

YMCA

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION



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ESTABLISHED 1844



AN INTRODUCTION TO CENTRAL YMCA

Central YMCA was established in 1844 and is the world's oldest YMCA.

Today, we are one of the UK's leading health, education and wellbeing charities, with the goal of helping people to live happier, healthier and more fulfilled lives.

In recent years the Skills and Education system has been overhauled considerably with far reaching Government reforms, including changes to the funding system, the apprenticeship reforms and the introduction of T-Levels.

Whilst we largely support the Government's programme of ambitious reforms, a number of unintended consequences have arisen. Central YMCA's Transforming Education manifesto is therefore intended to support the effective implementation of the Government's reforms, promote social mobility and inclusiveness and ensure that the most disadvantaged learners can achieve their ambitions.



HOW DO WE TRANSFORM SKILLS & EDUCATION?

We are asking the Government to:

1 | **Launch** a comprehensive review of Pre-Apprenticeship funding to examine whether current provision is fit for purpose

2 | **Develop** an awareness campaign to demonstrate the benefits of Further Education, Apprenticeships and T-Levels

3 | **Guarantee** the successful roll-out of T-Levels

4 **Launch** a 'social mobility fund' to ensure that the most hard to reach can access employment and Apprenticeships

6 **Support** small employers by implementing a guaranteed ring-fenced budget for Apprenticeships and reviewing the 20% off-the-job requirement

5 **Remove** barriers for learners, including, where appropriate, the GCSE maths and English requirement, replacing it with Functional Skills qualifications

WHAT WE'RE CALLING FOR

We are asking the Government to:

1 Launch a comprehensive review of Pre-Apprenticeship funding to examine whether current provision is fit for purpose

The Social Mobility Commission recently suggested that despite there having been sweeping changes to the post-16 education system over the last two decades, there has only been a limited impact on social mobility.

Central YMCA recommends that the Government undertake a review into Pre-Apprenticeship funding to explore gaps in provision for young people and to examine whether the current provision is fit for purpose. Whilst the ESFA funded Study Programme is flexible enough to be adapted to individual needs it does not provide adequate funding for those young people who have special educational needs but are not eligible for an education, health and care plan.

2 Develop an awareness campaign to demonstrate the countless benefits of Further Education, Apprenticeships and T-Levels

Central YMCA recommend that the Government should consider developing a national awareness campaign aimed at employers, to demonstrate the countless benefits of taking on a young person as part of an Apprenticeship or T-Level placement. Campaigns to date have not been sustained and are largely ineffective.

It is essential to ensure 16-18 year-olds are aware of their options and not simply encouraged to follow an academic route which may not provide them with the most appropriate outcomes for their career aims.



Good quality careers advice and regular access to industry prepares young people for training and work and helps them make decisions at critical junctures in their lives. Vocational training and Apprenticeships should therefore be promoted effectively, to challenge the A-Level route remaining the 'gold standard' for students, teachers and parents.



3 Guarantee the successful roll-out of T-Levels

Central YMCA support the Government's T-Level reforms, which aim to create a parity of esteem between technical and academic education. However, certain aspects of the system could prove problematic for learners, employers and providers.

To ensure a smooth implementation, Central YMCA suggest appropriate time scales are implemented to take account of provider readiness and awareness, as the current time scales do not leave much time to ensure employers and learners 'buy in' to the system.

Central YMCA also suggest a review into work placement opportunities, especially in rural areas and for niche specialisms, as we question whether there will be enough placement opportunities available. Furthermore, the department should review whether the required 315 hours' worth of work experience is an appropriate amount, given classroom teaching demands and the additional responsibility this places on to employers.

In addition, as the proposed T-Level progression route currently stands, Level 2 will likely become the standardised route onto T-Levels and will therefore lose its individualised content and prestige. This means that there is a danger that the range of post-school qualifications available will become significantly restricted and will no longer be suitable for the needs of a large cross-section of both employers and learners.

Lower level qualifications, especially at Level 2, are vital for social mobility. The majority of young people we work with do not have sufficient employability skills to be work ready and often rely on Level 1 or 2 programmes to progress.



4 Launch a new 'social mobility fund' to ensure that the most hard to reach can access employment and Apprenticeships. This should include subsidising travel for apprentices and students on T-Level placements

Following the loss of the Youth Contract in 2016, training providers have struggled to assist the most hard to reach young people, as there is no funded provision currently available which allows providers the flexibility to support this cohort onto courses or into employment.

A flexible funding package is still very much needed to support young people to become 'work ready'. Without adequate support, hiring 16-18 year-old care leavers or those with education, health and care (EHC) plans is simply not viable for many providers and employers. This leaves many young people unemployed and unable to find adequate further education provision.

Central YMCA recommends that a new social mobility fund be developed with sector stakeholders, to allow third sector providers to support the Government's employment and skills ambitions.

The social mobility fund should be made available to learners at all levels and should include subsidising travel for apprentices and students on T-Level placements.

5 Remove barriers for learners, including, where appropriate, the GCSE maths and English requirement, replacing it with Functional Skills qualifications

GCSEs, whilst widely recognised, are designed to be delivered over two years in an academic setting. This style of learning does not suit every individual and retaking qualifications that learners have already failed often only serves to reinforce a sense of failure and demotivation.

In a review of Functional Skills, carried out by Ofqual in 2014, it was found that there was a significant level of confidence in the qualifications, with 70% of employers saying they believed Functional Skills qualifications met their needs. We therefore recommend that achievement of Level 2 Functional Skills should replace the GCSE maths and English requirement when it becomes a barrier to achievement. For most vocational courses, the practical and hands on approach of a Functional Skills qualification is far more appropriate.



6 Support small employers by implementing a guaranteed ring-fenced budget for Apprenticeships and review the 20% off-the-job requirement

The Further Education Sector is concerned that funding to support non-levy paying employers will only come from unspent levy proceeds from larger businesses and that there will not be enough money to fund the Apprenticeships in non-levy paying SMEs.

SMEs currently account for more than half of the Apprenticeship opportunities on offer and, as MPs on the Public Accounts Committee recently observed, many constituencies have no levy paying employers in their localities. This means that young people in many towns and rural areas may no longer have access to Apprenticeships.

We are also concerned by the feedback we have received regarding funding as many SMEs have told us that they will no longer be able to take on apprentices due to the 10% co-investment funding requirement. Central YMCA, along with the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) is, therefore, calling for a guaranteed minimum annual budget of £1bn to ensure that SMEs in all areas of the country can continue to offer Apprenticeships.

Furthermore, we are aware that many employers remain concerned about the 20% off-the-job requirement.



Central YMCA believe that this “one-size-fits-all” approach to how off-the-job training is delivered does not provide adequate flexibility and is unsuitable for the majority of employers. 20% off-the-job training roughly equates to a full-time employee forgoing one day per week at work, something many employers are not able to accommodate. Furthermore, the 20% requirement does not incorporate English and maths delivery, progress reviews or training which also takes place outside of working hours.

The Government’s 3 million apprenticeship target relies largely on levy payers using their levy pots to upskill existing staff. However, Central YMCA believes employers are being put off developing in-house programmes as they will lose 20% of staff time. Therefore, Central YMCA recommend that the 20% requirement be urgently reviewed, in light of the strong criticism from employers and providers.

If you would like to help us make these calls to action realities, please get in touch with our Public Affairs and Communications Officer Kate Mahoney at kate.mahoney@ymca.co.uk or call +44 20 7343 1805





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