

# Building Engagement, Building Futures:

Our Strategy to Maximise the  
Participation of 16-24 Year Olds in  
Education, Training and Work

Executive Summary

# Ministerial Foreword

Increasing the participation of 16-24 year olds in education, training and work not only makes a lasting difference to their individual lives, but is central to our ambitions to improve social mobility and stimulate economic growth.

The radical programmes of reform that the Government has put in place for schools, vocational education, skills and welfare will all make a significant difference to young people's opportunities and support. We know that our young people are dynamic, focused and keen to take up these opportunities – we will shortly set out in *Positive for Youth* our overall vision for young people aged 13-19 and for a society that helps and supports them.

We must not underestimate the scale of the challenge – 1.16 million 16-24 year olds are not in education, employment or training and some young people remain out of learning or work for long periods. We know that stretches of unemployment whilst young can have a negative impact on an individual's long term prosperity, health and well-being. We also know that disadvantaged and vulnerable young people are at greater risk of long term disengagement. We need a new approach to encourage this group to realise their potential and to break the inter-generational cycle of disengagement.

But in order to meet this challenge we first need to understand the nature of the issue. In fact, more 16-18 year olds are participating in education or training than ever before and gaining the qualifications and skills they need to get good jobs. Unemployment rates for young people have risen, but remain lower than during previous recessions and a high proportion of those who are not in education, employment or training will quickly find work or start courses without additional intervention.

In *The Plan for Growth*<sup>1</sup>, we set out how we will create the conditions for economic growth and recovery, helping to reduce cyclical youth unemployment. This strategy is all about ensuring that young people are in the best possible place to realise those opportunities as the economy picks up.

That is why we are committed to raising the participation age so that all 16 and 17 year olds are in education or training by 2015, transforming vocational education following the Wolf Review, increasing the number of Apprenticeships for young people, taking forward the reforms in the Special Educational Needs Green Paper<sup>2</sup>, providing skills training for young adults who have not yet achieved Level 3 and putting in place personalised support through the Work Programme for those who are unemployed.

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<sup>1</sup> HM Treasury, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, *The Plan for Growth* (March 2011)

<sup>2</sup> Department for Education. *Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special education needs and disability* (March 2011)

But we want to go further still. We have announced a new package of reforms to Apprenticeships that includes at least 40,000 incentives for small businesses to take on a young apprentice and action to address the bureaucracy that can discourage employers from offering these vital opportunities. On 25 November, the Deputy Prime Minister announced the Government's new Youth Contract, worth almost £1 billion, which will support some of our most vulnerable 16-17 year olds to re-engage in education, Apprenticeships or jobs with training and provide wage incentives and Work Experience places for up to 410,000 18-24 year olds over the next three years.

We are publishing this document jointly because the Government recognises the need for coherent policy approaches across education, training, skills and employment. The shared aim of all these elements of the system must be to help every young person make progress towards adult life and successful careers. We want to ensure that all services align in the best possible way to serve that shared purpose.

We owe our young people the very best support on their journey from school or college into the world of work. This strategy sets out how we will support *all* young people to develop the skills, qualifications and experience they need – to succeed in their careers and make a positive contribution to our society and economy.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Hayes".

**John Hayes MP**  
Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Loughton".

**Tim Loughton MP**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families



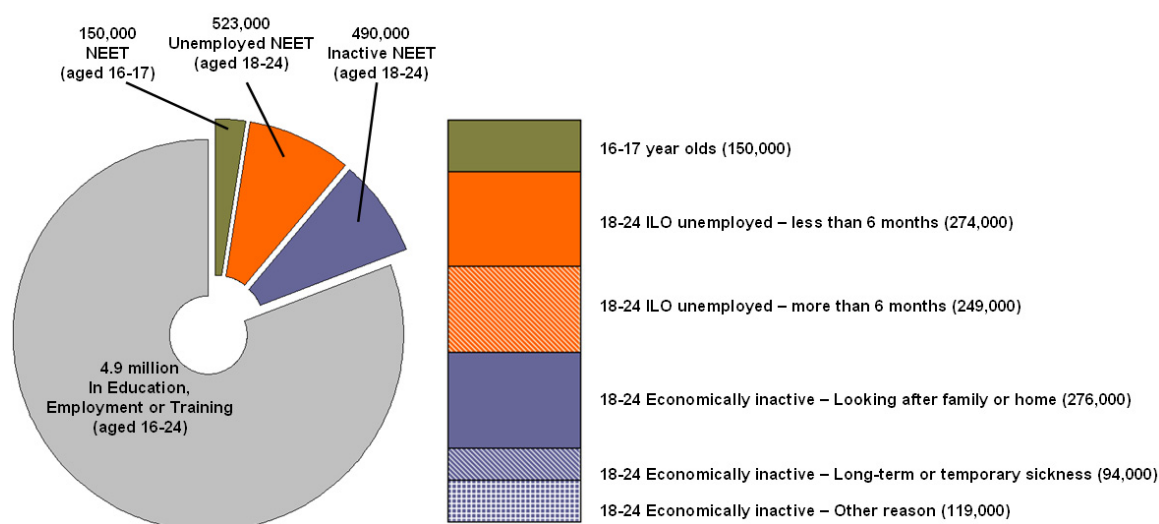
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Grayling".

**Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP**  
Minister of State for Employment

## Executive Summary

(i) The majority of young people succeed in education and make a positive transition to adult life and the world of work. But we face a very real challenge in terms of opportunities for young people, with 1.16 million young people in England aged 16-24 not in education, employment or training (NEET):

- 150,000 are 16-17 year olds who may need additional opportunities or support to re-engage in education or training;
- 523,000 are 18-24 year olds who are unemployed, not in education, and looking for work. 249,000 have been unemployed for over six months and may need significant help to find work; and
- 490,000 are 18-24 year olds who are economically inactive. Of these, 371,000 are looking after family or home, or are sick or disabled. The remaining 119,000 are inactive for a wide range of other reasons.



**Figure 1** – Breakdown of 16-24 year olds NEET (Labour Force Survey, Quarter 3 2011)

(ii) There are many reasons why people spend time not in education, employment or training. Most young people only spend a short time NEET before starting a course or taking up work or training. But others need more help if they are to avoid an extended and potentially damaging period outside learning or work.

- (iii) Increases in unemployment have been driven by long-term factors including structural changes to the economy and more recent economic challenges brought about by the recession. The impact of these has been greater on young people.
- (iv) Addressing this issue is of paramount importance to young people, to society and to our economy. Young people who are currently not participating are more likely than their peers to have low skills, to go on to be unemployed in the future, to earn less and to suffer from poor health or depression, which can have an impact well into adult life. This can fuel an inter-generational effect that acts as a block to social mobility. We want to minimise both the long and short-term impact of young people being NEET and ensure that all 16-24 year olds, including the most disadvantaged, get the opportunities and support they need to have the best possible start to adult life. This is also in the interests of our economy as we know that a fifth of the gap in productivity between our country and some of our key competitors is directly due to a lack of skills.
- (v) This strategy sets out how our existing strong reforms to schools, vocational education, skills and welfare provision will all help to increase the number of young people who are engaged in education, training and work. But the scale of the challenge means that in some areas we need to go further, in particular to help the most vulnerable, who are at risk of long-term disengagement. An overview of our strategic priorities is set out below:

### **Our Strategic Priorities**

Alongside creating the conditions for balanced and sustainable growth in the wider economy, we have five priorities for action to maximise the proportion of 16-24 year olds who are participating in education, training and work:

**Priority 1:** Raising educational attainment in school and beyond to ensure that young people have the skills they need to compete in a global economy;

**Priority 2:** Helping local partners to provide effective and coordinated services that support all young people, including the most vulnerable, putting us on track to achieve full participation for 16-17 year olds by 2015;

**Priority 3:** Encouraging and incentivising employers to inspire and recruit young people by offering more high quality Apprenticeships and work experience places;

**Priority 4:** Ensuring that work pays and giving young people the personalised support they need to find it, through Universal Credit, the Work Programme and our Get Britain Working measures; and

**Priority 5:** Putting in place a new Youth Contract worth almost £1 billion over the next three years to help get young people learning or earning before long term damage is done.

- (vi) **Chapter 1** explores the characteristics of young people who are not participating and our understanding of the issue.
- (vii) **Chapter 2** sets out our plans for early intervention and radical reform of the education system. Attainment at 16 is the single most important factor in securing young people's participation and future achievement. We will raise the attainment of all pupils and prepare them for post-16 participation by:
- Giving parents and families the support they need to encourage and help their children to develop, learn and participate at all ages;
  - Ensuring that all front line services working with young people and their families understand the benefits of participation and are provided with the information and tools they need to support young people to participate;
  - Giving schools greater freedom, improving the curriculum and addressing poor behaviour, as well as helping young people to make the right choices by giving schools responsibility for securing access to independent and impartial careers guidance for pupils in Years 9-11, and consulting on the extension of this age range;
  - Supporting the development of "I Am...", an innovative website where young people can shape their futures and improve the likelihood of finding fulfilling employment;
  - Providing additional support for the most disadvantaged young people, who are at greatest risk of disengaging; and
  - Improving accountability to incentivise schools to focus on young people's destinations.
- (viii) **Chapter 3** sets out our plans for achieving full participation of 16-17 year olds in education and training, so that all young people have the opportunity to build the experience and qualifications they need for successful employment and adult life. We will do this by:
- Raising the participation age to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015;
  - Targeting greater investment on Apprenticeships for young people so that they can gain skills and qualifications through a real paid job, while making it quicker and easier to take on an apprentice, and ensuring every Apprenticeship consistently delivers high quality training;
  - Reforming vocational education through new coherent 16-19 programmes of study, including work experience;
  - Enabling local authorities to fulfil their statutory duties to support young people to participate, including disadvantaged young people, by implementing the proposals in the Special Educational Needs Green Paper;
  - Addressing financial barriers to participation through better targeted support, including the new £180 million 16-19 Bursaries Fund; and

- Introducing a new programme, as part of the Youth Contract, to support disengaged 16-17 year olds to participate in education, an Apprenticeship or a job with training.
- (ix) **Chapter 4** outlines how we will help 18-24 year olds to engage in education and training, by:
- Launching the National Careers Service, which will provide information, advice and guidance about careers and learning, covering further education, Apprenticeships, other forms of training and higher education;
  - Introducing a new approach to public information so that from September 2012, each university will publish a Key Information Set on its website, providing easily comparable information on a course by course basis;
  - Reforming the Apprenticeship programme, maximising the number of Apprenticeships for 18-24 year olds as well as 16-17 year olds and promoting the uptake of Advanced Level and Higher Apprenticeships;
  - Providing further education and training opportunities focused on the needs of young people, and those seeking work;
  - Fully funding 18-24 year olds to gain their first Level 2 or 3 qualification;
  - Supporting the development of progressive routeways to jobs and Apprenticeships, looking particularly to promote the effective use of flexibilities in the skills system and the Work Programme to best meet the needs of young people;
  - Ensuring that qualifications meet the needs of both employers and young people;
  - Continuing to widen participation in higher education.
- (x) **Chapter 5** sets out our plans for supporting 18-24 year olds into employment, by:
- Creating the conditions for growth within the economy and the labour market, including through getting remuneration levels right for young people;
  - Working with employers to make a clear case for the benefits of recruiting young people, and jointly investing in projects to create opportunities;
  - Strengthening partnership between Jobcentre Plus, colleges, training organisations and employers to offer young people coordinated support;
  - Helping those who are ready to work through Universal Credit and our Get Britain Working measures, including Work Experience;
  - Supporting those who are at risk of long term unemployment through the Work Programme; and

- Helping young disabled people, including those with the most complex needs, back to work through the Work Choice Programme and Access to Work.
- (xi) A key element of our approach is the offer of additional support to unemployed 18-24 year olds as part of our new Youth Contract. This aims to help get young people working or learning quickly before their long term prospects are damaged. As we are providing more support and more opportunities for young people, we also expect more in return. Those failing to engage positively with the Youth Contract will be considered for Mandatory Work Activity. Those who drop out of a Work Experience place or a subsidised (or other) job without good reason will lose their benefits.
- (xii) The Youth Contract will include an offer of a Work Experience or sector-based work academy place for every unemployed 18-24 year old who wants one (after they have been on Jobseeker's Allowance for three months). In total, we will provide an additional 250,000 places over the next three years. Young people aged 18-24 will receive extra support from Jobcentre Plus, including weekly, rather than fortnightly signing from month five of a Jobseekers' Allowance claim and extra Personal Adviser time from month three. They will also be able to access a careers interview from the National Careers Service in the first three months of their claim. To give them a step up into employment, we will also provide 160,000 wage incentives of £2,275 to make it easier for employers to take on young people. Alongside our existing programmes of reform and our plans to support the growth of 16-24 Apprenticeships, in total the Youth Contract will provide additional support for up to 410,000 18-24 year olds over the next three years.
- (xiii) **Chapter 6** sets out our plans to support 18-24 year olds on inactive benefits and those in disadvantaged groups. These plans include:
- Where appropriate, supporting young people on inactive benefits towards education, training and employment;
  - Working with the voluntary and community sector to provide additional support to young people to move into productive activity through the Innovation Fund, giving providers a real chance to develop innovative solutions through social investment models;
  - Empowering the staff who run services to set up public service mutuals to take over the services they deliver by exercising new Rights to Provide across the public sector;
  - Improving data sharing between agencies, particularly at transition points, to ensure individuals' needs are best met; and
  - Providing targeted support for specific groups of young people such as lone parents, those with health problems, disabled people including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, young carers, offenders, substance misusers and care leavers.



(xiv) This strong combination of current action and new reforms will help to ensure that more of our young people make a successful transition from education into work, bringing benefits to themselves, the economy and wider society. Whilst this strategy applies to England only, a number of the policies covered apply across the United Kingdom, such as those of the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Government will work with the devolved administrations on areas of shared interest.

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