**Written Evidence submitted by John Benger (BYC034)**

1. Work experience is now increasingly essential to securing both university places and graduate jobs, with a 2016 report suggesting employers expect to fill a third of graduate vacancies with a student who has had previous work experience at their organisation.[[1]](#footnote-1) Over half of placements are found by young people or by their families using largely existing social networks and this can make it increasingly difficult for with those without connections to break into the careers they want.[[2]](#footnote-2)
2. The Chamber and Committees Team in the House of Commons has launched a Social Mobility work experience scheme to help tackle some of these issues. We hope to tackle barriers to work experience by targeting students from low-income backgrounds who might not otherwise have thought to work in Parliament. The scheme will give these students an opportunity to gain valuable experience of working within the House of Commons. It hopes to encourage these students to apply to work here in the future, which would in turn help to improve the representation of people in our workforce.
3. The House of Commons Service aims to provide a positive, inclusive working environment where people are valued for the skills and experience that they bring to work. The long-term goal is for the workforce to be representative of the society we serve and to and demonstrate the House’s commitment to being an inclusive workplace. This means making parliament more accessible, diverse and free from discrimination. This scheme hopes to help the House achieve these aims.
4. The first pilot of the scheme will run from the 25– 29 June 2018. The first cohort will consist of 18 students from low-income backgrounds. In order to reach these students, we have decided to partner with three organisations who specialise in working with our target groups. This will ensure our scheme has a wider reach than it might have had if it was solely advertised on our website.
5. The House of Commons is working with the following organisations:
   1. **The Social Mobility Foundation:** The Social Mobility Foundation (SMF) aims to “provide a network of support for bright young people from low-income backgrounds who otherwise don’t have the knowledge or networks to fulfil their potential”. They recruit high achieving, gifted and talented students. Around 60% of SMF’s students are female and they also have a high proportion of BAME students. The programme is aimed at students in years 12 and 13 and students are selected based on the following criteria:
      1. Students must have achieved 4/5 A’s at GCSE and be on track for at least AAB at A-level.
      2. Students must either receive free school meals during secondary education ***or***be a within the first generation to attend University ***and*** be at a school with high percentage of students receiving free school meals

SMF runs their ‘APP City’ programme to provide mentoring, support and work experience to young people living in London. SMF have agreed to provide us with six students.

* 1. **Villiers Park Educational Trust:** Villers Park aims to “ensure able students from less advantaged backgrounds gain places at leading universities and thrive once there and help young people to develop a passion for learning and the study and life skills to ensure they reach their full academic potential”. Villers Park run a four-year Scholar scheme for students in Year 10 to Year 13, including on-going mentoring, residential courses at Villiers Park, university masterclasses, workshops and online study resources.  Villiers Park has been running the programme since 2009 and work across the country in areas where low proportions of students attend higher education. Villers Park have agreed to provide us with sixstudents.
  2. **City University:** The House already has a strong partnership with City University; Hansard have worked closely with the University on a number of projects and career events, including a successful ‘Career Insight’ day. City also have a high proportion of BAME students (over 50%). City have agreed to provide us with seven students.

1. As this is a Social Mobility scheme we have had to carefully consider the costs of taking part in a work experience scheme. Funding travel costs, accommodation and meals during a work experience scheme would often be a barrier to entry for many of the students that we are looking to work with. For this reason, the House has offered to pay for travel costs, accommodation and subsistence for the students. We have offered to fund travel and accommodation upfront, as claiming back expenses could be prohibitive for the students as it would require students to spend a significant amount of money upfront and wait for reimbursement.
2. It is important that the students are provided with a good quality, varied and interesting programme during their time with the House. For this reason, we have arranged a variety of different activities for the students, including talks, meetings with senior staff and opportunities to shadow staff in variety of different roles. We have also arranged for all the students to present on a topic that they will have learned about during their time with the House of Commons. This will ensure that the week has a tangible outcome for the students and that it will be helpful when applying for University and other jobs in the future.

June 2018

1. High Fliers, The Graduate Market in 2016 http://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2016/graduate\_market/GMReport16.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Education and Employers, Work Experience, https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/work\_experience\_report\_\_april\_2012\_.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)