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Skills Commission– Call for Evidence

Spotlight Inquiry: Apprenticeships & Social Mobility
August 2017

The Spotlight Project

The further education landscape is currently undergoing significant reform. With a strong government agenda focussing on apprenticeships, productivity, and cutting the national deficit, the reforms are expected to go further over the course of the next five years and considerable changes to the system and its structures are expected.

With the expansion of apprenticeships, and following the completion of the area reviews of post-16 education, there are many components moving simultaneously across the system. The preoccupation with reforms and changing structures risks pulling attention away from the needs of individuals, and marginalised demographics, as they experience the labour market and our skills and training system. We will focus attention on the needs of each of the following groups:

- Young people with below average educational attainment
- Older workers looking to retrain
- **Apprentices & Social Mobility**
- Small employers
- Gender

Apprenticeships & Social Mobility

The third report in the Spotlight series will look at apprenticeships and social mobility. Apprenticeships policy in the UK has undergone a period of rapid transformation in recent years, with the recent introduction of the apprenticeship levy, a move from frameworks to standards and the Government target of 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020. Whilst this increased focus on apprenticeships is welcome, it is vital that disadvantaged young people, who arguably have the most to gain from apprenticeships, are not overlooked in the race to meet this target.

Terms of Reference and Scope

The purpose of this inquiry is to investigate:

- **How do recent reforms to the apprenticeship system support social mobility?**
- What immediate effects will this have on disadvantaged young people accessing apprenticeships?
- What will the effects be on progression within apprenticeships?
- What are the longer term changes on the horizon as a result of these reforms?
- What can be done by employers, providers and government to avoid any issues that may arise? What good practice is already occurring that we can learn from?

The inquiry will have a specific focus on disadvantaged young people, where young people are defined as age 16-24 and disadvantage includes economic and educational disadvantage. Free School Meal eligibility will be used as an indicator of economic disadvantage.



Submit evidence

Please use the questions below to frame your response to the call for evidence, but do not feel restricted by or compelled to answer every question.

The Commission welcomes all types of evidence, from data including data analysis or internal studies your organisation has carried out, and personal or organisational views on these issues. Submissions of evidence will not be published and the Commission will seek your permission before quoting from evidence submissions in our final report.

The extended deadline for submissions of evidence is **Friday 22nd September**. Evidence can be submitted to beth.wheaton@policyconnect.org.uk. Please also get in touch if you would like to discuss this issue in further detail on **020 7922 8003**.

Call for evidence

1. **Do you think there are any barriers to disadvantaged young people accessing apprenticeships?** Please give examples if you have any.
2. **How well do you think disadvantaged young people progress in apprenticeships?** This can either be to a higher level apprenticeship/qualification or a better paid role within a company.
3. **What impact do you think the apprenticeship levy will have?** For example on the number of apprenticeships available, the age at which people are employed on to apprenticeships, the levels and regional availability of apprentices. Are these changes positive?
4. **Is there anything additional you think government/employers/ training providers could do to boost social mobility in apprenticeships?**

Please indicate whether you are happy for the commission to attribute this evidence to you or your organisation in the report. Thank you for your contribution.