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## **From learning to earning: young people need more from school to succeed in today's job market**

Today's education system is failing many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds – according to a new survey published by an alliance of organisations led by Impetus – The Private Equity Foundation. On the eve of GCSE results day, the alliance is calling for schools to do more to prepare their students for life after education.

Young people aged 16-24 were asked a range of questions including: *What's the biggest barrier to finding work?; Where do you seek advice about employment options? and; If you could change one thing to help young people get jobs, what would it be?*

The responses pointed to two main areas of concern:

- 1. Schools need to do more to prepare young people for the world of work:** this includes providing structured careers advice and broader information on the type of jobs available. One respondent said: "Visits from employers and compulsory weekly sessions with a careers advisor would make a huge difference to students' focus".
- 2. Young people are crying out for more relevant, structured and substantial work placement opportunities** so they can develop transferable skills and gain the right experience that will help them land a job when they leave school. One respondent said: "It should be compulsory for all 14 year olds to work one day a week as part of the curriculum. This would give real insight into the world of work and help them develop the skills needed to get a job after they leave education".

Despite welcome improvements in the overall unemployment rate (down 132,000 to 2.08m ONS August 2014), the number of 16-24 year olds who are out of work remains disproportionately high (767,000). Impetus-PEF Chief Executive Officer Daniela Barone Soares said: "37% of all unemployed people are aged 16-24 which means young people are still bearing the brunt of unemployment in the UK. This is often as a result of poor educational attainment and limited preparedness for the world after school. As a nation, we have spent billions of pounds and countless hours trying to solve the problem but with only limited success. The result is a generation of already-disadvantaged young people whose prospects diminish year on year at great cost to themselves and society."

Barone Soares continued: "Unemployment while young can lead to long-term reductions in wages, increased likelihood of subsequent periods of unemployment, and poorer health outcomes. Economically disadvantaged young people are particularly at risk of being unemployed and we believe schools need to do more to prepare them for life after education. We need structured and relevant careers advice, more work experience opportunities and the better promotion of vocational courses, traineeships and apprenticeships. These should build to a minimum standard of employability experience that young people can expect to receive at school – or even an 'employability experience guarantee'."

**Ends**

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## **Notes to editors**

**The alliance organisations:** [Big Society Capital](#), [Impetus – The Private Equity Foundation](#), [OnSide](#), [Resurgo Social Ventures](#), [Street League](#), [ThinkForward](#), [WorkingRite](#), [The Work Foundation](#) and [Young Foundation](#).

**Impetus – The Private Equity Foundation** (Impetus-PEF) transforms the lives of 11-24 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds by ensuring that they get the support they need to succeed in education and employment. It does this by finding the most promising youth charities and social enterprises in the UK and helping them - through a pioneering combination of management support, specialist expertise and funding - to become highly effective at delivering programmes proven to transform the lives of the young people they serve. For more information, please visit [www.impetus-pef.org.uk](http://www.impetus-pef.org.uk) or call 020 3474 1007.

### **The survey – key findings**

The survey was conducted in May 2014 among 16-24 year olds across England, Scotland and Wales. The questions were distributed by Impetus-PEF, the alliance organisations and via social media. We received responses from 227 people. Findings include:

Forty-four per cent of respondents were in full time education; 29% were volunteering full time; seven per cent were in an apprenticeship and two per cent in a traineeship. Thirty five per cent of those in work had found their jobs through friends and family proving that networks are as important for young people as anyone else. For those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, however, this makes finding work even harder as they don't have the networks to help them informally access jobs.

Only 24% had a Saturday job which is a significant drop from 1990s national average of 40% and further demonstrates the difficulty young people face in getting valuable experience while still at school. Schools could help redress this by making better connections with local businesses. In reality, however, the survey showed that only 46% of pupils had either visited, or had had a visit from, a local employer while at school.

Eighty-six per cent said schools need to do more to prepare pupils for work – suggestions included: more careers advice; information about what kind of jobs exist; more personalised careers plans; more work experience opportunities and better connections with local employers. In reality the advice they got was predominantly about sixth form (75%) and university (50%). Only 19% received advice about FE colleges and vocational courses. Twenty nine per cent received advice and information about apprenticeships, 11% about traineeships and only 8% about local employment opportunities. This suggests schools are not giving young people information and advice on all the options particularly vocational routes. It also suggests that the Careers IAG guidelines introduced in 2009 are not being delivered by schools.