

## Youth Transitions: supporting the school-to-work transition for young people in London

Young people's access to education and employment is increasingly polarised between school leavers and graduates. Successive governments have prioritised access to university as part of their social mobility strategies, leaving those without a degree increasingly at risk of being left behind. In some disadvantaged communities deindustrialisation and unemployment have also weakened community bonds, leading to a lack of support for socialisation into work and adulthood at a time when the labour market has become more complex and more difficult to navigate. Despite several reform attempts vocational education has failed to fill this 'socialisation gap', as well as persistently offering weak returns in the labour market.

The recent riots cast a sharp lens on the opportunities for young Londoners. London's labour market has changed dramatically over the past thirty years, with the service sector now dominant. Despite the vibrancy of London's economy, high in-migration from other regions and abroad also has resulted in a highly competitive environment at the lower end of the labour market. As a result, despite the fact that young people in London perform better on average at school (particularly at GCSEs) than those in many other areas, they often struggle to get a foothold in the labour market. Youth unemployment in the capital is higher than the national average and still rising, while the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training rises to 9.1 per cent in deprived boroughs such as Southwark, well above the national average at 6.5 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

This research aims to explore the young people's transitions into work and responsible adulthood, using London as a case study. The project aims to provide understanding of how to improve participation and achievement in education and training, enable smoother transitions from learning to earning and ensure that public investment in education and training delivers the greatest economic and social benefit, highlighting wider social aims for vocational education associated with supporting the transition into adulthood. A key aim is to highlight important areas for London's policy makers by examining whether a more coordinated approach at local level could improve progression pathways.

With youth unemployment set to top one million, the need to support the transition from school into employment is more pressing than ever. This requires a fundamental rethink of youth policy. It is a timely opportunity to explore these issues, with the Coalition Government implementing a range of policy changes that include widespread reform to schools, tuition fees, educational maintenance allowance, skills provision and apprenticeships. Alongside an upcoming Mayoral election, this creates an active policy landscape ripe for new ideas.

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<sup>1</sup> See Inclusion's Benchmarker at <http://www.cesi.org.uk/statistics#>

**Key questions will include:**

- Which young people are most at risk of falling out of education and employment in London?
- Why and when are young people most at risk of falling out of education and employment in London, and what does this tell us about the key transition points for young people, their attitudes to work and learning, and their experiences of education, training and employment?
- How do different institutions – such as employers, schools, FE colleges, youth services and local government – work together and what impact does this have on young people's progression pathways through education and into work?
- How can we build an institutional framework for skills that supports transition and progression, in particular connecting qualifications to jobs?
- What would a comprehensive youth policy look like in London, and where are national policymaking levers required?

**Methods**

- In partnership with the GLA, we will conduct analysis of the key trends of young people not in education, employment and training, exploring who is more likely to be NEET, their experiences of employment and training, and trends over time.
- This will be supported by a poll and a focus group examining young Londoner's attitudes to education, employment and training.
- We will also conduct interviews with the key institutions involved in young people's transitions into work in at least one London borough, investigating what the institutional landscape facing young people looks like.
- We will conduct a literature and policy review of youth transitions into work, drawing on international case studies to identify best practice and inform new local policy approaches.

**Output**

A report will be published in March 2011.

**Further information**

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