

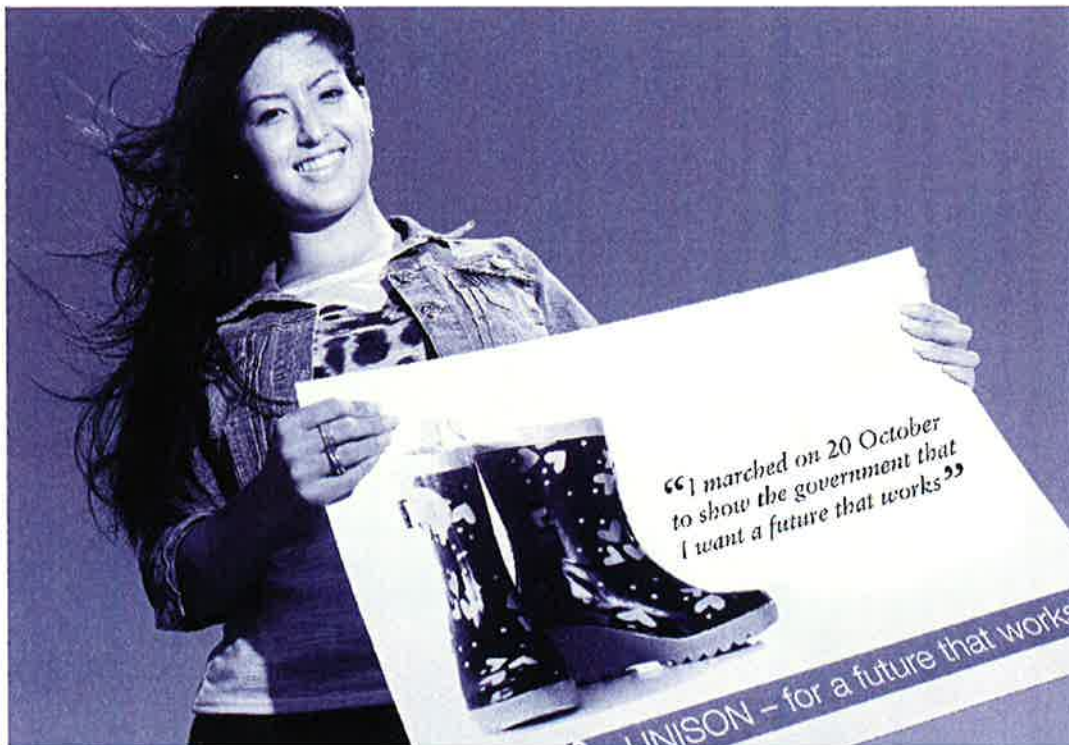


# a better start for young people

the **UNISON** agenda



UNISON is worried that the damage done to young people as a result of cuts to their services, job opportunities and financial support is being ignored.



“Young people are taking a disproportionate hit from the Con-Dem government’s austerity agenda. We should be investing in our young people through education and training, and providing decent jobs.



Instead they are being consigned to unemployment, workfare, or insecure work with low pay and little or no protection. UNISON’s young members welcome the publication of *A Better Start for Young People*, which sets out our trade union’s positive vision of how young people should be supported if we are going to resuscitate our economy and offer them real hope for the future.”

Cara Wedlock  
Chair, national young members’ forum



“Public service cuts threaten the teaching assistants who deliver ‘catch-up’ programmes to struggling pupils, youth workers who reach estranged young people through informal methods of engagement and careers staff who play a fundamental part in supporting them into work. The long-term impact of the diminution of these services will be to increase the number of young people who fail.”

Dave Prentis  
UNISON general  
secretary

## Young people – the damage

With 1.4 million members, UNISON represents staff who deliver a wide range of services to young people across the UK. Seventy-five thousand of our members are young people aged 16 to 26.

We are deeply concerned about the comprehensive assault on key services and benefits affecting young people's wellbeing, health, development, employment and education. Since the change of government in May 2010 we have seen:

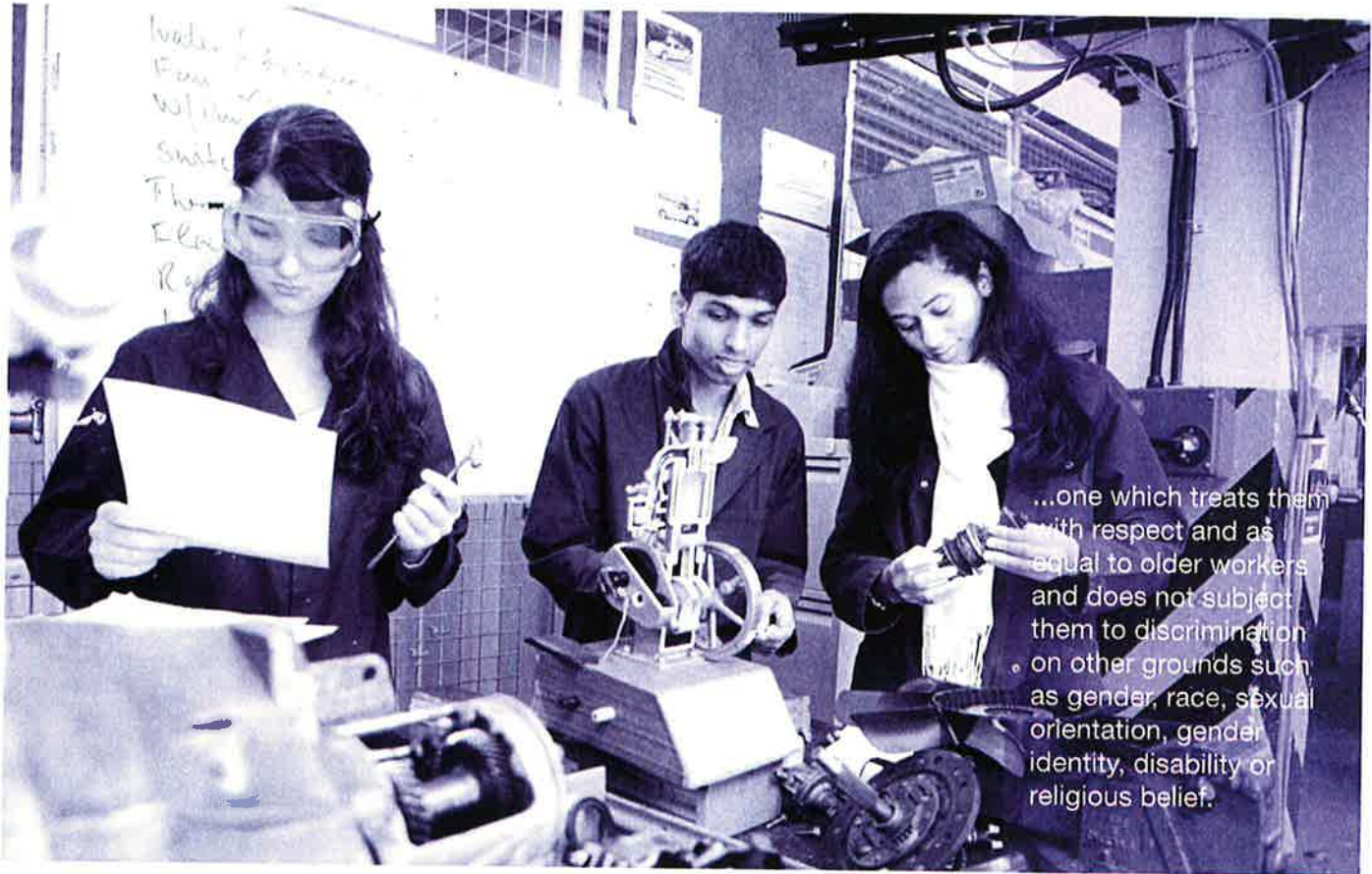
- the education maintenance allowance scrapped;
- the Connexions careers service axed;
- the future jobs fund abolished;
- tuition fees escalate;
- youth services close;
- transport costs rise;
- Sure Start funding cut;
- school buildings maintenance money withdrawn;
- housing benefit entitlements reduced;
- widespread unemployment;
- the prospect of working longer for a poorer pension.

UNISON is worried that the damage done to young people as a result of cuts to their services, job opportunities and financial support is being ignored. This reminds young people of their powerlessness in our democracy and how little they are valued. The cuts also risk creating a lost generation; they could have a negative impact on society, the economy and the future of our young people.

UNISON wants a better start for our young people. In this document we set out our vision.

## A note on devolution

All these changes have been happening in England. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have separate legislative and administrative systems and while services in the devolved nations are similarly under attack it has not been to the extent seen in England. For example, the devolved nations have retained the education maintenance allowance and resisted an increase in tuition fees. Some services such as Connexions and Sure Start are specific to England.



...one which treats them with respect and as equal to older workers and does not subject them to discrimination on other grounds such as gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or religious belief.

## Young people – UNISON's vision

UNISON believes society must invest in young people to support them as they develop so that they can take on more and greater responsibilities. Investing in young people means society providing them with education, health services, employment, affordable housing, transport, food and fuel.

It is also about society recognising the importance of employment for young people through real jobs and a range of employment opportunities. Youth unemployment stands at around one million (about one in five of 16-24-year-olds) with Black youth unemployment running at around twice the rate of their white counterparts. The way to build our economy and repair damaged communities is to provide proper employment and to pay people a decent wage for socially worthwhile jobs.

## Young people and society

UNISON believes that all young people must be given the opportunity to work in decently paid, secure jobs, which offer the prospect of development and advancement. Young people's labour is a crucial part of winning a sustainable economy – one which treats them with respect and as equal to older workers and does not subject them to discrimination on other grounds such as gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or religious belief.

Young people should have employment that:

- is secure;
- pays a living wage (which includes the deferred pay of a decent pension);
- provides for education, training, and development opportunities;
- is supported through high quality, negotiated apprenticeships and internships;
- has unionised workforces.

## Young people and age discrimination

UNISON believes that there should be effective, enforceable legislation that protects young people against age discrimination. We want to see an end to:

- age bandings in the national minimum wage;
- age-based payment systems;
- age bandings in statutory redundancy provisions;
- age-based discrimination in the benefits system.

UNISON is also concerned that the gender pay gap starts young. Trades Union Congress research indicates that 46.9% of apprentices are young women. However they are concentrated in the lower paying occupations and industries. The result is that the gender pay gap for apprentices is bigger than for employees.

## Young people and democracy

UNISON believes that the government must commit to ensuring that adults show young people that their voice matters and that their opinions count. Our youth parliaments need to play a greater role and every local authority should have a youth engagement body, playing an active role in shaping and scrutinising policies affecting young people. Young people should have the right to participate in electoral systems and referenda from the age of 16.

Schools should not just be a place for young people to learn how to pass exams. It is equally important for young people to have the space to understand the world they live in and their place within it. Only then can they see themselves as people



who can make the world a better place. Schools have a vital role in equipping young people to make informed decisions and in helping them to understand their place in the local, national and global community.

UNISON thinks there should be compulsory informal sessions on personal and social development, which should include identity, citizenship, society and cultures. School inspections should look at how individual development is encouraged and how young people work together within the school community and beyond.

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## Young people and compulsory education

UNISON believes that education is the engine of economic success, as well as a major vehicle for tackling inequality, delivering social justice and maintaining a stable and fulfilled society. It is the path into work and a tool for career advancement and personal development. Unemployment rates are nearly twice as high for people with no qualifications; they are likely to earn 10% less than others. There are nearly one million young people

who are not in education, employment or training. They are most likely to face long-term unemployment, receive low pay and be vulnerable to depression and other conditions associated with disadvantage.

The government's strategy for England relies on its school reforms, which it believes will improve the quality of teaching and free teachers to intervene and prevent failure. UNISON does not see how they will deliver a consistent approach to tackling low attainment. Far from focusing on attainment, academies and free schools will be disproportionately occupied with procuring support services and balancing the books.

UNISON believes that all young people should be safe to learn. Many young people experience homophobic and transphobic bullying in education. As schools move away from local authority accountability and faith schools increase, equality standards are at risk. The evaluation of schools' effectiveness in promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination should be an integral part of the inspection process.

UNISON thinks that education and other sectors should work together coherently with shared concepts of knowledge, skill and achievement. Rather than retaining a class-based division between education and training, all types of learning should be valued equally and as an economic and social priority. For example, high quality in-class support and more informal youth services should help tackle the problems that limit achievement together. Joint research by the CfBT Education Trust and the National Youth Agency for England found that 90% of senior youth service managers thought integrated services had provided better advice and guidance and improved access to positive activities for young people.

In England, the Education Act 2011 places schools under a duty to secure access to independent careers guidance for pupils in school years 9-11. This applies to secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units. Academies and free schools will be subject to the same requirements through their funding agreements. Careers guidance secured under the new duty must be presented in an impartial manner, include information on the full range of post-16 education or training options, including apprenticeships, and promote the best interests of the pupils. Local authorities will retain their duty to encourage, enable or assist young people's participation in education or training. They will be required to help the most vulnerable young people and those at risk of disengaging with education or work. Local authorities are also expected to have arrangements in place to ensure that 16- and 17-year-olds receive an offer of a suitable place in post-16 education or training, and that they are assisted to take up a place. This will become increasingly important as the participation age is raised.

UNISON recommends that schools are encouraged to procure collectively a careers advice service that is co-ordinated by local authorities. A collective approach is preferable to individual bids. This will lead to efficiency benefits and ensure consistency and coherence in the quality of careers advice given to schools. It will also benefit careers professionals as it will promote stability and consistency within the profession. In Scotland there is a similar emphasis through the My World of Work web services.

Local authorities must continue to provide vulnerable young people with support as part of their statutory duties to encourage, enable and assist the participation of young people in education or training. In practice, this would include support for those with statements. Schools are expected to work closely with local

authorities to identify and refer those young people who need targeted support.

## Young people and supporting parents and families

UNISON believes that growing up in a loving environment has a massive impact on life chances. Domestic arrangements in the UK are now very diverse. There are a large number of single parents, dual earner households and dispersed extended families. Today children grow up in environments where there is a significant social and cultural mix.

Research by the Children's Society indicates that regardless of context, it is the quality of relationships that are paramount to the wellbeing of children and young people. Factors such as poverty, disability, learning challenges and bullying have a negative impact. UNISON considers the seeds of underachievement to be sown early in life. There is a consensus that early intervention is the best course of action and Sure Start and children's centres are an invaluable source of support, which should not be reduced but expanded. In Scotland a family centred approach is being developed to identify social, emotional and behavioural problems early.

As well as support services for familial relationships, parents of particular groups of teenagers may need targeted help. Online and telephone services are no substitute for face-to-face support from professional staff. Where needs are complex key workers should co-ordinate support across services.

UNISON also thinks that cared for children and young carers should be given special consideration; they may lose their childhood because of their responsibilities.

UNISON believes that education is the engine of economic success, as well as a major vehicle for tackling inequality







UNISON would like to see a system of 16–19 student financial maintenance applied transparently and consistently according to national criteria for England.

## Young people and post-16 education

UNISON regrets the abolition of the education maintenance allowance (EMA) in England, which was instrumental in increasing access to post-16 education for poorer students. The replacement bursaries represent a significant reduction in investment in education and training for young people at a time of rising youth unemployment.

UNISON would like to see a system of 16–19 student financial maintenance applied transparently and consistently according to national criteria for England. Higher education ‘thresholds’ should apply. Students should receive a full grant if their household income is under £25,000 and a partial grant if it is between £25,000 and £50,000. Introducing loans to pay fees in further education in England would be immensely damaging and will lead to an increase in the number of young people not in education, training or employment.

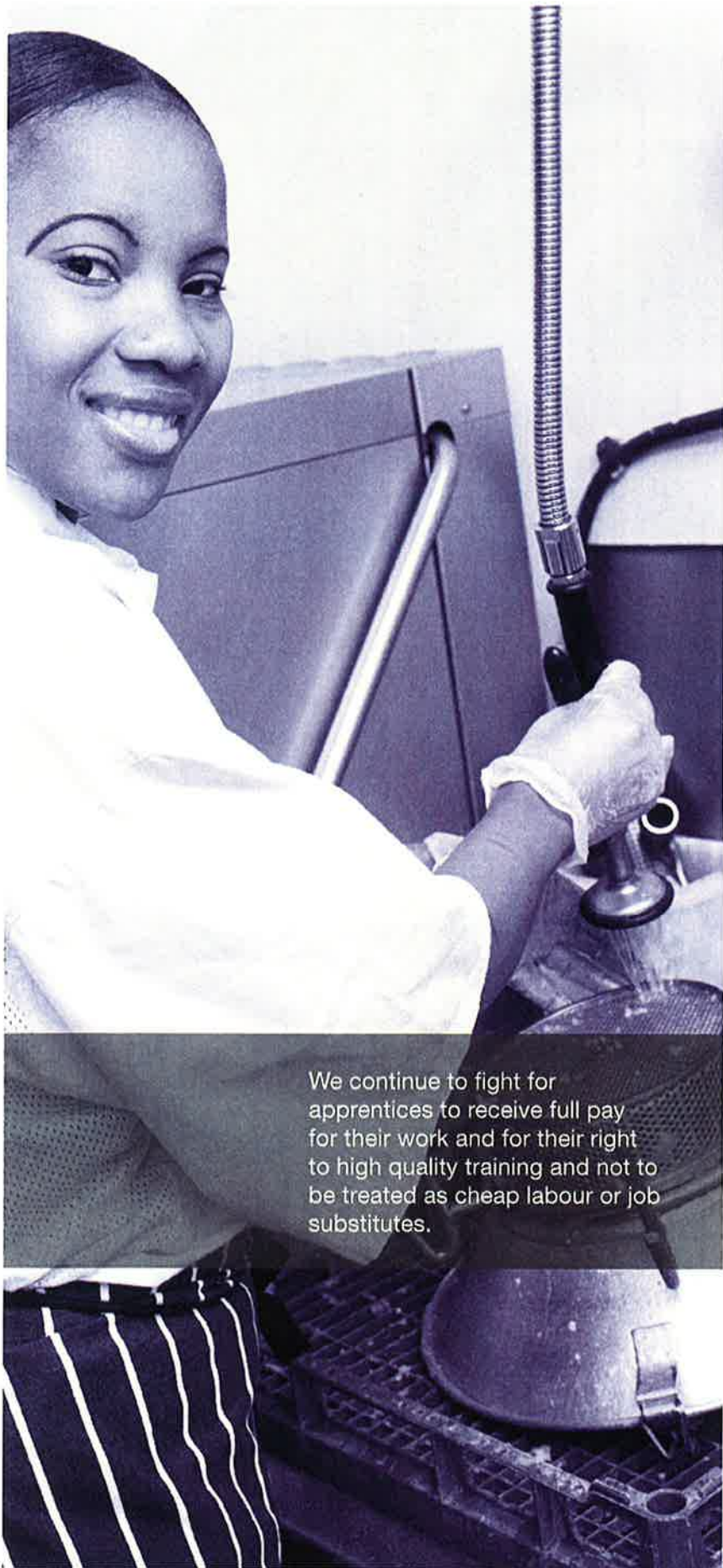
The fairness premium, a £150 million national scholarship fund to support

disadvantaged students to participate in higher education in England, cannot counter-balance the rise in tuition fees to £9,000, which has to be a significant disincentive to all but students from high income families.

UNISON would like the government to restore local authorities’ responsibility to fund and plan for 16-19 education provision. Currently councils have an unclear role. They are responsible for keeping track of young people’s participation as the school leaving age rises to 17 and then 18. This will be supported by a new early intervention grant in England, which is not ring-fenced. In theory it will provide flexibility and freedom at local level; in practice UNISON thinks it will result in inconsistency and variable quality.

## Young people and finding a job

The quality of services for young people depends on maintaining a well-trained, qualified and motivated workforce.



We continue to fight for apprentices to receive full pay for their work and for their right to high quality training and not to be treated as cheap labour or job substitutes.

Much of this is under attack – careers professionals are being replaced by online advice, jobs are being lost and there is a continuing professional development deficit. Services that support young people to enter education, training and work have been too variable and patchy. UNISON wants a national strategy for the consistent, local delivery of programmes aimed at promoting education and employment for all.

UNISON welcomes the government's stated commitment to careers advice but questions how individual schools in England will comply with their careers advice duty. The service should be comprehensive, with national standards that ensure access for all to a quality service. Standards should ensure that disadvantaged or disengaged groups receive additional support. Independence and impartiality should be a hallmark of the service. It should operate outside teaching and learning activities and be publicly provided. Access to face-to-face guidance should be a right.

There must be adequate and reliable funding for integrated all-age careers services. Young people should receive other information, advice and guidance on the wide range of issues they face through youth services.

Young disabled people starting their working lives need to be given all the support they need for them to be able to compete in the jobs market. This includes the necessary reasonable adjustments required to enable them to undertake the job, whether this is through formal learning situations that lead to qualifications or through informal learning situations while in employment. Cuts in education funding for disabled students and inadequate access provision in schools, colleges and universities are reducing young disabled people's learning options.



UNISON has been a consistent and powerful voice, arguing for a minimum wage set at a living wage level for all workers regardless of age.

UNISON welcomes government support for young people through its funding of apprenticeships. However, we note, for example, that young Black people are underrepresented in apprenticeship schemes. Apprenticeships offer job and learning opportunities and should be widely available and fully funded. UNISON is concerned about the withdrawal of the apprenticeship guarantee in England.

UNISON research reveals that apprentices are working long hours for low pay in poor conditions and receiving little training. It is also becoming clear that some apprentices are not on genuine schemes and are being used to plug the gaps of skilled and qualified employees in order to cut costs.

UNISON has been a consistent and powerful voice, arguing for a minimum wage set at a living wage level for all workers regardless of age. We continue to fight for apprentices to receive full pay for their work and for their right to high quality training and not to be treated as cheap labour or job substitutes.

Many young disabled people use the apprenticeship route to gain experience and skills to assist them secure future employment. Disabled apprentices are not eligible for help to meet the cost of reader or personal assistance support, interpretation or other services through the access to work scheme. This may deter organisations from engaging young disabled people. Some employers are reported to be failing to challenge disability discrimination – their excuses are that adjustments are time limited, disproportionately costly or too complex to arrange for short-term placements.

UNISON believes apprentices should be enabled to learn in a fully accessible environment with all their support requirements met, including their need for accessible student accommodation. They should have access to appropriate

learning tools and sufficient funds to meet personal care needs. Young disabled people should be eligible to receive access to work resources for the reasonable adjustments they require to enable them to secure accessible work placements. This will allow them to learn, achieve qualifications and maximise workplace learning opportunities as a route to paid work alongside their non-disabled counterparts.

Research evidence shows us what works best in tackling youth unemployment – well funded, demand-led welfare to work programmes, which provide young people with experience of real work that is paid at least the national minimum wage. The previous government's future jobs fund provided a good example of such a scheme.

UNISON continues to express concern that its replacement, an unpaid work experience programme with limited access to job search support or training, is poorly funded and less effective. The Department for Work and Pensions has been widely criticised for contracting out work programmes to big private firms, resulting in scandals such as A4e – Action for employment. UNISON believes instead that we need work programmes to be run by organisations that are close to their local communities.

The government's flagship for England, the youth contract, is a meagre combination of voluntary work experience, mandatory work activity, unpaid internships, wage subsidies to employers for each 26-week short-term job and the apprenticeship scheme. Yet even despite offering the private sector what amounts to a taxpayer subsidised unpaid workforce, companies are saying that the compulsion element is wrong. Fortunately more credible and rewarding schemes are being set up in the public sector with the benefit of proper union involvement.

## Young people and business

UNISON believes that the role of business is key to making young people's first experience of work a positive one. Young people must have a fair employment package, which includes a living wage, paid time off for training and a fixed number of contractual hours per week. Agency work, zero hours contracts and minimal hours contracts are unsettling. Businesses should embrace the European Union's agency workers directive so that young people receive fair treatment. Part-time work can help many young people as they study or train, but many want full-time opportunities and would rather not have several part-time jobs.

Large employers may be able to provide mentors for young people, training qualifications, peer group meetings, assistance with travel costs in rural areas and other help.

## Young people and youth work

A crisis is developing as a result of local authorities scaling back or reconfiguring their youth services in response to spending cuts. Open access provision for young people is fast disappearing as councils focus on targeted youth work. Specialist provision for young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) are being decimated to catastrophic effect. Some authorities have gone further and are withdrawing completely from youth service provision. UNISON believes that youth services will be the first public service to disappear in some areas. Years of professional expertise and partnership working between the statutory and voluntary sectors are being lost.

UNISON thinks all young people are entitled to the rewards and benefits of good quality youth work that provides open access services alongside proper support for targeted interventions. Young people want and need to be able to socialise in a safe and secure environment. Open access provision reaches out to and offers vulnerable young people early intervention; these young people might be missed by other services or their needs might escalate before they are picked up by the targeted service. In poorer communities youth clubs and open access provision are the only services available to young people.

Open access services can be more appropriate than targeted ones when it comes to improving some outcomes for young people but both types are needed. The youth and community method relies on establishing trust and sometimes long-term relationship building. Young people can enter and leave services over a period of time and results are more likely over a long timeframe; short-term indicators cannot easily measure the impact.

Good youth work transforms lives but the benefits may be less immediate and less obvious. It is difficult to measure social and personal development empowerment, confidence and resilience. In addition, youth work operates in a multi-agency setting – isolating the impact of a simple intervention ignores the fact that there might be several influences. The best measure is the fact that the young person wants to access the service and engage.

## Young people and housing

Young people face a greater level of uncertainty about their housing future than previous generations. The problems young people have finding a suitable place to

It is estimated that around 20% of young homeless people have experienced domestic and/or sexual abuse by the time they are 16 years old. Around a third of callers to the Childline service who are homeless or runaways talk of abuse by their parents or carers.



live flow directly from the chronic shortage of housing and the social and economic changes they are experiencing.

Research shows that a suitable, secure home is a vital ingredient in the successful transition to adulthood and that homelessness and bad housing conditions are contributory factors in ill health, involvement in crime and substance misuse, sexual exploitation and unemployment. Changes to the housing benefit system – which mean that single people under the age of 25, and from 2012, under 35, are only entitled to financial support for shared accommodation – have only added to these difficulties. UNISON believes such initiatives display politicians' astonishing ignorance of the lives of young people.

Many young people find that they are unable to continue living at home. Their relationship with their parents or carers may breakdown for a wide variety of reasons as they become young adults. This includes being at risk in their homes. It is estimated that around 20% of young homeless people have experienced domestic and/or sexual abuse by the time they are 16 years old. Around a third of callers to the Childline service who are homeless or runaways talk of abuse by their parents or carers.

Research suggests that a disproportionate number of young homeless people identify as LGBT. In addition to being at risk of becoming homeless for all the same reasons as any other young person, difficulties due to intolerance and prejudice can also contribute to the loss of a stable home or exacerbate periods of homelessness.

Without an increase in the supply of housing that meets the needs of young people, Shelter claims that<sup>1</sup>:

- homelessness among young people is expected to increase;
- a three-tier private rented sector will develop by 2020 with the bottom tier

- around 1.5 million more young people aged 18–30 will be pushed towards living in the private rented sector by 2020;
- fewer young people will be in the owner occupied sector as numbers under 30 are projected to fall by 50% in 2020 with the number of young people under 30 living at home increasing by approximately 550,000;
- three specific groups of young people are increasingly marginalised in the UK housing system – young families, those on low incomes and those who are vulnerable due to their support needs;

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/housing-options-solutions-young-people>

consisting of 400,000 young people under 30 who find it increasingly hard to compete for private rented tenancies.

UNISON believes the following are vital:

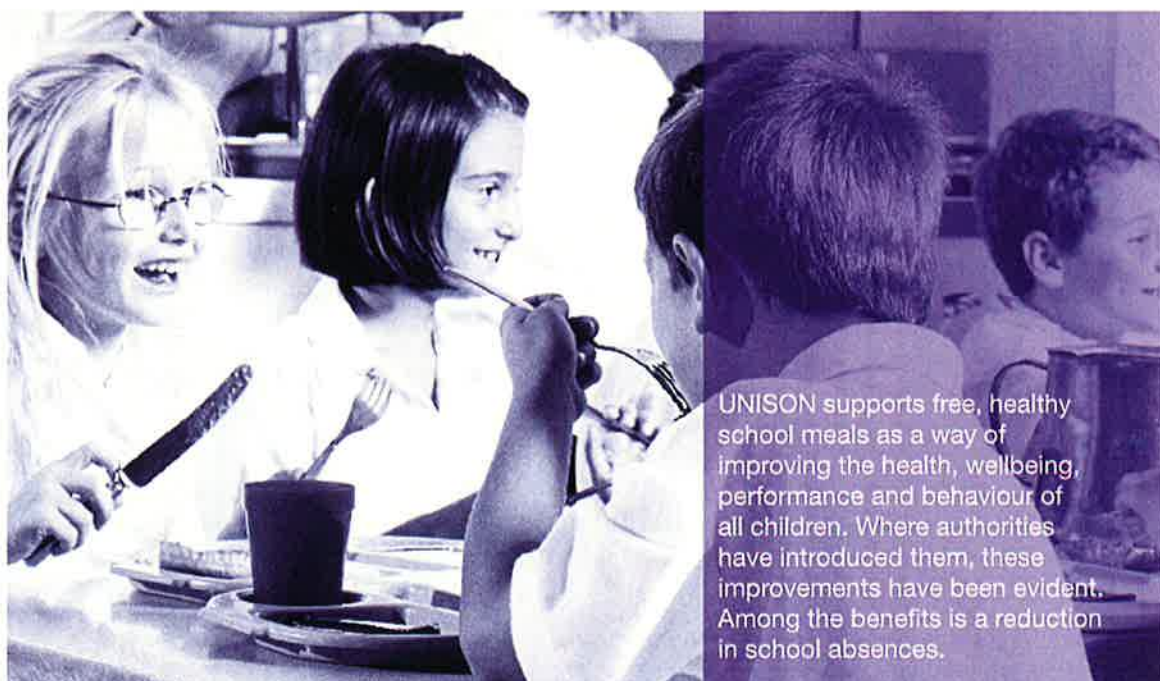
- an increase in the affordable housing supply;
- a renewed focus on improving the supply, quality and stability of rented housing in both the private and social rented sectors;
- greater degrees of security of tenure and more stable private rented tenancies;
- support enabling young people to access private rented tenancies;
- housing introduced as part of the 'life-skills' education programme for young people to help them understand the whole housing system and make more informed housing choices;
- flexible support for those who experience homelessness.

## Young people's health and wellbeing

UNISON believes that the government has a moral and ethical responsibility to help improve the wellbeing of the UK. We fail to see how this can be achieved when the industry giants in alcohol and chocolate are government advisers, and when the government is failing to regulate parts of the industry effectively.

Easy access to cheap alcohol from supermarkets will never be addressed unless we take measures to eradicate its sale. UNISON supports improved labelling to raise awareness of alcohol content.

UNISON also argues that an inappropriate role is being created for companies such as Mars UK, one of the biggest chocolate manufacturers criticised for super-sizing its products, Diageo GB, the British-based drinks multinational, and Compass, the creator of turkey 'twizzlers' highlighted by campaigner Jamie Oliver.



UNISON supports free, healthy school meals as a way of improving the health, wellbeing, performance and behaviour of all children. Where authorities have introduced them, these improvements have been evident. Among the benefits is a reduction in school absences.

There should be better regulation of advertising in and near schools, at times when young people watch TV as well as on websites popular with young people. Young people also need education awareness so that they can become wise to how advertising tactics seduce people into buying products and services.

UNISON supports free, healthy school meals as a way of improving the health, wellbeing, performance and behaviour of all children. Where authorities have introduced them, these improvements have been evident. Among the benefits is a reduction in school absences. UNISON welcomes the free breakfasts served in Welsh schools and Scotland has a 'food for good' charter.

Local authority spending cuts are also having a huge impact on the health and wellbeing of young people. Free swimming lessons, children's centres, libraries and schools are all facing cuts. All are vital parts of what should be an integrated public health system. UNISON has concerns about these spending cuts.

Government welfare reform policy is also threatening the living standards of disabled people. As state disability benefits such as disability living allowance, are being withdrawn altogether for some, or reduced for others, the cost of living with a disability is driving more disabled young people into poverty.

UNISON has major concerns from an education point of view about how the government will ensure that schools are involved in promoting the health and wellbeing of children. In England, other government policies, such as removing the duty on schools to co-operate with the Children's Trust, which provides specialist services for disabled children, and the creation of academies independent of local authority influence, are at odds with a policy of joined-up health services for

children in schools. There are specific concerns about how this will affect the delivery of support for children with medical needs in schools.

UNISON works with the School Support Alliance, which campaigns for the million school children in England with a health condition. We believe that schools and other learning providers should have a statutory duty to provide support for children with health conditions. All schools should also produce and implement medical support policies as part of their duty to promote pupils' wellbeing and there should be appropriate support and training for school staff.

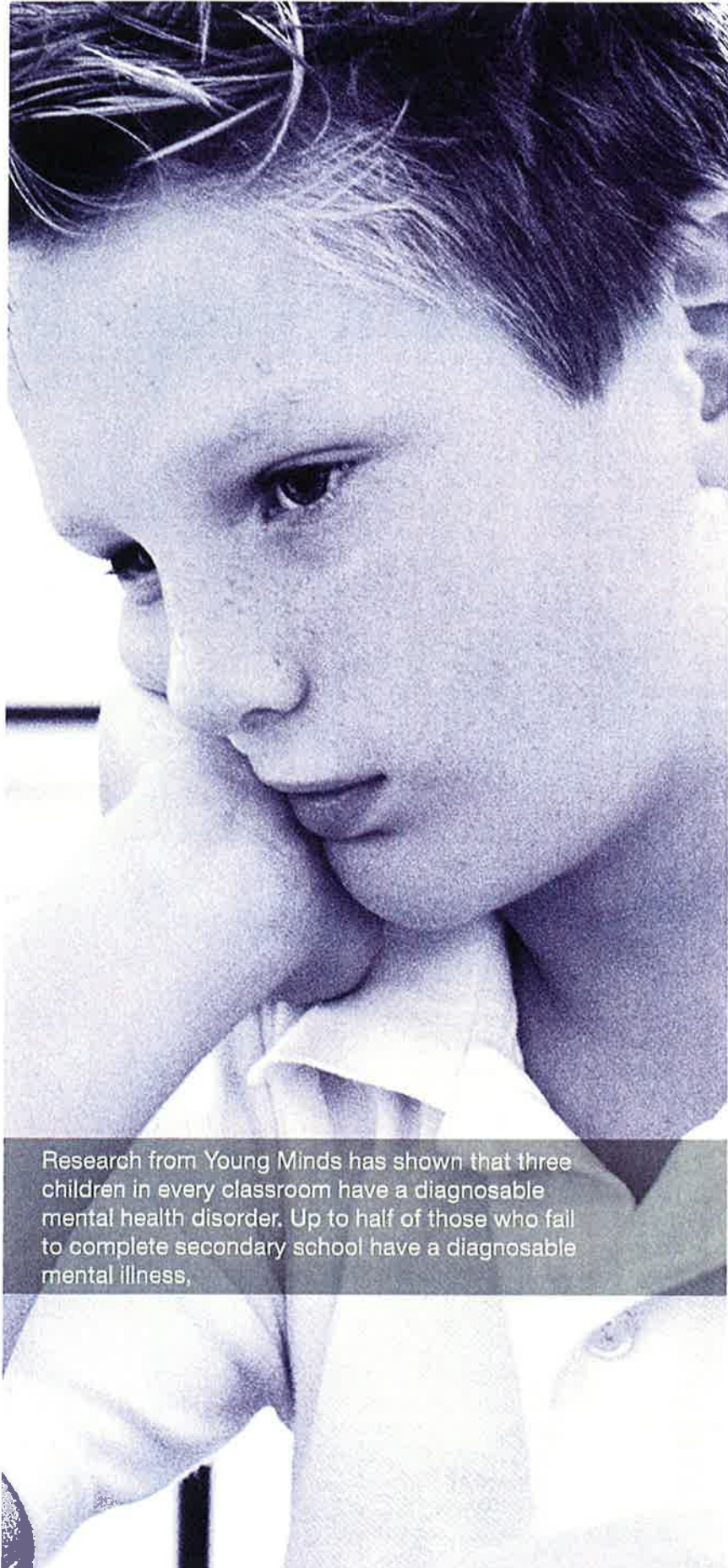
Mental health is as important as physical health. Yet in the UK thousands of young people are isolated or unhappy, have eating disorders or self harm and too many commit suicide. Research from Young Minds has shown that three children in every classroom have a diagnosable mental health disorder. Up to half of those who fail to complete secondary school have a diagnosable mental illness, 80,000 children and young people suffer from severe depression and 45% of children in care and 95% of imprisoned young offenders have a mental health disorder.

UNISON research on spending cuts has found that mental health services are being increasingly restricted, that the quality of services is deteriorating and that there is also evidence of mental health services closing. This is happening at a time of mass youth unemployment with a consequent detrimental effect on mental health. Being employed improves a young person's self esteem in a number of ways. It can provide security, stability and a structure to life as well as providing them with a sense of identity and enabling them to have contact with other people, the chance to develop friendships and an opportunity to meet and contribute to goals.

Photo: Philip Weismuth



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Research from Young Minds has shown that three children in every classroom have a diagnosable mental health disorder. Up to half of those who fail to complete secondary school have a diagnosable mental illness.

UNISON also believes that it is crucial that young people needing mental health support receive continuity of care in the transition between child and adult services. At present young people in England can find themselves with no help and support when they reach 16 or 17 because access to child and adolescent mental health services ceases. They may be deemed too young or not ill enough to access adult mental health services, which starts at the age of 18.

Tensions and pressure can worsen in the teenage years and increase the chances of substance misuse, crime, early parenthood, low educational attainment or unemployment. Youth offending, drug and alcohol advice, sexual health and relationship counselling are key local services for young people and must be protected, especially at a time of economic and social flux.

UNISON believes that young people's sexual health is as important as their physical and mental health and that young people should be encouraged to value their sexual health. All young people should have access to sexual health education and professional advice. In England, the localism agenda, new health commissioning arrangements and proposals for changing abortion counselling regulations could result in anti-choice groups receiving public funding to provide pregnancy counselling and prevent abortion providers from carrying out this role. UNISON believes that it is vital that young people have access to the professional decision-making support currently offered by abortion providers rather than to a network of unregulated individuals, many of whom are in breach of good practice.

Domestic violence is often conceptualised as an 'adult' issue, when in fact adolescents experience similar levels of domestic violence to adults. It is

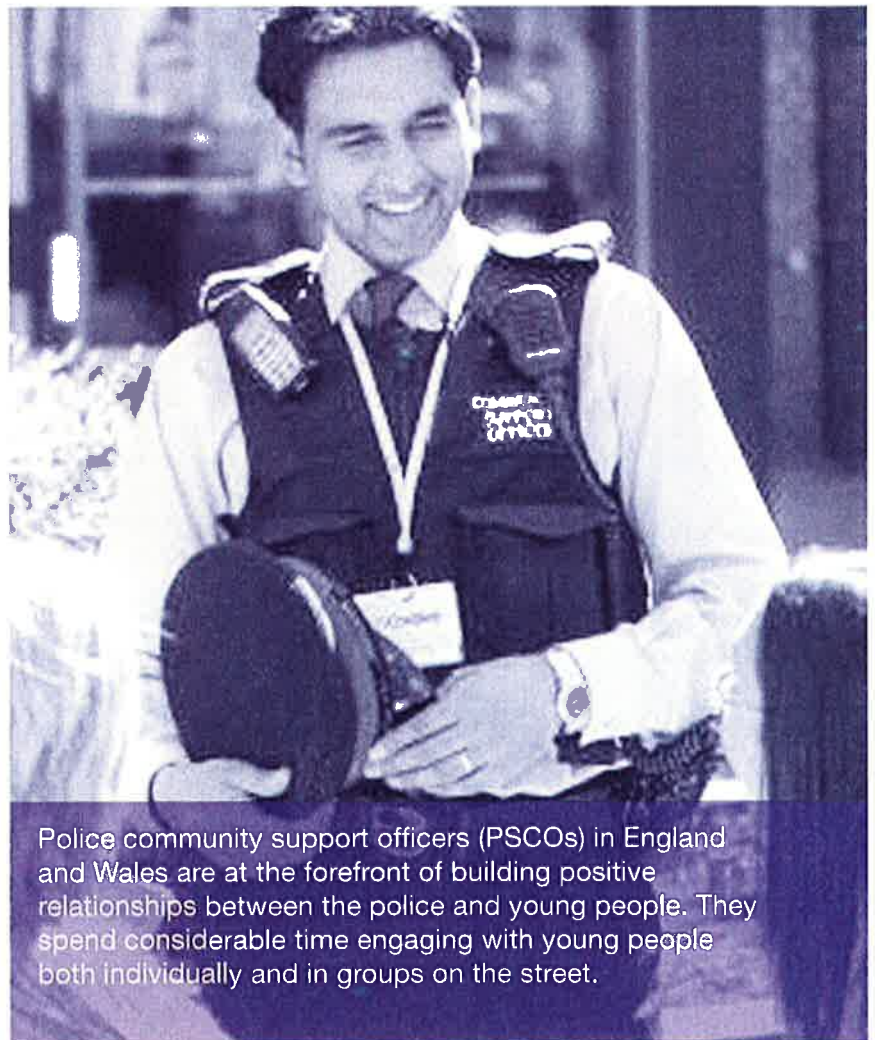


important to provide properly funded early intervention and prevention services to protect young people at this influential time of life, when many are entering their first relationship, and to challenge the attitudes that allow gender violence, including sexual assault and rape, to continue.

In addition, there is a need to ensure that appropriate services are provided to protect young women from cultural violence, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. Despite legislation to protect girls from FGM, it is estimated that between 500 and 2000 are subjected to the procedure each year, yet no prosecutions have been brought. Similarly hundreds of young women and men are taken out of the UK and subjected to forced marriages. Providing education, support and guidance to the young people, their parents and communities is essential if this form of violence is to be eradicated. This should be accompanied by stringent enforcement of the existing law and tough penalties for those who transgress it. This is particularly the case for rape and sexual violence. A 2009 National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children survey found that 12% of young men and 3% of young women admitted sexual violence against their partner; a large proportion of rapes among both young people and the general population go unreported and only 6% of those reported to the police result in convictions. It is therefore essential that age-appropriate services are accessible and adequately funded, and that youth and education providers take action to address the normalisation of sexual violence and rape, including in gang culture.

## Young people and crime prevention

UNISON notes that young people are often at most risk of being the victims of crime in their communities and have in the past been unfairly identified as the cause of anti-social behaviour. Research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission indicates that Black young people are disproportionately targeted for stop and search by the police and racial profiling is on the increase. The Guardian and the



Police community support officers (PSCOs) in England and Wales are at the forefront of building positive relationships between the police and young people. They spend considerable time engaging with young people both individually and in groups on the street.

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Philip Wolmuth

London School of Economics Reading the Riots research reveal that dissatisfaction with the police contributed to the 2011 summer riots and that the use and abuse of stop and search was one of the most loathed aspects.

Police community support officers (PCSOs) in England and Wales are at the forefront of building positive relationships between the police and young people. They spend considerable time engaging with young people both individually and in groups on the street. PCSOs are often deployed in schools to build these relationships from an early age with positive results. Since their introduction in Wales, the Welsh labour government has funded an additional 500 PCSOs.

However this community resource is now under threat in England. Police spending cuts of 20% are predicted to lead to a 10% reduction in PCSOs. This means there will be 1,800 fewer PCSOs to work with young people to encourage them to lead positive and fulfilling lives. UNISON is calling on the government to protect ring-fenced funding for PCSOs to ensure that police forces do not see the PCSO workforce as an easy target for cuts.

It is also clear that cuts are being used as an excuse to introduce the privatisation of police forces. UNISON has many concerns

about how privatisation in the police service will increase problems around the unequal treatment of vulnerable groups of people – and with no accountability or transparency; private companies will not be accountable to the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

UNISON believes justice services for young people need to be delivered as close to where they live and in the communities of which they are part. UNISON supports the concept of 'primary justice', a proposal that would see local justice services in England, such as prisons and community justice, commissioned in association with local authorities. This would require the devolution of a proportion of Ministry of Justice and Home Office central funding to local authorities.

Local authority enforcement teams are responsible for ensuring that the legal restrictions on the sale of alcohol and cigarettes to young people are properly enforced. This is a time-consuming and resource intensive activity, which is at risk as a result of a 30% cut in local authority spending. UNISON reminds government that maintaining the public health of young people requires local authorities to be adequately funded.

UNISON is also concerned that funding cuts to drug and alcohol action teams that support young people are having a devastating impact on the fight against substance misuse. Services provided by frontline workers to support young people are increasingly being scaled back. As a result, young people with drugs and alcohol problems are finding it increasingly difficult to find help. UNISON believes that this is the first sign that cuts are having a direct impact on frontline rehabilitation and prevention services. UNISON is particularly concerned about the potential long-term impact of these cuts on young people, their families and communities.



## Young people and the community and voluntary sector

UNISON's vision for the role of the community and voluntary sector (CVS) focuses on society benefiting from the sector's particular qualities – community links, the ability to identify gaps in public sector services, innovating, developing new solutions, and advocating and campaigning on behalf of vulnerable groups.

At the moment CVS organisations involved in young people's services and in others are compelled to participate in a fairly crude system of procurement. As long as they fulfil the requirements of a tender, they enter into a competition in which the cheapest bidder usually wins. Organisations only win contracts and funding by engaging in a 'race to the bottom' when it comes to staff pay and conditions. Spending cuts are exacerbating this, but undermining the workforce also undermines the quality of services.

UNISON has a wealth of evidence showing the impact of this system

on the organisations and the services they provide. Services are becoming increasingly generic and are failing to provide the benefits that come with CVS involvement. For example, a service provider for homeless young people in the north east told UNISON how it had used some left over capital to invest in research, which had led to suggestions for interesting new ways of working. When the organisation took these ideas to the commissioner (the local authority), they were told that they sounded good, but that the work would have to be re-tendered so that others could bid. The organisation had no incentive to invest in the future and good new ideas would not emerge.

UNISON supports the involvement of CVS organisations in the design of services – which, given their knowledge of local issues in their communities, they should be well placed to engage in. Instead of a local authority asking "Who can provide this generic service the cheapest?" they should be asking "Who can help us shape a service that meets local needs?" UNISON is committed to more grant-funded partnership working – but with the public sector working alongside CVS organisations to provide niche or specialist services that the public sector cannot provide.



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Paul Box

The commissioning system is only one element that needs changing if young people are to realise the benefits of the CVS. Whatever the system of funding, it has to be properly resourced. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations estimates that the government's cuts will take out £3 billion from the CVS, at a time when most organisations are reporting an increased demand for their services; many are having to cut jobs. The few hundred million pounds that the government has put into the sector is dwarfed by the amount being taken out due to the cuts, which are leaving the sector completely incapable of providing its existing level of services, let alone increasing its role.

The UK government is focusing on cutting red tape to create opportunities for the sector to get involved in service delivery. Genuine waste and unnecessary bureaucracy should be avoided, of course. However, there should be no compromise on regulations that ensure decent employment conditions, equality standards and health and safety for employees and service users and safeguarding for vulnerable people.

The government has indicated that the main way of increasing CVS involvement in England will be to re-define the CVS or 'civil society' to include mutuals, social enterprises (SEs), and "organisations which exist primarily for commercial objectives". UNISON thinks that provision offered by some mutuals and SEs may work if they emerge organically from communities and workers. But management 'spin-outs' will not improve services, and the involvement of profit-making companies as CVS organisations will mean that genuine CVS organisations will be less able to compete for contracts.

UNISON thinks redesigning services through mutualisation or the creation of a charitable trust does not enable councils to improve how it addresses spending cuts. Mutuals' relative inexperience in providing public services and the mutual approach could fragment the management and provision of services and undermine democratic accountability.

UNISON believes that vulnerable young people often have few financial resources and relatively poor financial prospects.

That's why it is likely to be difficult to lever resources from the private sector. The kind of long-term partnership working, which young people need is best suited to a free exchange of ideas and methodologies between providers. This may be contradictory to a competitive market where bidders may withhold information because it could undermine their competitive advantage.

The 2011 summer disturbances in England demonstrate the high political profile of disadvantaged young people and the potential need for substantial and rapid changes in approach. The restrictive and law-bound nature of contracts inhibits this and authorities may want to retain the extra flexibility and direct accountability that in-house service delivery allows.

## Young people and volunteering

UNISON believes that volunteering offers much added value to our society, and often to the individuals involved. But this is no replacement for paid, employed, trained, professional staff that provide security and continuity of service. The turnover in volunteers can often be high, which means they cannot fill the gap of paid staff. An infrastructure for recruitment, training and support for volunteers is also needed.

UNISON has become very concerned about the rapid spread of unpaid work in recent years. Well structured internships and work experience can play a very positive role in the lives of young people entering the labour market. However the current situation falls well short of this. In many cases internships have been used as a way to get free labour and substitute paid employment. They also exclude young people who cannot afford the additional costs of work when there

is no pay. This has an obvious adverse effect on people looking for work, as well as a negative influence on the economy through a reduction in consumer demand, lost tax revenues and increased benefit payments. In some instances, it is likely to amount to a breach of the national minimum wage regulations.

UNISON does not see how the National Citizens Service (NCS), pioneered in England, will help tackle youth unemployment, the key issue facing today's young people. It offers a short-term summer placement. Youth services run 365 days each year with youth workers working with young people in their communities to help them make a positive contribution. UNISON supports the education select committee's recommendation that the NCS should introduce accreditation for existing programmes and that the government must protect additional funds currently earmarked for NCS and divert them to year-round youth services.



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