



All-Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs
Social mobility
Monday, 27 April 2009

Present

A list of those present is in *Appendix A*

Introduction

Natascha Engel MP welcomes everyone to the APPG on Youth Affairs to debate issues surrounding social mobility. Natascha welcomes Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Cabinet Minister Liam Byrne MP who will be giving an overview of Government's long-term strategy around social mobility.

Future APPG on Youth Affairs seminars will be on:

- skills development and the transition into employment;
- financial support and economic wellbeing;
- education, health and family support; and
- housing and neighbourhoods.

Speech by Cabinet Minister Liam Byrne MP

Liam Byrne introduced himself as MP for Hodge Hill in Birmingham.

I want your advice and counsel about what we're going to be doing over the next year, the next 20 years. One billion skilled jobs will be created over the next 20 years. World wealth will double but what investment should we make now and how do we open those jobs and opportunities to everyone? Over the last 10, 20, 30, 40 years, since 1970, the ability for young people to get on and achieve the life of their dreams has not changed. The chances haven't moved, but now is the first time, over the last five or six years, that things have started moving. There is no one thing that we can do to give people a chance and the life they want, a whole load of things needs to be done. For example nursery education is important; as are good teachers in the classrooms with good discipline.

At 16, young people need the choice of apprenticeships, college or university. Being out of work at 16 can have the biggest influence in a young person's life. We want 50% of young people to have the opportunity to go to university. College and university are the best way to get a good job. People need to re-train and adapt to get on. We can achieve a lot and can open up jobs to anyone if we create a bridge of support. This is one of the biggest debates we can have in this country.

I got the chance to go to university, work in business and then politics because I had people around me who loved and supported me, picked me up when I made mistakes. But some people don't have that backing. Surely as a country we can

organise ourselves to still have a change to go and do what we're capable of. Think of what we can achieve not only as a country, but internationally.

Now it's a matter of political contest. Some people are saying that we should pull money out and let people get on with it. The White Paper is out and young people have now got a stake in getting it right in the future.

Natascha Engel MP (Chair)

Thanks Liam. We now have four sets of questions from young people. We'll start with Gemma, Kayleigh and Toni on issues around skills development and the transition into employment.

Gemma, 16 years old, YWCA Northampton

We've looked at issues around awareness, careers advice and adaptability.

Kayleigh, 22 years old, YWCA Northampton

A problem is that people are not aware of what career options are available to them. It's now what you know, it's who you know and that's unfair in society. Careers are like a cycle, get the job your parents have, you only see what's around you. Skills in jobs are sometimes not adaptable which leads to more unemployment. There are a lack of night classes and lack of help for young people aged 19.

Toni, YMCA Surbiton

You could provide opportunities through corporate events and careers fairs. The careers advice service needs role models to push you and show you love. Taster sessions should be encouraged to help people make decisions.

Liam Byrne MP

Alan Milburn MP has been asked to look at how we can open up professions like journalism, law and politics. These are amongst the best paid and most successful careers to have in our country now so how do we open up access to these and other professions? Role of careers advisors and Connexions is important. Every school has a legal obligation to give careers advice. As an MP, a lot of my work in Hodge Hill has been with young people trying to find out what the right number one priority for investment should be. The number one thing young people said was, 'to learn a new skill'. This is something that isn't happening in the right way now. We have launched a community service programme. I went to see young people who have been doing community service work for a while and they said that their work in volunteering had opened their eyes to new possibilities and you could sense the new horizons. The problem is when people don't have the right connections and self-confidence. We need to give young people a better way of seeing options, giving them wider exposure. We need to give people self-confidence to get on, and up, in life. Need to say if I can do it, you can do it. This could be through better access to volunteering and career services.

Gill Thornton, Head of Public Policy, Rathbone

This links to work Rathbone has been doing with the Nuffield Foundation which found that young people in Leeds have lots of aspirations but don't know how to reach them. You shouldn't assume people don't have support but thousands need help.

Sarah Carruthers, West London YMCA

There are certain set age groups that are missing out on things; older young people don't have the chances.

Helen Berresford, Policy Officer, YWCA

There are barriers if you're a young mum who wants to go back into education and achieve, but the funding isn't there to enable you to do it.

Natascha Engel MP, Chair

We will ask Alan Milburn MP to come to the next APPG session. Now we'll move on to financial support with questions from Daniella, George and Shabnam.

Daniella, Surbiton YMCA

My question is: 'Why should I give up my home to get an education? If I go into education my benefits stop and I will lose my home'.

Liam Byrne MP

You're talking about further education?

Daniella

Yes.

George and Adrian, West London YMCA

We've got some questions for you Liam. Why is funding for further education limited to 16 to 19 and not above? People might want to go back to education when they're older.

Shabnam, BYC

We want the rules to be more flexible within the education and benefits system; we don't want age limits on it.

Natascha Engel MP, Chair

It's a trap: benefits or further education. I visited the Prince's Trust and they have some great projects but it's difficult for young people to complete them because they lose their benefits if they go on a course.

Liam Byrne MP

I'm not an expert but Government has put in £1.2 billion extra to help make sure that people are leaving school with the option to apprenticeships, further education or jobs. The key is in the last recession, no-one cared if unemployment soared. We need to learn lessons. James Purnell, Secretary of State for the Department of Works and Pensions, needs to work out how to stop 16-25-year-olds being able to go 12 months without training, a job or going to college. The

longest time I've been unemployed is a few months but if you are unemployed you lose your zest. It's useful to give Government specific examples.

Amanda, Kingston and Wimbledon YMCA

Young people claiming benefits over 19 are not eligible for benefits if they go into full-time education.

George

What happens if you leave college and want to go back around 20 years old? How do you do that if it is no longer free?

Liam Byrne MP

In February Government tripled career development loans. Young people aren't sure what going to get out of going back to college. It's only when you start working sometimes that you realise how important education is.

Natascha Engel MP, Chair

We'll get James Purnell and John Denham and the Treasury to come to the next session and answer why there is only a certain amount of money available.

Dave Pendle, The Foyer Federation

Foyer has been campaigning for five years on the 16 hour rule. Brown announced pre-budget that this would be extended to 21 but I'm not sure what happened.

Liam Byrne MP

We trialled a relaxation in the West Midlands. A basic objective of the budget is that we can not have 16-25-year-olds out of work for a year.

Natascha Engel MP, Chair

We will have a wider seminar on this and get people that really know the answers. Now we have Linda and Emily on health.

Linda and Emily, ENVOY, National Council for Voluntary Youth Services

We've decided to talk about sex education. At school so far they treat us like we don't know anything, we learn more from others. There are three problems, one is the person teaching, the teacher can often feel uncomfortable talking about sex. Another is that sex education is taught too late in school life and the last is that sex education should be based around safe sex. There is also another problem with young mothers not being able to get back into education.

We think the solutions to these problems are: the person teaching sex education has to be comfortable talking about it; sex education needs to be taught earlier and in every year so it's more regular; an outsider should come in, maybe a young person, 18-21, who has personal experience. Someone who you're not going to see again so you're not so worried about what you say; and safe sex should be promoted, this will help stop STIs.

Natascha Engel MP, Chair

It should really be called 'sex and relationships education'. The UK Youth Parliament has done a massive amount of work around this and now by statute, sex education must start at primary school.

Liam Byrne MP

My mum was a biology teacher at school I went to but fortunately she got a new job before she had to teach me. In my constituency we have one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates, it is very difficult for young mum's to get back into education. Schools in the future need to have child care facilities and learning opportunities for parents. Schools need to be different in the future. On Thursday Government published a review of primary school curriculum which included age-appropriate sex education. The review was done independently, the Rose Review.

Gemma, 16 years old, YWCA Northampton

I had to leave school in Year 11. The council need more money to help teenage mums stay on in education.

Natascha Engel MP, Chair

We'll try and get the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Health to the next meeting. Now we'll move on to housing, neighbourhoods and citizenship.

Bianca, YMCA

Homesless young people are meant to be a priority but whether on Locator or bidding you don't get anywhere. Hostels can keep you for two years but then you have to move on. You get pushed from pillar to post. Privately rented partnerships aren't working, the landlords can kick you out and if you go back to full-time education you lose your benefits so can't pay the rent. Mothers and babies are still not a priority. What is a priority? My option is to have a baby to get a house.

The solution is more information for young people. Navigator says the same as housing. If you're 16 and younger you're on the streets. We need simple systems. We need outreach with youth workers who can give young people opportunities. One-to-one advice. What is Government doing to resolve these issues? And why, 20 years down the line, has housing law not been looked at since 1989. The older generation don't listen to young people.

Liam Byrne MP

You mentioned one-to-one advice, what is most valuable? What is most missing?

Bianca, YMCA

There aren't enough housing officers to support young people. You have to wait five months to talk to one person. The people supporting young people need to be supported.

Steve Lee, Youth Access

Youth Access members provide support for young people. Vulnerable young people are less likely to get advice and seek advice. Rights need to be at the base of it, proper, independent advice. Local authorities are driven by broader national policy objectives, they turn into gate-keepers and young people get moved around.

Bianca, YMCA

You need to be 25 to get a flat and get benefits.

Liam Byrne MP

How do you get job advice and housing advice?

Bianca, YMCA

You find it yourself. Connexions and Navigator good but they leave you to pick yourself back up. Young people aren't praised enough, don't get much help. If you don't know your rights, housing work around it to make you leave.

Liam Byrne MP

Natascha and I see surgeries in our constituencies every month and young mums are sleeping on sofas with their things in black bags. We listen and are affected by the person listening to but also looking at the child. The bottom line is build more homes. We will be building three million over the next three years.

Bianca, YMCA

But the new homes go to mothers with babies or councils.

Liam Byrne MP

We need to give councils more power over what they build on their patch. We need to put advice together properly. It's not thousands of young people leaving care each year, the number is in the hundreds. Government needs to respond and the Cabinet Office is looking to change targets to get everyone in a home or a job.

Bianca, YMCA

We get money and then have to spend it all on a house, then we have no money for things like travel and food.

Natascha Engel MP, Chair

What has come out of today is getting people that find it hard to get better education and jobs. All things raised today are massively important.

-----Meeting ends-----

Appendix A: Attendance

Natascha Engel MP (Chair)
Liam Byrne (Cabinet Minister)

Rugena Ali, BYC
Lara Kaplan, BYC
Helen Deakin, BYC
Sophie Helm, YWCA
Grace Weaver, Diana Award
Kat Simmonds, Oasis UK
Stephanie Poulter, Researcher to Natascha Engel MP
Jack Adkin, NCVYS
Jonathan Breedan, NCVYS
Matthew Barnard-Lim, NCVYS
Rebecca Davidson, NCVYS
Katie Sassienie, NCVYS
Laura Morris-Kingham, NCVYS
Michael Atomah, West London YMCA
Sarah Carruthers, West London YMCA
Rommel Moseley, Envision
Saskia Elias, Envision
Gill Thornton, Rathbone
Dave Pendle, Foyer Federation
Jennifer Niloff, YMCA England
Sophie Manning, Youthnet
Kate Rowley, Youthnet
Sarah Wilson, Youthnet
Harris, Rosenberg, BCVYS
David Braham, EUSE
Amanda McWilliams, Kingston and Wimbledon YMCA
Shabnam Ali, BYC
George Kissi, West London YMCA
Adrian Ferguson, West London YMCA
Toni Zimba, Kingston and Wimbledon YMCA
Stella Creasy, Scouts
Helen Longworth, DofE
Rezina Hakim, Barnardos
Sarah Gracey, LSN
Steve Lee, Youth Access
Samantha Windett, Action for Children
Janaki, Mahaderan, Children and Young People Now
Ira Zozulia, West London YMCA
Teodone, Gliga, British Psychological Society
Steven Prise, NCVYS
Charlotte Smith, UK Youth
Caronine Green, UNICEF UK
Tracy Hayes, Turningpoint
Tim Coates, BYC
Ayan Ahmed, West London YMCA

Kevin Williams, KIDS
Alison Reynolds, YWCA
Jade Whittle, YMCA
Rachel Wilkinson, Changemakers
Charmaine, YMCA
Oliver, YMCA
Shaun, YMCA
Karine Harris, YMCA
David Clarke, BYC
Rocky Corusso, BYC
Emily Casey-Haworth, NCVYS
Linds Epstein, NCVYS
Bianqa Watson, West London YMCA
Cara Bowler, West London YMCA
Lindsay Martin, YMCA England
Faiza Chaudary, NCVYS
Hannah Dobbin, NCVYS
Helen Berresford, YWCA
Stephen Matthews, YMCA England (clerk)