

Positive for Youth

What it means for
business and other employers

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Introduction

Positive for Youth is a new approach to cross-Government policy for young people aged 13-19 in England.

It brings together the work of all relevant government departments into a single vision for how all parts of society – including councils, schools, charities and businesses – can work more closely together to help all young people realise their potential.

This means supporting them and their families so that all young people develop a sense of belonging and the supportive relationships, strong ambitions, and good opportunities they need to succeed.

It has been developed through extensive consultation collaboration with young people and a wide range of other people that work with or support them, including a number of business leaders who support projects with young people.

Context

Young people can be creative and enterprising. Yet, the current global economic situation has created concern among many of today's teenagers about their future – particularly their future employment prospects.

Employers are concerned about many young people's work readiness, particularly in relation to their personal and social development. This includes skills and qualities such as the ability to manage behaviours, make decisions, and build relationships.

Young people may also have unrealistic expectations of the world of work. Yet time in the workplace and positive role models can be inspiring for many young people, including many who do not thrive in education.

Success in education is crucial to young people's success in life. The Government is working to drive up standards in schools so that all young people master the basics of literacy and numeracy and a challenging curriculum. Their experiences outside the classroom at home and in their community are also crucial in helping them form and pursue their ambitions.

An increasing number of businesses see a robust business case for building partnerships with voluntary organisations to support young people. Innovative projects are showing how this can improve both the quality and sustainability of community-based work with young people.

But many businesses report that it is hard to engage effectively with local and national youth charities and with local government.

The Positive for Youth vision

Positive for Youth aims to set out a way forward. It sets out the principles of what a good local system of support for young people looks like, focusing on the importance of strong cross-sector partnerships. It:

- emphasises the importance of young people's personal and social development to educational, employment, and other long term outcomes – and the role of services such as youth work in supporting this development;
- recognises that parents, carers and families have the primary responsibility and influence to support young people, and encourages services for young people to support them and take them more into account;
- recognises the role of employers and individual employees in inspiring and motivating young people to realise their potential;
- highlights how businesses can help promote positive images of young people to help overcome prevailing negative stereotypes;
- recognises that businesses can play a vital role in helping young people into employment, including through offering apprenticeships, work experience, or other opportunities for work-based learning; and
- encourages more business to come forward to support community-led work with young people.

Addressing youth unemployment

The Government has announced a new Youth Contract, worth almost £1 billion.

This will support vulnerable 16 to 17 year olds in England to re-engage in education or training and provide subsidised jobs or work experience to 410,000 18-24 year olds over the next three years.

In addition, the Government has

- set out reforms to target Apprenticeships more on young adults, ensure consistently high quality across all Apprenticeships, and cut back on bureaucracy to encourage more employers to join the programme;
- launched a consultation on programmes of study for 16 to 18 year olds, including a vision that work experience should become an important part of many 16 to 18 year olds' experience in school or college;
- published a short myth busting guide on work experience and will invest £4.5 million over the next two years to support work experience as part of post-16 learning; and
- following the Wolf review, begun to transform vocational education to ensure that vocational qualifications are high quality and enable progression to higher education and sustainable employment.

Greater business engagement

To encourage more businesses to support young people, the Government is:

- providing funding of £320,000 over the period to March 2013 to a consortium led by Business in the Community to broker the engagement of more businesses to support charities' work with young people;
- working with the Education and Employers Taskforce on *Inspiring the Future*, a new programme to get up to 100,000 people from all sectors and professions into schools and colleges to talk about their jobs and career routes;
- supporting the *Speakers for Schools* initiative which aims to give state schools access to high profile inspirational speakers who will speak in schools for free;
- promoting a Business Compact on social mobility setting out practical ways businesses can avoid talent and ability going to waste and ensure that young people from all backgrounds have a fair chance to get ahead.

The Government is funding the capital costs of 63 Myplace youth centres to be hubs for a wide range of activities and services for young people. It is also developing and piloting National Citizen Service to offer 16 year olds a challenging personal and social development experience and an opportunity for social action in their communities. Both Myplace and National Citizen Service present opportunities for businesses and other employers to get involved in innovative partnership-based approaches to supporting young people.

Monitoring progress

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families has met regularly a group of leading businesses to discuss business engagement with young people and the youth sector.

The Government will continue to work with businesses as well with young people and others to review progress in realising the *Positive for Youth* vision and in improving outcomes for young people.

It will publish an audit of overall progress at the end of 2012.

Further Information

Positive for Youth can be downloaded from the Department for Education's website at www.education.gov.uk/positiveforyouth. An executive summary is also available.

Case Studies

Positive for Youth contains a number of case studies. The following examples may be of particular interest to businesses.

A business leader supporting local young people

“It was a big decision when I agreed to Chair the board of the Blackburn Youth Zone, but it was inconceivable for this £5m myplace-funded project to go ahead without the support of local businesses. My experience has been helping my 65 year old family firm become a world class wall decoration business – so there was a little trepidation. But I wanted to do more than run a company, I wanted to reverse the decline in the town where my business operates and where I grew up. Two years in, I regard this decision as one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. A number of other local business leaders have joined the board and together we have raised a staggering £1.5m of revenue funding from local businesses. But a greater achievement is the sense of pride that is spreading across the whole town. There is no better way to invest in our communities than by investing in young people. Giving money is important, getting involved and offering leadership are even more important. I and the other board members are honoured to have this opportunity to inspire our young people to achieve levels of success that they are perhaps not aware they are capable of.” Andrew Graham, CEO, Graham & Brown.

Business-led support for young people

In April of 2011 Starbucks launched a three year youth investment programme called Starbucks Youth Action in 10 cities across the UK and Ireland. The programme inspires and encourages young people between the ages of 16-24 to make a difference in their own communities by applying for seed funding and volunteer hours from Starbucks partners (employees).

As well as supporting young people to bring to life the projects that mean the most to them, the programme also offers them training – delivered in England by UK Youth. After the training, the young people pitch their ideas to a panel of local policymakers, youth leaders and Starbucks partners in a Dragon’s Den style. Giving the young people this opportunity to talk about their ideas has been a highlight demonstrating their passion and commitment. This process builds a relationship between the local Starbucks team and the young people. Decisions are made on the day and successful projects receive a share of the £10,000 Starbucks has invested in each city.

At the end of the first year, over 50 youth-led projects have been supported including projects to introduce beehives into an inner-city park in Manchester, tackle cyber-bullies in Cardiff, and support cheerleaders in Kensington

The programme brings benefits to both young people and Starbucks. Young people are getting support to make their communities better places to be. And Starbucks is increasing the engagement of its employees, 47% of whom are between the ages of 16 and 24, who are highly supportive of the programme which is also helping local stores to be more relevant to their communities.