



**All-Party Parliamentary Group  
On Youth Affairs**

**Minutes of the meeting, held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2011, The Boothroyd Room,  
Portcullis House, House of Commons**

**Guest Speaker: Chris Grayling MP, Minister for Employment**

**1. Introductions and Welcome**

Stewart Jackson MP welcomed all those present to the Annual General Meeting of the group.

**2. Re-election of Officers**

It was agreed by all those present that the following Parliamentarians will serve as officers for the current Parliamentary session:

**Co-Chairs**

**Stewart Jackson**

**Dr Stella Creasy**

**Simon Hughes**

**Vice-Chair**

**Sir Peter Bottomley**

**Treasurer**

**Lisa Nandy**

**Secretary**

**James Morris**

**3. Guest speaker – Chris Grayling MP, Employment Minister**

Stewart Jackson introduced Chris Grayling (CG), Employment Minister, and explained that the focus of the session would be on the Work Programme.

CG began by explaining his role as Minister for Employment. He stated that headline reports on youth unemployment figures are deceptive. Acknowledging that the economy and job market is not in a good condition, he noted that the level of youth unemployment is not as bad as the 1 million, or 20% of 18-24 year olds, which has been suggested in the media. He said that the International Labour Organisation Labour Force measure includes full-time students looking for part-time work which inflates the figure. The majority of those under the age of 24 move in to full-time work after a couple of weeks and only one in five are categorised as long-term unemployed. However, he stated that he was keen not to belittle youth unemployment and said that tackling it is a priority for the Government.

He went on to outline the three measures the Government is taking to tackle youth unemployment.

The first measure involves providing young people with work experience. CG said that the Government intends to change the rules around work experience so that

young people can take part in voluntary placements with businesses for up to 8 weeks but remain on benefits. He suggested that if people prove themselves 'on the job' the placements may result in employment.

The second measure in the Government's strategy is the expansion of apprenticeships. CG said there will be 250,000 additional places over the term of the Parliament and that apprenticeships are a good way for people to build skills.

The third and final measure of the Government's strategy is the Work Programme. CG said that this would offer personalised, intensive support to the long-term unemployed. It is available for people who are unemployed for more than a year, but young people are able to access it after 9 months. He explained that it will be a payment by results model whereby providers of the programme will be rewarded for finding people jobs and keeping them in employment.

### **Question and Answer Session**

Simon Hughes MP addressed the group for a short time stressing the importance of young people following up any concerns or questions they have with Ministers or their local MP.

Chair Stewart Jackson then opened up the floor to questions and comments from the audience.

The following issues were raised during the discussion:

#### **Payment by results**

CG responded to suggestions that a payment by results mechanism in the Work Programme could lead to providers choosing to work with those who are easier to help. CG said that this should not happen as differential price structures reward providers more for helping those who are in complex situations such as an ex-offenders or young mothers. He said that the programme's approach seeks to allow various providers to find the best way of delivering results, as there is no set framework for how to deliver the programme.

Talking about the payments CG stated that providers would receive a small sum for finding someone a job but would be paid more after 6 months and would continue to receive payment the longer an individual stays in work over a period of up to two years.

Referring to a minimum standard of support he said that the Government has not told providers what is expected of them but that they were invited to outline their own standards during the bidding process, which was then taken into consideration in awarding the contracts.

Questions were also asked on whether there would be a difference in regional provision since it might be easier for providers to find people jobs in the South East and London. CG emphasised that each area is a different market and the providers will decide how to implement the Work Programme in each area.

#### **Access to Work and disabilities**

Questions were asked on how changes to the Access to Work programme will help people with disabilities to find employment. CG pointed to the Sayce Review which recently reported and made a number of recommendations on how to support disabled people into mainstream employment. The Government is still considering the suggestions and will be formulating proposals in the near future.

### **Young people finding jobs**

Questions were asked about what guarantees there are for jobseekers after they have developed their experiences through apprenticeships and work experience. CG replied that no one can guarantee anybody a job but the Government is doing its best to give people the opportunity to help themselves into training and support. He urged unemployed people to register for Jobseekers' Allowance so that they are in the system and can access the support available to them. He explained that those not receiving Jobseekers' Allowance will not be able to access support via the Work Programme.

CG also spoke about work clubs and job clubs in towns and cities around the country. He suggested that this might be an alternative for those who do not want to go on JSA. At these clubs people are supported to search for jobs and employers often go to the clubs looking for new staff.

He was asked whether young people who find a job through the Work Programme and then lose that job will have to wait another 9 months to re-join the work programme. He replied that it depends on the circumstances of the individual.

### **Young mothers**

CG commented that working while raising young children is always a challenge. He said that provisions are being developed for childcare support, especially for lone mothers to be able to work for 16 hours a week.

Talking about mothers going back to work once their child is at school CG said he felt it was reasonable that lone mothers should work part-time while their children were in school and should be supported to find part-time jobs that fit around the school day. He also spoke about the importance of children living in a household where their parents work.

### **Young people's aspirations**

Responding to concerns that people would be forced to take jobs that they may be over-qualified for, CG said that people are always better in work than out of it. He gave the example of a young person starting working at a supermarket checkout before becoming the head of a team within a year. He said that it is easier to move from the wrong job to the right job than from no job.

### **Work experience and training**

Answering a question from the audience about whether the minimum wage could be paid for work experience CG said that young people who are given 8 weeks work experience could not be paid minimum wage by employers as it would be very costly for either the taxpayer or the employer. He spoke of the importance of work

experience in equipping young people with a reference from an employer and the potential to be offered a job.

He said that people receiving Jobseekers' Allowance will be able to take up part-time training courses without losing their benefits, but explained they will not be able to take up a full-time course.

### **Young people leaving care**

One person in the audience raised concerns around payments to young people leaving care and the additional help they might require. CG agreed with the points raised. He said that Government is currently considering further proposals and spoke of the importance of providing further support to those leaving care.

Stewart Jackson thanked Chris Grayling and all the attendees for their contributions and called the meeting to a close.

### **Attendees: 90**

<b>Organisation</b>
Beatbullying
British Safety Council
BYC
Catch 22
Centrepoint
Changemakers
City Gateway
CORAM
COUI - Teens and Toddlers
Diana Award
Enternships.com
Fairbridge
Frontier Youth Trust
Girlguiding UK
Just for Kids Law
London Citizens
NCVYS
Office of Natascha Engel MP
Parliament Education Service
Platform 51
Prince's Trust
Pro-Action Herts
St John Ambulance

UKYP
UpRising, The Young Foundation
V
Voiceability
Volunteering England
Woodcraft Folk
YMCA England
Young Advisors
Young Foundation