

Navigating the complex journey into adulthood, young people in the UK.

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In 2011 the continuing effects of the 2008 recession and the Coalition Government's deficit reduction program shaped the economic and policy outlook of the UK.

The Foyer Federation is concerned about the effect of this outlook on young people in the UK; their opportunities for personal development and their journeys into adulthood. Many young people feel the current system penalises their generation with 67% of young people believing that government policy is biased against their age group.¹

The journey from dependent childhood into independent adulthood plays an important role in a young person's life and the society in which they live. On this journey young people pay their fare through individual agency and skills and social and community capital.²

To help navigate this increasingly complex journey, a holistic approach to supporting young people that utilises their own abilities, innovation and potential has been called for.³

Social mobility

The UK has one of the largest divides between the poorest 20% and the richest 20%, when measuring inequality the UK comes in fourth out of 23 of the world's richest countries.⁴ The gap appears to be getting wider, as measured by the Gini Coefficient, in 2007/08 and 2008/09 income inequality broke new records at its highest ever mark.⁵

The Joseph Rowntree report on the 'low pay, no pay' cycle explains how a succession of low paid; unskilled, insecure employments leave people in debt and without adequate experience, qualifications or training to move up the social ladder.

The comparison between the lives of the richest and the poorest is illustrated in The Spirit Level. In the slow lane, young people born into families in the higher socio-economic classes spend a long time in education and career training, putting off marriage and child bearing until they are established as successful adults. For young people on the fast track, truncated education often leads them into disjointed pattern of unemployment, low paid work and training schemes, rather than ordered, upward career trajectory.⁶

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report "the absence of society" suggests that young people will find it difficult to break free from the social confines in which

¹ *An Anatomy of Youth Demos 2010 Pages 12 and 34*

² *Life in all its fullness: YMCA 12 May 2010 page 8*

³ *An Anatomy of Youth Demos 2010 Page 14*

⁴ *The Spirit level / 2010 / page 17*

⁵ *State of the nation report poverty worklessness and welfare dependency in the UK, Iain Duncan Smith May 2010 Page 8*

⁶ *The spirit level - 2010 - page 125*

they were born. Whereas the upper classes do little or nothing at all to retain their superior condition, the lower classes can do little or nothing at all to improve on their inferior lot.⁷

The labour market

In May 2010 the new work and pension's secretary Iain Duncan Smith set out the government's position that "at the heart of this fight against poverty must be work".⁸ Despite high youth unemployment, low wages and low job satisfaction for many, most young people agree and want to work. 94% of young people, 16-18, believe that a job is the best route for someone to independence, 84% agree that having any job is better than being unemployed and only 22% believe that "benefits provide a more stable income than a wage".⁹

Every day young people are entering the UK's competitive labour market. Although many will flourish and be able to chart a career path that fulfils their needs and aspirations, many will struggle either to enter or advance in the market.

According to City & Guilds research many young people despite the appearance of choice have little control over what job they'll get. 29% of young people in work took the first job they were offered and 27% the only job they were offered.¹⁰

Demos, in conjunction with the Private Equity Foundation, have identified five *Employment Premiums*; qualities in many cases developed during school years and the transition into adulthood, which protect against unemployment and ease advances in the world of work. They are a character premium built by soft skills and personal development, a literacy and numeracy premium including confidence in using these skills, a work premium built by work experience, technical premium built by gaining subject specific qualifications or skills, and a graduate premium built by a degree or equivalent qualification.¹¹

Young people who enter the labour market at 16-18 years-old are more likely to end up in jobs without opportunities for training or progression. This type of work traps many young people in years of low wages and unstable employment, which degrades their quality of life and the opportunities for them to fulfil their potential.¹² Demos noted that even accounting for job scarcity during the recession there appears to be evidence of a cultural shift among employers against young people.¹³

This might be based on the belief that young people don't have the right attitude for work. In a City & Guilds study 41% of parents believed having the right mind set was the hardest thing about adapting to working life whereas only 10% of their

⁷ *The Absence of society - Joseph Rowntree Foundation - 2008*

⁸ *State of the nation report poverty worklessness and welfare dependency in the UK, Iain Duncan Smith May 2010*

⁹ *The Activities and Experiences of 18 year olds. DfE 2010 Page 58*

¹⁰ *New directions, City & Guilds 2011 Page 6*

¹¹ *The Forgotten Half Demos 2011 Page 37*

¹² *ibid Page 18*

¹³ *ibid Page 39*

children agreed. 60% of young people describe adapting to the new life style as the hardest part of adapting to working life whereas only 35% of their parents agreed.¹⁴

Many young people are poorly served by the school system as it focuses on academic results rather than employability and life skills. While many in the education sector have ambitions to move beyond this evidence shows they are hampered by lack of connections or experience to do so.¹⁵

It is not just young people's skills but the changing labour market that affects young people's employability opportunities. At the start of the twentieth century, there were few professional or managerial jobs. In 1911, only one in every fourteen jobs was professional. By 1951, this had risen to one in every eight jobs, and by 2001 to over one in every three.¹⁶ Some experts believe that up to nine in ten new jobs in future will be professional jobs; once retirements are taken into account the UK will need up to seven million new professionals in employment by 2020.¹⁷

Various national and local governments have tried developing a modern apprenticeship system. There remain concerns about the quality of and information for young people regarding this scheme as well as the extent of employer involvement. A telling statistic is the less than 1/3 of big UK companies offer apprenticeship schemes as opposed to 100% in Germany.¹⁸

Internships which provide many young people with routes into professions are similar in some respects to apprenticeships. However access is very unequal, internships are unregulated, often unadvertised and often unpaid. Some young people are increasingly resentful of the unpaid internship model which in some cases exploit their unpaid labour, block social mobility and lack meaningful training. It is predicted that as stories of this spread through social media many young people, including those without strong offline support networks, will demand an end to this and call for rightful remuneration. Employers should note the right of interns to sue for the minimum wage up to 6 years later in some cases.¹⁹

The National Union of Journalists has given evidence on the effect of unpaid internships on their profession. Of the 640 new journalists surveyed, more than 50% had completed post-qualification work experience 'with the majority of them receiving little if any payment for their work'. Of those who had material published or broadcast, 78% received no payment for their work and 25% said that the organisation they worked for would not be able to function normally without interns.²⁰

Problems with unpaid internships are slowly being acknowledged by politicians and business. Changes in the future might open professions such as politics, fashion and

¹⁴ *New directions, City & Guilds 2011* Page 28

¹⁵ *The Forgotten Half Demos 2011* Pages 19, 21 and 105

¹⁶ *Panel On Fair Access Final Report 2009* page 16

¹⁷ *ibid* page 5

¹⁸ *The Forgotten Half Demos 2011* Pages 88 and 176

¹⁹ *An Anatomy of Youth Demos 2010* Page 55

²⁰ *Panel On Fair Access Final Report 2009* - page 103

media to talented young people who cannot afford, or would not consider, the up to £500 a week living costs of an unpaid London internship.²¹

Furthermore 55-64 year-olds are increasingly likely to be in Labour Market employment. By contrast, there has been a substantial fall in the employment rates of 15-19-year-olds over the past 30 years, corresponding to the increased participation in full-time education of this age group²².

Demos suggest that older workers are more likely to be seeking part time work to give them flexibility in retirement. These could be the same part-time jobs that young people are pursuing while at school, or in their first attempts to gain work experience²³.

Unemployment

The latest figures for youth unemployment shows it is a startling 20.8 per cent the highest level since comparable records began in 1992²⁴. The percentage increase in unemployment between the beginning of 2007 and the beginning of 2009 was twice as high among 18-24-year-olds as the working age population²⁵.

In the future, Demos predicts 20% unemployment could become normal for 16-24 year-olds.²⁶ With deficiencies in skills and training and obstacles in the job market many predict a bleak future for young people in the labour market.

The most recent statistics put the number of NEET 18 to 24-year-olds in England at 18.4% up from 16.3% last year. Counting 16-25 year olds there are nearly one million NEET young people in the UK. The so called “NEET phenomenon” is increasingly influencing youth policy across a range of organizations.²⁷ Despite a range of policies over many governments and decades the number of young people who are NEET has fluctuated around a similar amount.²⁸

41% of young people who are NEET are “open to learning”, research by the Audit Commission suggests and their needs could be addressed with only “modest interventions”.²⁹

Early experience of unemployment have “scarring effects” on young people, research by the Foyers Federation has shown. Research by Demos and the Foyer

²¹ NOT ENOUGH CAPITAL? July 2011 RSA Projects Page 7, Panel Fair Access Final Report 2009 - page 103

²² Youth Labour's Lost / Demos / 2011 / page 32

²³ *ibid* page 33.

²⁴ *ibid* page 19 - Referencing ONS, 'Labour Market Statistics: Youth Unemployment', Office for National Statistics, www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labourmarket-statistics/september-2011/statistical-bulletin.html#tab-Youth-unemployment (accessed 6 Oct 2011).

²⁵ Youth Labour Lost / Demos / 2011 / page 19 - Referencing ONS, 'Labour Market Statistics Data Tables: Unemployment by age and duration', Office for National Statistics, www.ons.gov.uk:80/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/september-2011/index-of-data-tables.html#tab-Unemploymenttables (accessed 6 Oct 2011), table UNEM01.

²⁶ The Forgotten Half Demos 2011 Page 17

²⁷ BBC NEWS 26/08/2011

The Forgotten Half Demos 2011 Page 33

²⁸ Education and Skills Select Cttee report on NEETS April 2010 Page 9

²⁹ *ibid* Page 13, Quotes from Written evidence from the Audit Commission (NEET 13), paragraph 10

Federation suggests that investment in skills and education along with opportunities for young people in the Labour market is needed to prevent early and long term experience of unemployment.³⁰

Benefits

The benefits system is very important in either incentivising or discouraging work. Unfortunately it disadvantages young people. Benefits for young people are set and increasing at a very low rate, they fail to provide adequate support to avoid debt.

Evidence shows that the benefit system does not make it easy for young people to move away from a state of dependency and progress safely into independence. Even though start-up wages for young people are low, it is still enough to severely reduce benefits.

When a young person enters work their housing benefits are severely reduced. The formula used is that they lose 65% of their after-tax earnings that are over the amount they received on JSA + £5 a week. As young people receive a smaller JSA this means that their housing benefit is reduced more steeply than say a 26 year old.³¹

This system causes 70,000 families to face deduction rates over 90% when leaving unemployment benefits to enter work, for some low income families this means they keep as little as 5p for every extra pound they earn in wages.³²

Young people on benefits are more likely to have problems with numeracy and literacy skills.³³ This affects their budgeting skills making it more difficult, even scary, for young people to make decisions about living on benefits or moving to work.

Benefits usually cease the moment a claimant begins work but wages are paid monthly in arrears, leaving young people starting work with a month or more gap where they have no benefit or income.

If a problem arises with benefits, being underpaid or not paid at all, it can only usually be contested within one month.³⁴ This is particularly difficult for young people with poor literacy skills. They might lose benefits they're entitled to because of trouble dealing with the complaints procedure. Young people on benefits might get better advice from VCS organizations, who enjoy greater trust from young people who feel that state run services are against them.³⁵

Once young people turn 18 many of the adult rules on benefits apply though these are often paid at a reduced rate. Most 16 to 17 year olds are not entitled to any

³⁰ *The Forgotten Half Demos 2011 Page 53, drawing on All Areas, The Foyer Federation, 2010*

³¹ *What could make the difference? NVAS 2010 Page 11*

³² *State of the nation report poverty worklessness and welfare dependency in the UK, Iain Duncan Smith May 2010 Page 10*

³³ *The Forgotten Half Demos 2011 Pages 48 and 57*

³⁴ http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/your_money/benefits/young_people_and_benefits.htm

³⁵ http://www.turn2us.org.uk/information__resources/benefits/young_people.aspx

benefits, however there are confusing and complex rules regarding exceptions. Young people often need help with this, particularly those who don't live at home, lack stable homes, have left care or are continuing their education outside of an institutional setting e.g. on the job training. There is an assumption that 16-17 year olds are supported by their parents, however this support is often lacking or non-existent creating a grey area for vulnerable young people.³⁶

There are no reliable statistics on the number of young care leavers who claim benefits. Their numbers are estimated by statistics on care leavers entering further education or employment.³⁷ In England in 2009 26% or 1,600 care leavers were estimated to be NEET at age 19 and an estimated 4,800 young care leavers 18-21 were estimated to be claiming JSA.³⁸

Wealth and Debt

The debts many people feel driven into, along with the demographic distribution of wealth and debt disadvantage young people.

Demos reports that young people aged 18 years and older and in full-time education are more likely to be living away from home, less likely to be getting pocket money, and more likely to rely on a car for transport. With the abolishment of the educational maintenance allowance (EMA), financial pressures on this group may have increased further, underlining the importance of part-time work to supplement living costs.³⁹

The most recent comprehensive study on the subject was published, in 2010 by the ONS.⁴⁰ The ONS reveals the uneven distribution of wealth among different generations in Britain. Older households have the most property wealth and "Wealth-building starts early". In addition it showed that 83% of graduates own their homes as opposed to 52% of non-graduates.⁴¹

Households headed by 16 to 24 year olds were the least wealthy group. Although they had on average £37,600 worth of total wealth this was very unevenly distributed with half of all households owning £12,900 or less in 2006/08 and a quarter £3,500 or less.⁴²

20% of households headed by 16-24 year olds own property, the smallest proportion of any age group, the highest being the 55-64 year old group at 79%. The 16-24 year old group also had the lowest net property wealth.⁴³ This age group also had

³⁶ <http://www.youngsouthampton.org/youngpeople/advice/money/benefits.asp>

³⁷ *What could make the difference? NVAS 2010 Page 15*

³⁸ *ibid Page 16*

³⁹ *Youth Labour's Lost / Demos/ 2011/ page 23.*

⁴⁰ *Its data set was gathered before the recent recession which is therefore unaccounted for*

⁴¹ <http://www.lovemoney.com/news/property-and-mortgages/buying-and-selling-property/4425/the-truth-about-property-and-wealth-in-britain>

⁴² *Wealth in Great Britain Main Results from the Wealth and Assets Survey 2006/08 Office for National Statistics Edited by Chris Daffin 2009 Page 11*

⁴³ *ibid Pages 21-22*

the lowest physical wealth, on average £15,200.⁴⁴ As Alan Holmans⁴⁵ said in 2008 “Housing wealth is slowly but surely becoming more concentrated in the hands of older households”.⁴⁶

Non-mortgage borrowing is more common among younger households and peaks at 68% among households headed by 25-34 year olds.⁴⁷ As the age of the head of the household increases the likelihood of that household falling into arrears consistently decreases. This means that 16-24 year olds households are most likely to be in arrears, on at least 1 commitment, at 24%.⁴⁸

Although in absolute terms young people are in less debt than older people this debt represents a greater proportion of their income and is growing at twice the speed. Between 2004 and 2009 the average level of debt for young people nearly doubled.⁴⁹

Many young people have problems with managing debt. 7% have applied for credit in the knowledge they may not be able to afford it, 10% of young people have deliberately overestimated their income when applying for credit, likely in the hope their income will increase. The Money Trust has researched young people with debt problems and has found that “half attributed their debt problems to money mismanagement, while around four in ten thought that low income, having children and losing work were key factors”. Younger age groups are more likely to borrow money from friends and family to support their debts. However not all young people’s family and friends can support them in this way and if they do it can lead to strain on those relationships.⁵⁰

Many young people with good support networks, knowledge of debt issues and upwards social mobility are able to intelligently use credit facilities to help invest in their journey into adulthood. However bad debt can trap even the most competent of young people, it can exacerbate or be exacerbated by any of the other obstacles in their way. From forcing people out of training into low paid work to support payments or low pay leaving young people unable to meet payments, debt issues can cause depression and other poor health outcomes.⁵¹

Young people are increasingly living with and in a society with a “casual” attitude to high levels of personal debt, often driven by consumerism and stagnant or inadequate wages that exacerbate the cycle. Young people searching for identity or a way to solve issues of dissatisfaction are particularly prone to seeking materialistic responses, in some cases leading to a cycle of debt and low self

⁴⁴ *ibid* Page 44

⁴⁵ *From the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research*

⁴⁶ *Prospects for UK housing wealth and inheritance Alan Holmans July 2008 Page 2*

⁴⁷ *Wealth in Great Britain Main Results from the Wealth and Assets Survey 2006/08 Office for National Statistics Edited by Chris Daffin 2009 PAGE 71*

⁴⁸ *ibid* Page 79

⁴⁹

http://www.infohub.moneyadvicetrust.org/content_files/files/drowning_in_debt_07___young_people_6733_93921.pdf 2009

⁵⁰ *ibid*

⁵¹ *Life in all its fullness: YMCA 12 May 2010 and Demos An Anatomy of Youth 2010*

esteem.⁵² It is estimated that to live the life style young people expect, and equivalent to what their parent's generation took for granted, young people will need to earn 55% more.⁵³

The average adult in the UK is in £29,838 of debt. Both adults and young people have on average 6 debts each.⁵⁴ Society celebrates young people going to university despite the complex decisions this involves about debt. However getting into debt problems early in life can lock a young person into a longer cycle of issues. Young people who lack either the numeracy or literacy skills to understand debt agreements, or who lack a social network able to advise them, or who lack the knowledge or confidence needed to deal with creditors are all at increased risk. In addition young people's uncertainty over future earnings can cause even the most competent to over indebt themselves.⁵⁵

Education & Skills

Education is generally thought of as the main engine of social mobility in modern democracies; those with higher levels education earn more and have higher social status.⁵⁶ Different qualifications allow people to achieve significantly different wages, as measured by average wages per hour for:⁵⁷

- Those with no qualifications - £ 6.93
- Those with up to GCSE or equivalent - £ 8.68
- Up to A Level or equivalent - £ 10.00
- Up to HE participant or equivalent - £ 12.60
- Up to Degree or equivalent - £ 16.10

The education system “operates in a wider social and economic context” like that of many advanced capitalist democracies that context has changed “dramatically” over time.⁵⁸

Society seems to still have faith in the mantra that education is the *silver bullet* to social woes. Young people's formal and informal education is crucial to their development as individuals and members of society.

However poor quality courses, disengagement and financial constraints make it difficult for many young people to remain in or gain from education. A specific and clear example is the effect of withdrawing EMA.⁵⁹

Demos suggests that rather than simply feeding students' knowledge for them to reproduce in exams, schools need to focus on providing students with problem-

⁵² *ibid* Page 11, supported by research for the DCSF

⁵³ *Credit action Debt Facts and Figures - Compiled March 2011 Page 5*

⁵⁴ *ibid* Page 1

⁵⁵ *Life in all its fullness: YMCA 12 May 2010 and Demos An Anatomy of Youth 2010*

⁵⁶ *The spirit level/2010/page 161*

⁵⁷ *BBC NEWS*

⁵⁸ *The Wolf Report 2011, Page 24*

⁵⁹ *NOT ENOUGH CAPITAL? July 2011 RSA Projects Page 14*

solving skills and the capability to learn that allows them to adapt to different situations⁶⁰.

The resources invested in young people's education at a very early age will have a great influence on their transition into adulthood and the benefits they bring to their communities as adults. Every pound invested in programmes targeted at children with poor literacy and numeracy skills, such as the Every Child a Reader / Counter programmes, might return over £11-17 on that investment over a child's life.⁶¹ The Coalition Government has scrapped ring fencing for these programs.⁶²

At various stages during formal education young people and their families can choose what route to take; for example, choice of secondary school, choice of GCSE's or A 'levels. Increases in the diversity of educational options have benefited many young people.

But some have suffered from what could be classed as dishonesty in the advice given to young people about the value of different options. For young people from disadvantaged backgrounds without access to independent advice from their support network this makes it more difficult to pick a learning path that will best serve their life and career development.⁶³

Similarly Demos reported that employers felt that young people are getting poor quality advice education in school, and that guidance is not provided early enough to help young people make the decisions they need to prepare them for employment and apprenticeships⁶⁴.

74% of young people chose education subjects based on what they're interested, only 23% of young people in vocational courses chose their subject because it would help them get a job.⁶⁵

50% of young people will leave school or FE and not aim or succeed in moving, directly, to HE. This group has often received little attention, so much so that Demos and others have described them as a "*Forgotten Half*".⁶⁶ Changes to University funding and fees arrangements will increase both the numbers in this group and its disproportionate membership's from more disadvantaged backgrounds.⁶⁷ On October 24th 2011 it was announced that 64% of young people are definitely or slightly put off by the fees rise and two thirds would consider apprenticeships instead.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ *Youth Labour's Lost / Demos/ 2011/ page 30 referencing R Pring et al Education for All The Future of Training and Education for 14-19 year-olds, London: Routledge, 2009.*

⁶¹ *The Forgotten Half Demos 2011 Page 47, drawing on Sodha and Margo, Ex Curricula*

⁶² *ibid Page 163, drawing on Sodha and Margo, Ex Curricula*

⁶³ *NOT ENOUGH CAPITAL? July 2011 RSA Projects Page 16 drawing on Wolf 2011*

⁶⁴ *Youth Labour Lost / Demos/ 2011*

⁶⁵ *New directions, City & Guilds 2011 Page 5*

⁶⁶ *The Forgotten Half Demos 2011 Page 13 and 17*

⁶⁷ *ibid Page 32*

⁶⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-15392743>

Research by Demos and the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, indicate that despite the problems with access the HE system continues to aid the social mobility of many young people but that for a wider revival of social mobility there needs to be a better educational offer for the young people who do not go to university.⁶⁹ This offer needs to be based on a serious understanding of the changing labour market and the obstacles it has for young people's employment and advancement, including the disappearance of "stepping stone" or well-paid low-skill positions in many industries.⁷⁰ Without a reversal in this trend the RSA and others suggest young people will rely more on either VCS, state or community provision to gain the skills needed to develop their potential careers.

Schools have been encouraged to focus on academic success to such an extent that they have come to see preparing young people for university as their main job and not preparing the 50% who will take other routes. Demos suggest a cultural change could be achieved by schools and communities celebrating the achievement of young people as school leavers.⁷¹

Education providers cannot create jobs or social mobility alone; but research shows they have undeveloped capacity to work with young people, communities and employers to equip their generation with the skills they will need.⁷²

Given the different rates at which young people progress more provision needs to be provided for those past the age of 18, in developing key skills for the labour market and adult life. For example in Holland, a country with a fantastic record on youth unemployment, policies and services to employ and train young people extend up to age 27. There has been some effort on the part of government and public policy advisers in the UK to work around such strict age boundaries.⁷³

Young people who do not achieve qualifications at school will have little investment in personal development in later life, Demos reports that just 4% of those with no qualifications receive training, compared with 20% of those with degrees⁷⁴.

If young people miss out on English or Maths GCSE's at 16 "the system actively discourages" them from catching up in FE. Every year 300,000 18 year olds don't have the equivalent of a Maths or English GCSE.⁷⁵ This closes many future education options to them.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ *The Forgotten Half Demos 2011 Page 33*

⁷⁰ *ibid Pages 37 and 39*

⁷¹ *ibid Page 121*

⁷² *The Forgotten Half Demos 2011 Page 97*

⁷³ *Education and Skills Select Cttee report on NEETS April 2010 Pages 9 and 21*

YOUNG ADULTS TODAY Young People in Focus Ltd 2009 Page 3

⁷⁴ *Youth Labour Lost / Demos / 2011 / page 47/ referencing BIS, Returns to Intermediate and Low Level Vocational Qualifications.*

⁷⁵ *The Wolf Report 2011, Page 5*

⁷⁶ *ibid, Page 77*

The labour market structure makes on the job education difficult or unavailable to many young people. For underemployed young people with low skills the government has encouraged NVQ Level 1 and 2 courses.⁷⁷

NVQ Level 1 and 2 qualifications to have little to no benefit for young people, as measured by impact on future wages and time spent in employment as the main measure multiple analyses have shown.⁷⁸

In 2011 Alyson Wolf produced a comprehensive report into the state of vocational education, in England for the DFE, which may have lasting influence. The forward was written by The Secretary of Education Michael Gove and the Minister of Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning John Hayes.⁷⁹ She estimated that at any given time at least 350,000 young people between 16 and 19 are being let down by English vocational education, which fails to prepare them for progression.⁸⁰

Vocational training may help many young people gain the skills for employability and personal development. Young people on vocational courses are more likely than others to highly value practical skills, 37% to 29%.⁸¹

Research by City & Guilds shows that although most people know the term “vocational education” but did not have a good understanding of what it means.⁸² Vocational education for young people suffers from a range of misconceptions and negative images.

Young people on vocational qualifications might experience more confusion, as might future employers, than their academic qualification peers as the names and levels of vocational qualifications in England have been “serially” changed.⁸³

A City & Guilds survey asked young people in vocational and comparable young people in general education for their views on common views on the two. 78% of young people in the general education route and 66% of those in the vocational route agreed that universities prefer general education qualifications to vocational ones. 35% of young people in the general route and 25% of young people in the vocational route agree with the statement “You only do vocational qualifications if you can’t do A-levels/Highers”. And only 34% of young people in the general route and less than half, 48%, of young people in the vocational route agree with the statement “Vocational qualifications are as valuable as A-levels/Highers”.⁸⁴

⁷⁷ *The Forgotten Half Demos 2011*

⁷⁸ *ibid Page 33*

⁷⁹ *The Wolf Report 2011*

⁸⁰ *ibid, Page 21*

⁸¹ *New directions, City & Guilds 2011 Page 7*

⁸² *ibid Page 39*

⁸³ *The Wolf Report 2011, Page 73*

⁸⁴ *New directions, City & Guilds 2011 Page 44*

The vocational education system, where course providers are paid for young people completing courses rather than the value they give young learners helps create the “incentive to misinform”.⁸⁵

Parents with higher level qualifications are more likely to hold negative views about vocational qualifications and to believe it is unsuitable for their children.⁸⁶ However parent’s levels of qualification have little influence over how likely their children actually are to take vocational qualifications.⁸⁷

The aspiration of attending University is a key feature of the modern UK education system; among mothers of UK children born in 2000, 98% aspire for their children to go to university.⁸⁸

Many young people and their parents agree on ways to improve take-up and knowledge of vocational education. 52% of young people and 60% of their parents believe that work experience would help. 53% of young people and 59% of their parents believe that better information and advice would help.⁸⁹

Apprenticeships are a practical way of learning and gaining experience, leading independent apprenticeships, such as those at BT or Rolls-Royce are more oversubscribed than courses at the best universities.⁹⁰

Despite criticisms in the UK, international evidence suggests apprentice systems can be successfully reformed. Denmark’s education system was once similar to the UK’s in its academic focus but has successfully relaunched apprenticeships, 8% of young Danes are currently enrolled and the number is rising.⁹¹

However the Wolf Report explains how apprenticeships can be confusing and hard to regulate for young people, government and employers as the young person occupies the dual position of both student and worker.⁹²

⁸⁵ *The Wolf Report 2011, Page 94*

⁸⁶ *New directions, City & Guilds 2011 Page 8*

⁸⁷ *ibid Page 15*

⁸⁸ *The Wolf Report 2011, Page 24*

⁸⁹ *New directions, City & Guilds 2011Page 8*

⁹⁰ *The Wolf Report 2011, Page 4*

⁹¹ *ibid, Page 25*

⁹² *ibid, Page 124*

The family

“*The decline of the family*” has often been heralded. A JRF consultation recently identified it as a “social evil”, noting that family breakdown is more prevalent in marginalised groups.⁹³

Evidence from multiple disciplines shows that family is an important factor in the wellbeing and socialization of young people. Like many social institutions the pressure on and role of the family is changing.⁹⁴ However Demos argues that in these changes young people will continue to be one of the driving forces in the “ascent of new family values”.⁹⁵

As the transition into adulthood becomes more complex, young people are living with and dependent on their families support for longer. Conversely with an aging population young people are also contributing more to support within their family.⁹⁶ On many fronts the strength and social capital of family networks will become increasingly important to and linked to young people’s success.⁹⁷

If a child grows up in a household without an employed adult there is a 64% chance they will end up in poverty, whereas a child growing up in a household with 2 employed adults’ faces less than a 1% risk.⁹⁸ Studies have shown that children from low socio-economic backgrounds but with high cognitive ability at 22 months are overtaken by less able children from more affluent families between the ages of 5 and 10.⁹⁹ And a child who receives free school meals is only half as likely as one who does not to get 5 or more GCSE’s at grade A*-C.¹⁰⁰

It would be prejudicial to suggest that most young people do not have access to supportive parents and role models, research by Demos suggests they do. But for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds these parents and role models are likely to be a lower source of social capital.¹⁰¹ They are more likely to lack knowledge and experience, for example about which courses are most valued by employers. As one FE staff member said “Parents from certain backgrounds have a better understanding of how the system works, they have an awareness”.¹⁰²

Evidence shows that the higher the level of a parents’ education the more likely their children are to trust their advice on education and employment, 45% for parents with a Level 6 qualification verses 30% for those with Level 2.¹⁰³ Parents

⁹³ *What are today’s social evils? Joseph Rowntree Foundation Consultation Results 2007*

⁹⁴ *ibid*

⁹⁵ *An Anatomy of Youth Demos 2010 Pages 82-86*

⁹⁶ *ibid Pages 82-86*

⁹⁷ *An Anatomy of Youth Demos 2010 Pages 82-86*

⁹⁸ *State of the nation report poverty worklessness and welfare dependency in the UK, Iain Duncan Smith May 2010 Page 9, Based on data from Department for Work and Pensions, Households Below Average Income, 2008/09*

⁹⁹ *10 Melhuish, E., A literature review of the impact of early years provision on young children, 2004*

¹⁰⁰ *State of the nation report poverty worklessness and welfare dependency in the UK, Iain Duncan Smith May 2010 Page 12*

¹⁰¹ *NOT ENOUGH CAPITAL? July 2011 RSA Projects Pages 4 and 6*

¹⁰² *ibid Page 9 Based of focus group response by FE staff member in Leicester*

¹⁰³ *New directions, City & Guilds 2011 Page 6*

with lower levels of education are also less likely to feel confident advising their children. In a City & Guilds study 60% of parents were confident in giving their children such advice.¹⁰⁴ When asked about vocational education specifically only 37% of parents in the same survey were so confident.¹⁰⁵

This has a knock on effect on a young person's chance of receiving good advice on education and employment from other sources. 17% of young people whose parents were confident giving advice reported they got no advice from anyone, versus 32% for young people whose parents were not confident.¹⁰⁶

One in two children with parents who are professionals wants to pursue a professional career. Only one in six children from average family income backgrounds want to do the same.¹⁰⁷ Of all professions, doctors and lawyers are the occupations whose members typically grew up in the most affluent families.¹⁰⁸ The typical doctor or lawyer of the future will today be growing up in a family that is better off than five in six of all families in the UK.¹⁰⁹

As well as receiving support and care from their families many young people are themselves care providers for families. This, Demos suggests, is a result of teenage relationships, teenage birth rates and an aging population.¹¹⁰

By 18 years old 1% of young people are married or in civil partnerships and 46% are in a relationship, of these two groups 16% are living in the same house as their partner.¹¹¹ At age 16 1% of young people have children of their own, by age 17, 3% and by age 18, 4%.¹¹²

Each year almost 5 per cent of teenagers living in the poorest quarter of homes have a first baby, four times the rate in the richest quarter.¹¹³ It has been suggested that teenage motherhood is a choice that women make when they feel they have no other prospects for achieving the social credentials of adulthood.¹¹⁴

Currently the average age of women in the UK to have a first child is 29.5 years.¹¹⁵ Looking further back in history we find that in the mid 1930s the most usual age to have a first child was between the ages of 20 and 24, 430 first births per 1,000 women. The social issues research centre explains that the trend to leave motherhood until later in life is due to women's increased interest and success in the labour market but suggest that motherhood at the age of 20 is natural.¹¹⁶ It is

¹⁰⁴ *ibid* Page 6

¹⁰⁵ *ibid* Page 7

¹⁰⁶ *New directions, City & Guilds 2011* Page 19

¹⁰⁷ *Panel On Fair Access Final Report 2009 - page 7*

¹⁰⁸ *ibid* page

¹⁰⁹ *ibid* page 21

¹¹⁰ *See above*

¹¹¹ *The Activities and Experiences of 18 year olds. DfE 2010* Page 42

¹¹² *ibid* Page 42

¹¹³ *The spirit level/2010*/page 121

¹¹⁴ *S.Cater and L.Coleman / 'planned teenage pregnancy: views and experiences of young people from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds/ policy press for joseph Rowntree foundation/2006.*

¹¹⁵ *Office of national statistics 2010*

¹¹⁶ *The changing face of Motherhood SIRC 2011* Page 5

also possible that the lengthening transition into adulthood is responsible for society encouraging the change.

By age 18 more than a quarter of young people provided regular unpaid care for another child or adult.¹¹⁷ Young people who provide unpaid care were less likely than their peers to be in full time education at 18, by 36 to 48%, they were also more likely to be NEET at 18, by 23 to 13%.¹¹⁸

The picture is more complex for the significant minority of young people who do not have traditional or stable families to provide them with care and support. Excluding benefits and wages 54% of young people, 16-18, relied on their parents as their main source of income and 6% relied on informal loans from their family.¹¹⁹

Whereas most young people live in their family home at and beyond 18 and do not rely on benefits for income; research by the National Care Advisory Service shows that young people in care are more likely than their peers to leave home at 18 and have a “more abrupt transition to adulthood”.¹²⁰ Many local authorities are making efforts to allow young care leavers to continue living with foster families after 18. However this often falls under the heading of supported housing, requiring the young people to claim housing benefits and or pay rent. NCAS points out that this experience is in no way comparable with that of the majority of their peers.¹²¹

Communities

It has been suggested in “the spirit level” that mainstream politics has abandoned the attempt to provide a shared vision capable of inspiring us to create a better society. As voters, we have lost sight of any collective belief that society could be different. Instead of a better society, the only thing almost everybody strives for is to better their own position - as individuals - within the existing society.¹²²

However The Prime Ministers central domestic policy agenda “The Big Society” has included much rhetoric on the development and strengthening of communities.¹²³

There is a concern that disadvantaged communities will have difficulty in engaging with the big society agenda. The ability of the members of a community to come together and solve problems through informal processes is of significant value to the general wellbeing of that community. Yet the communities that would most benefit from collective efficiency are the ones that have the most difficulty in

¹¹⁷ *The Activities and Experiences of 18 year olds. DfE 2010 Page 43, it should be noted this does not take into account a definition of “regular”*

¹¹⁸ *The Activities and Experiences of 18 year olds. DfE 2010 Page 44*

¹¹⁹ *ibid Page 57*

¹²⁰ *What could make the difference? NVAS 2010 Page 2*

¹²¹ *ibid Page 14*

¹²² *The Spirit Level 2010 page 4*

¹²³ *Youth Tracker Issue 3 Spring 2010 Page 3, Quoting from Cameron, D., 2010. Big Society Speech. [http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/07/big-society-speech-53572*

developing it, for the exclusion and marginalisation they suffer becomes barriers to collective efficiency.¹²⁴

Furthermore, in 2011 alone the government has cut £110m from charities and public services squeezing provisions. Wealthier parents are able to purchase activities and access to institutions that can enhance children's personal and social development. However poorer groups do not have the purchasing power to access it. This means that many children and young people will lose out in relative terms of development.

Territorial behaviour has increased particularly in deprived urban cities with a year on year increase in serious youth violence by 4% and a 9.6% increase in knife crime.¹²⁵ The *Young People and Territoriality in British Cities* report explored the impact of territoriality and found that it limits mobility including access to leisure provisions and employment opportunities, risks personal safety and leads to criminalization. The report identifies diversionary activities as the key to defusing territorial behaviour, but such provisions are feared under threat in the current economic environment.

Image

Young people in the UK struggle to break free from the confines of labelling and stereotyping, often misrepresented, societies perception can become warped.

Demos reports on the labelling of young people as NEETs, The NEET category is now too broad and is defined Neet (unhelpfully) by what people are not doing (not working or taking part in education or training), rather than what they are doing. A 17-year-old with no GCSEs, no post-16 training and no job is counted as NEET alongside a 24-year-old with a degree, who is married and staying at home to look after his or her family. This broadness can lead to stigmatisation and bad policy.¹²⁶

Labelling and stereotyping affects the perception of society but worryingly affects young people's perception of themselves. The Spirit Level explains how performance and behaviour in an educational task can be profoundly affected by the way we feel we are seen and judged by others. When we expect to be viewed as inferior, our abilities seem to be diminished.¹²⁷

Young people become trapped by the idea that money is a measurement of a person's worth, that fame and glamour is most valued in our society. The Joseph Rowntree foundation suggests that the driving force of conduct is no longer the realistic desire to 'keep up with Joneses', but the nebulous idea of catching up with supermodels, premier league footballers and top-ten singers.¹²⁸ Consuming results in inclusion, but the inability to consume more is a sure recipe for

¹²⁴ *Freedom's Orphans/ raising youth in a changing world/2006*

¹²⁵ *The Gaurdian* - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/jul/29/gang-violence-rises-as-councils-cut-youth-services>

¹²⁶ *Lost Labours Youth / Demos/ 2011/ PAGE 12*

¹²⁷ *The spirit level - 2010 - page 113*

¹²⁸ *The absence of society - JRF - 2008*

exclusion.¹²⁹ This mostly unattainable lifestyle leaves young people feeling frustrated.

When young people are unable to attain such an image the consequences can be detrimental. Alain de Botton describes status anxiety as a worry so pernicious as to be capable of ruining extended stretches of our lives. When we fail to maintain our position in the societal hierarchy we are condemned to consider the successful with bitterness and ourselves with shame.¹³⁰

Dick Hebdidge explains how people turn to violence as a way of recovering control, the powerless try to hide their powerlessness in the dazzling light of power implying violence.¹³¹ However this behaviour only causes further disengagement from society.

LGBTQ

In 2005 it was estimated that LGBTQ people make up around 5% of the UK population, however this estimate is likely to be inaccurate and comparing to other international studies likely to underestimate the number¹³². With almost all data on LGBTQ young people it should be taken in mind that studies are often skewed in that they concentrate on young people who are open or aware of their sexuality.¹³³

Sexuality and gender are important parts of the human experience. Transitions to adulthood in various cultures have been marked by sexual mile stones, for example entering puberty or loss of virginity. Different journeys into adulthood are associated with different gender roles. For young people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered or Questioning¹³⁴ in a heteronormative society¹³⁵ this part of transition to adulthood may create its own unique challenges.¹³⁶ Similar challenges might be faced by heterosexual young people who do not conform to traditional gender roles.¹³⁷

It is the negative experience many LGBTQ young people find in a society which organises its services, economics and culture along heteronormative lines.¹³⁸ LGBTQ people are invisible in many services.¹³⁹

LGBTQ young people are a diverse group spread among all demographics of society, they share the same challenges and talents as their heterosexual peers, however

¹²⁹ *ibid*

¹³⁰ *The spirit level - 2010 - page 69*

¹³¹ *The absence of society - JRF - 2008*

¹³² *Supporting the Emotional Wellbeing of LGBTQ Young People, 42nd Street 2010 Page 3*

¹³³ *Social exclusion, IGLYO 2006 Page 230, See Rivers 1997*

¹³⁴ *Under different definitions of LGBTQ the letters LGB usually stand for the same thing, however T sometimes stands for transsexual and Q sometimes stands for queer*

¹³⁵ *Social exclusion, IGLYO 2006 Page 225*

¹³⁶ *ibid Page 224*

¹³⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT>

¹³⁸ *Supporting the Emotional Wellbeing of LGBTQ Young People, 42nd Street 2010 Page 11*

¹³⁹ *Housing, Homelessness and LGBT Young People, Factsheet, LGBT Youth Scotland 2008 Page 4*

might also “face particular health inequalities and challenges in getting their needs met”.¹⁴⁰

The LGBTQ experience of adolescence is different from the experience of LGBTQ adulthood; as young people are more reliant emotionally and economically on the family, peer, schools and community environments that might pressure heteronormatively.¹⁴¹

Stonewall, the UK's largest LGBTQ campaigning and research organization was founded in 1988 in response to the Section 28 of the Local Government Act which banned the so called “promotion” of homosexuality. More than 4 out of 5 teachers believed this meant homosexuality could not be mentioned in schools, following the repeal of Section 28 invisibility remains an important obstacle to young LGBTQ people.¹⁴²

In 2006 Stonewall conducted the largest survey of LGBTQ students in British schools ever, there were 1100 involved.¹⁴³ They found that 65% of LGB students have experienced homophobic bullying. In faith schools the number rises to 75% and students are less likely to report it.¹⁴⁴

In the study only 23% of young LGBTQ people had schools that explicitly stated homophobic bullying is wrong. In schools that did LGBTQ young people were 60% less likely to be bullied and nearly 70% more likely to feel safe in school.¹⁴⁵

Experiences of homophobic bullying can have knock on effects on a young LGBTQ person's transition into adulthood. 70% of people who suffer homophobic bullying state that bullying has had an impact on their school work and 50% have skipped school because of it.¹⁴⁶ Truancy behaviour has knock on effects and is correlated with a variety of negative outcomes in the lives of young people.¹⁴⁷

The time spent at school has a huge impact on a young person's transition into adulthood and formation of identity.¹⁴⁸ 98% of people hear the phrases “you're gay” or “that's so gay” used in school with negative connotations and other homophobic language is “commonplace”.¹⁴⁹ In addition school years can expose young people to negative and inaccurate information about LGBTQ issues, with possible negative health and person outcomes resulting.¹⁵⁰

Being LGBTQ has a complex relationship with homelessness.¹⁵¹ Many young LGBTQ people feel they need to leave home “anticipating rejection from family”¹⁵² and 1

¹⁴⁰ *Supporting the Emotional Wellbeing of LGBTQ Young People, 42nd Street 2010 Page 3*

¹⁴¹ *Social exclusion, IGLYO 2006 Page 228*

¹⁴² *The School Report, Stonewall 2007 Page 5*

¹⁴³ *ibid Page 5*

¹⁴⁴ *ibid Page 6*

¹⁴⁵ *ibid Pages 6-7*

¹⁴⁶ *ibid Pages 7 and 15*

¹⁴⁷ *See bellow*

¹⁴⁸ *Supporting the Emotional Wellbeing of LGBTQ Young People, 42nd Street 2010 Page 4*

¹⁴⁹ *The School Report, Stonewall 2007 Pages 6 and 8*

¹⁵⁰ *ibid Page 15*

¹⁵¹ *Housing, Homelessness and LGBT Young People, Factsheet, LGBT Youth Scotland 2008 Page 2*

in 10 LGBTQ young people are forced to leave home after coming out to parents.¹⁵³ Such negative family and peer reactions are also associated with a wide range of negative outcomes for LGBTQ young people.¹⁵⁴

“Abuse at home and bullying in schools is linked to homelessness in LGBTQ youth”.¹⁵⁵ Some believe that LGBTQ people are forming an increasing proportion of homeless and a variety of theories have been used to explain this.¹⁵⁶ Homeless LGBTQ young people have similar characteristics to other young homeless people but are more likely to come from care, disruptive and even abusive family backgrounds.¹⁵⁷ They are also more likely to be at risk of violence and or exploitation.¹⁵⁸

In 2010 42nd Street with the Foyer Federation produced a guide to aid Foyers in caring for their LGBTQ residents. Adolescence and young adulthood is when many LGBTQ young people become aware of their sexual or gender orientation and have their first experience of coming out, with men usually coming to this at an earlier age than women.¹⁵⁹ For some becoming aware of their orientation can itself be a confusing period of the transition into adulthood but in other cases young people are aware of and accept their orientation at a very early age.¹⁶⁰

Many LGBTQ young people view universities as an “escape” from discrimination and invisibility.¹⁶¹ This option is not open to LGBTQ young people who do not go to University; only 6% of schools have some sort of LGBTQ and friends’ supportive club or society¹⁶², compared to a large majority of UK public universities. For young LGBTQ people who do not go to university community youth LGBTQ clubs can also help.¹⁶³

LGBTQ people in lower level jobs are more likely to be young people and are more likely to move jobs because of homophobia than their more securely employed older LGBTQ peers.¹⁶⁴

With the LGBTQ group transsexual or transgendered young people might face their own challenges. Being more reliant, including economically, than older transgendered people on their families they may lack the resources or opportunity to express their gendered identity.

¹⁵² *ibid* Page 3

¹⁵³ *Supporting the Emotional Wellbeing of LGBTQ Young People, 42nd Street 2010* Page 9

¹⁵⁴ *ibid* Page 6

¹⁵⁵ *Out On My Own, Cull, Platzer and Balloch 2006* Page 3

¹⁵⁶ *Supporting the Emotional Wellbeing of LGBTQ Young People, 42nd Street 2010* Page 6

¹⁵⁷ *Out On My Own, Cull, Platzer and Balloch 2006* Page 2

¹⁵⁸ *Housing, Homelessness and LGBT Young People, Factsheet, LGBT Youth Scotland 2008* Page 3

¹⁵⁹ *Supporting the Emotional Wellbeing of LGBTQ Young People, 42nd Street 2010* Page 3

¹⁶⁰ *ibid* Page 6

¹⁶¹ *ibid* Page 8

¹⁶² *The School Report, Stonewall 2007* Page 15

¹⁶³ *Supporting the Emotional Wellbeing of LGBTQ Young People, 42nd Street 2010* Page 8

¹⁶⁴ *Beyond Recognition and Redistribution, Ryan-Flood 2004* Page 4

BME & Ethnicity

Cultural background can affect many if not all of the issues that aid or hinder a young person's transition into adulthood. BME or Black and Minority Ethnic young people are a hugely diverse group sharing many of the characteristics of their ethnic majority peers. Given this diversity looking at BME young people as a group has some benefits but also serious methodological flaws.

In the transition to adulthood it has been suggested that "BME young people are among the more vulnerable because of discrimination, unemployment, low wages and inadequate service provision".¹⁶⁵

The Race Equality Foundation has criticised the supported housing sector for its record on serving BME young people. However the foundation singles out Foyers for some praise in this area and some Foyers are "heavily used" by this group, for example in 2008 90% of Camberwell Foyer's residents were from BME backgrounds.¹⁶⁶

"Evidence suggests that BME young people are particularly vulnerable to homelessness because of the disproportionate numbers who face problems of debt, unemployment, family disputes and overcrowding".¹⁶⁷

In the crisis of affordable housing "BME young people, especially in London and the south-east, are disproportionately affected".¹⁶⁸ Among most young people demand for affordable housing is increasing, but there might be higher demand from "British Pakistani and Bangladeshi families, because of their youthful age structure and the high incidence of overcrowding".¹⁶⁹ "A common complaint is that landlords do not fully consider young BME people's specific cultural needs, or how these might differ from the older generation".¹⁷⁰

Evidence suggests that "housing managers and those giving support and advice to young people may still hold stereotyped views of BME" young people, their needs and preferences.¹⁷¹

The charity Centrepont suggests that Asian young people are more likely to make up the ranks of the "hidden homeless" living in more overcrowded unsuitable accommodation or sharing with friends.¹⁷²

Disabled BME young people may be particularly disadvantaged, for example "ethnic stereotypes mean that practitioners sometimes overestimate the willingness of

¹⁶⁵ Deborah Phillips A Race Equality Foundation Briefing Paper March 2008 Page 1, Harrison et al., 2005

¹⁶⁶ *ibid* Page 5

¹⁶⁷ *ibid* Page 5, Gervais and Rehman, 2005

¹⁶⁸ *ibid* Page 2

¹⁶⁹ *ibid* Page 2

¹⁷⁰ *ibid* Page 2 Harrison et al., 2005

¹⁷¹ *ibid* Page 3

¹⁷² *ibid* Page 5, Steele, 2002; Centrepont, 2005; ROTA, 2007

relatives to care for young disabled people, and thus misjudge the demand for supported housing from ethnic groups”.¹⁷³

Since the early 90’s “under-achievement” has “dominated” debate and research over BME young people in schools and early work experience. However it has now been suggested that “the concept is widely misunderstood and may now play a part in reproducing familiar stereotypes. It can lead to lowered expectations and self-fulfilling prophecies of failure. It may also shift responsibility away from the education system and onto students and their families”.¹⁷⁴

According to the Youth Cohort Study in 2004, the lowest levels of GCSE attainment were among Black Caribbean pupils, particularly boys. Only 27 per cent of Black Caribbean boys and 44 per cent of Black Caribbean girls achieved five or more A*-C GCSEs. Chinese pupils were the most likely to achieve five or more GCSE grades A*-C with 79 per cent of Chinese girls and 70 per cent of Chinese boys achieving this level.

Research suggests that educational achievement differences among ethnic groups can be mostly put down to their social economic background rather than specific ethnic group factors.¹⁷⁵ When adjusted for social economic background all major BME groups, with the exception of Black Caribbean, perform better than equivalent white pupils.¹⁷⁶ This suggests that overall BME school pupils are more resilient than their white peers in the face of social economic disadvantage.¹⁷⁷

However despite individual resilience BME young people may suffer obstacles in the education system. For example research has shown that “African and Caribbean students frequently experience relationships with white teachers which are characterised by relatively high levels of control and criticism” and “teachers often hold negative and patronising stereotypes about South Asian students, especially concerning the nature of their home communities and linguistic abilities”.¹⁷⁸ Black students are more likely than average to be excluded from school with knock on effects, and BME pupils are more likely than average to suffer bullying.¹⁷⁹

According to the EHRC children from BME and non English speaking backgrounds benefit most from pre-school education. However they are less likely to be involved in formal pre-school education, evidence suggest this is linked to lower employment rates among women and larger family sizes in BME communities.¹⁸⁰

BME children are particularly disadvantaged in the care system; for example “black children took on average over 50 per cent longer to be placed for adoption than

¹⁷³ *ibid* Page 4, JRF, 2002

¹⁷⁴ *Black and Ethnic Minority Young People and Educational Disadvantage by The Runnymede Trust*

¹⁷⁵ *Early Years EHRC 2008 Page 22*

¹⁷⁶ *ibid* Page 23

¹⁷⁷ *ibid* Page 23

¹⁷⁸ *ibid* Page 26

¹⁷⁹ *ibid* Page 26

¹⁸⁰ *ibid* Pages 20-21

children from other ethnic groups”.¹⁸¹ Banardo’s and other groups have criticised a “fixation” on race and ethnicity in the care system, where BME children might be held back from adoption because there are no families available from matching ethnic backgrounds.¹⁸²

There is evidence that BME people suffer disadvantage in the labour market, even adjusting for other factors such as social economic background.¹⁸³ There are well documented and significant differences between ethnic groups’ employment rates which furthermore differ greatly across genders.¹⁸⁴

Women from ethnic minorities are much less likely to be employed than white women. For example, in 2004 although 68.3 per cent of men of Bangladeshi origin are economically active, only 26.8 per cent of Bangladeshi women are similarly employed. This has a huge financial impact on Bangladeshi and Pakistani families; half have incomes 50 per cent below the national average income.

Ethnic minorities are more likely to become victims of crime; in 2002/3 46 per cent of adults of Mixed race had been the victim of crime in the previous 12 months. In 1999, racially motivated incidents represented 12 per cent of all crime against minority ethnic people compared with 2 per cent of white people.

Health

The Adolescent Health in the UK Today report believes that policy often fails to take account of the great differences in health needs among the age groups covered by “children”, “adolescents” or “young people”.¹⁸⁵

The report explains how young people get shorter consultation times with GP’s, perhaps as a result of poor GP training on dealing with young people or young people not knowing what questions to ask or concerns over judgment and privacy.¹⁸⁶

Poor mental health is still stigmatised in the UK despite being a common issue with Mind reporting that 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in any given year.¹⁸⁷

In the UK 9.6% or nearly 850,000 young people between 6 and 16 years old have a mental health disorder, nearly 80,000 such young people are seriously depressed and around 195,000 have an anxiety disorder.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸¹ <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a0074754/breaking-down-barriers-to-adoption>

¹⁸² *ibid*

¹⁸³ *Early Years EHRC 2008 Page iv*

¹⁸⁴ *ibid Page 27*

¹⁸⁵ *Adolescent health in the UK today, AYPH 2001 Page 1*

¹⁸⁶ *ibid Page 2, drawing on Macfarlane and MacPherson, 2007*

¹⁸⁷ http://www.mind.org.uk/help/research_and_policy/statistics_1_how_common_is_mental_distress#1in4

¹⁸⁸ <http://www.youngminds.org.uk/professionals/policy-and-knowledge/statistical-information/statistics-on-children-and-young-people-with-mental-health-problems>

Good mental health is essential for a young person's successful transition to adulthood, the NHS identifies susceptible groups as homeless, offenders and those with poor housing conditions,¹⁸⁹ but leading mental health charity Mind have criticized mental health provisions for long waiting lists which often leave people in crisis.¹⁹⁰

The "Adolescent Health in the UK Today" report explains how many young people engage in behaviour that risks their long term health. Current trends on health risks for young people show that; teen pregnancies, suicides among young men, smoking and cannabis use are all coming down, while levels of mental health problems seem to remain the same. However trends show that STI infections are increasing among young people along with obesity rates, alcohol use and other long term conditions. STI infections may in fact not be rising but being better screened. The UK Youth Parliament has found that "over 90% of young people want better sex and relationships education".¹⁹¹

The education level young people achieve is the single biggest correlated factor in whether they will be involved in teenage conception. The UK has made steady progress on its worryingly high levels of teenage pregnancy and on the care for teenage parents. Between 1998 and 2009 there has been an 18.1% decrease in the under 18 conception rate and a 15% decrease in the rates for under 16. It is likely that the government will miss the 1999 target of halving teenage conceptions by 2010.¹⁹²

The Adolescent health in the UK Today reports that poverty and inequality with families and young people are the biggest factors correlated with poor health outcomes and high health risk behaviours for young people.¹⁹³

Poverty has a significant impact on disadvantaged young people, with the authors of the Spirit Level stating that richer people tend, on average, to be healthier and happier than poorer people in the same society.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Mental-health/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

¹⁹⁰ http://www.mind.org.uk/campaigns_and_issues/we_need_to_talk

¹⁹¹ Adolescent health in the UK today, AYPH 2001 Pages 2 - 3

¹⁹² http://www.ncb.org.uk/sef/evidence/data_and_statistics.aspx and ONS 2011

¹⁹³ Adolescent health in the UK today, AYPH 2001 Page 5

¹⁹⁴ The spirit level /2010 /page 13

Housing

1,247 people are without a shelter on any given night in England, according to official figures the 2010 count for rough sleepers. This is the lowest total count since the current methodology was introduced in 1988. Figures also show that currently the amount of households in temporary accommodation such as hostels and bedsits have decreased to 48,330 down by 4% in 2010.

There is a significant overlap between homelessness and other social issues such as substance misuse and mental health problems. Worryingly the median age in which people first experience these issues is at a young age with median ages predominantly ranging between 17 and 28. This would suggest that young people are most vulnerable to homelessness.¹⁹⁵

It has been suggested that homelessness is closely linked to a range of various social issues such as substance misuse, mental health issues and financial issues all of which were first experienced at a young age with median ages usually ranging from 17-28 years of age.¹⁹⁶

Low-income households are struggling to cope in increasingly competitive housing markets. At the time of writing, according to figures released by LSL Property Services, the average cost of renting increased by 0.7 per cent to £718 pounds per month.¹⁹⁷ In the previous 12 months rents have increased by 4.3 per cent, considering the 2.5% increase in VAT and rising food and energy prices, independence is increasingly expensive.¹⁹⁸

These costs make it difficult for a young person to either embark or maintain a smooth transition to independence. Private properties to rent are not only costly but have a tendency to be in a poorer condition if paying a lower rent. Many lower income employed households may ultimately be able to buy and pay for their own housing. However without the adequate support they will find it difficult to live independently and save to ensure a secure and sustainable future.¹⁹⁹

Alternatively, while the gap between the cost of rent for social and private housing closes, the standard of housing has improved. Since April 2010; the Decent Homes Standard has been a regulatory requirement for social landlords. It has significantly improved the standard of all social homes. In 1997, there were 2.1 million houses owned by local authorities and housing associations that did not meet the Decent Homes Standard. By the end of 2010, 92 per cent of social housing met the standard of being warm and weatherproof with reasonably modern facilities.²⁰⁰

The needs of young people in social housing can be far more complex, services are available to cope with young people's deficits such as unemployment yet there are

¹⁹⁵ *Tackling homelessness and exclusion - understanding complex lives - JRF - 2011*

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁹⁷ *LSL Property Services PLC / <http://www.lslps.co.uk/>*

¹⁹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹⁹ *The Joseph Rowntree foundation*

²⁰⁰ *ibid*

few services available that build on young person's assets allowing them not to just survive and cope but to build and thrive.

Geographic's

In the UK a young person's location can have a huge impact on employment opportunities. The UK economy is heavily reliant on London which as a result attracts the most investment. By some measures the UK has the highest regional inequality of any OECD country.²⁰¹

Data from the Office for National Statistics shows that 50% of all jobs in the Greater London region are professional, rising to over 75% in central London and the City. This compares to less than 33% of jobs in the North East and fewer than 20% in some local areas.²⁰² In Liverpool almost 40% of jobs are in the public sector compared to 22% in London.²⁰³

Demos reports that the Coalition Government's commitment to reducing the size of the public sector will particularly hit the north of England, where state expenditure can contribute in excess of 50 per cent of local GDP²⁰⁴.

Unemployment benefit in the UK varies widely by region; the benefit claimant count is far less concentrated in the South East and South West of England than elsewhere in the country²⁰⁵. A cut to the public sector is likely to result in a further increase in benefit claimants in the north of England.

Similarly young people living in rural areas face barriers compared to their urban counterparts. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reports that the more remote the area, the greater the extra expense. To afford a minimum standard of living, a single person needs to earn at least, £15,600 a year in a rural town, £17,900 a year in a village, £18,600 in a hamlet or the remote countryside; in comparison urban dwellers need £14,400²⁰⁶.

However with low pay more common in rural areas, many rural workers fall well short of being able to afford their essential needs²⁰⁷, pushing people into poverty. Services can be difficult to access, employment lacks variety and moving to an urban areas is far too costly, leaving young people with limited opportunities.

²⁰¹ <http://www.economist.com/node/18332806> <http://www.economist.com/node/18332880>

²⁰² Panel Fair Access Final Report 2009 - page 102

²⁰³ <http://www.economist.com/node/18332880>

²⁰⁴ Youth labour lost/ demos/2011

²⁰⁵ *ibid*

²⁰⁶ Country life: Tougher to make ends meet/jrf/2010

²⁰⁷ *ibid*

Offending

Young people growing up are increasingly affected by, victims of, or stigmatised by issues around youth offending. 34%, a significant minority of Foyer residents come from offending backgrounds.²⁰⁸

*“A punitive approach to youth justice has developed in Britain in tandem with political rhetoric about the threats posed by children who are said to be beyond the control of their families, schools and communities; rhetoric which both reflects and reinforces public anxiety about offending and anti-social behaviour perpetrated by the youngest members of our society.”*²⁰⁹ Quote from the Prison Reform Trust

The government in England and Wales spends an estimated £3.4 billion a year dealing with anti-social behavior and this behaviour has become a concern of both the public, government and research. Research by the Audit Commission shows that such public debate focuses on adults’ views of young people, but that young people have their own concerns about and are often victims of anti-social behaviour. This was illustrated in the Audit Commission’s 2009 study on activities believed to prevent anti-social behaviour in young people, 8-19 years old.²¹⁰ It showed that the image of young people “hanging around” is associated with anti-social behavior and concerns 31% of adults.²¹¹ When questioned about hanging around 8 out of 10 young people say they do it to socialise cheaply. Only 2% of young people questioned believe this behavior to be anti-social.²¹²

It should be remembered that the “vast majority” of children and young people will never commit a crime or come into contact with the youth justice system.²¹³ However, every year around 70,000 new school-age children enter the youth justice system.²¹⁴ On average at any given time 2-3,000 children are likely to be in custodial-remand or serving custodial sentences in England and Wales.²¹⁵

In 2010 CIVITAS gathered data from multiple sources to produce a factsheet of youth crime in England and Wales. Youth crime is defined as crime perpetrated by individuals between the age of criminal responsibility and the age of majority i.e. 10-18 year olds.²¹⁶ England and Wales have more under 18’s in custody as a percentage of the population than any other European country besides Turkey.

²⁰⁸ Foyer Federation Consultation response to “Ministry of Justice Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders”

²⁰⁹ Punishing Disadvantage a profile of children in custody, Prison Reform Trust 2010 Page ix

²¹⁰ Tired of hanging around. Audit Commission 2009 Page 7

²¹¹ *ibid* Page 14, Based on data from the Home Office, Youth Net and the British Youth Council, Ipsos MORI, and Audit Commission

²¹² Tired of hanging around. Audit Commission 2009 Page 2

²¹³ FACTSHEET- Youth Crime in England and Wales CIVITAS Institute for the Study of Civil Society 2010, Lara Natale Page 10, <http://www.99percent.org.uk/>

²¹⁴ *ibid* Page 2

²¹⁵ Punishing Disadvantage a profile of children in custody, Prison Reform Trust 2010 Page vii

²¹⁶ Gathering specific data on the age range 16-25 which the Foyer Federation focuses on is difficult because of this definition.

Despite a small reduction before 2010, likely an anomaly given current trends, between 1990 and 2010 the number of 14-17 year olds in custody doubled.²¹⁷ There exists no evidence from any crime survey over this period to suggest a correlating increase in the rates or seriousness of youth crime.²¹⁸

In 2010 The Prison Reform Trust published the most comprehensive study of youth custody in 25 years. It is based on the amalgamation of openly available statistics on the subject and a detailed study of a 200 strong representative group of children in youth custody.²¹⁹ This representative group were assessed on 30 common factors seen to indicate disadvantage. Around 80% of the children had 5 or more disadvantage factors, one child in the survey had 19, and only 1 did not have a single disadvantage factor.²²⁰

A representative sample of children in custody showed they were 6 times more likely than their peers to have a Statement of special educational needs.²²¹ In research from the Prison Reform Trust the most common diagnosed mental disorder among incarcerated children was ADHD, however they acknowledge this masks the true level of undiagnosed mental illness, which might go unreported in up to half of all cases. A more comprehensive study of offenders aged 13-8 revealed 31% suffered from depression.²²²

Children in custody are almost 4 times more likely (13to51%) than their peers to come from deprived households.²²³ Although family problems are highly correlated with a child's likelihood of being put into custody the Prison Reform Trust reminds us that many children from stable and supportive homes are also at risk.²²⁴ Social networks are also important; in one survey of imprisoned children 70% reported that their main group of peers were involved in criminality.²²⁵

Victimization and offending are highly correlated, that means children and young people who are victimised including victims of crime are themselves statistically more likely to offend.²²⁶ 25% of boys and 40% of girls in custody report experiencing violence at home.²²⁷ 12% of incarcerated children in one study had been victims of bereavement before their offence.²²⁸

Boys aged 15-17 are 18 times more likely to commit suicide in custody than in their communities and between 1990 and 2010 30 children died in custody accounting

²¹⁷ FACTSHEET- Youth Crime in England and Wales CIVITAS Institute for the Study of Civil Society 2010, Lara Natale Page 2. With additional data from Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour.

²¹⁸ *ibid* 10

²¹⁹ Punishing Disadvantage a profile of children in custody, Prison Reform Trust 2010 Page 6

²²⁰ *ibid* Page 72

²²¹ *ibid* Page 62, original data from DCSF as of January 2009

²²² *ibid* Page 68 Original research from Harrington, R. and Bailey, S. 2005 Mental Health Needs and Effectiveness of Provision for Young Offenders in Custody and Community. London: Youth Justice Board

²²³ *ibid* Page 52, original data from DCSF in 2009 based on whether or not the child was entitled to free school meals

²²⁴ *ibid* Page 54

²²⁵ *ibid* Page 61

²²⁶ FACTSHEET- Youth Crime in England and Wales CIVITAS Institute for the Study of Civil Society 2010, Lara Natale Page 11

²²⁷ *ibid* Page 9

²²⁸ Punishing Disadvantage a profile of children in custody, Prison Reform Trust 2010 Page iv

for all causes.²²⁹ In general children in custody have worse health outcomes over a range of indicators than their peers.²³⁰ “Girls in custody appear to have particularly poor health”.²³¹ An HM Prisons report in 2007 revealed that 69% of girls in custody self-harmed.²³²

The Prison Reform Trust has revealed that; 91% of children sentenced to custody are boys. 72% are white, 10% black, 6% mixed race and 4% Asian, 8% are listed as other or have no ethnicity recorded. 83% of the children are serving their sentences in young offender institutions, 11% in secure training centres, and 7% in secure children’s homes.²³³ 45% of children in custody were 17 and 76% were 16 or 17 in 2010, at that time there were no 10 or 11 year olds in custody.²³⁴ It is poor young men from disadvantaged neighbourhoods who are most likely to be both victims and perpetrators of violence.²³⁵

In 2004 68.6% of children released from prison were reconvicted within 1 year, this compares for example young adult men 75% of whom are reconvicted within 2 years of leaving prison.²³⁶ The average sentence of a young person at a Young Offender’s institute costs £42,000.²³⁷ It costs up to £100,000 a year to jail a young offender and society will likely absorb a further £40,000 cost on average over that individual’s life after release, given their increased likelihood of unemployment or reoffending. To give a young person a Community Rehabilitation Order for a year has only 3% of the equivalent direct costs, £3,000.²³⁸

Youth offender’s courts have a statutory duty to show “regard to the welfare” of the children they try.²³⁹ Yet research by the Prison Reform Trust suggests that many children are being sent to Young Offender’s institutions for repeated minor offences.²⁴⁰ In addition the courts are sentencing children to inappropriate Young Offenders Institutes, for example in May 2009 40% of 15-17 year olds were sent to institutions more than 50 miles from home.²⁴¹

The overuse of custodial remand for children is indicated by the “large majority” of children held on remand that are later acquitted or sentenced to non-custodial sentences by the courts.²⁴² Furthermore the Prison Reform Trust has uncovered evidence which “suggests the courts are making decisions about remand on the

²²⁹ *FACTSHEET- Youth Crime in England and Wales CIVITAS Institute for the Study of Civil Society 2010, Lara Natale Page 9*

²³⁰ *Punishing Disadvantage a profile of children in custody, Prison Reform Trust 2010 Page 5, original data from Brooker, C. and Fox, C. 2009 Health needs assessment of children in secure settings in the East Midlands, University of Lincoln*

²³¹ *Punishing Disadvantage a profile of children in custody, Prison Reform Trust 2010 Page 5*

²³² *ibid Page 5*

²³³ *ibid Page 14*

²³⁴ *ibid Page 13*

²³⁵ *The spirit level/ 2010/ page 132*

²³⁶ *FACTSHEET- Youth Crime in England and Wales CIVITAS Institute for the Study of Civil Society 2010, Lara Natale Page 7*

²³⁷ *ibid Page 3*

²³⁸ *ibid Page 3*

²³⁹ *Punishing Disadvantage a profile of children in custody, Prison Reform Trust 2010 Page xi*

²⁴⁰ *ibid Pages vii-viii*

²⁴¹ *FACTSHEET- Youth Crime in England and Wales CIVITAS Institute for the Study of Civil Society 2010, Lara Natale Page 9*

²⁴² *Punishing Disadvantage a profile of children in custody, Prison Reform Trust 2010 Page 9*

basis of very limited information”.²⁴³ There have even been cases where custodial remand has been used for children because they do not have suitable accommodation to be bailed to.²⁴⁴

A study from Homeless Link in 2011 showed that four in five ex-offenders who are homeless are reconvicted within a year.²⁴⁵ Barnardo’s research in 2011 discovered that an ex-young offender who becomes caught in a cycle of homelessness and re-offending can cost the government up to £116,094 over three years. However if money was instead invested in support and accommodation for ex-young offenders it could save the government more than £67,000 of that sum.²⁴⁶

When looking at rates of criminal activity reported by young people verses demographic breakdowns of convictions a key disparity emerges. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are significantly more likely to be caught if involved in crime.²⁴⁷

Open Talent

Research into effective youth services by the YMCA suggests that although political support exists from many sides for a more holistic version of young people services and personal development, this has failed to transfer into widespread policy and investment.²⁴⁸ With all areas of social spending under strain, following increased unemployment and the deficit reduction plan, young people’s services need to be assessed and funded according to an evidence based and holistic assessment of their outcomes.²⁴⁹

The YMCA argues that there is a growing consensus such a model should be based on building young people’s resilience, self-esteem and involvement not their deficiencies²⁵⁰. This is the Foyer’s Open Talent Campaign approach.

While this report has painted a rather grim picture of the challenges facing young people in their journey into adulthood we recognise that many young people with a little help can flourish along this journey what path they take. A realistic understanding of these obstacles should also celebrate the wide abilities young people have found to overcome them. The Open Talent campaign aims to do just that.

²⁴³ *ibid* Page 38

²⁴⁴ *ibid* Page 43

²⁴⁵ <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/homelessness-bodies-look-to-address-reoffending/6517861.article>

²⁴⁶ <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/6513861.article>

²⁴⁷ FACTSHEET- Youth Crime in England and Wales CIVITAS Institute for the Study of Civil Society 2010, Lara Natale Page 10

²⁴⁸ *Life in all its fullness: YMCA* 12 May 2010

²⁴⁹ *ibid* Pages 19 and 33

²⁵⁰ *ibid* Page 4