



SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL MOBILITY

CALL FOR EVIDENCE

The Social Mobility Committee of the House of Lords, chaired by Baroness Corston, is conducting an inquiry into the transition from school to work for 14-24 year olds. The Committee invites interested individuals and organisations to submit evidence to this inquiry.

The deadline for written evidence is 1 October 2015. The submissions we receive will guide the Committee's deliberations in oral evidence sessions later this year, and also inform the Committee's final conclusions and recommendations.

Public hearings began in early July and will continue until early December. The Committee aims to report to the House with recommendations in late March 2016. The report will receive a response from the Government, and will be debated in the House.

Background

The terms of reference for the inquiry are "to consider social mobility in the transition from school to work" and to report by 23 March 2016. The Committee has decided to set its inquiry in the context of a changing youth labour market, for those within the age range of 14-24.

Social mobility is a topic of substantial political interest. There is a significant body of academic work, as well as a number of reviews and reports for the Government and numerous policy initiatives on many of the elements of social mobility. Many of these have focused on the influence of educational attainment on social mobility, including the transition from school to work. However, the bulk of recent government action has been concentrated on either those 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) or those at high risk of becoming NEET. Previous governments have also put an emphasis on increasing the number of students who stay at school beyond compulsory education in order to go to university. Relatively little attention has been given to those students who do not fall into either category.

The Committee has therefore decided to focus its inquiry on those who fall between the route of A-Levels and Higher Education and those classified as NEET.¹

We want to establish who the young people in this group are, and what other disparate, and possibly disadvantaged, groups fall within it. We intend to examine the school to work route for these young people, and whether in its current state it provides good employment outcomes and opportunities for them to move up the social ladder.

The Committee is keen to take evidence from as diverse and as wide a range of stakeholders as possible. This includes, but is not limited to: young people aged 14-24,

¹ Centre for Post-14 Research and Innovation, Institute of Education, University of London, The 'over-looked middle' in 14+ education and training: Becoming the new NEETs? (March 2012)



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businesses and their representative organisations (including small and medium enterprises and large employers of young people); academics; local authorities; consultancies; sector skills councils; civil society and non-governmental organisations; organisations working in the EU and other international bodies; apprenticeship schemes; careers guidance bodies; educators in schools and further education colleges; lifelong learning organisations; and organisations working with hard-to-reach groups. We would also like to hear from people and organisations working in these sectors across all four nations in the United Kingdom.

The Committee's inquiry will not focus on the route to work for school leavers who are on, who intend to follow, or who did follow the A-Level to Higher Education pathway. Nor will it focus on those not in employment, education, or training (NEET).

If you have any questions about the call for evidence, please contact the staff of the Committee at hlsocialmobilitycmttee@parliament.uk.

July 2015



Questions

The following questions cover the full focus of our inquiry. It is not necessary to answer every question in detail in your submission and invite you to share any other information with us that you feel is relevant to the focus of the inquiry. Please consult the staff of the Committee if you have any questions. There is further information on each question attached to this call for evidence. Please focus your answers on young people aged 14-24 who are not on, who do not intend to follow, or who did not follow the A-Level to Higher Education pathway

- 1. What are the most significant factors that affect the social mobility and employment outcomes of young people in the transition from school into the work place?**
- 2. There is a group of young people aged 14-24 who do not follow the A-Level and higher education route, and are not classified as NEET. What is known about the young people in this group– who are they, why are they in this position and what are their career trajectories?**
- 3. Does the current transition system support young people who do not follow the A-Level and higher education route to perform better in terms of employment outcomes? If not, why not? What challenges do these young people face in their ability to transition successfully into the workplace?**
- 4. How can the transition from school to work be improved for all young people, particularly for those who do not go on to study A-Levels and higher education? How can employers be encouraged to employ more young people from this group?**
- 5. Who should be responsible for improving the system to support the transition into work for school leavers?**



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Further information on the questions

Please find below possible aspects of each question that you may wish to consider in your response to the questions above. This is guidance on the Committee's areas of particular interest and is not intended to be prescriptive.

Q1 – factors affecting social mobility

For this question, we would like you to consider the range of factors that affect the ability of young people to enter the job market and to build careers. You may wish to consider the impact of current (and previous) Government policy, the qualifications system, the expectations of employers and the challenges facing those aged 14-24 as they transition from school to work.

Q2 – the 14-24 year old cohort

For this question, we would ask you to consider the reasons for existence of the group who have not done A-Levels but are not NEET, the likely career trajectories for this group, and the impact of changes to the assessment framework for A-levels, GCSEs and vocation education.

We are keen to find out what is already known about this group, for instance, patterns of gender, ethnicity, disability, social class, region in who is in this group, what they are doing, what their trajectories are; and any meaningful breakdown data on the qualifications they take and the routes they follow. We would like you to tell us what you know about the trajectories of this group, including their routes and progress through education and training, and their progression into employment. The outcomes for this group in terms of income and quality of employment could also be considered in your response, as well as anything else you feel may be relevant.

Q3 –the current system

For this question, we would like you to consider how much is known about transitions, and the reliability and transparency of the data supporting this information. You could also consider how it is for young people to get onto pathways that they want and that have currency with employers and higher education institutions. Further areas that you could consider could include the options available to young people if they do not undertake A-Levels and go on to study higher education, why some qualification programmes and apprenticeships have less status than others, and what the features of high quality qualification programmes and apprenticeships are. We would like to know why the group who do not complete A-Levels perform poorly and their performance has not improved over time. We are also interested in international comparisons and what the different patterns of provision in other countries are and what the key features of countries that perform better are. Finally we are interested in what the further education provision is for those who have to be in the system but have been unable to access an apprenticeship and



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how reactive the system is to the labour market (nationally and regionally), and what changes are taking place within it that have an impact on the employment of young people.

Q4 – possible improvements

For this question, we would like you to consider what incentives exist in the current system to make the transition from school to work be more efficient for young people, and what the different options are for improving the system. We would also ask you to consider how labour market information could be used better and by whom, what employers want in their new employees, and if there is a match between what employers say they want and what they practice. We are interested in what good practice in careers guidance looks like and what can we learn from the changes that have taken place to career guidance over the past decades.

We are looking to establish where the most important junctures in the route from education to work are to make appropriate interventions; offer guidance and support; and what the nature of that guidance should be. We want to know how employers can be persuaded to offer work placements and have input into vocational learning, including both SMEs and large employers, and how this can be done on a sustained basis. We would also like to know if there is a way of large employers and their supply chain SMEs working together. Finally we would like to find out how employers and educational institutions can work together to meet the needs of the labour market and the needs of school leavers on a sustained basis. Any suggestions for improvements could also be made here.

Q5 – responsibility for improvement

For this question we would like you to consider who is best placed to help improve the transition from school to work for young people. This includes assessing who in the system is currently responsible for seeing young people through the transition and what the role of the Government is, as well as the role of regional bodies such as local authorities and local enterprise partnerships. We would to know more about what organisations have, or should have, a remit for monitoring and reviewing progress towards achieving greater equity and social mobility.