

Work and Pensions Committee

Oral evidence: Employment Opportunities for Young People, HC 586

Monday 21 November 2016

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Frank Field (Chair); Heidi Allen; Ms Karen Buck; James Cartlidge; Richard Graham; Craig Mackinlay.

Questions 1 - 80

Witnesses

Richard Chadwick, Director of Programmes and Development, Prince's Trust, Samantha Kerr, Young Ambassador, Prince's Trust, Luke McCarthy, Programme Development Manager, ThinkForward, Kianu Glasgow, Young ambassador, ThinkForward.

Gillian Econopouly, Head of Policy and Research, Construction Industry Training Board, Dean Smith, Director, HR Group Operations, Carillion, Chris Oxford, Assistant Project Engineer, Carillion, Jaden Waugh, Former apprentice, Carillion

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [The Prince's Trust](#)
- [ThinkForward](#)

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Richard Chadwick, Samantha Kerr, Luke McCarthy and Kiianu Glasgow.

Q1 Chair: Richard, might you identify yourself for the sake of the record? When everybody has done that, Heidi is going to kick off with the questioning? Welcome.

Richard Chadwick: Thank you. I am Richard Chadwick, Director of Programmes and Development at the Prince's Trust.

Samantha Kerr: I am Samantha Kerr. I am an ex-Young Ambassador for the Prince's Trust.

Kiianu Glasgow: My name is Kiianu and I am an ex-apprentice for ThinkForward.

Luke McCarthy: I am Luke McCarthy, Programme Development Manager for ThinkForward.

Chair: We are quite old—at least, I am—so if you could speak slowly and into the microphone it would help me. It might also help get you down correctly on the record, because we are very interested in your evidence today.

Q2 Heidi Allen: First of all, I have questions for Kiianu and Samantha. It seems to me that you are ambassadors now for your respective organisations, which I presume must mean that you enjoyed the experience and the assistance that they gave you. I am interested to hear from both of you, but perhaps we will start with Samantha and then move on to Kiianu. What was it that both of you got from your respective organisations, the Prince's Trust and ThinkForward, when you left school? What was great about it in terms of how it helped you find work? How is it different from what, if anything, you received by way of support from the Jobcentre or your school, for example?

Samantha Kerr: For the Prince's Trust, it was that communication. We got one-to-one support rather than just being taken through a door and kicked out like it was at the Jobcentre, if you like. Also with the Prince's Trust, it was 12 weeks of constant support, and ongoing support for me for four years after, and getting that support means a lot, especially when it comes to mental health issues. For myself, I suffer with depression and anxiety. There was no support there from the Jobcentre for those sorts of issues, whereas the Prince's Trust specialises, if you like, in helping people with big barriers like that.

Q3 Heidi Allen: I am interested in your description—and I do not disagree with you—of the Jobcentre; going in and being kicked out the other door. Talk to me about that. Did you try the Jobcentre to start with?

Samantha Kerr: Well, I was going into the Jobcentre for a few months before I found the Prince's Trust. There was one occasion when I went in



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there and I was having an anxiety attack, so I said to them, "Can I have a glass of water, please?" and they said no, because they were worried I was going to throw it at them. That kind of pushed me back a bit and from that moment on every time I went into the Jobcentre I was anxious all the time, because I thought I was going to be judged for suffering with anxiety. There is a big enough stigma around mental health as it is, but going somewhere where you think you are going to be supported and you do not get that support is a bit of a kick.

Q4 Heidi Allen: Was it, do you think, the lack of support for you as a young person or because of your mental health issues, or a bit of both?

Samantha Kerr: A bit of both, I think. There is, again, a bit of a stigma around young people being jobless and not doing anything to help themselves, but if we are not being helped, we cannot help ourselves either. We go to the Jobcentre to get support and we do not receive it.

Q5 Heidi Allen: What about your school? What was it like at school before you left, in terms of preparation?

Samantha Kerr: There was no support from my school whatsoever. We did not have any careers advisers come in or anything like that. The same at college; we did not have anything like that. Doing media at college, you would have thought it was something we would be getting. Part of our course was interview techniques, but that was how to interview people through journalism; it was nothing to do with job interviews or anything like that, so we missed out.

Heidi Allen: So near and yet so far.

Samantha Kerr: Yes.

Q6 Heidi Allen: What about you, Kiianu?

Kiianu Glasgow: I was with ThinkForward for four years. I was on their programme and when I left school the support that I received from my coach was exploring which sector I wanted to go into. That linked in with me picking a college course to guide me down the right path. My coach encouraged me to attend different open days and interview practice workshops that ThinkForward put on. I received lots of e-mails and vacancies from the other members of the team because I was asking for different organisations that I may be interested in. I received a lot of support from there in terms of how to apply, how to present yourself at interviews and whatnot.

We also have an employment adviser or the business engagement team at ThinkForward, so I had a lot of sessions with the employment adviser. That was more me looking at whether I wanted to move on to another apprenticeship, was I ready for work, and making sure that when I did apply for the jobs I answered the questions correctly and whatnot.

I have never been to the Jobcentre, so I don't know how it is with finding jobs through it, but from other people's experiences and listening to my



peer group, I have heard that it is basic. You are going in to sign on and you have to apply for a certain number of jobs within a given timescale and then you leave, but after that what is the next step, like actually moving forward? Whereas with ThinkForward, when I applied for a job, through my interview stages they were there keeping me updated and it was more of a long-term thing. They stayed with me until I got into my job.

Previously, when I did sustain a part-time job, my coach came to visit me. He saw me at my placement, spoke to my manager, saw how I was doing, and that encouraged me to stay with ThinkForward and believe that they will help me in the long term to find a full-time job, because at that point I was doing a part-time job. Currently, I am working as a support assistant. My coach supported me to apply for the job, went through my supporting statement with me, made sure that I was clear with what I put in there and that I could evidence my examples, so it was coming from me, whereas he was supporting me to make sure that it was worded right and whatnot.

Q7 Heidi Allen: With the two jobs—the part-time one and the one you are in now—did you say they were both leads brought to you by ThinkForward, or were they jobs you just found yourself?

Kiianu Glasgow: The part-time job was when I was still in college and that was through ThinkForward. That is when my coach came to see me on my placement. The full-time job was when I finished as an apprentice with ThinkForward. Because with their programme you are entitled to five years and then after that you become more independent. My coach still stayed with me after being an apprentice, and that was because I felt like I needed that support to find a job. I felt like I could do it by myself, but I wanted to find the right job for me and I wasn't as confident. So, yes, he supported me through that.

Q8 Heidi Allen: Was your experience at school similar to Samantha's? Did you get much prep at school or college?

Kiianu Glasgow: We had a careers adviser at school. I think I probably met her four times. I did not find that beneficial in any type of way because she would come in at lunchtime and be like, "Do you want to come in and apply for a few jobs?" At that time, I wasn't even ready to work. She did not identify me as being ready to work; it was just that you are down on a list to find a part-time job or get some work experience or develop a career pathway. I wasn't yet ready for that and I felt like I was being rushed into it. The opportunities they were providing were just off Indeed or Totaljobs—so something you could find on the internet by yourself—and every young person had those same vacancies; it was not tailored or personalised. Whereas, ThinkForward looked at my needs and saw what skills I already had and what skills I needed to gain, and then they put me through work experience and different opportunities in order to apply for the job where I already had those skills.



Q9 **Heidi Allen:** Why didn't you go to the Jobcentre?

Kiianu Glasgow: It was fear, to be honest, because I had heard so much negativity about it. My friends were doing the same thing. They were like, "It's long. You'll go in there, sign on, and you are literally sitting at a computer just clicking apply, apply, apply". I know how I am and I know that would not motivate me to get a job at all, and I did not want to put myself in a boat where you have to sign on and whatnot. My coach made it very clear that once you start it is very difficult to come off it because you might get demotivated or just see it as a normal thing; that this is your job, going to the Jobcentre. I didn't want to be in that boat, so I went down a different path.

Heidi Allen: Brilliant. I would employ both of you anyway. Thank you.

Q10 **Ms Karen Buck:** How did you both get into the two programmes that you are on, with the Prince's Trust and ThinkForward? Where did it start? Who guided you into it?

Samantha Kerr: It is a funny story, actually. I had never heard of the Prince's Trust before and I was going through a really bad time with my depression. Four of my friends had died in the past year and I did not leave my house for three months. One day my friend literally dragged me out of my house kicking and screaming. I was like, "No, I don't want to go out. I don't want to see anyone", but she managed to drag me out anyway. Out of nowhere this lady came up to us and said, "Do you know where this specific building is?" We were like, "Yes, it's over there". Me being nosy said, "Why?" and she explained she was from the Prince's Trust and they had a taster day for the Team programme. All because of that, just meeting this lady one day out of the blue, I am where I am today.

Kiianu Glasgow: I joined the ThinkForward programme when they came into my school when I was in year 10. They basically identified a group of young people who would benefit from the coaching support. I don't know if I could say I was put on the programme or selected to go on it.

Q11 **Ms Karen Buck:** Both your experiences have been through having the two projects that have worked with you, so maybe it is more a question of you both having talked to others; you both have friends who have been through the experience. When people use the Jobcentre, do you think their approach to it is partly to do with it just being about processing people through off benefit and not tailoring it to their personal needs? Or is it because, as you were saying, Kiianu, it is about how you try to find work just by sitting at a computer? What is it that is so off-putting?

Samantha Kerr: Personally, I felt like it was quite an intimidating environment, with so many desks everywhere, getting called up as if you are in prison or something—"Yes, it is your turn to talk now" sort of thing. I have never been in prison, I might add, so I don't actually know what it is like.



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Ms Karen Buck: It feels like prison?

Samantha Kerr: Yes, it feels like a really intimidating environment.

Chair: We heard the other day, Samantha, that the most popular course in prison is scaffolding.

Samantha Kerr: I would be no good at that anyway—I'd be worried about breaking a nail or something. No, it was a very intimidating environment, and I think some people find the Jobcentre, with them getting money, like a safety net, if you like. They are definitely getting money as long as they do as they are told. They will carry on getting their money, and I think they get stuck in that cycle of, "I will do this, I will get my money; I will do this, I will get my money. If I get a job, I might get fired and then I won't have any money."

Q12 **Ms Karen Buck:** It is about security?

Samantha Kerr: I think so, yes. But like you were saying, it is not tailored for a specific person in any way. I know quite a few people who were also part of the Jobcentre and none of the jobs they applied for were tailored for them.

Q13 **Ms Karen Buck:** Did they find work fairly quickly?

Samantha Kerr: They found work, but they were so unhappy in that job, because they were forced to apply for it, that they ended up either getting fired because they weren't right for the job and then had to go back on to jobseeker's allowance, or they left because they were so unhappy there and it was not what they wanted to do. A friend of mine wanted to be a chef and he was put into an accounting job. He was there for a month and left because he was so unhappy. Then obviously the Jobcentre gets angry and doesn't like it that you have left a job that you were given.

Q14 **Ms Karen Buck:** It is slightly unfair to ask you this—it would be nice to be able to ask your friend—but presumably he was talking through what he wanted to do.

Samantha Kerr: Yes. I remember him telling me he had found a couple of courses he wanted to do at Norwich City College. I had a similar experience. They said, "No, you are in the Jobcentre to find paid work. We are not here to help you find college courses or fund you or anything like that. You need to find paid work. That is what we are here for." I felt, and so did he, that it is a really negative place to be, because if we are not getting the support we need to do the career we want, we are going to be in and out of jobs every week.

Q15 **Ms Karen Buck:** You two are very bright and very articulate. You both went into the system with qualifications? You got your GCSEs?

Kiianu Glasgow: Yes, although not the greatest of GCSEs and whatnot.

Q16 **Ms Karen Buck:** With maths and English?



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Kiianu Glasgow: Maths, yes. I did my English once I did college. I had a part-time job without English but I had my maths.

Q17 **Ms Karen Buck:** Did you get your English later?

Kiianu Glasgow: Yes.

Q18 **Ms Karen Buck:** What people will sometimes tell you is that if young people do not have the qualifications and perhaps they are not staying on, then it is very hard to get back into getting the qualifications that will move them on to the next stage.

Kiianu Glasgow: With ThinkForward, what they do is they have work readiness capabilities. I found that while I was on the programme that more motivated me to want to get my GCSEs. They have seven capability states, like being receptive, resilient and a good communicator, and once a young person has all those seven boxes ticked, they are ready to go into the working world. Whereas if you were at a Jobcentre, they do not prepare you for anything like that. It is so basic that you can probably sit at home and do it. They are helping you find a job, not a career. It could be something as basic as working at a McDonald's, and once that person has secured that job, how do they know that they are going to be there long term? They are not helping young people to be motivated and see the long-term view of finding a career or starting off as a support assistant and possibly becoming a project worker. It is just getting them into that job. If they are there for a few days to a few weeks, they do not know.

Whereas I found when I was on with ThinkForward, they maintained that relationship with me and communicated with me and made sure I was okay. It is more these things of just checking in with somebody, and that is what I felt like. I have never been to a Jobcentre, but I would not feel comfortable going to see a random employment adviser, just meeting up with a person I did not know at all. I would be like I am trying to just be here to tick the box, as you said, get the money and say that I have come in for an hour and I will see you tomorrow.

Q19 **Ms Karen Buck:** Luke and Richard, if you ruled the world, how would you strike that balance between this tailored support that you are giving to young people and the fact that there are never going to be the resources in a system to be able to do that for everybody? What would you ask for if you ruled the world?

Richard Chadwick: From the Prince's Trust perspective, we do see it working in some Jobcentres, and we get over 10,000 referrals a year from Jobcentres on to our programmes. Where it does work is where maybe young people do not have some of the barriers to employment—they could be confidence, self-esteem, mental health problems, drugs and alcohol issues, and so on—so Jobcentres are able to refer those young people on to some of our shorter programmes where it is a much quicker intervention into a sector, into a job.



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I think what is missing is that for young people who have significant barriers there isn't that tailoring, and for us that means proper assessment of young people, getting to know exactly what those barriers to employment are. Often for us confidence and self-esteem are the key things that run through a lot of the barriers that young people have and that are preventing them from accessing either the Jobcentre or employment.

Q20 Ms Karen Buck: Where does the identification of that go wrong?

Richard Chadwick: Our fantastic staff are able to do that assessment in a non-confrontational way in a Prince's Trust centre, in a college or in a different environment where you can make that proper assessment and understand what the barriers are. We have examples where it is working, where we have outreach staff who are able to go into Jobcentres and do some of that assessment face to face with young people. We even have an example where DWP staff are based in one of our centres as well, so they are able to have a slightly different conversation with young people to understand what those barriers are. Then they are able to make a decision, which is what we are always doing, as to what the right programme is.

For someone who has fewer barriers, a good programme is our Get Into programme, for example, which is sector specific. If a young person says, "I want to work in construction or logistics", we have a four-week programme that is pretty quick and they are able to access a job. For someone who has more barriers, then it would be more likely the Team programme that Samantha went on, which is a 12-week programme, which does not start at all about employability; it starts at how to build a young person's confidence, self-esteem, communication skills and teamwork way before you get to any employability skills. That fundamentally is the barrier to them being able to work, not the fact that they do not have employability skills and that sort of thing.

I would absolutely make that assessment piece more tailored and be able to recognise the difference between young people with significant barriers and those who just need a bit of a leg up into a sector.

Luke McCarthy: Yes, I would completely echo that. ThinkForward is very focused at the more extreme end, so the young people who have particular challenges and particular barriers around their progression from school to employment. As Kianu said, we work in partner schools and when we are selecting young people we take a combination of the known risk factors around future unemployment, so all the stats that everybody knows out there around some of their socioeconomic background, and some of it about how they are engaging and attending school. That then also brings up a shortlist of young people who are at particular risk of future unemployment, and then we have a conversation with the school, usually over a couple of weeks, to talk to the school staff, get a bit more context on where that young person is at in their education, and then use that to select the caseload that our progression



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coaches take on. We are very targeted at young people who are most at risk of becoming unemployed in future and use that qualitative and quantitative approach to try to do that.

There are two other things I would say. Apart from having the right level of targeting, one thing is around early intervention. We currently recruit and enrol young people at the end of year 8 and the beginning of year 9, so young people aged about 13. As Kiianu says, we work with them for five years because, given the barriers to employment that the young people we choose to work with are coming with, our model and our experience is that it takes that long to address those personal barriers, as Richard says, to support them to attain five GCSEs at school, including English and maths, and then progress into an apprenticeship or go to college once they leave school. I guess we would argue for an early intervention approach, which allows time to address those broader barriers.

Finally, I would pick up on what Kiianu was saying about what we call the ready for work capabilities and some of the things that Richard referred to in relation to confidence and self-esteem. There seems to be a major focus, particularly in schools and, I am sure, at the Jobcentre, on academic attainment or college courses being the only thing that counts when young people are looking for jobs. There is a huge amount of evidence around that link, but we would suggest that there are other measures as well—short-term things that you can track over a 12-week programme, over a five-year programme in our case—that are probably better indicators or give young people some sort of building blocks towards progressing into work once they leave the programme rather than just saying, “It’s all about whether or not you pass your English and maths GCSE at 16, whether you pass your level 3, your BTEC or A-levels at age 18”, so looking at other outcomes other than just academic attainment.

Q21 **Chair:** Samantha, can I ask you a quick question before Heidi does as well? You spoke a moment ago about a friend who, in a sense, went through the ordinary system. Where is he now?

Samantha Kerr: He is now a Tesco delivery driver. He was a chef at a nursery and he absolutely loved it, but due to unforeseen circumstances he had to leave. He is now a delivery driver for Tesco and he absolutely loves it.

Q22 **Chair:** Tesco have a career structure, haven't they?

Samantha Kerr: Yes. Like you were saying, just being shoved into McDonald's, even if there may be a structure there, in some terms—no offence to anyone who works in McDonald's—I think to have a career path rather than just going into a job helps because you have something to look forward to. You have something that you can build up on.

Q23 **Chair:** The truth is that if you were sent to Tesco, you might think that



almost a punishment, but once you have got there you realise that Tesco are rather different from lots of other firms because they do take people seriously in career development and apprenticeships and so on, don't they?

Samantha Kerr: Definitely, yes.

Q24 **Heidi Allen:** I have a quick question for Luke and Richard. Thinking with your national heads on, having heard pretty damning evidence from Samantha and Kiianu about their local Jobcentre experiences, have you any experience of Jobcentres where universal credit has been rolled out and there is this work coach role in there and whether that is giving a better service to young people? Have you any evidence of that?

Richard Chadwick: I think our evidence is mixed, so it is a similar sort of picture.

Heidi Allen: So are there some signs of improvement with work coaches?

Richard Chadwick: No, not particularly.

Luke McCarthy: All of our work is for young people aged 13 to 18, so we do not have as much contact with the Jobcentre as the Trust does, so I am afraid that I am probably not best placed to comment on that.

Chair: Richard, might we come back to you, because I think these work coaches could be crucially important and we might try to learn from your experience? Craig and then Richard.

Q25 **Craig Mackinlay:** To Samantha and Kiianu, you got on in life without the Jobcentre and you described the experiences of friends who have been to the Jobcentre and didn't like the environment. Do you think we are focusing too much in these sort of job club-type environments where it is just go for any job, and keep piling that CV out to employers who maybe do not even want them? My worry is that we are just wasting a lot of people's time. I used to be an employer and my business still employs 30 people, and that is through all ages. I am always very impressed to see someone who has done something while they are looking for the job they really want—if that is a spell at McDonald's, then that is fantastic. I am really pleased to see that.

Should we not be focusing on where you really want to get to and how we are going to get you there, rather than on keeping going round and round, with any job, any job, any job? Okay, it is a good CV filler. Do you think perhaps Jobcentre Plus ought to be segregated a little bit towards the younger market that does slightly different things from everyone else, which can be—I perfectly appreciate this—quite dispiriting to a lot of youngsters going there for the first time?

Samantha Kerr: Yes, I think you are definitely right saying it is rather than just "any job, any job, any job." It is going to fill your CV up but it is going to look bad having job, job, job, job, job, rather than, "I was at this



job for two years. I then decided to move on because I wanted to try something better and improve my career”.

I was part of the Jobcentre myself and I am really interested in media work and youth work. I have previously worked in a call centre—I absolutely hated it; it was the worst thing I’ve ever done. It made me really poorly and I was out of work for a year because of my anxiety and depression. I was really unwell. When I got back on—I think it was jobseeker’s allowance and then it turned into universal credit halfway through—they were near enough forcing me to take another job at a call centre, because apparently I was being too picky in what I wanted to do and there wasn’t enough work in the sectors I wanted to be in: youth work and media. I left the Jobcentre because I was so unhappy there. They were not helping me. I managed to get into a job by myself that I love, which is now in youth work, and the Jobcentre had no part to play in that.

Q26 Craig Mackinlay: Luke, you seem to be nodding furiously at that.

Luke McCarthy: Yes, I am really struck by the description of the coach approach, because at the core of ThinkForward is a coaching methodology. By that, we mean working with the young people we support in order to identify where they want to go with their career, some of the barriers from their current situation, through to progressing into that. Anything that is forcing somebody to do something that they do not want to do for me, as an organisation where coaching is at the core of what we do, is a complete anathema to what that should be about.

That goes back to the point about supporting people—I do not think it matters what age they are—to do what they want to do, finding out what they are interested in, what they think their barriers are and what steps they need to take, rather than just ticking boxes or doing the things that you are told to do. There seems to be a bit of a disconnect between the description of them as any sort of coaches and the behaviours, if you like, that we are hearing described here.

Q27 Richard Graham: This part of the inquiry is partly about trying to identify what sort of support is needed for young people and how that differs from support for other groups. Richard, as you and Luke both know, the Government has tried various different things. In 2014 there was the effort on the Youth Engagement Fund and Social Impact Bonds. In 2015 we had the Youth Offer, which was about short-term experience in work academies. Now we have the Youth Obligation, which is coming in in April next year. Can you give us a brief feel for whether you think these attempts at creating a different offering, if you like, for young people, to what extent they have been successful and what your hopes for the Youth Obligation are? Shall we start with Luke and then come to Richard?

Luke McCarthy: The young people we support are slightly younger, so the Youth Obligation probably has not come across our radar as being



particularly positive or negative. In terms of sharing our experience of five years working with young people around that transition from school, the lessons that we have learned I guess are two, possibly three, things. One is that working in schools is a unique experience for people who have not had that contact with schools. Although you would think a school is a school, actually every school is different; they have their own culture, their own way of working, often set by the headmaster, the head teacher or the principal. We have learnt not only to tailor our offer to the young people, but to tailor it so that it fits in with the school's strategic priorities. I think a one-size-fits-all programme that is mandated through central Government, or even at local government level, is not enough. You have to really carefully tailor what the offer is in our experience of working in schools.

Secondly, just to reinforce the point I made earlier, the Youth Engagement Fund is a good example where we would argue strongly that there needs to be some consideration given to, as Richard said before, where young people's starting points are and what their risk factors are, how much support they need in order to move from where they are when they start on a programme to when they finish.

Q28 Richard Graham: Have you used the Youth Engagement Fund?

Luke McCarthy: We have put in a bid for that. We had a Social Impact Bond through round 2 of the Innovation Fund from about 2012, which allowed us to expand our provision from four to 10 schools in London at the time. We were one of the most successful providers on that.

Q29 Richard Graham: So that did answer your need for having a system that is flexible enough to tailor it, for instance?

Luke McCarthy: It did. What it did not do is that the way that particular fund worked, it was one payment whether a young person is just on the edge of getting into employment or has significant barriers. We would argue that for young people most at risk of unemployment, when we start working with them aged 13 or 14, there needs to be consideration given to a higher outcomes payment in the Social Impact Bond social investment structure to young people who have these particular barriers to employment and potentially lower rates of payment, so a differentiated rate card, to use the social investment jargon, that reflects what—

Q30 Richard Graham: Why is that? Obviously it is fantastic if people can get paid more money, but what would the difference be? Is this a psychological thing about—

Luke McCarthy: As Richard said, when the young people are selected for the Prince's Trust programmes, they make a decision about whether a four-week programme is the right intervention for them or a 12-week programme. In our case, we work with young people at early intervention over a five-year programme because they have such significant risk factors around their personal skills, often around their family situation, mental health and all of these things. To provide the right level of support



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for a young person with all of those challenging backgrounds to progress is a much longer, much more intensive and much more expensive intervention.

Q31 Richard Graham: The cash thing is about the amount of cash that ThinkForward thinks you need to get in order to be able to provide that?

Luke McCarthy: It is the amount it costs to provide support to properly support a young person to progress.

Q32 Richard Graham: Okay, thank you. Richard, how about your experience in these three different programmes, or two so far, really?

Richard Chadwick: Thinking about the Youth Obligation, looking ahead, again it comes back to the idea that all young people will be starting at a different point. If the Youth Obligation can take young people from those different points and get them into employment for a more tailored assessment and delivery of programmes approach, then that would be more successful. An example would be the intensive activity programme that is part of the Youth Obligation, which I understand is three weeks of intensive work around job interviews, applications and things like that. That will work for a number of young people who are closer to the jobs market and they will learn a lot through that and it will be really valuable.

For young people who are further away from the employment it won't work, in our experience, and over 50% of the young people who we support are coming from that long-term unemployed background. The better thing to do with that group of young people is to work on some of what we would call soft skills, but they are much more important at that point in time.

Q33 Richard Graham: What age do you start with people on The Prince's Trust programmes, Richard?

Richard Chadwick: We start in secondary school and then we kick in with our employment programmes from 16 onwards.

Q34 Richard Graham: Do either of you encourage people to go on the National Citizen Service programmes?

Richard Chadwick: We would do. The design of NCS was originally based on the Prince's Trust Team programme—the one that Samantha did. We recognise, absolutely, the benefits that young people get from NCS.

Q35 Richard Graham: Moving to Samantha and Kiianu, I want to turn it around a little bit. Inevitably in these sorts of inquiries the focus tends to be on what support the Government give, what programmes they come up, what cash they come up, how Jobcentre Plus does and so on? I want to slightly turn it around the other way and say, "What sorts of contacts did you have at school with actual employers who explained what they were looking for?" Employers sometimes feel that we in Government and young people see that the primary reason for having them is to provide



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jobs for young people, whereas their primary purpose for existing is to develop a business, grow it and, through that, provide opportunities that need certain skills. What sort of sense did you have when you were at school about what sort of skills might be needed to win a job?

Samantha Kerr: Nothing at all.

Kiianu Glasgow: At the end of school, it wasn't an employer but a staff member who I had a really good relationship with who did talk me through what a person specification is when employers are looking for staff. But it wasn't really detailed or I didn't feel that I was provided with any information in order for me to go out in the working world and feel ready.

Q36 **Richard Graham:** Have either of you had the chance to go back to your schools and talk to them about the journey that you have been on and what is involved in getting a job and how fulfilling or frustrating it can be? Have you had that chance, Kiianu?

Kiianu Glasgow: They were quite surprised that I actually found a job, to be honest, but they were quite uplifted. The stereotype was that I would be unemployed. When I came back and I was employed I told them how it was all down to ThinkForward and the great support I have received and that possibly if employment advisers did had the right skills to empower young people maybe more young people would be coming back.

Q37 **Richard Graham:** What sort of reaction did you get from the people at your school?

Kiianu Glasgow: They were just really surprised. They said well done and everything, but they were more surprised than anything.

Q38 **Richard Graham:** Samantha?

Samantha Kerr: I am actually planning to go back to my old high school and hopefully have a chat with the year 10s and year 11s. They now have to stay in education until 18 or work, so I would really like to do that.

Richard Graham: Chairman, let me leave Richard and Luke with the thought that one of the great things you can do is to encourage people you have successfully helped, once they have climbed up the ladder, to make sure the ladder is rolled down to inspire the next generation of school leavers. Then people can see someone who was in their position a year or two before and has made it, and explain how and why and what made a difference.

Chair: It is great, isn't it?

Q39 **James Cartlidge:** I don't think Richard mentioned the Jobcentre Plus Support for Schools initiative, and you have not been too positive about schools careers service or about the Jobcentre, so I am not sure what your hopes are for that. This was announced in January, with Jobcentre



staff potentially going into schools. Luke, how hopeful are you about the impact that could have?

Luke McCarthy: We are intrigued—I think that is probably the best term. Having worked in partnership with schools, we would strongly advocate an early intervention approach, as I said. I would have some questions about how it was pitched and branded. If it is a Jobcentre Plus initiative, we have heard some of the negativity about some of the connotations. There would be some questions for me about the knowledge of the Jobcentre staff about the requirements and the ways of working with young people.

A big part of what the progression coaches do, as we have heard, is identifying a career that is right for a young person and then working back from that on what steps they need to take. There is a whole network of steps that a young person is going to need to take from 14 in school to getting a job at 18. That is potentially vocational options and college options after school. There is a missing piece in the jigsaw about what the skillsets and experience of a typical Jobcentre Plus member of staff might be.

James Cartlidge: It is demand-led, so the school has to request it

Luke McCarthy: Yes. We select schools based on there being a high number of young people at risk. We then select young people within those schools.

Q40 **James Cartlidge:** But this service will also be demand-led, so is there a danger that schools that don't take careers quite as proactively as others may not involve themselves anyway?

Luke McCarthy: I am sure that will be the case. Schools that are focused mainly on getting young people through their GCSEs are probably less concerned about the employment outcomes. For instance, we have recently launched with four schools in Nottingham North constituency. Of the four schools there, the one that has the highest rate of young people in positive destinations post-school has the lowest GCSE results, but we know that it has a wide range of employer partners that go into the school and give tailored advice about what the opportunities are.

Richard Chadwick: I would link it in with a medium or large-sized employer in the local area, so it wouldn't just be someone from the Jobcentre. It would also be someone who is able to partner and say, "These are the sorts of skills we are looking for in our workplace as an example." Our experience says that kids would respond to that more than a Jobcentre person going in on their own.

Luke McCarthy: I would be interested in the model of what that support looks like and look at how lessons have been learned from Prince's Trust and ThinkForward initiatives in schools. There are a number of organisations that have delivered successfully in schools. I would like to



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hope that those organisations were considered to share their experience in designing that methodology and potentially be involved with delivery of some of the pilot work and designing what it looks like, rather than another initiative, as we talked about before, without necessarily any testing or learning from what had happened on the ground and what was successful.

Chair: Thank you very much. That was very good evidence and immensely helpful.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Gillian Econopouly, Dean Smith, Chris Oxford and Jaden Waugh.

Q41 **Chair:** Would you please begin by identifying yourselves for the record?

Dean Smith: I am Dean Smith, group HR operations director for Carillion plc. I have responsibility for the apprentice strategy at Carillion.

Chris Oxford: I am Christopher Oxford, an assistant project engineer recently from an apprenticeship with Carillion.

Jaden Waugh: I am Jaden. I have finished my apprenticeship with Carillion and have just started my HNC.

Gillian Econopouly: I am Gillian Econopouly, head of policy and research at the Construction Industry Training Board. We are a non-departmental public body under the Department for Education.

Q42 **Heidi Allen:** The first question is to Chris and Jaden. I don't know whether you were in the last session and heard any of it, but we didn't talk about apprenticeships at all as being an option for those young people when they came out of school. I would be interested to know why both of you chose an apprenticeship. Was it an idea you had on your own? How did you reach that conclusion? Who or what supported you to get into an apprenticeship in the first place?

Chris Oxford: I was at Dudley Sixth, a sixth-form college that was connected to our school, so we were pushed towards going there. All of our friends would have laughs and jokes about how we could do an apprenticeship and that sort of stuff, but it was always seen as the worst thing to do. It was not ever put forward to us as something to do, but then I went on to do my A-levels. I got halfway through my first year and it just wasn't for me. Some people don't learn in that sort of way. I didn't and I thought I wanted to do something different. They were like, "You can go to our BTEC side and go to the other part of the college and learn there and do these sort of courses", but I didn't really want to do that so I started having a look around on the national apprenticeships website, and that is where I found an apprenticeship.

Q43 **Heidi Allen:** Why did you and all your friends think it was the worst thing that you could have done?

Chris Oxford: It's a bit bad. We were a bit snobby in a sense and we looked at it as if you go for an apprenticeship when you get the worst grades. It was always put across to us that if you got good grades you go and do your A-levels and then progress to university. That was the route that was shown to us.

Q44 **Chair:** Chris, did anyone say to you, for example, that the top 40% of apprentices earn more immediately, and we expect over their lifetime, than the bottom 40% of graduates, and that this is a real option for



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people to go into?

Chris Oxford: That was never really put across to us.

Richard Graham: Frank's sales pitch wasn't made, I don't think.

Q45 **Chair:** No, I think it is terrible. The university pitch was made?

Chris Oxford: Yes, it was more the university pitch. Once we had a careers fair in the main hall and we all went in and looked around these different things. At the time I was looking at joining the military service, so I was looking more at those. There was one stand for apprentices but the rest of it was, "Come to our college and get your BTECs or A-levels and then go on to university." The apprenticeship side was not mainly put across to us.

Q46 **Heidi Allen:** Was it just you googling?

Chris Oxford: Yes. It was talking to family and they said, "You could have a look at apprenticeships" and then me googling and I found the national apprenticeships website.

Q47 **Heidi Allen:** What about you, Jaden?

Jaden Waugh: My background is pretty similar to Christopher's. I went to college and didn't enjoy it. Then I went to my careers adviser at college. I knew that I wanted to be a civil engineer, so I told them what I wanted to do and they said, "Look at this website, look at this one" and they gave me a few tips on how to write a CV and things like that. In the end I applied, so that was the way I got into the apprenticeship.

Q48 **Ms Karen Buck:** Do you think that was because they didn't have enough time to spend with you, or was it more indifference?

Jaden Waugh: Do you mean from school?

Ms Karen Buck: You said what you wanted to do—to be a civil engineer—and then you were just told to go and look at some websites. Is that because there simply isn't the time to spend talking you through what the right path would be?

Jaden Waugh: Yes. They have to go around thousands of students every day, so basically the best thing for them to do is—

Ms Karen Buck: It wasn't a lack of interest; it was a lack of time?

Jaden Waugh: Yes.

Q49 **Heidi Allen:** Had you done the same as Christopher; having started your A-levels, you thought it wasn't for you?

Jaden Waugh: I knew what I wanted to do, so I thought I was wasting my time. If I knew what I wanted to do then, why shouldn't I just go and do it? So that is what I did.

Q50 **Heidi Allen:** Does that mean that you didn't know you wanted to be a



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civil engineer before you picked your A-levels and then it kind of dawned on you a little bit later?

Jaden Waugh: Yes.

- Q51 **James Cartlidge:** I think it is an incredibly important point about the perception. Chris, you said about seeing it as, to be blunt, something that was quite low level. To clarify, was that because that was how it was presented to you or was that your peer group's social perception?

Chris Oxford: It was half and half really. It wasn't that well presented to us as being a good thing to go into. It was more like you want to get your A-levels and your degree.

- Q52 **James Cartlidge:** When you were speaking to your mates, did they say similar sorts of things?

Chris Oxford: Yes. The mates, the friends and everything, they were like, "If you're not capable of learning at university, then go and do an apprenticeship."

- Q53 **James Cartlidge:** Jaden, did you get that impression?

Jaden Waugh: Yes. Initially when I went to my college tutor and told her that this wasn't for me and I wanted to go on to an apprenticeship scheme, her words were like, "It is not really a good thing to do." I was quite shocked at the response.

- Q54 **Chair:** How many of those who were giving advice had ever been apprenticed themselves?

Jaden Waugh: None of them.

- Q55 **James Cartlidge:** What were your expectations of going into it against how you now feel about it?

Jaden Waugh: I love it now.

Chris Oxford: It is amazing. I went back to school a year into my apprenticeship and spoke to one of my tutors. My friend went with me who was one of the people who was actually into apprenticeships. He is now working at Tesco, but he went and did his BTECs and wanted to go into motor sport engineering. My tutor gave him a bit of a kick and said, "Why aren't you doing what Chris does? You should be doing that." He was like, "I might give up teaching and move to that".

- Q56 **James Cartlidge:** Is your advice to someone who is in the position where they are weighing up their options to look at them equally? Obviously it depends on the individual but, Jaden, do you think people should look at them equally?

Jaden Waugh: No. I believe if you know what you want to do then definitely take the apprenticeship route. I do quite a lot of volunteering now and that is exactly what I tell them, "If you know, then don't waste your time, do an apprenticeship".



Q57 **Chair:** Do you go back into college and school and tell people, “Never mind what you are told, this is a real option”?

Jaden Waugh: Yes.

Chris Oxford: I did have an opportunity to go to a school with Branwen—just behind me—and speak to some people, but unfortunately I was ill that day. Something I definitely want to get across to people is that apprenticeships are a good thing to do and not just to think you get paid a little bit of money. At the end of the day you are learning as well as being paid so there is more incentive than just going to college.

Q58 **James Cartlidge:** Turning now to Dean about employing young people, there are different challenges in employing young people. What is your approach to that?

Dean Smith: We have a couple of approaches. From a career perspective, we recruit young apprentices for our skills base. We know we have an ageing workforce—so, gas and hard FM—and it is clear where we employ these people and we have an issue arising. Secondly, we will bid for a construction project and be there for a couple of years. In those instances the project will have apprenticeship targets and school visit targets. We operate on a couple of levels and what you heard from the Prince’s Trust is relevant to us as well. We would connect with a Prince’s Trust-type set-up to bring young people who are furthest away from the workplace into apprenticeships as part of that project. We are quite adept at managing both what we need for ourselves and what the project would demand us to deliver for the community benefits and so on.

You need the same sort of methods. You need good mentoring, to be able to relate to the schools and work with parents. You have to put a lot of effort into those young people and accept along the way that one or two will decide it is not for them and move on. I have to say now that generally, whether it is from projects or direct intake, we don’t get problems with young people who see it, once they start, as a career. It is very rewarding not only for them but for the people who look after them as well. It is really good.

Chair: Gillian, we have lots of questions for you at the end.

Q59 **Richard Graham:** I want to come back to Dean and Gillian about the challenges that you find for recruiting apprentices. Everything you have said confirms all my experience in Gloucester, which is that once young people see what the opportunity to earn as well as learn is and have an idea of what the businesses do, which often exceeds their wildest expectations, the excitement of some of the things happening, then everybody is up, up and away. But it is the beginning bit of opening up people’s thinking to the idea that there are these wonderful opportunities called apprenticeships with schools that are very busy, have a lot of things going on, as I think Karen suggested earlier. How do you get the ball rolling? What is your process for that?



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Dean Smith: There are several ways. We are lucky that, as a large company, we can afford to have recruitment systems and once you have a system and a digital link to young people, whether it is through recruitment or mobile phone, then you can start to get those vacancies into everybody. It is quite an equalisation process.

Q60 **Richard Graham:** What is your main route? Is it through putting something on Facebook?

Dean Smith: We have a recruitment system that will immediately post a vacancy anywhere you want to post it, whether it is LinkedIn or the Jobcentre.

Q61 **Richard Graham:** Does that work, Chris and Jaden? If you have Carillion out there pushing out stuff, you still need to be in a receptive mode to get it and understand what it is about. How do you think young people can best hear of the sorts of opportunities you have had? Do apprenticeship fairs work best, for example, or some other method?

Chris Oxford: Apprenticeship fairs are good, but it is a matter of getting them to go to the apprenticeship fairs in the first place. It is about whether they actually want to go to it. It comes down to advertising, in a sense, and getting these things across to them, how to get that across to kids and younger people these days. I would say TV is good, but I don't watch TV that much.

Q62 **Richard Graham:** That is also very expensive. Most apprenticeships are going to be with small employers who do not have advertising budgets for jobs. What works best? Jaden, what do you think?

Jaden Waugh: Social media, definitely. That is where a lot of the apprenticeships are advertised now.

Q63 **Richard Graham:** What social media do you look at most there?

Jaden Waugh: Twitter and Facebook.

Q64 **Richard Graham:** Twitter works for the younger generation too, does it?

Jaden Waugh: Yes.

Gillian Econopouly: One thing that we have found in talking to young people is that they like to get information online and very often, as Jaden and Chris's experience shows, people who find apprenticeships find them in spite of being set back at several stages. Over the past year we have been working on a website called Go Construct, which we have launched. It is a shop window for the industry. Instead of CITB doing it unilaterally, which we had tried to do in the past—frankly, it didn't work—we joined up with over 100 people in the industry to get together and co-design what would work.

We use a lot of tactics on there that are very familiar to social media users. You can take a personality quiz about what construction job would suit you best, or you can indicate the kind of environment you prefer to



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work in, and then you get a range of roles and how much they pay, which is a very important motivating factor for young people. In the year that that has been launched, we have had 125,000 young people visiting the website and we have now had over 1,500 school visits coming out of that.

The next phase is that once we have inspired people with what the opportunities are, we will be creating an opportunity for them to experience construction. The next phase of development is about an experience-matching service where young people can say, "I am interested in this sector" and we find them somewhere locally that they can have a careers talk, a site visit and some work experience. We find that that is what really converts people into being able to say, "I want to be an apprentice."

- Q65 **Richard Graham:** Gillian, how do you find getting over the idea that you can work in, say, the construction sector but do an apprenticeship that is maybe business admin, marketing, IT; that you are not purely recruiting chunky young men who are going to be bashing new houses up? How do you get over the range of different skills that you need in the construction industry?

Gillian Econopouly: It is a real issue. One thing that we find often is that the information young people get from schools tends to be quite outdated—big burly people outside in the rain—and we know that there is a lot more to it. We find that case studies work incredibly well, particularly vox pop video-style case studies in which someone like Jaden or Chris talks about their daily life and what they do. That could be someone who works in an office or on site, who does the financing or a creative job in a company like Carillion or other construction companies. We find that peer-to-peer engagement makes a big difference. Even things like apprentices saying, "I get a wage and, unlike my friends who are in full-time college courses, I can afford to have a car" resonates with a lot of young people.

- Q66 **Richard Graham:** Do you find that doing short films—one minute maximum—of, let's say, a young woman working in the construction industry and then putting it out there on social media helps break down the stereotypes?

Gillian Econopouly: It really does. We have had a lot of media success lately with two young women who are stonemasons in Scotland, and one of them works on Orkney Cathedral. We did a video about her and we talked to her parents and her apprenticeship tutor. That was fantastically popular because people never really thought of that as being a construction career or putting this kind of person together with that kind of apprenticeship.

- Q67 **Chair:** We have got a paradox already though, Gillian. In the earlier session we learnt that in a sense Jobcentre Plus was trying to get people on to a treadmill, and there you are trying to talk to these young people.



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How do you overcome this particular barrier so that Jobcentre Plus is encouraging what you are doing and making sure that young people who are not looking at social media actively might do so, and seeing you as partners in this endeavour?

Gillian Econopouly: Nationally we get a lot of good engagement with Jobcentre Plus. They were involved in all the planning for Go Construct.

Q68 **Chair:** That is nationally, but what about locally where people have to turn up?

Gillian Econopouly: This is absolutely the point. Nationally we get a lot of good engagement. It is quite patchy when it comes down to a local level. I think what is really important is to help Jobcentre Plus advisers understand what the actual requirements are in the job market. Sometimes you might get someone into Jobcentre Plus who has a general interest in construction, so the easy thing to do is just put them on a course that is being offered at a local college. What we would like to see is Jobcentre Plus staff knowing what the requirements are in that area. They might say to you, "Go and do a bricklaying course", but we actually needed scaffolding. If they understand the local labour market needs, they can put people on a pathway to a career, which I think is what the young people in the first session said was missing.

Dean Smith: From a Jobcentre Plus perspective, it worked extremely well for us when we had a national contract manager who knew Carillion. We are a construction and FM business, so we have 10,000 people in non-construction work. If we were to then look for apprenticeships in a particular area, our national contract manager would go into that cluster of Jobcentres and pave the way and set up the ready-for-work programmes. That kind of fell away—it has been gone for several years now. I think it got confused with the Work programme launch and who did what. That is the missing bit for us, because that worked extremely well. They were able to set up all those programmes that we have heard from the Prince's Trust, and we were able to provide them with all the information they needed on the range of jobs that we had, from cleaning and catering to construction. That is where it has moved for us from what used to work well before.

Chair: It is a tragedy, isn't it, because we are short of skilled people?

Dean Smith: Yes.

Q69 **Heidi Allen:** I have a quick question for Gillian about the scope of the website. Who has driven that? Is it the construction industry saying, "We desperately need people"? What has made this happen?

Gillian Econopouly: The demand for skills is definitely a driver. Over the next five years—and this is a post-Brexit vote reforecast—we will need 157,000 new construction workers in the UK. But it was about CITB co-ordinating a lot of different efforts that were happening. There is a range of fantastic initiatives that individual companies are doing to promote



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construction to young people, career changers—really everyone. It was a repeated request from industry to join that together. What we try to do is create the shell of what the website is and then encourage employers to bring forward their own case studies and their own content because they can tell the story much better than we can.

Q70 Heidi Allen: So you are just holding the website and letting them feed the information in?

Gillian Econopouly: Really co-ordinating the information and we put the funding behind it. We were happy to do that because industry said that was a very important thing to them. The image issue comes up again and again in construction conversations and this is one way we can try to tackle that.

Q71 Ms Karen Buck: One of the things that worries me a little bit is the expectation that young people are looking for themselves. You had to look for yourselves to find not just the area that you want to work in, but then you happened to hit on the right company to find the right job for you. I wonder whether the answer to that is the extent to which employers such as yourselves would use the portal companies—in London we have the London Apprenticeship Company—so that everybody who is interested in an apprenticeship logs on to a central company that does apprenticeships rather than doing it on their own.

Dean Smith: For example, we have big engagement with schools. The volunteering policy allows employees to have six days off a year to do work like that. We are connected with the Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service, and we are about to launch the Digital Apprenticeship Service, which again is a method of advertising the vacancies. In addition to your recruitment technology that could connect with pretty much everything and Twitter and social media, you have to build, at the 14 year-old and upward stage, that visit to schools, the fact we have 700 different jobs in our company. We are also sponsoring the UTC for construction, so we are now seeing 14-year-olds going into the UTC. The recruitment system and applying for a job is the tip of the iceberg. There is all this real underpinning work going on engaging with all education providers so that we can start to build that knowledge of what an apprenticeship—

Q72 Ms Karen Buck: I think that is absolutely excellent and I agree with that in-depth work that you do further down the line with schools, but that is still not going to reach a huge potential pool of people who possibly realise sometime after school that this is where they want to go. I am still a little bit unclear about what the best way is for you as employers to work with Jobcentres and others to make sure that you are fishing in the right pool for the young people and young people who are interested in your jobs know where to go to get them.

Gillian Econopouly: I think that local engagement is incredibly important, particularly in construction, because the majority of



construction premises are in SMEs. While Carillion can do some great support with their apprentices, quite a lot of apprentices are in small or even micro-companies, and it is the issue that those companies will probably struggle to find some of that support. What has had some success is where Jobcentre Plus is able to work closely with our advisers on the ground. We have advisers who go and engage with construction employers of all sizes, but particularly smaller employers. Then we have apprenticeship officers who go out and broker the relationship, so they are checking in regularly with the apprentice and providing support to the small employer.

Q73 Ms Karen Buck: Where is that? Where are your working relationships most well developed?

Gillian Econopouly: I can probably send it to you afterwards. We have a huge network, so it can sometimes be very local. I would prefer to follow it up in writing so I can give you all the statistics. What we find is where we are able to have that close connection and sharing of data, on local levels we have established data-sharing protocols with Jobcentre Plus; that is what makes the difference. They can identify and motivate people who want to do an apprenticeship and we can find them employers who are small and would like to have an apprentice but want to make sure they are getting someone who is really motivated and wants to be in the sector.

Dean Smith: CITB has something called skills academies. Where there is a highways project, multiple companies will work a construction skills academy that focuses the roles in one place and that feeds out into the local Jobcentre Plus market. They have a very strong skills academy approach. It was very prominent in the Olympics, which is where it started with skills academies. We will collaborate with our partners in construction companies through the CITB to do that.

Q74 Ms Karen Buck: I sometimes feel that these things work better in medium-sized cities and towns where there is a discrete labour market and those relationships can be built and sustained with a college. When you get into a big city, that can get a bit lost. The information does not always get shared between Jobcentres and you don't have those strong relationships with a college and so on.

Dean Smith: If we have a major project, the first thing we would do is work with Jobcentre Plus and look at umbrella organisations such as the Prince's Trust. We would map out the colleges and look at the schools in the areas where we are doing the work. We would have people on the ground who are dedicated to making those connections work over and above what is required on the project. We can do a very localised approach in a large city or, as you say, if it is a medium-sized city then you can work a broader approach as well. It is very targeted around that.

Q75 Ms Karen Buck: Do you sometimes have the experience of Jobcentres, being volume driven as they are, referring people just to get their



numbers up? Is that ever an issue?

Gillian Econopouly: Our research shows that only 12% of construction employers have engaged with Jobcentre Plus services and, of those, only a third have been successful in recruiting. There is a huge swathe of companies who have not engaged with Jobcentre Plus, and the ones that do say that while they sometimes get good candidates, they do find that construction is treated as a fall-back option. They get a lot of unsuitable CVs from people who are not very motivated. Then, of course, that holds them back from engaging with a Jobcentre again. Having a little bit more information about the sector and making sure the people who are being put forward are actually interested in construction would make it easier for employers to participate.

Q76 Ms Karen Buck: I am being slightly leading here. I have spoken to Jobcentre staff who told me that they find it a problem being at the other end of that. If they are telling jobseekers to push through a certain number of applications in a week in order to meet the criteria for JSA, that does mean that each employer will get a phenomenal number of applications, many of which may not be tailored to fit the needs of the employer. That puts the employer off because they get lots and lots of applications, many of which won't be suitable.

Gillian Econopouly: I think that can happen. The other thing is to understand the dynamics of the way different sectors recruit. We know that a lot of construction companies recruit informally, so it is really important to have Jobcentre Plus staff out there meeting employers where they meet each other, whether that is at a sector group meeting, their local federation or one of our training groups, so they can make those connections and let the employers know that there is an opportunity.

Dean Smith: We used to have very good pre-employment arrangements with Jobcentres when we had a national contract manager. They would have filtered out that and then they would have several weeks of orientation, similar to the Prince's Trust. The people we saw—and remember that the people we saw would be working for our supply chain—had already been through, "Is this really for you? Is this what you want to do?" Where we have a major project it does work rather well because you can build the relationship with the local Jobcentre network. If I was a small micro-company trying to do this on my own in a city it probably would be more difficult.

Q77 Chair: How many unplaced vacancies do you think you have? I am going to talk to you afterwards about Birkenhead, if I may. Given your abilities to attract and to break through barriers, how many more people could you place over and above the ones that you do?

Gillian Econopouly: That we place? We tend to place apprentices and we do quite well at filling the vacancies that we have. One issue is that we have a lot of people applying for apprentices and doing a hedging



system where they are applying for lots of different apprentices. We place the applications we get pretty successfully into apprenticeship roles. I think what we really need to do is create more apprenticeship opportunities, and that is about helping employers to find their way through the bureaucracy that can sometimes exist and letting them know that even as a small employer you can take on an apprentice. We don't really have a problem filling the roles that we have. The problem is that there are a lot of people who would like to be an apprentice and, as Jaden and Chris have said, the attitude towards apprenticeships is changing.

Dean Smith: I think the answer to the question is that if you look at the commitments that we sign up for in our projects, they are overtaken very quickly once you get the momentum and the work experience sequencing going. I was in the Paradise Circus project in Birmingham, and I think within a year they had hit their full targets and they will just keep going once you create the capacity. What we try to do is link the projects together. It is having that continuity, so as one project in Birmingham winds down and another one starts up you don't dismantle all the mechanism you have put in place. In Birmingham, in particular, we have hugely over-delivered on our targets. The answer to your question is that if you build the capacity, and it is very easy to maintain going forward, and you significantly increase the numbers of opportunities you can give people.

Q78 Craig Mackinlay: I am very interested in what we have heard here. We have big employers, and everybody knows they are there, and they know that they have apprenticeships availability. They have the CITB, and everybody knows that they are there. And then we have this big informal market going on, which does its own thing, and that is great and fine and good. Do you think the DWP could do more? How could they do more to encourage employers to think about apprenticeships and work placements?

I have run a business for many years, with 30 employees, which is a reasonable size. I have never had DWP call me, or even try to interact with me, and say, "We've got a lot of youngsters out there who are interested in accountancy—poor them, but for many it is what they want to do—so would you like to think about apprenticeships?" We do take them on, but again that is through the informal market. I have never known the DWP get involved with myself or friends' companies to say, "We could help you to fit some youngsters together in your organisation." Do you think it is a role for DWP at all and, if so, how could they do it?

Gillian Econopouly: It could be a role for Jobcentre Plus and DWP. I think it should be done in partnership and leveraging the relationships that already exist between employers and any federations they belong to, or any local groups or LEPs. I don't think an approach specifically from Jobcentre Plus would resonate as well as a partnership approach coming forward. It is quite similar with the support for schools. It is fantastic to get more outreach in the schools, but what would be great is having



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Jobcentre Plus do that in tandem with companies, organisations that are already going into schools, rather than trying to duplicate and do their own thing.

Dean Smith: It is an interesting conundrum, because the apprenticeship levy is coming in. We are adjusting to how that is going to work and there are a lot of upsides to the levy. There is promotion of apprenticeships more and more, so I think less and less it is being seen as a pass-down option in schools. Potentially what you will find with the apprenticeship levy is that, because the apprenticeships regime focusing on young people is probably going to change, if the Jobcentre Plus role is to encourage maybe people who have been out of work but are older than the normal apprentice intake range, there is scope for the DWP to do more on that. From an apprenticeship levy perspective, now it has become quite a level playing field. The old age elements are disappearing in terms of why you would take a young apprentice on, versus someone who may be in their mid-20s who had finally understood what they want to do and settled down. I think the DWP could do more for the more mature entry into work type apprenticeship routes, which is where the big jobs market is, and promote that more and let employers engage with the first job post-school apprenticeship intake.

Q79 **Craig Mackinlay:** I don't want to get into how the levy may work, but I have heard from some bigger companies that are already doing the right thing and have apprenticeships that they may substitute what they are already doing with a qualifying type of activity within the levy. They are thinking, "We are going to have to pay something so we will almost use our own money under the scheme." Is it going to create more money in the system for apprenticeships, or is it just a different recycling?

Dean Smith: I can only speak for Carillion. First of all, nobody wants to pay the levy, but the reality is that we are already looking at doubling and trebling our apprenticeship intake from outside into employed status. This is not about recycling our own training schemes. You will have that element of an apprenticeship and then you will have other elements where you can now upskill and reskill the existing workforce. There is room for both. If a company is taking the view that this is all too difficult and just recycling it within its own employees, it is not taking the longer term view of the workforce.

From a Carillion plc perspective, we think there are a lot of positives about that. We have just had sight of the new digital system and that appears to be very intuitive and easy to use. We are going into April next year pretty ready for this and we are seeing huge demand from the business to have more apprenticeships at all levels. I think it is a mixture of the campaigning and the change in the levy that is driving those numbers up and that will feed into the school system as well. I think DWP needs to feed that into people who maybe need an entry route into work, which is where again there is scope to do that.

Q80 **Chair:** Chris and Jaden, would you like to add anything before we bring



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this to a conclusion? From what you have heard, what is your last message to us, please?

Chris Oxford: The way that I have seen it since I have left school, when I was in school it was very much low. It was a low level sort of thing to go into, but since then I have seen it come up. It might be because I am in an apprenticeship now, so I look at it more—well, when I was in an apprenticeship—or it might be because it is being advertised more. I think it is coming up, but it still does need to be pushed across to people that it is a good thing to go into.

Jaden Waugh: I do think the information is there now, but the problem is that young people don't know what is out there career-wise. When we go to career fairs, they don't exactly know what a civil engineer is. They know what a teacher or doctor is, but they don't know the more technical side of jobs.

Chair: That is terrific. Thank you for your help. As I represent one of these medium-sized towns that Karen described, if I can come back to you both I would be very grateful and we can learn. Thanks for your evidence. The session was fascinating.