**Written evidence submitted by Cameron Wood (BYC001)**

1.1- A good quality work experience placement consists of the student, employer & school working together to make the placement work. This would mean that the employer would sit down with the student to establish what the student would like to achieve during the placement, I have had many work experience placements with employers across Herefordshire as a young person who is disabled and if it wasn’t for them I wouldn’t have gained the knowledge & experience to have found full time employment with a very supportive employer.

1.2- I have always found that when undertaking a work experience placement that employers want to make worth their while. They have done this in my case by adapting the duties of the placement so that they will suit my needs, this could be by maybe spending sometime on a reception desk instead of spending time in the gym. This would of course mean that they have done everything with their power to cover reasonable adjustments within the workplace. The employer would expect the student to adhere to the company's standards during the placement as they would be an employee.

1.3- I believe that should be a dedicated website for work experience placements that young people can undertake with employers, maybe this could be regulated by the DWP (Jobcentre Plus) or local authorities themselves such as Herefordshire Council. This would be that students would be able to apply for placements in one centralised location (A website), however this should work in a different way to the national apprenticeship website, as you would not be applying for anything but registering your interest in the post with your contact details so that the employer can touch base with you.

1.4- In my experience of work experience placements young people are not judged on differences for example myself being physically disabled does not matter when I am being considered by an organisation for a work experience placement. All of the placements that I have carried have been adapted by employers at every opportunity to suit my individual needs. Organisations will also try to where possible make adaptions to the job role for anybody who has any additional needs. I have always been extremely lucky when it comes down to any employer making adjustments in my local area, which is why work experience in Herefordshire is so successful.

1.5- I would totally support the reintroduction of compulsory work experience placements for 16 to 18-year olds as I have first-hand the benefits of this age range completing work placement's. I also believe that it is an awesome way for young disabled people within this age bracket to break into the world of work. It has helped to gain experience within the customer service industry and therefore it has meant that I have found employment within my chosen field. It is not the easiest of tasks for young people with disabilities to find successful work placements & opportunities.

1.6- if this is introduced it would mean that the Job Centre Plus would see a massive increase in young people with disabilities signing on, this would be a positive step in young people find employment & gaining the self-confidence to actually enjoy the working world. Businesses offering work experience placements to young people shows that they can engage with schools and young people in their local communities.

1.7- The government should create a body of MPs to monitor the quality of work experience placements for young people. This would mean that all work experience placements across the United Kingdom would be to the same standard- this would mean that work placements that are of a poor quality can be stopped as this would not give young people the experience/knowledge of the world of work to find suitable full-time employment.

1.8- The Government should also in my opinion produce guidelines for employers with regards to undertaking a successful work experience and this would also mean that the standard of work placements would be of an acceptable standard. The government could also support students with disabilities to undertake work placements that suit their needs. I know of young people in my local area that would love to undertake work placements but would struggle to because the placements may not be suitable to their needs.

1.9- The Government should invest resources into young people finding work placements so that they can increase the number of young people undertaking successful work placements with the potential it leading to paid employment, but in my opinion, it is more important that the government create resources to support young people with disabilities in finding high quality work placements, so that they can be seen to help disabled young people find employment if they so wish.

1.10- The private sector should be given funding to form a quality work experience programme for all young people as in my opinion this would mean that they could maybe off high-quality work placements and introduce young people into what it takes for them to start up their own business and make a complete success of it. I would also like there to be a better insensitive for young people with disabilities to undertake work experience in the private sector.

1.11- The motivations of business offering work experience should be a sense of community engagement by this I mean that that they could work with schools and other organisations in their local communities to introduce young people in to the world of work. This is already established in Coventry by a college who canter for those with Send provision, they can build relationships with an extensive number of local business to offer work experience and internships to students.

1.12- This has given the employers the confidence to potentially employ disabled young people as they would have already had some disabled young people working within their organisation. This has been a very positive experience for the employers and they have now actually gone onto employ disabled young people post a work experience placement.

1.13- I believe that United Kingdom can learn of other countries work experience programmes as there could be something that they are doing to make complete success of work experience placements in their country. The United Kingdom offers an excellent work placement program which canters for all but having said that I do think that there could be better provision for disabled young people wanting to undertake work experience in our country. There should be a complete overall of work experience placements offered by the government so that every placement can be suitable for all no matter what.

1.14- I believe that the should focus on disabled young people find quality work experience placements as its key that young people who are disabled have the same chances as their able-bodied peers when it comes to finding work. The young person's network in Herefordshire, who supports young people with disabilities fights for young people who require extra support to have work experience opportunities.

1.15- We have seen first-hand what benefit work experience has to young people with disabilities and because of this we want the government to commit more funding to getting these marginalised young people into work through the power of work experience placements. This could be achieved by the government understanding what needs to be done to achieve this.

1.16- The young person's network in Herefordshire has seen why work placements should be encouraged by the government through schemes and extra funding to further promote work experience placements for young disabled people. I also believe that the government should appoint disability employment minister within the DWP (Department for Work & Pensions) to focus on the governments approach on getting young people with disabilities into work & work experience placements.

1.17- if this was to become a reality the minister in my opinion would need to meet with some marginalised young people so that they could understand what young people would require when considering key decisions with regards to work experience/paid employment, this is key to young people having successful employment opportunities/work experience placements, I have a firm believer in young people with disabilities having outstanding opportunities into the world of work.

1.18- I would also advise the government to conduct a complete overview of the provision that the Department for Work and Pensions off when supporting all young people with getting into work but mainly for disabled young people. I would advise the government to commission a full review into the support offered by the work placement programme and other organisations that offer similar provision. I am not saying that the support offered to young people by the suggested is not excellent but that I feel that this should be reviewed so that it can be made better, so that all young people have the same opportunities.

1.19- I think that the government should produce framework for all organisations who offer support and advice to all young people wanting to get into work but require some support. I would say that jobcentre plus can-do more to support all young people to find work but mainly the disabled. I am already aware that the JCP already offer support for jobseekers within group sessions, but I think that these sessions could be tailor made to suit all young people.

1.20- if this was to happen I would also say that young people should be asked to take part in any commissioned review as these would be the service users who are regularly using these services in many cases on a weekly basis. Young people require more time in preparing for interviews I believe that not enough is currently being done when helping to prepare young people for the interview process, disabled young people are not supported when it comes prepare for interviews which means that they are less likely to be successful at interview.

1.21- There are a lot of differences when it comes to work experience opportunities for young people with disabilities because many employers find it difficult when trying to find work experiences opportunities within their local area. Employers in some cases a reluctant to offer work placements to disabled young people this is because they are concerned about how they will make adaptions and deal with the student.

1.22- 16-18-year olds should receive compulsory work experience placements as it will allow them to have the experience and understanding of how organisations work, I completed my 1st work experience placement as a 16-year-old. This was at a local leisure centre where I was able to gain the knowledge and experience of the organisation & also the public sector, this allowed to have an insight into the public working sector, which is something that I believe all young people should gain experience of.

1.23- I am aware that many young people believe that work experience can potentially lead to paid employment but this is not always the case but having said that sometimes this can be the case as I have seen this first hand. In some cases, young people especially, the disabled can develop their self-confidence when at work and this was the same for me as I struggled to believe that I was going to be able to find paid employment post further education, but work experience changed all that.

1.24- Hereward College in Coventry is the perfect example of this as they developed an outstanding work placement plan for their young disabled students, there supported allowed me to have a good level of experience of interview preparation and also employability skills which included in college work experiences placements. In my case I was able to complete my in-house placement within my own subject department of sports.

1.25- The college has continued to develop this leading work placement programme for young people with disabilities both in their local area and across the west midlands, there student internship programme has also allowed work experience to showcase that it does. In my opinion this is what could potentially set disabled part from the rest of the field when going through an interview process.

1.26- I have always seen good practice when it comes to recruitment process and advertisement campaigns, all of the recruitment processes that I have been through have always been conducted with great professionalism, this also includes the recruitment advertising campaign to make a job and company look attractive to potential candidates. In many ways that is what has attracted myself to certain employers when looking for work experience placements and or paid employment.

1.27- I think that services that are currently on offer to support schools and colleges with supporting their students with souring work experience placements could be adapted so that teachers and work experience coordinators in school have better support from the government in them creating when it comes to "how can we support your students" framework, this is something that I strongly believe in and would urge the government to consider creating.

1.28- young disabled people need to be at the fore front of the governments mind when it comes to them getting the support when trying to help them find suitable placements, my only concern with that is the fact that the government will not consider the recommendations that I have made because there will not be enough scope when it comes to appointing a government minister to lead disability employment.

1.29- I know that the governments potential response to my above point or suggestion because they could say that there are already enough ministers in post at the DWP to manage this area of interest, this should be the case because the ministers who are already working the named department could lead on disability employment, my argument is that those ministers have other responsibities.

1.30- Work experience for disabled young people throughout the United Kingdom is something that is very close to my heart and something that I would like to promote on the national stage because we would them see many more disabled young people fight their way into the world of work, there are plenty of young people who want to get into work but are not given the opportunities by employers because of a number of different reasons.

1.31- It is very disappointing that employers have varying attitudes to employing young people with impairments just because of a few this that can easily be fixed with a bit of effort before the placement begins. I am living proof that this can happening because prior to the beginning of every work experience placement that I have undertaken my school/college have liase with the employer to ensure that I both get the very best out of the placement and all the necessary adaptions have been made. That is something that I believe should be on offer to every young person who has a disability and wants to get into the world of work- every young person is entitled to do this.

1.32- Businesses are encouraged to offer good working practises by conducting a fair and transparent recruitment and advertising processes by adhering to the law by following the 2 ticks scheme which encourages employers to invite candidates who have a disability and meet the majority of the job description. I also recognise that work experience placements play a key role in a young person gaining full time employment, employers also have to be seen to be giving these young people opportunities to undertake placements with them no matter what their individual circumstances are.

**May 2018**