordination of provision to meet them, which has become increasingly centralised and fragmented.
28. Councils should be empowered to join up and improve local services to deliver a 'person centric approach' alongside integration with other local services. Therefore, we are calling for **strategic oversight** and **co-commissioning with local partners of national programmes** to facilitate better co-ordination and reduce duplication. Set out below is how this might work in practice across careers advice, a post-16 offer, and support to young people who are NEET.

A careers advice systems that works for young people

29. There is broad consensus among councils and stakeholders on the need for an all age careers system that is relevant, grounded in local labour market information, with a consistent and coherent offer for young people. This is vital as labour markets are constantly changing and individuals need to have access to up-to-date labour market intelligence that provides relevant information.
30. Many councils and combined authorities have recently developed up-to-date local market information, as part of their Local Industrial Strategies, which provides a useful evidence base to inform the relevant offer. For example, Essex County Council in partnership with Essex Employment and Skills Board has developed a careers information brand called "[What's Your Thing](#)". The careers guide informs residents on the wealth of opportunities on offer in the key growth sectors.
31. Councils should have the **power and resources to work with all providers**, including the Careers Enterprise Company, National Careers Service, and Jobcentre Plus, to co-design the local offer making it more relevant for young people who are seeking advice and guidance on career options. This should include **progressive devolution of The Careers and Enterprise Company and National Careers Service funding**.

A coherent post-16 local offer

32. The current system is complex and confusing for young people to navigate when making a decision on which education or training path to choose for their career option. The traditional academic route is well recognised and understood by individuals and parents but vocational routes are not as well understood. Apprenticeships are now becoming accepted as a valued vocational education option by both individuals and employers.
33. Councils should be **at the heart of planning Apprenticeships, Traineeships and T Levels, as these are rolled out across England**, to ensure that the local vocational educational provision is of a high standard and meets the needs of young people and employers. This will support young people, including the disadvantaged and those with special needs, to be well-prepared for the world of work.
34. Alongside the strategic planning, a **new UCAS style system** should be developed which gives individuals the chance to explore all the post-16 the options available locally. This should include coherent information on A Levels, Apprenticeships, T Levels and other training options that offer a route into their chosen career, together with facility to make an application to the provider. The new system should also support employers to connect

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with a wide range of young people in their locality and share variety of opportunities. This type of portal will support thriving local economies and address the skills gaps.

35. Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) is piloting a number of initiatives to support young people into training and employment. One of the projects is a [UCAS style](#) portal to help young people access apprenticeships, technical training or other employment opportunities. This will be launched later this year.

A holistic approach to supporting young people who are NEET

36. With 700,000² or 11 percent of 16-24 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and 2 million young people overall spending time as NEET, representing 27 percent of the 16-24 population³, is a concerning trend. Only one half of unemployed young people are in receipt of out-of-work benefits and this limits access to support to find work. NEETs often experience a number of barrier ranging from mental health to numeracy and literacy that can only be addressed with appropriate wrap-around support
37. Councils should have the **power and resources to develop a holistic approach with wrap-around support for individuals** to engage and benefit from employment and skills opportunities. This should include work with schools and other providers to ensure tailored support is available for the disadvantaged and special education groups to prevent young people becoming NEET in the first place and cycling in-and-out NEET. This is vital to enable councils to fulfil their statutory duties.
38. Durham County Council in partnership with nine other organisations has developed a dedicated programme for young people who are NEET called [Durham Works](#). The programme aims to support 10,000 young people by July 2021, with a tailored service. This includes 1-2-1 support, help in finding and securing learning and employment opportunities and housing and in work support.

Next Steps

39. Following the board's approval of the policy position (paragraphs 21 to 38) it is proposed that the LGA convene a series of roundtables to develop policy work with the sector. A short paper will be produced at the end of each roundtable event and a final report in Summer 2020.
40. To progress this policy we will continue to work the Whitehall departments, in particular DfE, and engage with stakeholders. We have established good working relationships with a number of organisations in this area and intend to work closely with them to ensure that councils' experience from programmes relating to young people and NEETs is reflected in their work. Parliamentary engagement on this agenda is in train as part of wider Work Local policy work. We intend to create and capitalise on media opportunities over the next year to shine a light on this issue. A case studies report with roundtable write-ups and policy recommendations will be published in Summer 2020.

² ONS May 2019

³ <https://impetus.org.uk/assets/publications/Report/Youth-Jobs-Index-II-report-final.pdf>

Collaboration with other organisations

41. Developing relationships with other organisations has been important in ensuring Work Local has become embedded across the skills sector. To develop this further within a youth participation arena, the LGA has worked with a number of organisations including:
- 42.1. The Learning and Work Institute's (LWI) commission on education and employment opportunities for young people ([Youth Commission](#)).
 - 42.2. Impetus's research into the [Youth Jobs Gap: Establishing the Employment Gap](#).
 - 42.3. The recently established Youth Futures Foundation (YFF) focussing on those young people who are furthest away from the labour market to explore what works in supporting them into meaningful employment.
43. We will continue to explore further opportunities to engage with influential research and policy development.

Media and PR

44. To shine a light on the importance of good careers, advice and guidance and make a case for improvements to the system, the LGA issued a [press release](#) ahead of the GCSE result day in August. This also coincided with NEET quarterly data release showing a spike in figures, which gained some traction from national press. The upcoming APPG on Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution Work Local event will be focussing significantly on young people. We are working with colleagues in the media team to make the most of future influencing opportunities.

Action plan

45. Following the board's approval we will continue to progress this piece of work both with the sector and stakeholders, the key activities together with the timescales are detailed below:

Activity	Timescale
Work with Youth Futures Foundation to identify and support pilot areas	Sept 2019 – June 2020
APPG on Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution: Work Local to move forward our ambition	15 Oct 2019
Engagement with the combined authority Employment and Skills Group on youth participation	Oct – June 2020
Skills and employment conference session on youth participation	27 Nov 2019
Roundtable events with the sector to develop the LGA position	Dec 2019 – April 2020
NEET annual figures press release to shine a light on the importance of good careers advice and guidance and devolution to support statutory duties	Feb 2020
Engagement with stakeholders to build an alliance to support our work	Spring 2020
Case study/report publication to showcase good practice	June 2020

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46. Members are asked to consider and comment on a) policy position (paras 21-38), b) proposed activity in the summary action plan (para 45) and provide a steer on the development of this piece of work.

Next steps

47. The proposed activities in the action plan will be progressed with the sector and stakeholders to develop this policy further.
48. Following the Board's considerations and comments on the contents of this paper, officers will provide regular updates on the development of this policy/ activities at future boards meetings.

Financial implications

49. To be covered through the existing Budget.

Implications for Wales

50. Skills and employment are devolved matters. The LGA liaises with WLGA colleagues.