

# Ways into Work: Youth Employment Research

On 1 May 2012, City & Guilds held a reception in the House of Lords to launch a report covering our research into the youth unemployment situation – there are now over one million unemployed under the age of 24 years<sup>1</sup>. Chris Jones, our CEO and Director-General, took the opportunity in his speech to set out key findings from a survey undertaken into the views of 3000 young people on employment, their future prospects and their experiences of the education and training system so far. He called for the creation of an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) to coordinate key stakeholders across education, business and the Government to identify and deal with factors affecting sustainable access for young people into work. He repeated his views in a FE News article on 8 May 2012, accessible here: <http://www.fenews.co.uk/featured-article/young-people-view-links-to-employers-as-the-key-to-their-career-success>

The report: *Ways into Work: Views of children and young people on education and employment*, sets out interesting findings from a unique perspective – the voice of young people themselves. The survey engaged with over 3,000 young people aged 7-18 years and highlighted key themes for the sector to address.

**City & Guilds believes there needs to be more emphasis on the practical application of learning Maths and English in schools to ensure young people have the skills employers need.** Although young people are aware of the importance of numeracy skills, most young people said they do not study Maths beyond 16 as they find it 'boring' and 'difficult'. 54% of 16-18 year olds commented unprompted that Maths should be more geared towards real life scenarios.

**We will press for better access to careers advice and guidance from a young age.** The Education and Skills Act 2008 will see the participation age raised to 18 years from 2015. At 16, young people need to decide where their future lies, in general, so appropriate careers information and guidance is vital to achieve the right outcomes. One third of respondents said they had **not** received any careers guidance. Those that had received careers advice and guidance, said they had received this from teachers in their schools. But this was not their preferred mechanism for receiving advice and guidance and the majority put a higher value on the advice received from employers and family members.


**Unstructured work experience is letting young people down.** Well planned work experience or placements can be inspiring and worthwhile for both young people and employers. If poorly organised, it can be disillusioning. Only 26% of the 16-18 group surveyed had actually visited an employer recently, and yet all age groups (7-18 years) agreed that visits to employers would be useful.

**City & Guilds supports the principle that enterprise and entrepreneurship needs to be nurtured and taught in schools.** One of the most encouraging results from the survey was that almost half (49%) of 16-18 year olds said they would one day like to run their own business. 42% of 14-16 year olds held the same ambition. This is surely a clear signal for curriculum change that could directly benefit the national economy.

Chris Jones launched a long term campaign for us and we will be consulting with a range of groups and partners before finalising our proposals later this year. There are a number of suggestions for an APPG to consider for action:

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<sup>1</sup> In period Nov 2011-Jan2012. Source: House of Commons Library, Standard Note SN/5871 14 March 2012

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- Developing careers advice and guidance that is fit-for-purpose;
  - Identifying the types of support Government should provide to enable young people to set up in business on their own as entrepreneurs – mentoring, structured funding, and so on;
  - Insisting on more direct engagement with employers as part of the National Curriculum review;
  - Raising the emphasis on enterprise and entrepreneurial skills as an option for young people;
  - Calling for the implementation of a structured work experience programme that is implemented system-wide and as early as possible to facilitate constructive links between education and the workplace.

Our report finds that overall, young people remain optimistic about their personal chance of success in life with 61% of 7-11 year olds, 66% of 14-16 year olds and 71% of 16-18 year olds feeling optimistic or very optimistic about their future. We owe it to them to ensure their optimism is justified and they can take their place in a dynamic economy to fulfil those aspirations.