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Immediate release

Pioneering youth charity calls for new Cabinet post in bid to make NEETs history by 2020

Impetus-PEF makes a compelling case for establishing a new Secretary of State to end our NEET crisis for good

Today (22 October 2014), Impetus – The Private Equity Foundation calls for brave solutions to the country's enduring youth unemployment problem.

With the general election in sight, all the major parties are putting together plans and policies to address the fact that almost one million 16-19 year olds are currently not in education, training or employment (NEET). David Cameron has pledged to 'abolish youth unemployment'; Ed Miliband has made promises to the 'forgotten 50%'; and Nick Clegg wants every young person to 'share in the recovery'.

Where there's a will, there is usually a way but – despite the promises, the initiatives and the billions of pounds spent on this issue – there has been no significant change in the number of NEETs since records began in 2000.

Why? Because responsibility for the problem is split over three Whitehall departments and there is, quite simply, nowhere for the buck to stop. Impetus-PEF is calling for the appointment of a Secretary of State to Make NEETs History – someone at Cabinet level with the mandate, the power and – crucially – the accountability to ensure that young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds have every opportunity to succeed in education and employment.

Today, Impetus-PEF publishes a blueprint for what that strategy would look like in action. Director of Policy and Strategy Jenny North said: "Despite recent good economic news, young people are still bearing the brunt of unemployment in the UK. The incoming Prime Minister in May 2015 can decide to adopt a new direction and create accountability for solving this enduring problem. This is a multi-generational issue and more of the same won't change anything. We urge all the parties to be brave and innovative in writing their manifestos. We need action not pledges if we are to end this problem once and for all."

The blueprint, produced in partnership with the Social Market Foundation, recommends that the new Secretary of State implements a strategy based on the following four areas:

- **Improving school-to-work transitions:** young people are most vulnerable to becoming NEET when they leave school. Despite attempts to simplify vocational pathways, they remain complex and misunderstood by employers and students. Schools typically do not have a senior leader responsible for pupil transitions, and there is evidence that young people not pursuing an academic track miss out on a clear plan for progression. At the same time, the provision and quality of careers education is patchy, and there is little clear responsibility for this. Finally, schools' funding is not linked to whether pupils reach positive destinations.

- **Focusing on higher-quality further education and apprenticeships:** young people who go into further education or apprenticeships are experiencing lower-quality provision than those who go into higher education, with predictable effects on attainment. Public funding continues to prop

up poor-quality provision. This money can be refocused on further education and apprenticeships provision that works.

- **Tailoring job-search services for young people:** the all-age Jobcentre Plus offer does not work for younger people and there is evidence that it is particularly ineffective for those young people furthest from the labour market. There is an emerging and well-supported case for a service which is better directed towards their needs.

- **Incentivising local authorities to make an impact:** there are large variations across local authorities in the proportions of young people who are NEET. While these are inevitably due in some part to different economic conditions, activist local authorities can have an impact and more can be encouraged to play that role.

By 2020, the Secretary of State should be in a position to report that:

- Every school in England and Wales will be responsible for the post-16 destinations of their pupils and that they will be properly resourced to help ensure every pupil is supported to a destination in education, training or employment.

- Further education providers will have significantly improved the rates of learners achieving the qualifications that will help them in the workplace. Two-thirds of all government-funded apprenticeships will be reserved for those aged under 25.

- Every Jobcentre Plus in England and Wales will employ specialist youth advisers, helping young people navigate and secure the traineeships, apprenticeships, and skills training they need to eventually find secure employment.

- Every local authority will be intentionally using its convening power to bring together partnerships of schools and colleges, employers, and the voluntary sector to develop strategies, and deliver programmes, which suit local labour markets, and result in local reductions in numbers of young people NEET.

ENDS

Media Enquiries

Kelly Matthews, Interim PR Manager, Impetus-PEF

Tel: 0203 474 1007

Email: press@impetus-pef.org.uk

Notes to the editors

Impetus – The Private Equity Foundation (Impetus-PEF) transforms the lives of disadvantaged 11-24 year olds by ensuring they get the support they need to succeed in education, training and employment. It does this by identifying the most promising youth charities and social enterprises and providing them with a combination of long-term funding and sustained strategic advice. This pioneering approach enables its portfolio charities to reach their full potential, in turn enabling them to reach more disadvantaged young people and to positively impact all our lives for generations to come. For more information, please visit impetus-pef.org.uk or call 020 3474 1007.