**Written evidence submitted by Youth Employment UK (BYC016)**

Youth Employment UK is a not-for-profit organisation that was set up in 2012. Youth Employment UK specialises in all aspects of youth employment and unemployment and works collaboratively to tackle the issues faced by young people today.

Youth Employment UK has three key objectives:

* To give young people a voice and empower them to be more prepared for the world of work
* To help organisations be better equipped to support young people and adopt Youth Friendly Principles
* To ensure that government policy is geared towards the real needs of young people

Youth Employment UK has more than 20,000 young people in its network who are benefitting from the free skill and career resources available through its website, it also has a national network of 80 Youth Ambassadors who represent the young members. Youth Employment UK works with more than 300 organisations and key government departments also acting as the Secretariat APPG for Youth Employment.

Youth Employment UK welcomes this inquiry as young people often tell us that work experience or a lack of it, is a barrier to employment. Our submission includes the experiences of some of the young people in our network, the knowledge we have gained from the employment community we work with and importantly some of our key services that were co-designed by young people to overcome the work experience challenge.

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

In 2012 Youth Employment UK worked with key stakeholders to develop “Youth Friendly” employment principles for employers. The concept was to create a good practice model that employers could work to. The main stakeholder group was young people aged 16-24 who shaped the principles.

Following this work, we created the Youth Friendly Employer Award that assess an organisations support for young people including – Careers Inspiration, Work Experience and Employment.

The aspect of the Youth Friendly Employer Award that looks specifically at Work Experience expects an employer to have the following quality standards in place:

**Inclusive** – ensuring that there is fair an equal access to the opportunity for all young people, considering the additional needs some young people may have to access the placement. Ensuring that where appropriate there is adequate support for travel and any other related costs so as not to exclude any young person from the opportunity.

**Learning** – ensuing that the placement is tailored to the needs of the young person and that there are clearly defined learning outcomes, and that the young person will experience different aspects of a business, be given appropriate training to carry out meaningful tasks and given opportunity to explore different roles and responsibilities and to reflect on the learning that has taken place.

**Supportive** – ensuring that there is appropriate support in place, including a mentor or line manager who is adequately trained to support a young person. That there is a clear induction, expectations set and feedback is provided at key stages. Ensuring that a young person completing any placement will be able to clearly identify the skills that they have learned, understand different career roles, and receive a reference or completion statement that can be used for future employment.

**Youth Voice** – We require Youth Friendly employers to also get feedback from young people about the placement, the application process, learning and support that has been offered so that the organisation may learn and develop its experience based on young people’s feedback.

**In our experience** –

Many employers want to offer good quality work experience and see it as an opportunity to both support young people in their community but to also engage with potential future employees. It is usually easier for larger organisations to develop a good quality programme as they have more resource to do so. Unfortunately for smaller employers they may not have the resource in-house to develop a quality programme and this can deter them from offering an experience. It can sometimes be the case that fears such as health and safety, risk assessments etc can be a barrier. Employers do need better support and guidance around work experience and we believe that a quality mark that not only assesses the opportunities provided but also supports organisations with good practice models and useful templates would help create more opportunities. This is why we are now engaging more stakeholders such as government, local government, corporate employers and partners to support the Youth Friendly Employer Award so that it becomes a nationally recognised quality mark for all sizes of organisations to help them support more young people. All organisations with the mark are searchable on our website so young people can see which employers are committed to the highest standards of youth friendly employment.

Young people tell us that they expect to learn about a career role during their time on work experience, that they expect to learn about work and different business functions. Young people look forward to work experience where they know they will have meaningful opportunities to learn. Young people do have concerns that some work experience placements are exploitive as an employer provides little training and the role is simply replacing a full-time worker.

<https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/membership/talent-match-mark/>

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

We know that young people benefit from good quality work experience, we also know that where a young person does not have this experience the transition between education and employment is harder. Work experience raises aspirations, it introduces young people to careers and sectors they had not heard of and it develops key skills employers are looking for. Therefore, work experience is key to the industrial strategy to develop the skills the future labour market demands.

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

In our recent report – The Role of the Family in Social Mobility we identified that where young people have access to work, to learning about work and the value of work they are more likely to progress into good careers. This learning can take place both in the family environment (learning from parents/carers etc) and importantly in taking part in work experience itself. This work experience could be in the form of formal school-based experience but also in the form of having a part-time job or taking part in some form of social action.

<https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/role-family-social-mobility/>

**Young people**

1. **How do differences between young people (eg. geographic location, socioeconomic background, ethnicity, disability) affect the work experience opportunities they people have?**

In our Family & Social Mobility report we have evidence that suggests young people whose family members are connected to the world of work have better experiences, where parents can broker opportunities with their own employer or from their own network of contacts. This creates a disadvantage for those young people with limited access to connections.

We also have anecdotal evidence about additional barriers for young people in rural areas where there may be less opportunity to experience a variety of sectors or where access is limited by public transport and costs.

The charity Leonard Cheshire spoke at an APPG for Youth Employment about the additional barriers young people with disability have to work experience and how much harder it was to find quality opportunities with young people with complex needs.

1. **How could resources to help young people find out about and access work experience be improved?**

We believe that our approach to creating a national Youth Friendly Employer Award and having those employers accessible through our website will give a significant boost to young people looking for work experience. The benefit of using our site to do this is that the site already provides impartial careers information about the different sectors that exist, it has free quality youth-led resources for young people and the Youth Friendly Award is already held by over 70 employers. This means that there is a place to start from rather then reinventing new products or services, which is important given the time and cost associated. What is needed now is general support for one of the models that already exists, so it can reach scale. New products are often created to tackle this issue making the connection between young people and employers event harder.

**Schools and businesses**

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

Young people are being asked to make key education and career choices at an early age, in some schools this is at 13 when young people are selecting GCSE’s. We would argue that before young people make significant education choices (linked to career paths) they should have some experience of work. Making work experience compulsory between the ages of 14-16 would be our recommendation. This will become even more important once the government introduces T-Levels where a young person at age of 16 may have to choose a sector they want to specialise in.

1. **How could schools and colleges be better supported to help their students access quality work experience?**

The introduction of the new statutory guidance for careers education should help with this. In September 2018 all schools will have to have a named Careers Leader who will have responsibility to ensure that young people have experiences of work linked to the Gatsby Benchmarks. Our concern is for schools who do not have adequate funding for this Career Leader role and therefore may not be able to allocate the time/resource that supporting young people to access work experience needs. We therefore recommend that as well as making it statutory for young people to have work experience there will need to be appropriate funding allocated and ringfenced to the duty to ensure every child in every school has the same opportunity. In addition, schools and colleges should be signposted to a service such as ours that has links to employers who offer good quality placements to make matching easier.

**Other services and organisations**

**12. What role should the Government have in ensuring young people have access to quality work experience?**

We believe that if the government formally endorsed the Youth Friendly Employer Award (which government departments should all have to apply for), employers would look to take it up in large numbers helping to reach the point of scale that any product or service would require to make a difference to the experiences young people have. The government could also put in a measure that any employer taking on apprentices should have the Youth Friendly Employer Award which would then encourage more quality work experiences as part of the Award application process. This endorsement would not cost the government anything but would significantly increase the number of quality experience and employment opportunities being offered to young people across the UK.

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