**Written evidence submitted by the Greater Manchester Youth Combined Authority (BYC014)**

**1) Overview**

**1.1** The Greater Manchester Youth Combined Authority (GMYCA) was formed in 2016 and consists of 40 young people representing the ten youth councils (Stockport, Manchester, Trafford, Tameside, Bolton, Wigan, Oldham, Bury, Rochdale, Salford) and ten voluntary sector organisations working with specific youth communities of interest. It has been supported by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority since 2018.

**1.2** Young people from the GMYCA took part in a group work session during their meeting on 14th June at the headquarters of 42nd Street, a youth mental health charity based in central Manchester. There were 36 young people in attendance. They were supported by staff from Youth Focus North West and Dr Andy Mycock (University of Huddersfield) who is conducting an evaluation of the GMYCA.

**2) Executive Summary**

**2.1** A significant minority of young people were unsure as to what ‘work experience’ was. It was agreed that work experience can come in many forms, offering opportunities for young people to shadow professionals in the workplace and also gain practical experience where possible. There was also some uncertainty as to what ‘good’ work experience is. Some of the participants expressed concerns regarding the potential for work experience to largely involve undertaking menial and undemanding tasks that would not aid their career planning or enhance their CVs. It was agreed that good work experience offered opportunities to develop work-based knowledge, skills, and understanding to support effective career-planning.

**2.2** The main theme which emerged was the demand for universal and strategic provision which linked secondary education to further and higher education, and beyond. The young people stated that they would like to see a developed programme of work experience whereby opportunities for work-based learning were offered at both secondary and further education. Moreover they were keen to link career planning and work experience to post-18 higher education and employment.

**2.3** Widespread concerns were expressed from young people from a range of educational backgrounds that the provision of careers advice in schools and colleges was poor – if provided at all. Where careers advice was provided, it was often sporadic and limited in frequency and quality. Some students complained that advice about careers focused on a small number of ‘core subjects’ (Maths, English, and Sciences) and overlooked the potential for careers planning in the arts, sports, humanities and social sciences.

**2.4** Young people discussing the potential for work experience to encourage social mobility noted that they had seen little evidence that work experience on its own helps boost social mobility. Though the group noted that it might encourage social mixing, they drew attention to the need to work experience was based on consistently good quality placements. Moreover, there were a wide-range of issues that influenced social mobility which even a good work experience would not address (including wealth and connections of parents, university tuition fees, geographical location).

**2.5** There was a widespread lack of knowledge or understanding about the UK government’s industrial strategy. Many raised concerns that there was little or no discussion of economic policy as part of citizenship education or other lessons in school. Finally, there was concern that some employers might use work experience students to lay-off workers, particularly in the service sector of the economy.

**2.6** Overall young people expressed a keen interest in developing work experience as part of the wider introduction of a Curriculum for Life in schools and colleges. Many thought that both the UK government and the business community had a responsibility to engage with and actively develop the provision of work experience for young people.

**3) Recommendations**

* A universal work experience programme for all secondary school students (14-16) linked to a work placement programme for all young people in further education (16-18).
* Dedicated careers planning and personal professional development (provided via the Curriculum for Life) throughout secondary and further education (11-18). This should involve structured interventions from local employers, higher education providers, and careers planning specialists.
* Annual ‘Careers Fairs’ held either in schools or colleges with local businesses, universities, careers advice.
* Comprehensive work-based learning to encourage development of knowledge, skills, and experiences.
* Establish a ‘UCAS-style’ website providing information on different types of work experience placements and careers advice
* The introduction of a national certificate programme for young people to aid career development and enhance their CVs.
* Link work experience and careers advice at secondary and further education levels to life-long provision in universities and those working.

**4) Questions and Responses**

**We asked the young people what do they think is work experience?**

‘It is about gaining experience of the workplace. It teaches you what work will be like in the future’

‘It’s about shadowing, gaining an education on, and practical experience of the work environment’.

‘We don’t think that young people know what work experience is’.

‘It’s not always related to our future career choice’.

‘We don’t know even though there is a high demand from pupils in school some school don’t run it’.

‘It’s unpaid’

‘It gives you a taste of work and helps you understand what an industry is like’

**What does “good quality” work look like? What do young people and businesses expect to get from it?**

‘We’re not sure what good looks like but we know that it’s not just about making tea’.

‘Good helps you learn the relevant skills that will prepare you for future work’.

‘Good help young people decide their futures’.

**How important is good quality work experience to a successful industrial strategy?**

‘We don’t know what an industrial strategy is’.

**What evidence is there that work experience boosts social mobility?**

‘It helps us to meet different people, different ages and from different places. Work experience inspires us and opens our mind which prepares us better for the workplace’.

**How do differences between young people (i.e. geography, social back ground) affect the work experience opportunities that you have?**

‘Young people from working class backgrounds do not have nearly as many work experience opportunities than a young person from a higher social background’.

**How could resources to help find out about access to work experience be improved?**

‘What resources?’

‘Any resources should be passed down through schools and colleges’.

**Should compulsory work experience for under 16s be reinstated? What is the right age for work experience? 14-16 or 16-18.**

‘Neither, we think 14-18 years’

**How could schools and colleges be better supported to help their students?**

‘Encourage as an opportunity to learn about the work place in class and outside’.

‘Encourage local businesses to get involved with interview training’.

**How can barriers to business b overcome?**

‘Make work permits more affordable’.

**What is good practice in offering, advertising and recruiting for work experience?**

‘Using social media’.

‘School day work fairs’.

**Does work experience benefit businesses?**

‘Yes it creates better relations between young people and business’.

‘It’s good PR for business’.

‘It inspires young people to go into business’.

**What role should government have in ensuring young people have access to quality work experience?**

‘Force business to co-operate’

‘Set a formal intake target for businesses’

‘Make sure the opportunities are not just ‘grunt’ activities’.

**Should government invest in resources to help young people find work experience independently?**

‘Yes, have a UCAS like website showing all different types of work experience placements available’.

‘Companies should provide sponsorship for the website’.

‘We need to be careful though, some companies may use these opportunities to lay off staff to accommodate work experience’.

**What lessons can be learnt from approaches done before?**

‘Has there been previous approaches?’

‘You could make it as part of a company’s corporate responsibility’

‘Make it beneficial for business’

‘Give out national certification for taking part? Maybe a logo or badge for business’.

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