

Young adults and employability

Findings of desk research on youth
unemployment across the UK

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September 2016

Published by National Learning and Work Institute (England and Wales)

21 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GE

Company registration no. 2603322 | Charity registration no. 1002775

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We research what works, develop new ways of thinking and implement new approaches. Working with partners, we transform people's experiences of learning and employment. What we do benefits individuals, families, communities and the wider economy.

We bring together over 90 years of combined history and heritage from the 'National Institute of Adult Continuing Education' and the 'Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion'.

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Introduction

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Since 2012, L&W has been the UK National Coordinator for the European Agenda for Adult Learning. In this role, we work with partners and stakeholders across the UK – with representation from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales - and Europe to share good practice policy messages between member states. This involves delivering a programme of work on behalf of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills and the European Commission for the European Union's Agenda for Adult Learning, which is based on the themes of adult basic skills; digital learning; engaging hard to reach groups; and employability for young people.

This paper presents the findings of desk research carried out under the employability for young people theme of our programme of work. The aim of the desk research was to identify the scale of youth unemployment across the four nations of the UK; to identify national policy responses to address this issue; and to scope the range of programmes and initiatives that aim to tackle youth unemployment across the UK. The findings of this paper will inform the delivery of our project which will support young people to carry out peer research in order to find out what employers want from young job applicants.



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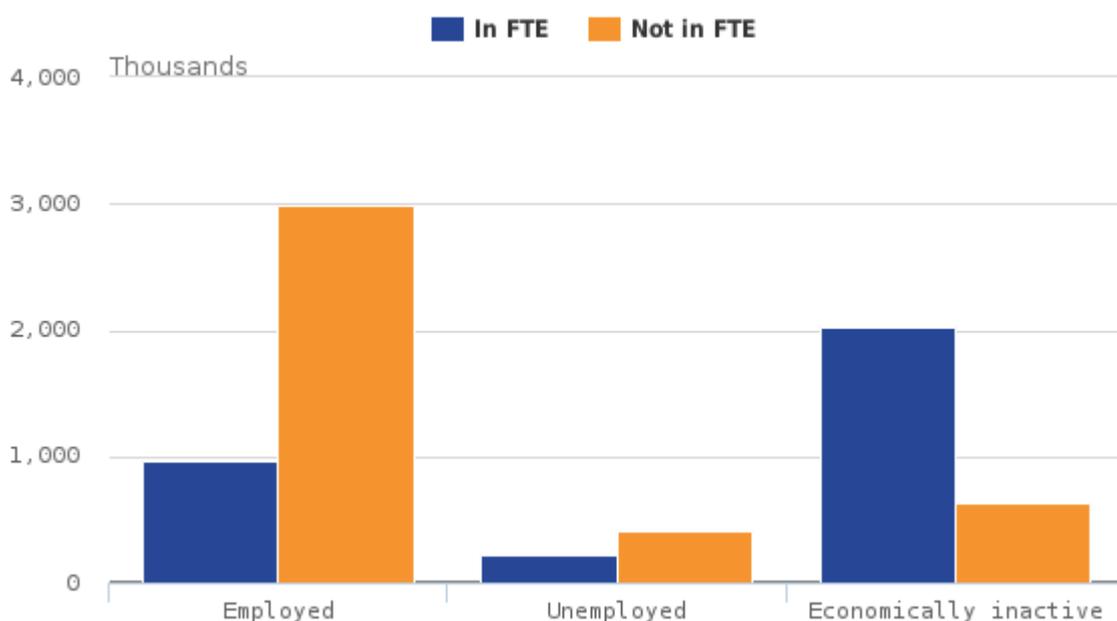


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Context

Youth unemployment remains an issue in all four of the nations which make up the United Kingdom. During 2011, in the aftermath of the financial crisis, the unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds in the UK hit a record high of 22.5%. This has slowly declined since and reached 13.6% in February to April 2016 (see Figure 1 below), down from 16% a year earlier. This figure accounts for 621,000 young people, including 216,000 full-time students who were looking for part-time work. In total, 16.5% of these young people had been unemployed for over 12 months (roughly 102,000 young people)¹.

Figure 1: Employment status of young people (aged 16 to 24) in the UK for February to April 2016, seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force Survey: Office of National Statistics

Notes: FTE = Full-time education. The "Not in full-time education" series includes people in part-time education and/or some form of training.

Youth unemployment in each of the four UK nations

There is a lack of consistent data on youth unemployment rates and economic inactivity rates across the four UK nations. There is relatively little data specifically relating to England and Northern Ireland individually, with England tending to be mixed within UK national

¹ Office of National Statistics (2016) UK Labour Market

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/june2016#young-people-in-the-labour-market>

statistics data. Scotland's data is provided within a number of separate reports on youth unemployment and NEET groups. Wales has the most data available from their statistics office, which has its own datasets relating specifically to youth unemployment. Yet the data that exists suggest that youth unemployment and economic inactivity rates vary considerably across the four UK nations. This section draws on these data to present the picture of youth unemployment in each of the four UK nations.

England

In December 2015, the unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds in England was 14.1%, down from 17.1% the previous year².

In July 2016, the percentage of 18-24 year olds in England claiming unemployment-related benefits was 2.6%³, just under the rate for the UK as a whole at 2.8%⁴.

The current economic inactivity rate for working age persons from April to June 2016 was 21.2% in England, compared to 21.6% for the UK as a whole⁵.

Northern Ireland

In March 2016, the unemployment rate for 18-24 year olds in Northern Ireland was 18.4%, down 1.1 percentage points on the year before, but still above the UK average of 11.7%. The overall 3 month rolling unemployment rate for 16-64 year olds in Northern Ireland was 6% in January 2016, just above the UK average of 5.1%⁶.

The claimant count monthly data for July 2016 showed that 5.3% of 18-24 year olds in Northern Ireland were claiming unemployment-related benefits⁷. Again, this was considerably higher than the UK average of 2.8%⁸.

² NOMIS (2016) *Annual population survey*, Office of National Statistics, www.nomisweb.co.uk

³ % is number of persons claiming JSA as a proportion of resident population of the same age

⁴ NOMIS (2016) *Labour Market Profile: England*, online:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/gor/2092957699/report.aspx?town=England#tabwab>
[accessed: 11.07.2016]

⁵ NOMIS (2016) *Labour Market Profile: England*, online:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/gor/2092957699/report.aspx?town=England#tabwab>
[accessed: 22.08.2016]

⁶ Statistics and Research Agency (2016) *Northern Ireland Labour Market Report, March 2016*, pdf.

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/deti/Labour%20Market%20Report%20-%20March%202016.PDF>

⁷ Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2016) *Claimant Count Annual Averages: 18-24 years*, online: <http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/PivotGrid.aspx?ds=7008&lh=73&yn=2005-2014&sk=18&sn=Labour%20Market&yearfilter=>

⁸ Ibid

Scotland

In March 2016, the unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds in Scotland was 15.7%, an increase of 0.4 percentage points on the year before⁹. This was almost three times the unemployment rate of all working age adults (aged 16-64) in Scotland in the same period, which was 5.8%.

Between November 2015 and January 2016, 29.3%¹⁰ of 16-24 year olds in Scotland were economically inactive, down 4.4 percentage points on the year before¹¹. This was lower than the UK-wide rate of 36.3% for the same period. Between October 2014 and September 2015, 27% of 16-24 year olds in Scotland were unemployed and not enrolled in full time education for longer than 12 months¹².

In Scotland, the rate of young people claiming unemployment-related benefits for 16-17 year olds was 0.2% in July 2016, and 3.8% for 18-24 year olds¹³. Both of these figures were higher than the UK equivalent rates, which were 0.1% and 2.8% respectively during the same period.

Wales

At the end of December 2015, the unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds in Wales was 17.5%¹⁴, the same as the year before. In comparison, the average unemployment rate for adults aged 16-64 in Wales was 6.1% at the end of December 2015. This suggests that a young person is currently twice as likely to be unemployed than the average adult of working age in Wales.

⁹ Aiton, A. (2016) *Financial Scrutiny Briefing Labour Market Update: March 2016*, Scottish Parliament. Pdf: http://www.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB_16-30_Labour_Market_Update_March_2016.pdf

¹⁰ Non-seasonally adjusted.

¹¹ The Scottish Government (2016) *Labour Market monthly briefing summary tables – March 2016*, tables Y1 and Y2. Online: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Labour-Market/AnalyticalPapers/LM-Brief-Mar>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ NOMIS (2016) *Labour Market Profile: Scotland*, online: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/qr/2013265931/report.aspx?town=Scotland> [accessed: 11.07.2016]

¹⁴ Stats Wales (2016) *Annual Population Survey / Local Labour Force Survey: Summary of economic activity*, March 2016, <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Unemployment/ILO-Unemployment/ilounemploymentrates-by-welshlocalareas-year>

The economic inactivity rate¹⁵ for 16-24 year olds, excluding students, was 18.2% at the end of March 2016, lower than the overall economic inactivity rate of working age adults, which was 20.8%¹⁶.

There are also some regional differences in youth employment rates within Wales. At the end of December 2015, the average unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds was highest in South West Wales at 22.2%, followed by West Wales and the Valleys at 20.2% and South East Wales at 17.0%. North Wales had a 16-24 unemployment rate of 15.3%¹⁷.

A breakdown of the claimant count by age shows that 3.6%¹⁸ of 18-24 year olds were claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) in Wales in July 2016¹⁹. This was higher than the 2.8% of the total UK population of 18-24 year olds in the same period.

Although far from comprehensive, these data suggest that youth unemployment, economic activity and claimant counts vary considerably across the four UK nations. While Northern Ireland and Wales appeared to have the highest rates of youth unemployment, Scotland had a very high rate of economic inactivity amongst its 16-24 year olds. Northern Ireland also had the highest rate of young people claiming unemployment-related benefits. In comparison, England appeared to have the lowest rates of youth unemployment amongst the four nations, although this was still considerably higher than the overall unemployment rate for all working age adults in the UK.

¹⁵ Those classed as economically inactive as a percentage of the population aged 16-24

¹⁶ Stats Wales (2016) *Annual labour market summary (16 to 64) by Welsh local area and economic activity status*, Welsh Government, online: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Labour-Market-Summary/annuallabourmarketsummary16to64-by-welshlocalareas-economicactivitystatus> [accessed: 11.07.2016]

¹⁷ The data for Mid-Wales sample was too small to create an accurate unemployment rate.

¹⁸ % is number of persons claiming JSA as a proportion of resident population of the same age

¹⁹ NOMIS (2016) *Labour Market Profile: Wales*, Online: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/gor/2013265930/report.aspx?town=Wales#tabwab> [accessed: 11.07.2016]

Research on youth unemployment

In recent years, a range of research has explored youth unemployment and the factors which make it more or less likely that a young person will become unemployed in the UK. This section summarises the key findings of this research under three headings:

1. Education and training
2. Recruitment methods
3. Work experience

Education and training

A range of research papers have found a strong link between a young person's level of education and their likelihood of experiencing unemployment. For example, in 2015, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) published '*Empirical research on Youth Transitions to, and within, the labour market*'. This research found that young people who had extended their education, rather than entering work immediately after compulsory education, were less likely to be affected by unemployment, and made successful and sustainable transitions into the workplace in their mid-20s²⁰.

This confirmed earlier findings from BIS (2013) that the level of qualification a young person has achieved is a good predictor of future labour market success²¹. However, this research also found that centring labour market policies around training has historically had mixed results, with targeted, small scale, employment-focused programmes tending to be more successful at getting young people into employment²².

This finding was echoed by the UKCES in their 2015 publication, *Catch 22 16-24*, in which they argued that education and employment should be better linked to prepare young people for work, with employers taking a leading role in ensuring skill requirements for the UK economy are met through developing young people. They found that, while there is a general consensus that apprenticeships can meet the skills and experience needs of employers, there is still limited take up by employers and few offer apprenticeships²³.

²⁰ BIS (2015) '*Empirical research on Youth Transitions to, and within the labour market*', pdf: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/471319/BIS-15-612-empirical-research-on-youth-transitions-to-and-within-the-labour-market.pdf

²¹ BIS (2013) '*Youth Unemployment: Review of Training for Young People with Low Qualifications*', Pdf: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/70226/bis-13-608-youth-unemployment-review-of-training-for-young-people-with-low-qualifications.pdf, p5.

²² Ibid, p6.

²³ UKCES (2015) *Catch 22 16-24*, pdf. Available: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/404997/15.02.18_Youth_report_V17.pdf, p18

Recruitment methods

Existing research also suggests that the recruitment methods adopted by employers can affect young people's access to the labour market. For example, UKCES (2015) found that 'word of mouth' and personal recommendations remained the top recruitment method for UK employers when recruiting young people, with 24% recruited this way. This significantly restricts access to work to those with the 'right' networks²⁴.

In addition, UKCES (2015) found that employers tend to recruit young people to elementary and sales positions, and do not provide training for staff at these levels. This can lead to career stagnation, with many young people competing for low paid and insecure jobs²⁵. Therefore, even if a young person has the contacts needed to find employment, they may find themselves stuck in a cycle of low-paid, insecure work with little prospect for progression.

Work experience

Research consistently highlights a lack of work experience as a key issue which employers face when attempting to recruit young people. According to UKCES (2015), 66% of employers look for work experience in job applicants, compared to 49% who identified academic qualifications as important and 50% who looked for vocational qualifications. However, the same research found that work experience opportunities were not extensive or consistent across regions, even though this was the key area employers looked for in young job applicants. When looking at access to work experience, UKCES found that Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have the highest proportions of employers offering work experience opportunities, with most English regions (excepting London), lagging behind²⁶.

Previous research has suggested that, in order to address the lack of work experience amongst young people, there needs to be a balance of education and employment for young people, arguing that the evidence shows there are benefits to combining part-time work with education²⁷. In their international study looking at tackling youth unemployment, UKCES (2014) also argues for better access to high quality work experience opportunities and for employers to take the lead in promoting pathways for young people²⁸. This was the result of an analysis of a wide range of published data from Eurostat, OECD and the Office of National Statistics, from which UKCES drew out examples from other countries on youth employment policies.

Similarly, in 2015, BIS conducted research to explore the pathways mostly likely to support young people into work. They found that structural changes, such as the rise in youth

²⁴ Ibid, p16.

²⁵ Ibid, p6.

²⁶ Ibid, p11.

²⁷ Ibid, p18.

²⁸ Ibid, p19.

unemployment since the beginning of 1980s, have affected young people's transitions into the workplace²⁹. This research also concluded that work experience and education in the workplace significantly improved people's initial transitions into full employment, and had benefits which continued throughout life³⁰.

National Policy Responses

The UK government has developed a number of national policies and initiatives in an attempt to tackle rising youth unemployment. In *'Building Engagement, Building Futures: Our Strategy to maximise the Participation of 16-24 year Olds in Education, Training and work'* (December 2011)³¹, the UK Coalition Government set out priorities and strategies for supporting young people, including those at risk of disengagement, to succeed in learning and careers. The Coalition Government outlined 5 strategic priorities to tackle youth unemployment:

"Priority 1: Raising educational attainment in school and beyond to ensure that young people have the skills they need to compete in a global economy;

Priority 2: Helping local partners to provide effective and coordinated services that support all young people, including the most vulnerable, putting us on track to achieve full participation for 16-17 year olds by 2015;

Priority 3: Encouraging and incentivising employers to inspire and recruit young people by offering more high quality Apprenticeships and work experience places;

Priority 4: Ensuring that work pays and giving young people the personalised support they need to find it, through Universal Credit, the Work Programme and our Get Britain Working measures;

Priority 5: Putting in place a new Youth Contract worth almost £1 billion over the next three years to help get young people learning or earning before long term damage is done."³²

This strategy resulted in a number of national initiatives and policy responses aimed at reducing youth unemployment across the UK. This section will look at these UK-wide policy

²⁹ BIS (2015) *'Empirical research on Youth Transitions to, and within the labour market'*.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ HM Government (2011) *Building Engagement, Building Futures: Our Strategy to maximise the Participation of 16-24 year Olds in Education, Training and work*, pdf: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/300215/Building_Engagement_Building_Futures.pdf

³² Ibid.

responses and also explore those developed in to support young people in each of the UK nations.

Apprenticeships

This is a UK-wide policy agenda. Apprenticeships are full-time paid jobs which incorporate on and off the job training. A successful apprentice will receive a nationally recognised qualification on completion of their contract. Recognised apprenticeships are required to meet Government minimum standards, which include a minimum duration of 12 months, employed 30 hours a week, an English and maths requirement and include off the job training. Apprentices have the same rights as other employees and are entitled to be paid at least the apprentice rate of the national minimum wage³³.

The drive for more apprenticeships is based on the government's view of these programmes as an effective way of decreasing youth unemployment in the UK³⁴. In Germany, Austria and Norway, high quality, high volume apprenticeships have kept youth unemployment at very low levels despite the economic downturn, and the UK government is keen to replicate this approach. Apprenticeships are also viewed as a way of increasing the numbers of technical and professional skilled workers, hence the particular focus on increasing the number and quality of STEM apprenticeships.

The government is currently committed to achieving three million apprenticeship starts a year across the UK by 2020, and the Welfare Reform and Work Bill includes an obligation for the government to report on the progress towards this goal each year. Although apprenticeships are open to all ages, the government has introduced additional incentives for employers to recruit and train apprentices aged 16-24. Employers with less than 50 employees are able to get a grant of £1500 towards training an apprentice who is aged 16-24³⁵. This is offset against the Apprenticeship Levy which employers will have to pay from spring 2017, if their pay bill is more than £3 million³⁶.

Traineeships

Traineeships were introduced in August 2013 for people aged 16 to 24, and are primarily targeted at young people who:

³³ Jeanne Delebarre (2015) *Apprenticeships Policy, England 2015*, House of Commons Library, [pdf](#)

³⁴ HM Government (2015) *English Apprenticeships: Our 2020 Vision*, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482754/BIS-15-604-english-apprenticeships-our-2020-vision.pdf

³⁵ HM Government (2016) *Employing an apprentice*, online information: <https://www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice/employer-grants-apprentices> [accessed: 22/08/2016]

³⁶ Department for Education (2016) *Apprenticeship levy: how it will work*, online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work> [accessed: 22/08/2016]

- “Have little work experience and are not employed;
- are qualified below Level 3; and
- Could be ready for employment or an apprenticeship within six months”³⁷.

Traineeships are delivered as a partnership between employers and education and training providers³⁸. The programme can last between six weeks and six months and are comprised of a high quality work experience placement, work preparation training and English and maths provision, where appropriate. Employers are not required to pay trainees³⁹.

National Policy Response in England

Raising the education participation age to 18

In 2010 the Coalition Government confirmed the extension of the Education and Skills Act 2008 to 18 year olds⁴⁰. This policy was implemented in response to research which outlined the increase in successful transitions into full-time work for young people who extended their education or participated in work experience. Coming into effect in 2015, the requirement to be in “appropriate full-time education or training” applies to anyone who has ceased to be of compulsory school age but who has not yet reached the age of 18, and who has not attained a Level 3 qualification⁴¹. This means that 16-18 year olds must now either stay in full-time education, start an apprenticeship or traineeship, or work/volunteer part-time whilst in part-time education or training⁴².

Youth Contract Measures

The Youth Contract was an initiative which ran from September 2012 to March 2016. The aim of the programme was to engage young people who were hardest to reach and support

³⁷ DfE and BIS (2015) *Traineeships: Framework for delivery 2015-2016*:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/410737/Framework_for_delivery_2015-2016.pdf

³⁸ BIS (2015) *Traineeships: First Year Process Evaluation*. London: BIS

³⁹ DfE and BIS (2015) *Traineeships: Framework for delivery 2015-2016*, P30.

⁴⁰ HM Government (2011) *Building Engagement Building Futures*, pdf:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/300215/Building_Engagement_Building_Futures.pdf

⁴¹ Education and Skills Act 2008 London: HMSO [available online:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/part/1/chapter/1/crossheading/duty-to-participate-in-education-or-training>]

⁴² HM Government (2011) *2010 to 2015 government policy: young people*, pdf:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-young-people/2010-to-2015-government-policy-young-people#appendix-3-raising-the-participation-age>

them into education, training or a job with training⁴³. It was targeted at young people designated as NEET and who had either no qualifications or only one GCSE qualification, had been in custody or community service, or were a care leaver with one or more GCSE qualifications⁴⁴. The pilots were delivered nationally through a prime-contractor, based on a payment-by-results approach.

The Youth Contract supported young people at risk of becoming long-term NEET by providing: summer mentoring, help applying for financial support, help applying for learning and training, support using public transport links and other soft skills support, such as helping to deal with challenging family circumstances⁴⁵.

The main outcome looked for was sustained re-engagement in education or training for 5 out of 6 months. As of September 2013, 11,920 young people had started the national YC and 4,114 were recorded as initially re-engaged in a positive outcome, but only 489 had recorded sustained re-engagement⁴⁶. Final evaluation data is set to be published later in 2016.

National Policy Response in Northern Ireland

There are not many youth unemployment specific policies outside of the UK wide policy strategies in Northern Ireland, as their primary policy focus is cross-cultural reconciliation. However, they did introduce one initiative to tackle youth unemployment, called Youth Works.

Youth Works

Youth Works was an initiative funded by the International Fund for Ireland, through the *Sharing in Education* Programme, and was managed by the Youth Council for Northern Ireland on behalf of the Department of Education. Youth Works was designed as a 26-week programme, plus four weeks' follow-up mentoring support and was delivered nine times from September 2011 until it ended in December 2013.

The initiative sought to illustrate the value and impact of a youth work approach to engaging young people not in education, training or employment. It supported young people to gain recognised qualifications and improve their ability to gain long term employment, education and training⁴⁷.

⁴³ Gov (2016) *Youth Contract Provision: 16-17 year olds*. DWP.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-contract-16-and-17-year-olds/youth-contract-provision-16-and-17-year-olds>

⁴⁴ I Becci Newton, Stefan Speckesser, Vahé Nafilyan, Sue Maguire, David Devins & Tim Bickerstaffe (2014) *The Youth Contract for 16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training evaluation*.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p16

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Youth Council for Northern Ireland (2013) *Youth Works*, website:

<http://www.ycni.org/youthworks/youthworks.html>

One of the major focuses for this initiative was reconciliation and peace building exercises.

National Policy Response in Scotland

In 2014, the Scottish Government committed to its headline target to reduce youth unemployment by 40 per cent by 2021⁴⁸. In order to achieve this, the Scottish government introduced a number of policies which aimed to tackle youth unemployment.

Developing the young workforce – Scotland’s youth employment strategy

The Scottish government set up a Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce in 2013, which published its first report *Education Working for All!* in 2014. Its recommendations called for more effective joint working between schools, colleges, training providers and employers⁴⁹.

Focus on apprenticeships and vocational qualifications

Modern Apprenticeships⁵⁰ programme was set up in 2011, and aims to have 25,000 apprenticeship starts per year by 2020. Modern Apprenticeships are funded by the Skills Development Scotland, and are available in most sectors in Scotland⁵¹.

As part of their Youth Employment policy, Graduate Apprenticeships were also developed, providing up to Master’s degree level learning opportunities for employees⁵². The first Graduate Apprenticeships will start in the 2016/17 academic year, and focus on ICT/Digital, Civil Engineering and Engineering. They are intended as a route for individuals who are currently employed or have gone straight into work, to acquire academic accreditation⁵³.

Foundation Apprenticeships have also been developed in Scotland, in order to help young people gain work experience, and access work-based learning whilst still attending school⁵⁴. These apprenticeships offer the opportunity to gain industry-recognised qualifications and

⁴⁸ The Scottish Governments (2014) *Youth Employment: the strategy*, Scotland.

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/12/7750/2>

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Fiona Mullen, Camilla Kidner, Nicola Hudson and Scherie Nicol (2012) *Youth Employment: Policy*, Scottish Parliament, pdf: http://www.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB_12-20.pdf

⁵¹ Skills Development Scotland (2016) *Modern Apprenticeships*, online:

<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/our-products/modern-apprenticeships/>

⁵² Skills Development Scotland (2016) *Graduate Apprenticeships*, online:

<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/our-products/graduate-level-apprenticeships/>

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Skills Development Scotland (2016) *Foundation Apprenticeships*, online:

<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/our-products/foundation-apprenticeships/>

work experience. These are currently being rolled out across Scotland, with the hope that they become embedded in schools' offers by 2020⁵⁵.

Scotland also has a system of vocational qualifications that are informed by, and recognised by, employers across all sectors, underpinned by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)⁵⁶.

Youth Employment Fund

Aimed at unemployed 16-19 year olds, the Youth Employment Fund created recruitment incentives for employers who hire people from this age group. It provided financial support to employers for at least 26 weeks, which covered a minimum of half the salary costs at the National Minimum Wage (NMW). It ended in June 2015.

National Policy Response in Wales

Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

A key part of the Welsh Government's *Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012-2016* was a commitment to reduce the number of young people who were not in education, employment and training (NEET). New targets were set out in the plan to reduce the:

- "numbers of NEETs aged 16 to 18 to 9 per cent by 2017;
- proportion of young people aged 19 to 24 who are NEET in Wales relative to the UK as a whole by 2017"⁵⁷.

To implement these targets, the Welsh Government implemented the *Youth Engagement and Progression Framework*⁵⁸. This programme ran from 2013 until 2015. The framework followed six key areas, targeting NEET young people. Those areas aimed to:

- identify young people most at risk of disengagement;
- provide better brokerage and co-ordination of support;
- provide stronger tracking and transition of young people through the system;
- ensure provision meets the needs of young people;
- strengthen employability skills and opportunities for employment;

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Scottish Government (2014) *Youth Employment: the strategy*

⁵⁷ Welsh Government (2013) *Youth engagement and progression framework*, Welsh Government. http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/18502/13/130930-ye-framework-implementation-plan-en_Redacted.pdf

⁵⁸ Ibid.

- provide greater accountability for better outcomes for young people.

Two policy programmes were offered under this framework.

The first was the allocation of a single lead worker to the most at-risk young people, who was responsible for ensuring support was delivered in a joined up and coordinated way and met the young person's needs⁵⁹.

The second was the Youth Guarantee which provided an offer of a suitable place in education or training⁶⁰. This could include apprenticeships, traineeships, fulltime education, a volunteering opportunity or a place on a re-engagement programme.

Programmes to support young people into employment

Across the UK there are a range of programmes and initiatives which aim to tackle youth unemployment and support young people into sustainable work. The following table lists some of these programmes, giving a summary of their approach, any innovative aspects of their offer and their location and audience.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p6

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Programme Title	Summary	Innovation	Location/ Audience
16-24 Alliance	16-24 Alliance aims to create 50,000 new jobs for young people. It does this through creating work experience, employment and business opportunities, and building a network between educators and employers to aid the transition from education to work.	Runs a mixture of initiatives including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a pilot recruitment pilot in the North West region which created 120 new jobs for 16-24 year olds • created relationships with large UK employers to pool specifically for young people • Supported someone to set up a company designed as a learning company, which employs young people. 	UK
Barnardo's	Barnardo's runs a number of different employability programmes across England, including Barnardo's Progress, Barnardo's Works and Midlands on Track. Depending on the location, these are aimed at 16-24 year olds, who are unemployed.		England
Birmingham Children's Hospital ⁶¹ – Employability Programme	Employability Programme, specifically for young people aged 19-25 with learning difficulties, offers one day a week placements in areas such as facilities, therapies, secretarial support, fundraising, HR and neurosciences.	The hospital focus is quite innovative.	Birmingham – England Young people with Learning Difficulties

⁶¹ Birmingham Children's hospital also offers work experience, traineeships and apprenticeships.

Bridge to Employment – Department for Economics N.Ireland	Run by the Department for Economics in Northern Ireland, Bridge to Employment is a pre-employment training programme that helps companies recruit unemployed people. The scheme is open to anyone over the age of 18, who is unemployed or working less than 16 hours a week or on a zero-hour contract. The aim is to provide customised training to equip unemployed people with the skills they need to compete for employment opportunities.	Bridge to Employment programmes are run in response to employers with job vacancies. Training courses are tailored to meet the skill requirements of the job.	Northern Ireland – 18+
Bridges to Work Programme	Supported by Barclays, Bridges into Work is a programme which helps young people (16 – 24) into apprenticeships. Providing non-accredited learning and then supports participants throughout application, interviews and the first six months of an apprenticeship. They also set-up new apprenticeships for young people to access.	The interaction between actively setting up apprenticeships and offering additional learning for young people so they can access them, makes this a dual approach.	London
Careers and Enterprise Company – Enterprise Adviser Programme	Enterprise Advisers (EAs) are volunteers drawn from businesses who will work directly with the school's leadership team to develop effective employer engagement plans. They will work with other local businesses to equip young people with the skills they need.	The involvement of employers and creating networks between schools and employers.	
Creative Employment Programme – Closed in March 2016	<p>The Creative Employment Programme creates paid internships, apprenticeships and traineeships in arts and cultural organisations and gives young people the chance to gain experience in organisations local to where they live.</p> <p>Some of the programme's aims were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities across the arts, museums and library sectors 	Worked with the creative sector to establish paid work-placements.	<p>England – Only available to those who are registered unemployed and/or receiving unemployment related benefits.</p> <p>It was open to people aged 16-24 from all</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of paid interns in the sector, with a view to completely eradicating unpaid internships in the long term • Deliver work-focused training opportunities to 16-21 years old to help build their confidence and employability skills 		backgrounds, no matter their qualifications.
GET SET summer programmes in Belfast ⁶² – Youth Action	Opportunities for young people aged 16 – 24 years. Programmes are free and for young unemployed aged 16 – 24 year olds who need jobs, education or training. Programmes include training and support in interview skills, CVs, job applications and progression into jobs, further training and education. They formed around different sector themes, including construction and football coaching.	The construction course, for example, is a part - time course (2 days/week) running from June to August which builds young people’s practical skills for the construction industry. Qualifications in CSR, Manual Handling, First Aid at Work and a 2 – 3-week work placement in the construction industry through our partners.	Northern Ireland
Include Youth - Meant to Work	One-to-one mentoring service for 16-24 year olds which aims to help young people gain and sustain meaningful employment or access work-related courses. The Meant to Work team help young people gain employability skills, build a CV, research career options, fill in job application forms and prepare for job interviews.	Support and advice from career advisers.	Belfast – Northern Ireland
Invest in Renfrewshire - STEPS to Excellence	STEPS is a developmental programme delivered over one or two weeks. The programme aims to help young people find out what they are capable of achieving and provides them with the tools to make it happen.	Free crèche provision, mainly focuses on confidence and setting out goals.	Renfrewshire - Scotland

⁶² School summer holidays are June to August in Northern Ireland.

Invest in Renfrewshire - Positive Destinations (Age 16-19)	<p>Positive Destinations is a personal development course designed to help young people build their confidence and develop their employability skills.</p> <p>It helps to update their CV and learn how to succeed at interviews. The course is delivered in a four-week block at the Youth Employability Hub in Paisley.</p>	Mainly an employability course	Renfrewshire - Scotland
Jobcentre Plus in Schools	In 2016 Jobcentre support was rolled out to secondary schools in England. The initiative offers 12-18 insight into the world of work and provide advice on apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities.	It is taking the jobcentre to schools. But seems quite similar to what Connexions used to be. The advisers offer high quality work experience placements with employers.	England
Links4Life	The project works with a wide range of young people and support includes mentoring, wrap-around care, removal of barriers, regular interventions including support with education, training, employment and apprenticeships. We also work within local schools improving attendance and behaviour.	Mentoring and support provided is quite intensive, to support these young people.	Works with young people aged 14 – 19 years of age within the boroughs of Newham and Waltham Forest.
Northern Ireland Creative Employment Programme	Northern Ireland Creative Employment Programme is creating 100 paid apprenticeships and paid internships in arts and cultural organisations. Run by the same foundation as Creative Employment Programme England, This programme is funded up to March 2017.	They will fund any apprenticeship pathway that is relevant to the arts and cultural workforce. In Northern Ireland the available frameworks are: Live Events & Promotion, Technical Theatre (Stage, Light and Sound), Costume & Wardrobe, Cultural Venue Operations, Community Arts and Business Administration.	Northern Ireland - Young people from all backgrounds

Princes Trust – Get into	<p>Provides gain work experience and training in a specific sector. Focusing on employability skills to help young people move into a job after the course.</p> <p>Programmes run in a number of sectors - including retail, construction, logistics and hospitality – most of their time is spent training on the job and gaining work experience in their chosen sector.</p> <p>The courses are focused on sectors with high vacancy numbers.</p>	The sector specific training, and the fact that training is mostly in the workplace rather than in a classroom.	UK – NEET 16-24 – travel, lunch and child care costs are supported through the programme.
Princes Trust – Residential Team	A residential 12-week personal development programme, developing interview and employability skills, whilst also participating in community work, work experience and building English and Maths skills.	The residential aspect of this course is quite unique.	UK
Talent Match - London	<p>Talent Match London funded by The Big Lottery supports those young people facing the biggest barriers to gaining sustainable work. They offer employability skills as well as personalised one-to-one support.</p> <p>A 5 year, £10m programme.</p>	Talent Match has been designed by young people, in partnership with employers and the voluntary sector. They use a youth work approach to engaging with young people, using young people as ‘talent scouts’ to locate other young people who are then supported to find and stay in work.	Works intensively in specific London boroughs as well as across London on a less intensive scale.
The Recruit (Ages 16-24) – Invest in Renfrewshire	The Recruit is a council-run youth employment programme loosely based on TV’s The Apprentice. The programme sees 40 local young people take part in a series of challenges set by local businesses to improve their skills an	A series of challenges set by local businesses, with a chance of gaining employment. An ‘Apprentice’ style to	Renfrewshire - Scotland

	<p>individual and as part of a team, and include some practical training. Programmes run each summer and winter.</p> <p>Recruit candidates get a chance to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • network with industry leaders and develop a better understanding of business • have the chance to land a job, or a route into education or training • improve their job prospects, enhance their CV and develop interview skills 	<p>delivery, with a reward at the end for being the best recruit.</p>	
Urban Futures	<p>Urban Futures is a youth project designed to engage, motivate and enable young people aged 14-19 to stay in education, employment or training. It consists of tailored activities, mentoring support, skills training, financial and social incentives, and health, fitness and outdoor activities.</p>	<p>The intensive one-to-one support with additional skills and fitness training, makes this an interesting project.</p>	<p>London -participants are referred on to the project by organisations working with young people at risk of dropping out of education.</p>