



POLICY BRIEFING NOTE: 20

This is the 20th of a series of short Policy Briefing Notes

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IPPR SAYS SCHOOLS SHOULD HAVE FULL TIME SPECIALIST CAREERS ADVISERS

“Remember the young ones: Improving career opportunities for Britain’s young people”

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Youth unemployment low in countries with strong vocational route and good careers guidance in schools

<http://www.ippr.org/publications/remember-the-young-ones-improving-career-opportunities-for-britains-young-people>

(A) Summary of the report:

- i. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) report found that youth unemployment was low in countries where there was a clear vocational route in education and **strong careers guidance in schools**.
 - ii. A high-level of employer involvement in vocational education through apprenticeships was also a contributing factor in their success in reducing the NEET population.
 - iii. While conceding that youth unemployment had fallen in recent months, the latest figure of 868,000 young people aged between 16 and 24 who are out of work is still too high, says the IPPR.
 - iv. Around 700,000 workless young people have never had a job and the NEET rate has barely moved in recent years, the think-tank adds. Even if full-time students are excluded from the figures, 16- to 24-year-olds are around three-and-a-half times more likely to be unemployed than a person aged 25, a ratio that has not changed significantly since 2007.
1. This report by think-tank the IPPR looks at five critical elements of the school-to-work transition for young people – the role of employers, vocational education,

- apprenticeships, **careers guidance**, and the benefits system – and at lessons the UK can learn from European economies with better youth employment records.
2. A long period without work at a young age can have a long-lasting effect on a person's life chances, leading to a higher future likelihood of unemployment and lower future earnings. For this reason, UK policymakers should be particularly worried about the present level of youth unemployment. There are currently 868,000 young people aged 16–24 unemployed in the UK, and 247,000 of them have been looking for work for over a year.
 3. This is not simply due to the financial crash and recession. While the last six or seven years have been particularly tough for the latest generation of young people, even before the financial crisis many of those entering the labour market for the first time were struggling to compete with older workers for jobs. This suggests that even a full-blown economic recovery is unlikely to solve the problem of youth unemployment in the UK.
 4. The report makes a series of recommendations to address five critical policy areas, each of which requires a focused response.
 5. Employers are dissatisfied with the school-leavers who are applying to them for jobs, but a large part of the problem arises because employers are not prepared to be sufficiently involved in young people's training to ensure that they develop meaningful, useful skills. **The best way to increase employers' engagement is to have them take a financial stake in the success of the system.**
 6. **Vocational education in England needs to be reformed so that it is held in higher esteem by employers and young people alike.** As a pathway into work, higher-level vocational education should be seen as a valid alternative to a university education.
 7. Policy on apprenticeships in recent years has been dominated by a preoccupation with quantity, putting quality at risk. **Apprenticeships should be seen by students and employers as a high-quality vocational route into work for young people.**
 8. In those European countries that have low rates of youth unemployment, **careers education and guidance play a crucial role in ensuring a smooth transition from education to work. Our recommendations focus on embedding and resourcing careers advice in schools, particularly at key milestone moments when young people make vital decisions about their future.**
 9. The current benefits system fails to differentiate between the needs of younger unemployed people and older jobseekers, such as finishing basic education or receiving on-the-job work experience. The IPPR proposes that a distinct work, training and benefits system should be established for young people.

(B) Comments on CEG:

1. The IPPR Recommendations include requiring all secondary schools **to have a full-time careers officer responsible for both careers education, as well as improving links with local employers.** The IPPR also says careers guidance should be provided by specialist advisers, not teachers.
2. The report states (interalia):

- *In those European countries that have low rates of youth unemployment, careers education and guidance play a crucial role in ensuring a smooth transition from education to work, but it has been badly neglected in England. To rectify the*

situation, additional funds should be found to enable a number of steps to be taken.

- *Careers education should be embedded in the curriculum from primary school onwards, and for pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 should involve a greater degree of contact with local employers.*
- *The National Careers Service should be expanded to allow it to offer more support to schools.*
- *Careers guidance – and some careers education – should be provided by specialist advisers rather than teachers.*
- *Every secondary school should be required to appoint a full-time careers officer responsible for careers education and guidance, and for liaison with local employers.*
- *All students should have a face-to-face careers interview with a specialist adviser in year 9 and again in year 11, to help them make the crucial choices they face in those years.*
- *Careers advisers should be made responsible for getting local employers more involved in schools, and for providing students with up-to-date information on education and training options and on opportunities in the local labour market.’*

3. The report suggests that **better guidance from careers experts could help avert glaring mismatches in the youth labour market**, pointing to the fact that 94,000 people were undertaking training in the beauty and hair sector with the hope of securing just 18,000 jobs. In contrast, just 123,000 were being trained in the construction and engineering sectors for an advertised 275,000 jobs.

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