

# Young People and Work Report: Call for Evidence

## Draft Call for Evidence

### 1. Introduction

In November 2025 the Government commissioned the Right Honourable Alan Milburn to author a report that will seek to:

- understand the drivers of the increase in the number of young people who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET), including those claiming health and disability benefits and childhood experiences.
- investigate the root causes of this rise in economic inactivity among disabled young people and those with health conditions.
- make recommendations for policy responses aimed at increasing opportunities for young people.

The Report will be taken forward in two distinct phases:

1. A discovery phase which will provide a diagnosis on the increase in the number of young people, including disabled people and those with a health condition who are NEET.
2. A solution phase which will identify potential areas for reform.

## 2. Background and trends

Too many young people are being denied the opportunity secure the benefits of good work due to being unable to further their education, skills, or career. For young people, the impact can last a lifetime: lost confidence, lost opportunity and, for some, more than £1m in lost earnings. Spending time unemployed under the age of 23 has been linked to lower wages even two decades later. This is a long-running structural challenge which has worsened in recent years.

Nearly one million young people - approximately one in eight young people aged 16 to 24 - are not in education, employment or training (NEET). They could fill Wembley Stadium more than 10 times over. This is a rise of over 200,000 since 2022.

The proportion of people who are NEET is around double those of Japan or Ireland and 3 times the rate of the Netherlands.

Most young people who are NEET are economically inactive, meaning they are not looking and able to start work. 60% of young people who are NEET – 580,000 young people – are economically inactive: up from 55% and 476,000 in 2015.

In England, in 2024 those who are NEET were estimated to be nearly twice as likely to have a health condition (51%) compared to the overall 16 to 24-year-old population (27%). The proportion of young NEET people in England with a mental health condition in 2024 is

estimated to be nearly two and half times the rate in 2012, 19% compared with 8%.

The number of young people receiving health-related benefits, specifically Universal Credit Health and Employment and Support Allowance, has soared by more than 50% over the past five years, reaching 239,000. 4 in 5 of those with a recorded condition on Universal Credit Health are claiming due to mental health issues or neurodevelopmental conditions.

There are varied perspectives on the primary factors driving these trends. Debated influences include recent changes in the labour market, the impact of social and technological developments, poverty and inequality, as well as shifts within the benefits system, among others.

Addressing this challenge requires a fresh approach. It is essential to consider not only education, skills, and training, but also the roles of employers, the healthcare system, and the benefits system. By examining each of these areas, we can better understand the current situation and identify new ways to help young people secure quality employment opportunities.

### **3. Call for Evidence**

This Call for Evidence seeks evidence and insight from anyone with relevant lived experience, knowledge and expertise to inform the discovery phase. We are particularly keen to hear from:

- Young people with lived experience of not being in employment, education, or training.

- Young disabled people and people with health conditions.
- Parents and carers for young people.
- Employers.
- Frontline services that support young people
- Trade Unions.
- Academics and think-tanks.
- Employment, education, health and careers providers.

We are looking for evidence and insight to answer two questions:

1. What is stopping more young people from participating in employment, education or training?
2. What would make the biggest difference to support more young people to participate?

In answering these questions we are, among others, interested in evidence and insight on the impacts of:

- The changing nature of the labour market and work
- Any changes in the aspirations and attitudes of young people and employers
- Changes in health trends (particularly mental health and neuro-developmental conditions)
- The alignment between the skills and experience young people have and those that employers are seeking

- The benefits and employment support systems
- Transition points between different elements of the benefits, employment, health, education and skills systems
- Childhood factors
- Community and place

Alongside this call for evidence, we will be undertaking a wide range of proactive activities to ensure we directly hear from young people about their lived experiences.

## **How to submit your evidence**

Please submit your evidence to [youngpeopleandwork.report@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:youngpeopleandwork.report@dwp.gov.uk) by Friday 30th January to ensure that your evidence can be analysed and fed into the report.





