



Title: **Enterprise and Business Committee Inquiry into Assisting Young People into Work**

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1. Information and working context of Barnardo's Cymru

Barnardo's Cymru has been working with children, young people and families in Wales for over 100 years and is one of the largest children's charities working in the country. We currently run 88 diverse services across Wales, working in partnership with 19 of the 22 local authorities, supporting in the region of 8,500 children, young people and families last year. Barnardo's Cymru services in Wales include: care leavers and youth homelessness projects, young carers schemes, specialist fostering and adoption schemes, family centres and family support, parenting support, community development projects, family support for children affected by parental imprisonment, domestic abuse and parental substance misuse, short breaks and inclusive services for disabled children and young people, assessment and treatment for young people who exhibit sexually harmful or concerning behaviour and specialist services for children and young people at risk of, or abused through, child sexual exploitation and young people's substance misuse services.

Every Barnardo's Cymru service is different but each believes that every child and young person deserves the best start in life, no matter who they are, what they have done or what they have been through. We use the knowledge gained from our direct work with children to campaign for better childcare policy and to champion the rights of every child. We believe that with the right help, committed support and a little belief, even the most vulnerable children can turn their lives around.

- **This response may be made public.**
- **This response is on behalf of Barnardo's Cymru.**

Inquiry submission

Barnardo's Cymru works with families, children and young people of all ages across Wales. We deliver services to young people aged 16+ through services working with young people who have left care, homeless young people and young people in need of tenancy support, young parents, young adult carers, disabled young people, young people with substance misuse issues, young people with mental health needs and young people at risk of or abused through child sexual exploitation

1. What are the main barriers that face young people trying to enter the labour market?

- 1.1.** The young people that Barnardo's Cymru supports have a range of needs that present particular barriers to entry into the labour market. The challenging circumstances of their lives and the relationship between their childhood experiences and levels of engagement in education often means that they enter young adulthood as young people with low or no qualifications who are the furthest away from the labour market.
- 1.2.** Young people leaving care have to cope with the challenge of compressed and accelerated transitions to adulthood (relative to their peers). It is clear that if care leavers are to have the best chance to succeed in education, training and employment, they must have a secure base from which to start. Suitable accommodation, access to health care, appropriate financial and personal support must all be in place.¹ Too often, care leavers are forced to sideline education, training and employment as they face the challenge of living independently for the first time.²
- 1.3.** Caring responsibilities impact on young people's educational experiences and outcomes. Transitions to adulthood are difficult for many young carers and in particular transitions into further education, employment and training.³ This is the result of poor educational experiences in compulsory education, the impact of school responses and caring responsibilities on lower educational achievement and inadequate support for continued caring responsibilities. Young carers movement into education, employment and training has to be understood in the context of the needs of the whole family and the young person's role within that family.

¹ The Centre for Social Justice, (2014), *Survival of the Fittest? Improving life chances for care leavers*, http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/UserStorage/pdf/Pdf%20reports/CSJ_Care_Report_28.01.14_web.pdf

² Consumer Focus Wales, (2011), *From care to where? How young people cope financially after care*, <http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk/wales/files/2011/03/From-care-to-where-Web-2.pdf>

³ NIACE Policy Paper (2013), *Access and Inclusion: Young Adult Carers and Education and Training* http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/access_and_inclusion_-_young_adult_carers_and_education_and_training_1.pdf

- 1.4.** Young mothers may have their schooling disrupted at the most critical time but even where they become parents post-16 years as many as 40% are likely to have had poor educational engagement and outcomes.⁴ Participation in education, employment and training for young mothers is very low despite evidence to suggest young parents are motivated to engage and research suggests that young parents have a range of emotional and practical support needs which have to be met before they can settle into and effectively engage in a learning programme. At the time of publication of a Barnardo's research report on young mothers and access to learning in 2010, 84% of young mothers in Wales were NEET.⁵ The majority of young parents struggle with living on a low income, accommodation issues, childcare and getting their support needs met and these issues impact on their ability to access the labour market.
- 1.5.** Homelessness almost trebles a young person's chance of developing a mental health problem and homelessness is frequently associated with substance misuse problems.⁶ Young people may face real difficulties in accessing appropriate support for their additional needs in order to provide them with the personal resources and stability required to engage in education, employment and training. At the same time using a hostel address has been reported as a major barrier in applying for work by young people and they have also talked about the 'poverty trap' in terms of securing employment that will demand a big enough wage to cover housing costs as they struggle to secure accommodation.⁷
- 1.6.** Evidence suggests that disabled and learning disabled young people are not prepared for employment as a destination of transition into adulthood and are often denied access to employment or training opportunities.⁸ Disabled young people remain twice as likely to be not in education, training or employment than those who are not disabled.⁹
- 1.7.** Many of the young people we support are affected by more than one of the issues set out above and face complex and interrelated barriers to entry into the labour market compounded by chaotic lifestyles related to their additional needs. Our Swansea Bays Service for example supports care leavers:

⁴ Department for Children, Schools and Families , (2007) *Teenage Parents next steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts*, (ENGLAND) London: Every Child Matters, DCSF

⁵ Barnardo's (2010) *Not the end of the story – supporting young mothers back into education*, http://www.barnardos.org.uk/not_the_end_of_the_story_-_march_2010_pdf.pdf

⁶ Social Exclusion Unit, (2005), *Transition: young adults with complex needs a Social Exclusion Unit final report*, London: ODPM

⁷ Buchanan, J. et al (2010) *Beyond the rhetoric of youth homelessness: telling it as it is*, Barnardo's Cymru and Glyndwr University https://www.barnardos.org.uk/beyond_rhetoric_of_youth_homelessness_-_telling_it_as_it_is_-_full_report.pdf

⁸ Conlan,L., (2014) *Transition Planning for Young People with Learning Disabilities in Great Britain*, Research and Information Service Research Paper, Northern Ireland Assembly http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/employment_learning/6514.pdf

⁹ <http://www.learningobservatory.com/uploads/publications/2423.pdf>

- Among those under 18 years of age a total of 16 or 18% are NEET.
- A total of 74 or 53% of care leavers aged over 18 years that the service supports are NEET.
- Of the total 74 young people who are over 18 years and NEET 33 are also either pregnant, in custody, are disabled or in receipt of ESA or are a parent on Income Support.
- Between April 1st and 31st August this year there were a total of 756 visits by care leavers to the Bays service and 38% of those visits relate to just 10 young people.
- Of those 10 young people : all are NEET; 7 are over 18 years of age; 4 are in temporary accommodation; 4 have YOS or offender manager involvement; 4 have substance misuse issues; 3 have identified mental health issues and 1 young woman is pregnant.

1.8. The impact of children's circumstances on their educational opportunities and outcomes combined with the challenges of entering young adulthood with additional responsibilities and/or needs in addition to related issues such as low self esteem and often limited family support result in a position where the barriers to employment can appear insurmountable.

1.9. We are aware that evidence in relation to the barriers facing young people in certain circumstances as set out above has been presented by ourselves and others to various Committee Inquiries over the past decade. Contemporary evidence as referenced in this submission and our own experience as service providers to vulnerable young people suggests that these are persistent issues that are still not being adequately addressed and that must now be seen in the context of an extremely challenging economic climate. These barriers impact not only on labour market entry but in limiting the opportunities for young people to engage in or sustain training or places in further education.

1.10. Well rehearsed practical barriers to entering the further education, training or the labour market also persist. Low wages, prohibitive travel expenses (particularly in rural areas), learning and training equipment costs and work related costs such as clothing can be barriers for young people living in low income families and young people living independently.

1.11. For young people who live independently (because they have left care or have been homeless or come from families who are unable to continue to accommodate them) housing costs set against low wages mean that sustaining a tenancy on a low wage can be very difficult even with housing benefit assistance. These issues were highlighted as far back as 2009 when Barnardo's Cymru produced a film 'Hope'¹⁰ with young people in North Wales that set out the challenges of living in poverty for young people living independently. The film includes young people who have left care or

¹⁰ http://www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/research_and_publications/below-the-breadline-a-year-in-the-life-of-families-in-poverty/publication-view.jsp?pid=PUB-1442

experienced homelessness and young parents, some with a wage, some in receipt of benefits. All were facing the everyday dilemma of issues such as should they 'eat or heat'. Unfortunately these issues persist and young people continue to present at our services in states of crisis because of poverty which means that they cannot afford to heat the place where they live or to eat. In fact our services report that persistent and absolute poverty are affecting growing numbers of the young people that we support.

2. What support is most effective for young people trying to enter the labour market?

- 2.1** The Social Exclusion Unit suggests that for young people with complex needs, work to address thinking and behaviour directly is often a necessary first step on the road to harder outcomes, such as engagement with education, training or labour markets.¹¹
- 2.2** In 2011 the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services produced a rapid review of 'Strategies to re-engage young people not in education, employment or training'. Which included in its summary of effective approaches those that:
- *Offer support at key transitions, often through intensive support from a key worker, mentor or adviser, who acts as a 'role model' as well as providing practical guidance, support and brokerage,*
 - *Are flexible and offer a range of pathways for young people with different needs, attributes and skill levels.*
- 2.3** Earlier this year Barnardo's Cymru produced evaluation reports following completion of two 4 year long projects that were funded under the Big Lottery 'Life Skills' funding grant.
- 2.4** The Life Skills Options Project was based in Wrexham at Barnardo's Cymru Compass Partnership and worked with 41 young care leavers to support their entry into education, training or employment. The project was managed by Barnardo's Cymru and the team consisted of Barnardo's Cymru staff, a therapeutic intervention worker from CAIS drug and alcohol agency and a personal advisor from Careers Wales. **At the end of the project there was a 50% reduction in the number of young people who were NEET.**
- 2.5** The Life Skills Work Your Way Project was based in Denbighshire at Barnardo's Cymru Cyfle Service and worked with 33 young care leavers who were involved with the criminal justice system or were young parents to support their entry into education, training or employment. **At the end of the project 17 young people had experienced paid employment, 6 had entered into further learning and 9 were completing a package of training.**

¹¹ Social Exclusion Unit, (2005), *Transition: young adults with complex needs a Social Exclusion Unit final report*, London: ODPM

- 2.6** The projects delivered support through 1:1 support and group work which included basic independent living skills, basic skills such as numeracy, literacy, building confidence and self esteem, organisational and motivational skills and practical support for entry into education, training or employment. Detailed individual learning and development plans were put in place with each young person. Work placements, volunteering opportunities and employment entry preparation work was secured to support young people to be 'work ready'.
- 2.7** Young people received support through their Personal Advisor service and the projects to deal with personal crisis and on-going accommodation issues. Personal issues for young people during the lifetime of the project included for example: bullying, pregnancy, managing civic life after prison, family breakdown, sexual exploitation, adoption of child, domestic abuse and insecure housing.
- 2.8** Securing sustained paid employment was the most challenging outcome to achieve. Of the 41 young people at who the Life Skills Options project supported 5 secured 3 months paid employment, 4 secured 6 months paid employment and 1 secured 12 months paid employment. Of the 33 young people who the Life Skills Way to Work project supported 7 secured 3 months paid employment, 4 secured 6 months paid employment and 1 secured 12 months paid employment.
- 2.9** Paid employment was the most popular destination goal for young people participating in the project however a number of barriers to sustaining employment were identified. Some young people did not see the value of volunteering or work experience and started work before they were able to cope with the demands of employment and withdrew to go into education or training. Some young people were unable to cope financially with being in employment as a result of housing benefit loss and low wages. Part-time and temporary work was particularly difficult because the benefits system was not flexible or reactive enough to changing patterns of labour market engagement for individuals. Young people continued to experience personal crisis situations and instability in accommodation while engaged with the project and this impacted on their ability to commit to the demands of employment. The project operated against the context of the recession with some companies having to withdraw from work experience and volunteering offers as a result of economic cuts and a profile of increasing youth unemployment.
- 2.10** The evaluation of the projects suggests work to support vulnerable young people into education, training or employment should be:
- Tailor made for individuals using personal outcomes rather than tick box outcomes.
 - Be delivered in respectful partnership across organisations, clearly utilising the expertise within different organisations.
 - Work in partnership with the young people ensuring their participation in their own direction, at their own pace.
 - Flexible and varied.
 - Tailored to a specific client group- young people will face some generic difficulties common to others on low incomes but specific groups will also face difficulties particular to their life circumstances.

- Not be time limited. This projects needed 4 years to support young people across long term goals and change.
- Combine personal soft skills, activity based learning, socialising opportunities and emotional support/ talking therapies.
- Work to the premise of informed choice. Through giving opportunities and tasters young people can fully understand what their options are.