



A difficult nut to crack? How the UK has tackled the youth employment challenge

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In September 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and with growing concern about its economic impact across the UK, the Kickstart Scheme became the latest in a very long line of initiatives targeted at assisting young people to gain entry to the labour market. As the UK emerges from the pandemic and looks ahead, it is opportune to reflect on how policy makers have grappled with the challenge of managing youth transitions into the labour market, with the aim of minimising the risk and incidence of youth unemployment and the scarring effects of youth disengagement.



Harking back to the 1970s, when most young people left education at the age of 15 or 16 and were able to access employment opportunities within their local areas, there was little need for government support. This 'traditional' youth labour market was dismantled in the 1980s following economic restructuring, in particular the demise of traditional manufacturing industries, which hastened the reduction of jobs available to young people. What followed was a raft of policy interventions to stem the flow of youth unemployment; a redefinition of large sections of the education, employment and training systems for young people; and, consequently, an extension of the age at which most young people transition into the labour market.

The purpose of this paper is to map the trajectory of change within youth transitions which has occurred across the UK since the 1970s. The focus includes a review of selected training initiatives that have been introduced to replace 'traditional' youth jobs; the expansion of educational opportunities for young people; and the shifting responsibility for youth transitions within national, regional and local government and, increasingly, outside of government. Foremost, it examines what we have learnt, where we have failed, and how we might move forward.

The 1970s youth labour market – it was alright then?

When the Raising of School Leaving Age (RoSLA) (from 15 years to 16 years) was implemented across England and Wales in 1972 it resulted in nearly two-thirds of young people leaving full-time education as soon as possible, with the majority moving directly into work (Roberts, 1995). A study of school leavers at that time found that most young people joined one of three occupational bands: i) 'careerless'; ii) 'short-term careers'; and iii) 'extended careers' (Ashton and Field, 1976). These bands were characterised by differences in wage levels, promotion prospects, skills requirements and job security. Subsequent research in the late 1970s and early 1980s was able to identify that not only were there broad differences between the types of occupations that young people entered, but that there existed a youth labour market distinct from that available to adults which differed in terms of its entry patterns and the selection criteria used by employers (Ashton et al, 1982). This buoyant youth labour market has been both referred to and challenged by some commentators as being the 'golden age' of employment opportunities for young people (Goodwin and O'Connor,

2005). Moreover, Furlong and Cartmel (2004) pointed to evidence which highlighted that some employers at that time '*perceived young workers as less reliable than adults and in need of greater levels of supervision, both of which carried hidden costs*' (p.1).

By the 1980s, the bottom had dropped out of this clearly defined youth labour market, so that in 1984 only 18 per cent of 16-year-old school leavers were finding jobs (Roberts et al, 1987). The debate shifted from a description of the youth labour market to the causes of its collapse (Maguire, 2001). Ashton et al (1990) attributed the decline in the demand for youth labour throughout the 1980s to changes such as the decline of labour-intensive industries, the impact of new technology, increased business competition and a process of increasing industrial concentration. They argued that such structural changes were irreversible and, regardless of economic conditions, many of the jobs which had traditionally been occupied by young people had been permanently lost. Other commentators were less pessimistic, arguing that young workers were particularly vulnerable to any changes in the levels of employment and unemployment because of their place in the 'labour queue' (Raffe, 1986). The argument here is that when unemployment is high, young people are forced to compete to a much greater extent with those from other sections of the labour force able to offer more in terms of skills and experience, and who may also have fewer demands in terms of training and development (Shelley, 1988). Proponents of this hypothesis maintain that these changes are not permanent and could be reversed by policies aimed at stimulating economic activity. The theoretical explanations underpinning the demise of the youth labour market were accompanied by the introduction of a whole series of measures and initiatives which have attempted to 'solve the problem' of youth unemployment, whilst at the same time attempting to install facets of a national vocational education system.

The training revolution

The UK government first dabbled in state supported training for young people in the mid-1970s and has continued to offer an ever-changing array of programmes. The introduction of the Work Experience Scheme in 1976 and the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) in 1978 were the first attempts to structure training provision for the small number of young people who found themselves out of work. YOP offered six-month work experience placements

to the young unemployed and resembled the current Kickstart Scheme, although the latter offers wage incentives rather than a fixed training allowance. By the early 1980s, youth unemployment had escalated to such an extent that YOP was the destination for more than half of all school leavers entering the labour market (Maguire, 2001). In September 1983, YOP was replaced by the much larger Youth Training Scheme (YTS), which had an enormous £1 billion annual budget, with an emphasis on expanding training opportunities for unemployed 16-18-year-olds. In contrast, Kickstart Scheme, introduced nearly forty years later, has a total budget of £1.9 billion to meet the needs of a much wider age cohort, namely unemployed 16-24-year-olds across Great Britain, until March 2022.

YTS offered all young people (under the age of 18), whether employed or unemployed, a one-year work-experience-based programme (Department of Employment, 1981). For the first time, employers were offered a government training subsidy to support

the first year of apprenticeship training. Before any systematic evaluation had taken place, YTS was extended to a two-year programme from 1986. However, evidence from the many studies which were undertaken of YTS shows that it failed to operate as a high-quality training programme. Despite the huge sums being spent, the cost-effectiveness of the programme was never measured (Skilbeck et al, 1994). A major criticism of the programme was that it was segmented, with different parts of the programme offering varying amounts of training, qualification attainment and chances of securing future employment opportunities (Lee et al, 1990; Roberts, Dench, and Richardson, 1986; Raffe, 1988; Cockburn, 1987). Also, large numbers of young people were 'warehoused' in training activities without progression to the labour market or qualification enhancement (Keep, 1986). When applying for jobs beyond their placement provider, only a small proportion of trainees found the qualifications and experience gained on YTS to be useful (Roberts, 1995).



Criticism of youth training programmes such as YTS is not confined to the UK's experience. Indeed, an international review of youth active labour market policies (ALMPs) found insignificant or even negative effects of labour market training programmes (Caliendo and Schmidl, 2016:17). In particular, the review highlighted negative findings from classroom-based training programmes, especially when operational under poor economic conditions. Crucially, a significant issue with most ALMPs, particularly training and subsidised employment programmes, is their propensity to demonstrate large deadweight, substitution, and displacement effects. Evidence on the impact of work experience and training programmes in the UK, notably the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), found that the deadweight and substitution effects varied between 40 per cent and 80 per cent, according to the period studied (Begg et al, 1991). Similar concerns about high deadweight, displacement and substitution effects were raised by the National Audit Office in their review of the Kickstart Scheme (NAO, 2021).

- **Deadweight** means that some of those young people employed as a result of a programme replace other young people who would have been taken on had the scheme not existed or would themselves have found work, irrespective of the intervention.
- **Substitution** occurs when labour market programmes cause employers to replace employees with programme participants, or choose programme participants over unemployed non-participants.
- **Displacement** refers to the loss of employment in other organisations owing to the competitive advantage gained by some employers recruiting programme participants.

However, such effects can be countered by the argument that, in times of recession and high youth unemployment, the availability of training and/or work experience options to young people offers attachment to the labour market and reduces the risk of the disabling effects of long-term unemployment, namely prolonged economic and social exclusion.

The performance of youth training programmes may be linked to their size and targeting. It has been found that closely targeted programmes are more effective than generic programmes (OECD, 1993) and that, by scaling up interventions, it becomes more difficult to tailor these to meet the needs of specific groups of individuals and sectors (O'Higgins, 2001). Again, these findings resonate with evidence from training programmes that were operational in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s. Large scale programmes such as YTS functioned as unintentional secondary and segmented labour markets. Employers used the programmes for different purposes, notably to subsidise their own programmes of training, to test out the young person's suitability for future employment and to create temporary low-level jobs rather than a high-quality training programme for all young people (Roberts et al, 1986; Lee et al, 1990; Raffe, 1987).

In 1990, YTS was replaced by Youth Training (YT), followed by Youth Credits (YCs) in 1991 and Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) in 1995. Each programme was characterised by a period of government-subsidised work experience, mainly with private employers, off-the-job training and a low-level training allowance paid to programme participants (O'Higgins, 2001). Budget cuts, devolution of responsibility for youth training to local level, and diminishing numbers of young people entering government-supported training, were common during the 1990s and beyond. In the 2000s and 2010s, however, new models of youth training programmes were introduced, with an increasing focus on managing youth unemployment rates, as opposed to developing a national youth training programme. Key examples include the New Deal for Young People (NDYP) and the Youth Contract (YC). It is interesting to note that later programmes targeted a much wider age cohort of 16(18)-24-year-olds. Moreover, they were linked to welfare receipt through their management by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and separated from apprenticeship programmes, which were managed by the Department for Education (DfE). Set out below are summaries of the delivery models and performance of the NDYP and the YC, as well as messages about key lessons learnt.

New Deal for Young People (NDYP) - 1998-2009

Designed to avoid the poor performance of the training schemes of the 1980s, NDYP was based on good practice derived from international evidence (Gregg, 2009). Following pilots in twelve pathfinder areas, it was rolled out across the UK from April 1998. The programme was funded through the UK government having levied a £5.2 billion windfall tax on the privatised utility companies in 1997 in order to pay for its welfare-to-work programme. NDYP was mandatory and targeted 18-24-year-olds who were unemployed and had been claiming Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) for a minimum of six months. Several disadvantaged groups were eligible to access the programme before the minimum six-month eligibility threshold.

After an initial gateway period of four months, which included intensive job search, participants who remained unemployed could pursue one of four options: i) subsidised employment (including a wage subsidy, a training grant and self-employment support); ii) voluntary work; iii) full-time education and training; and iv) environmental work. Each option lasted six months, apart from the education and training option which lasted twelve months. Participants who remained on the programme at the end of their selected option returned for a second intensive job search intervention (Hasluck and Green, 2007). It is interesting to note that NDYP included environmental work, at a time when climate change issues remained a relatively low-level policy priority.

Extensive evaluation of NDYP demonstrated positive programme impacts. Van Reenan (2004) and De Georgi (2005) found that there was a five percentage point increase in the number of young people going into work (a 20 per cent increase) and that the costs (net of benefit payments) were more than justified by the savings. When compared with a control group, participation in the programme was also found to reduce the overall length of time a young person remained unemployed and claiming benefits. In addition, young people undertaking the employment option within NDYP had a much greater propensity to remain in employment, in contrast to participants who had undertaken education and training, environmental or voluntary work (Beale et al, 2008).

Overall, some 60,000 more young people were estimated to have moved into jobs (including subsidised jobs) than would have been the case without the programme (Anderton et al, 1999), and no evidence of a negative impact from a substitution effect was found (Beale et al, 2008). Furthermore, the changes in employment levels as a result of NDYP were estimated to have increased national income by more than £200 million per year (NAO, 2002).

In terms of cost, the initial estimate for total expenditure on NDYP over five years was £3,150 million, although only around half of this budget allocation was spent (Education and Employment Select Committee, 2001). Importantly, programme costs and performance need to be contextualised by its operational environment, i.e. during a period of relatively low youth unemployment. A number of changes were made to the programme over the length of its implementation, before it was replaced with the 'Flexible New Deal' in 2009 and later disbanded in 2010.



The Youth Contract (YC) - 2012-2015

The Youth Contract (YC) was designed to support young people aged 16-24 years, who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) to achieve access to positive paths of education, employment or training. For the first time in the UK, a policy intervention to tackle youth unemployment was delivered through a payments-by-results (PbR) and 'black box' delivery model. This involved management of the programme being devolved from central government through a supply chain of prime providers, who derived payment through their performance targets. Targets were linked to the proportion of young people who were recruited and retained on the programme, as well as to the number of participants who secured sustained outcomes as a direct result of their programme participation.

The YC policy spanned two government departments, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department for Education (DfE). While the overall programme was overseen by DWP, the DfE, which has statutory responsibility for 16-and 17-year-olds, ran a separate intervention to that which existed for the 18-plus group. As well as wage incentives, the YC for 18-24-year-olds included apprenticeship payment incentives, subsidised jobs and work experience places, and sector-based work academies which offered a mixture of training, work experience, and a job interview at a local firm arranged through Jobcentre Plus. £126m of YC funding was allocated to support disengaged 16-17-year-olds in England between April 2013 and March 2015 (Department for Work and Pensions, 2014). The core target group was initially young people with no GCSEs at A*-C. The offer to the younger cohort included a programme of intensive support over a twelve-month period, in order that they participated in education, an apprenticeship or a job with training.

The statistical results from the delivery of the YC for 18-24-year-olds show that only a nominal 2,070 YC wage incentive payments were made to employers for young people who completed the 26 weeks full employment period between June 2012 and May 2013 (Jordan et al. 2013). The budget for the YC for 16- and 17-year-olds was spent to engage fewer than 20,000 young people and to achieve sustained outcomes for approximately 2,500 of them (March 2014 figures) (Work and Pensions Select Committee, 2012). While the eligibility criteria for entry to the programme was subsequently extended for the younger cohort, it did not significantly expand the take-up of the programme. This was largely attributed to the difficulties that prime providers and their supply chains encountered in recruiting eligible young people, inaccurate data and/or the inability to access local data (Maguire, 2015a; Newton et al., 2014). The evaluation concluded that insufficient funding was available up-front in the national model to support the recruitment process and the intensive work that often had to be undertaken to develop soft skills before young people (particularly the most disadvantaged) were able to progress into pre-engagement and sustained outcomes (Newton et al., 2014).

The YC was subsequently wound up in 2015.



Expansion in post-16 full-time learning and the demise of youth apprenticeships

The decrease in the number of jobs open to school-leavers, and the failure of large-scale programmes such as YTS and its successors to establish a credible training programme for young people coincided with a substantial shift in government thinking towards investment in expanding opportunities for young people in post-16 and higher education. From the mid- 1980s there was a dramatic rise in the proportion of 16-year-olds continuing to participate in full-time education, with less steep but still significant increases for 17- and 18-year-olds. Among 16-year-olds, the participation rate rose from 48 per cent in 1987 to 75 per cent in 1993, while for 17-and 18-year-olds it rose from 33 per cent in 1987 to 55 per cent in 1993. Interestingly, however, post-16 participation rates began to plateau by the mid-1990s. Significant growth also began to occur in full-time and part-time enrolments in higher education from 1979 (Murphy, 1994).

The increase in participation rates until the mid-1990s has been attributed to a lack of jobs for young people as a result of the recession in 1990; the withdrawal of entitlement to unemployment benefit for 16 and 17 year olds in 1988; the introduction of the GCSE which increased qualification attainment rates; a change of funding rates to schools and colleges which encouraged an expansion in the recruitment of 16- and 17-year olds; and the introduction of new vocational qualifications, such as GNVQs (Maguire and Maguire, 1997). However, an expansion in full-time post-16 education rates did not coincide with improvements to young people's qualification attainment. Spours (1991) and Richardson et al (1995) reported that significant proportions of young people who were participating in full-time post-16 learning were subsequently leaving the education system at 17 with little or no enhancement to their qualifications. Moreover, research which examined employers' demands for youth labour in two contrasting local labour markets in the 1990s found, in one locality, that demand for young workers exceeded supply. This was largely attributed to increased post-16 education participation rates (Maguire, 2001)

From 1997, the Labour Government's ambition was to expand learning opportunities in order to improve economic success both nationally and internationally, with education (as opposed to youth training) being centre stage (Department for Education and Employment, 1998). This led to a mushrooming of different types of provision (apart from A levels), which opened up alternative routes into post-16 and higher education (Keep and Mayhew, 1996). Interventions such as the national roll-out, in 2004, of Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) targeted at encouraging young people from lower income families to participate in post-16 education, further enhanced participation and retention rates in full-time post-16 learning and reversed the plateauing effect. EMAs offered young people weekly payments and achievement bonuses and were shown to improve participation and retention rates in full-time post-16 learning (Middleton et al, 2005). EMAs in England were subsequently scrapped by the Coalition government in 2011, but remain operational in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

A further measure to increase post-16 education and training rates in England was the implementation of the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) among young people to 17 years from 2013, and to their 18th birthday from 2015. This participation must comprise 'appropriate full-time education or training; a contract of apprenticeship; or part-time education or training towards an accredited qualification as part of a full-time occupation or alongside an occupation of more than 20 hours a week'¹. Within the Coalition government's implementation of the RPA, there was a lack of immediate enforcement, thereby implying a voluntary commitment on the part of young people to participate (Department for Education, 2010). In addition, there was no independent evaluation of the impact of the legislation on education, employment or training opportunities for young people. Post-16 destination data provide evidence that rates of participation in education have increased since 2013, although training rates have fallen. This indicates that the RPA is encouraging more young people to remain in school, although it is impossible to isolate its impact from other changes which occurred over the same period, such as the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. The devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

have not implemented the RPA and continue to pursue their own policies to promote the value of post-16 learning (Maguire, 2021).

The introduction of Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) in 1995 (see also page 4) was an attempt to rebuild apprenticeship training and, at the same time, restore some credibility for youth training. MAs policy also signalled a move away from combining employer-based training with initiatives targeted at reducing high youth unemployment. Moreover, the overall funding commitment and number of places available were reduced. It resulted in a two-tier training system for young people, with MAs being employer-led and a lower status government-led programme, Youth Training (later National Traineeships), running alongside (Mason, 2020). Evaluation evidence from MA prototypes which had been launched in 1994 found that over fifty per cent of young people who had participated in the programme had five or more GCSEs at Grade C or above and, therefore, employers were able to be highly selective (Everett and Leman, 1995). It was also evident from the national MA programmes that 16 and 17-year-olds comprised only 40 per cent of entrants to the programme (Everett, Tu, and Caughey, 1999), with the majority of training being undertaken by adults, as well as by existing employees (Mason, 2020).

Mason (2020) reported that apprenticeship training numbers for young people have continued to fall in recent years and have failed to become the panacea to high-quality training and work to more than a small number of young people. Moreover, he asserted that this trend was exacerbated not only by the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, but also by the reduction in government's financial support for training by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which fall outside the scope of levy. Funding difficulties are also compounded by inequality in access to apprenticeship training. For example, evidence published by the Social Mobility Commission (2020) showed that, between 2015/16 and 2017/18, the number of apprenticeship starters from disadvantaged backgrounds in England fell by more than a third (36%), compared to a 23 percentage point reduction for non-disadvantaged apprentices. In addition, disadvantaged apprentices (all ages) are less likely to complete their training than their non-disadvantaged peers (Ibid: 9).

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/notes/division/5/1/1/1/1>

Defining the youth cohort

Over the last fifty years there have been significant changes, both within the UK and internationally, relating to defining youth transitions in terms of the age categories that are included and, more importantly, in the interchange of the terms 'youth unemployment', 'NEET' (not in education, employment or training) and, most recently, 'economic inactivity', to capture the scale of young people's economic and social disengagement and exclusion. Moreover, issues relating to capturing accurate statistics to gauge the scale of the 'problem' and reach some groups of young people, continue to frustrate policy makers' attempts to implement inclusive education, employment and training (EET) measures.

During the 1970s, when the majority of young people left school at 16, the term 'young person' or 'school leaver' implicitly meant a 16- or 17-year-old who was entering or had recently entered the labour market for the first time. The small number of young people who were unable to transition into the labour market, and had left education, were eligible to claim welfare support and were classified as unemployed or economically inactive (due to parenthood, disability or ill health). The term 'NEET' emerged in the UK in the late 1990s, following changes to unemployment benefit entitlement regulations that had been implemented in 1988, and which, essentially, removed young people under the age of 18 from the unemployment statistics (Maguire and Thompson, 2007). This had led to high rates of unknown or unrecorded destinations among young people in the UK. For example, research carried out in two separate studies in South Glamorgan (Istance, Rees and Williamson, 1994) and Wearside (Wilkinson, 1995) demonstrated that a considerable number of young people were disconnected from support services. The South Glamorgan study estimated that, at any one time, between 16 per cent and 23 per cent of 16 and 17-year-olds in the area were NEET and many failed to appear in official statistics. Of the 250 16-24-year-olds interviewed as part of the Wearside study, 64 per cent were NEET, with 39 per cent stating that they were registered as unemployed.

While there was a subsequent expansion of the term NEET to cover a much wider age cohort, both within the UK and internationally, typically to 16-24-year-olds (Maguire, 2015b) and most recently 16-29-year-olds (Eurofound, 2016) and up to the age of 35 (Maguire and Keep, 2021) due to protracted youth transitions, this extended use has attracted criticism. For example,

the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2015) asserted that, worldwide, unlike for unemployment or employment, there is no international standard for the definition of NEET. A number of studies have segmented the NEET group in terms of young people's differing characteristics and their propensity to (re)engage in education, employment or training (Eurofound, 2016; Spielhofer et al, 2009). For example, Eurofound (2016) classified NEETs in Europe into seven main categories: 're-entrants', who are on the verge of entering employment or training (8%); 'the short-term unemployed', who are ready and available to work, and have been out of work for less than a year (30%); 'the long-term unemployed', who are ready and available to work, but unemployed for over a year (22%); 'young people who are unavailable due to illness or disability' (7%); 'young people who are unavailable due to family responsibilities' (15%); 'discouraged workers', who have given up looking for jobs because of a perceived lack of opportunities (6%); and 'other inactive young people', which is a residual group, including, the very 'hard to reach' and privileged young people who choose not to work (13%) (Eurofound, 2016: 32).

It is important to emphasise that the NEET category covers more than the youth unemployment figures. UK NEET statistics, which are derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on a quarterly basis, include both the youth unemployment rate and economic inactivity rates, i.e. young people who are not actively seeking work, largely due to ill health and/or caring responsibilities, and hence comprises a much wider population of young people. NEET economic inactive figures have an over-representation of young women due to their propensity to assume caring responsibilities.

The period July to September 2021 reported that there were an estimated 421,000 economically inactive young people who were NEET. This was up a record 70,000 on the quarter from April to June 2021 and up 5,000 compared with July to September 2020 (the total NEET estimate covering the period July to September 2021 was 648,000 young people) (ONS, 2021). The reality is that 40 per cent of young people (aged 16-24) who are currently defined as NEET in the UK are classified as unemployed, with the remainder being defined as economically inactive. Despite this, most policy intervention has traditionally and most recently focused on re-engaging the young unemployed, leaving the economically inactive group sidelined and welfare dependent for long periods of time and far less likely



to receive any form of positive support or intervention. Young women's lives are disproportionately affected by this, leading to their propensity to experience long-term social and economic exclusion (Maguire, 2018).

Over a number of years, there has also been concern about the suitability, as well as the accuracy, of survey data to capture NEET or youth unemployment statistics. This started in the 1980s when the young unemployed were removed from the unemployment register, and concern grew about the growing population of young people who had 'hidden' or 'unknown' destinations and were 'off register' (Bentley and Gurumurphy, 1999). Similar concerns were expressed by policy makers and academics about this issue (Furlong, 2006; Thompson, 2011). Dedicated longitudinal surveys of young people which were designed to capture data on youth transitions at that time, most notably the Youth Cohort Study (YCS), were criticised in terms of their ability to define the characteristics of the NEET group (Payne, 2000). In 1994, Joan Payne, who prepared the YCS data,

commented that 'minority underclass cultures ... if (they) do exist are not likely to be identified by large surveys... which rely on conventional methods' (Payne and Payne, 1994: 18, cited in MacDonald and Marsh, 2000: 4). This calls into question the reliability and accuracy of large-scale survey data to capture young people who are defined as NEET and has been exacerbated over recent years by the move to derive NEET data from whole population surveys, such as the LFS and APS (Annual Population Survey), as well as data derived from local authorities (LAs). Moreover, the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the ability to collect survey data through face-to-face interviewing, and the shift to telephone interviewing, further compounds concern about the ability of survey methods to adequately reach 'hardest to help' and 'hardest to reach' communities, where many young people who are NEET may reside. Indeed, the ONS stated that a move to telephone interviewing to derive LFS data has increased non-response bias to the overall survey (ONS, 2021: 2).

Shifting sands

Sitting alongside an array of youth employment initiatives since the 1970s, responsibility for the funding and delivery of youth (and adult) training has involved a range of funding bodies over the last sixty years. There has been significant and ongoing change, which has included movement to and from centralised UK government control, towards the creation of a series of different or re-constituted government agencies and increased devolution of responsibility for education, employment and training policy across the four UK nations. It has also resulted in divergence in terms of the overall aims of policy and the ways in which policy goals can be achieved (Keep, 2017).

The setting up of the Industrial Training Boards (ITBs) after 1963 was the UK government's first attempt to be involved in employers' training activity and allowed ITBs to manage their own compulsory levy/grant system. However, a radical overhaul of the ITBs formed part of the 1973 Employment and Training Act, which diminished their role through the creation of the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) (Evans, 1992). This was a tripartite organisation led by government through its delivery agent and including representation from trade unions and employers. The MSC was set

up as semi-autonomous from government and given what is commonly referred to as 'quango' status. It was charged with delivering manpower policy through the development and delivery of five-year rolling operational programmes, which were approved by the Secretary of State for Employment, who was, in turn, answerable to parliament (Edwards, 1985). The power and influence of the MSC increased during the 1980s, as it became increasingly influential in the design of delivery mechanisms for employment programmes targeted at reducing youth unemployment, most notably YTS and its successors, at the expense of assuming responsibility for national manpower planning (Evans, 1992).

Separating state leadership of employers' training activity and government-supported training programmes, through an arms-length organisation like the MSC was superseded by a shift in government thinking in the 1990s towards the creation of a 'training market', with the aim of placing ownership of the 'training and enterprise system' with employers, through the creation, in England and Wales, of Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) at local level (Evans, 1992: 201). TECs were established following the 1988 White Paper Employment for the 1990s, which proposed a combination of national government control with increased local flexibility in the provision of training and welfare-to-work programmes.



In Scotland, Local Enterprise Councils (LECs), which were private companies with independent chairs and two-thirds majority private board members, were created (Peck, 1996). Due to the early-1990s economic recession, TECs/LECs assumed the same legacy as the MSC, to manage training schemes for the unemployed, although with far less funding. (Peck, 1996: 209).

More reorganisation followed with the election of the Labour government in the late 1990s, leading to a further drive to devolve responsibility for education, training and skills to the local level. The publication of the White Paper *Learning to Succeed* in June 1999, set out proposals to establish, from 2001, a national Learning and Skills Council (LSC) that would assume responsibility for all post-16 education and training, except universities and school sixth forms. It was to be supported at local level by the creation of 47 Learning and Skills Councils, which would replace TECs and be responsible for identifying local needs and managing local delivery of education and training. TECs were described in the White Paper as 'bureaucratic, costly to run and ineffective' (DfEE, 1999) (Maguire, 2001). In Wales, TECs were replaced by Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) and in Scotland, from the late 1990s, the LECs came under the control of Scottish Enterprise (as part of Scottish Government), rather than operating as separate companies². Sitting alongside local LSCs in England were nine Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), which operated between 1998 and 2010. These were non-departmental government organisations, which had devolved responsibility for economic development, regeneration and meeting local skills needs (Payne, 2018). Similar functions performed by the RDAs were carried out by the devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The LSC and its constituent parts were abolished in 2008 (Mayhew and Wickham-Jones, 2014), followed by the winding up of the RDAs in 2010. In England, the creation of 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in 2010 was an attempt to retain 'localism' through the establishment of networks between local authorities and local business leaders to generate local economic plans and to bid for national funding to support local economic and training needs (Payne, 2018). However, national government austerity measures led to criticism that they were under resourced, as well as having responsibilities for

boundary areas which did not align with existing local economies and, in some cases, were lacking in strategic direction (Pike et al, 2015). LEPs were given a boost to their profile in 2013, with a government announcement that responsibility for decision-making powers for EU funded programmes (including those for unemployed and inactive young people) would be transferred from Whitehall to local areas, in order *"to provide significant investment in innovation, business, skills and employment in a common agenda for growth and jobs that would integrate effectively with wider LEP Strategic Plans"*³.

Responsibility for UK government funding for skills, training and education (young people and adults) currently resides within the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in England, with the devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland managing their own affairs. Over recent years, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has also become involved in delivering employment programmes targeted at the young unemployed/ economically inactive, as well as at adults. The DWP holds a unique position in terms of its 'ministerial reach', in that, apart from Northern Ireland, it retains responsibility for managing most social security matters for all groups (including young people) across the UK. However, recent shifts have occurred, most notably through the Scotland Act 2016, which gave Scottish Government new powers relating to social security, including control over eleven welfare benefits and 15 per cent of social security spending (Bradshaw and Bennett, 2018).

Employment and training programmes led by DWP have included New Deal for Young People (1998-2009) (see page 5) and the Youth Contract (2012- 2015) (see page 6). More recently, the Youth Obligation was introduced across the UK (apart from Northern Ireland) from April 2017 and was focused on providing young people between the ages of 18 and 21, who were new claimants, with intensive support for a period of up to six months. The aim was to move them into some form of education, employment or training (EET). Early criticism of the Youth Obligation came from the House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee, which queried why the programme was concentrated in areas operating the new welfare system of Universal Credit, rather than targeting areas of high youth unemployment (House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, 2017: 25).

² <https://www.oecd.org/regional/leed/40215388.pdf>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/european-regional-development-fund-and-european-social-fund-allocations-2014-to-2020>

Alternative funding models have also been utilised by DWP to support policy implementation targeted at NEET prevention and the re-engagement of young people who had become NEET, most notably the use of Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) in England. SIBs comprise capital generated from social investors to fund delivery services which act on behalf of government to achieve social outcomes, using a payment-by-results funding model. The Innovation Fund Pilot (2012-15), which cost £30 million, and the Youth Engagement Fund (2014-17), which totalled £16 million, were both funded using SIBs. The longitudinal evaluation of the Innovation Fund Pilot showed that young people in the treatment group, i.e. programme participants, were less likely to be in EET and had acquired fewer qualifications (apart from at Level 1) compared to young people in the control group (Department for Work and Pensions, 2018). Thus, the delivery of 'hard' EET outcomes was not achieved through a SIBs-funded programme. It is unclear from the evaluation evidence whether the external investors received a return on their investment or whether the delivery providers achieved their payment targets due to the programme's performance. Nonetheless, despite the negative evaluation evidence emanating from the Innovation Fund Pilot, the DWP went on to commission a second programme, the Youth Engagement Fund (2014-17), which cost £16 million, using SIBs (Maguire and Keep, 2021).

Given DWP's scale and scope, it might be expected that it would play a major role in youth transitions. However, research evidence suggests that many young people fail to register for welfare support within the UK and that the 16-24 age claimant group has a much greater propensity to be sanctioned compared with other age categories. As a result, their payments are suspended for set periods of time. Cooke (2013) found that 43 per

cent of eligible young people were not claiming any type of out-of-work benefit in the UK and were, in effect, marginalised and disengaged from formal employment and support services. The divergence between the NEET population and claimant numbers is not peculiar to the UK. For example, analysis of the 2013 EU Labour Force Survey highlighted that 57 per cent of NEETs aged 15-24 years were not registered with public employment services (PES) (Eurofound, 2016).

Relating to welfare sanctioning rates, Eisenstadt (2017) reported that *'official statistics suggest that young people are disproportionately affected by the DWP sanctions regime: as of December 2016, people under the age of 25 made up 39% of the Universal Credit caseload that were eligible to receive a sanction; but the same group received 53% of all sanctions in the same month.'* (Eisenstadt, 2017: 21). These findings were reinforced by research which found that, between 2012 and 2016, 18-24-year-old claimants were significantly more likely than other age groups to be referred for and to receive a sanction, with young men being almost twice as likely as young women to be sanctioned (de Vries, Reeves and Geiger, 2017:18).

More recently, in 2020, DWP announced its Youth Offer, which comprises three elements: i) a 13- week youth employment programme; ii) an expansion in the number of youth employability work coaches who have dedicated responsibility for meeting the needs of the youth cohort; and iii) the creation of over 100 youth hubs⁴. Youth Hubs are essentially 'one-stop' shops, with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) working in partnership with other organisations to offer young people access to a range of services and support (House of Lords, 2021). They are outreach facilities, with the ambition of reaching a wider cohort of young people within their own communities through drop-in services in informal settings. Although this is part of an overall strategy to engage with a greater number of young people through policies which are designed to adapt services and provision to meet their needs, it remains a passive intervention, in that it is dependent on young people visiting a Youth Hub and making a claim for Universal Credit (UC). An absence of search strategies to identify eligible groups beyond the boundaries of Youth Hub premises, and thereby encourage more young people to use JCP services, may be an impediment to the ambitions of the Youth Offer. This could be compounded by the threat of sanctioning for failing to comply with JCP policy requirements. Crucially, by targeting the young people who are claiming or prepared to claim Universal Credit (UC), the





policy is ignoring large swathes of the NEET population who currently fail to engage.

While DWP retains responsibility for most welfare related employment initiatives across the UK, the devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland retain responsibility for education, training and skills policy. This has enabled each of them to develop and implement a raft of initiatives, which are separate from, although in some cases comparable with, youth programmes which exist within the rest of the UK.

A recent study which examined the extent to which a UK-wide strategy to support young people in the NEET group existed found increasing divergence between the four UK nations, in terms of policy making and intervention (Maguire and Keep, 2021). Significantly, the research found that, apart from DWP/welfare related interventions that exist for all young people in the NEET group across the UK (except in Northern Ireland), there were significant differences between the four nations in the range and scope of interventions to support young people defined as NEET. Moreover, while the impact of

austerity since 2010 had taken its toll in all spheres of social policy, the four nations differed in terms of how interventions to support the NEET group were being sustained (if at all), the funding sources employed, and the role and type of different delivery agents in programme implementation.

For example, for young people under the age of 18, the Welsh Government implements the *Youth Engagement and Progression Framework* (YEGF) as its main NEET intervention policy. This incorporates an early intervention programme to prevent young people becoming NEET, re-engagement programmes, and active labour market policies targeted largely at the under 18s group, building on co-working between statutory and voluntary service providers. (Welsh Government, 2016). In Northern Ireland, *Pathways to Success* comprises a number of targeted interventions to support the NEET group (Wilson et al, 2015) and is similar in design to the Welsh model. Independent evaluations of both initiatives point to two crucial weaknesses in the employability strand of individual programmes: i) difficulties with employer engagement,

⁴ http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2021-0349/177_Youth_Offer_V1_o.pdf

and ii) finding access to sustained employment for participants as a route out of NEET status (Welsh Government, 2016; Wilson et al, 2015). In Scotland, the *Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy* incorporated interventions to support vulnerable groups of young people make successful transitions into education, employment or training (Scottish Government, 2014). The absence of the term 'NEET' in policy documents in Scotland was reported to represent a deliberate emphasis on achieving positive outcomes for all young people, while at the same time recognising that barriers to attaining successful transitions need to be addressed through targeted programme intervention (Maguire and Keep, 2021). In contrast, while the Department for Education has strategic responsibility for the 16-24 NEET group in England, there was found to be an absence of a nationwide, government-led programme to address this policy area. Transitions beyond full-time academic or vocational education provision are managed within Apprenticeship programmes and a small-scale Traineeships programme (for young people who require bridging provision before entering apprenticeship programmes).

Differences were also apparent in relation to employability programmes. Policy initiatives introduced by the Scottish and Welsh Governments have taken responsibility for employment services into their own hands, away from the UK government, and put much greater emphasis on voluntary participation on the part of individuals who are seeking access to, or re-engagement into, the labour market (Maguire and Keep, 2021). For example, in 2018, the Scottish Government launched *Fair Start Scotland*⁵, which is an employment support initiative delivered to individuals who are furthest away from the labour market in nine contract areas across Scotland. The move from a mandatory requirement for individuals to participate marks a significant shift away from the approach adopted by UK government-led programmes, where mandatory participation and a payment-by-results delivery model were centre stage (NAO, 2014). Fair Start Scotland sits alongside other interventions targeted at socially and economically excluded groups, including young people. In 2019, the Welsh Government launched *Working Wales*, which offers employment support to both economically active and economically inactive

groups, including 16-24-year-olds who are NEET (Welsh Government, 2018). Again, the policy design places an emphasis on individuals' voluntary participation in job-seeking and guidance services. The introduction of both *Fair Start Scotland* and *Working Wales* represents a significant departure from a UK-wide employment service strategy towards much greater devolution of responsibility for expenditure and policy implementation. In both Wales and Scotland, Youth Guarantees, which connect young people between the ages of 16-24-years with the offer of education, training, employment or volunteering opportunities, have recently been introduced⁶.

Another important finding from the research was the strategic importance of EU funding and programmes to support the needs of young people in the NEET group. This has become heightened since 2010, due to the UK government's austerity measures and budget cuts that have impacted on the availability of other provision. The UK benefited from significant funding from the EU's huge investment in the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and the European Social Fund (ESF). For example, during 2014-2020, the ESF and European Regional Development Fund invested around €11.8 billion across the UK. The ESF share, of €4.9 billion, funded six operational programmes across the UK and included



⁵ <http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/fair-start-scotland/fair-start-scotland/-faq/>

⁶ <https://youngpersonsguarantee.scot>; <https://workingwales.gov.wales/how-we-can-help/young-persons-guarantee>



€206 million for the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)⁷. While the funding is tied to certain regions across the UK (and not allocated UK-wide), the availability of funds has enabled NEET provision to continue in some areas which have been affected by UK government budget cuts. This stream of funding was found to be of particular importance to the devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, in ensuring their continued commitment to recognising and supporting the needs of young people in the NEET group. Acute concern was voiced by policymakers in the sample about the impact of Brexit on this policy arena. In the absence of UK-wide initiatives to support young people in the NEET group, EU money was seen to be 'shoring up' policy intervention. Of great concern was how this current stream of funding would be sustained post-Brexit and what, if any, future provision would be funded and put in place in the absence of a UK-wide commitment to sustained funding through future UK government channels, such as the Shared Prosperity and Levelling Up Fund (Maguire and Keep, 2021).

The research also highlighted the significant role of charities and philanthropy in supporting young people in the NEET group across the UK in terms of sponsoring interventions either locally and/or nationally; managing and delivering programmes on behalf of government/EU; and acting as a sub-contractor to deliver programmes and initiatives. While this has enabled some organisations to take an active role in supporting their local communities, it raises important questions about the coverage, quality and availability of provision, as well as whether funding for interventions should be so heavily reliant on charity and philanthropy. At the same time, it was found that charities across the UK have played a very important role in delivering EU/government led initiatives, particularly in identifying and supporting hard-to-help/hard-to-reach groups through their community links and by acting as a powerful lobby on government (Maguire and Keep, 2021).

⁷ <http://www.creativeeuropeuk.eu/other-eu-funding/european-social-fund-esf>

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to map how policy changes have responded to and helped to shape youth transitions in the UK over the last fifty years. This has included a decline in early labour market entry, the introduction of an array of employment and training initiatives which have often walked a tight rope of having responsibility for simultaneously managing youth unemployment and youth training/skills development. Moreover, there has been a rapid expansion in both post-16 and higher education participation, which, in turn, has broadened the age cohort of first entry labour market transitions. Apprenticeship training has sat both within and outside initiatives targeted at the young unemployed, and, most recently, has remained an outlier to a policy focus on expanding full-time learning opportunities. The introduction of the apprenticeship levy has achieved little in enhancing the numbers of opportunities for young people.

Continual policy change and turmoil affecting programmes and incentives targeted at supporting youth transitions into the labour market and managing ever-changing NEET rates have been accompanied by increasing diversification in funding sources and responsibility. For example, the Youth Training Scheme, which was put into operation by the UK government in 1983, covered the whole of Great Britain (with similar provision operating in Northern Ireland) and was hailed

as the first youth training initiative of its kind. In contrast, there now exists an array of different funders and providers across the UK. This highlights the extent to which policy has been displaced from UK government control. Moreover, while devolved responsibility can make interventions more targeted to meet local needs, the evidence suggests that there is growing disparity between the four UK nations, in terms of how this policy arena is prioritised and funded. Accordingly, where a young person lives in the UK largely determines the types of intervention they might receive and signals a growth in local, regional and national disparities. The absence of a strategic oversight into the range, scope and performance of programmes and initiatives targeted at supporting youth transitions means there is little overall grasp of what works, for whom and under what circumstances.

While NEET rates, and in particular, youth unemployment rates, are currently quite low, they belie a longstanding issue about the quality and range of jobs open to young people, the currency of their qualifications in the labour market, and their future earnings potential, in comparison to earlier generations. Moreover, NEET statistics hide the stubbornly persistent large numbers of young people who are economically inactive, primarily due to caring responsibilities and ill health, which often results in increasing the likelihood of them remaining long-term welfare dependent and detached from the labour market.





There is a plethora of studies and policy documents on employment interventions for young people which have been implemented in varying economic circumstances and structural contexts. It is important to stress that there is no 'silver bullet' in terms of success, although three key factors which should be taken into consideration when formulating policy do stand out:

- the economic context
- an appraisal and understanding of the target group, and
- identifying parts of the economy with potential for growth (O'Higgins, 2001).

Also, the ILO has long argued that there should be synergy between youth employment policy and education policy, with the goal of achieving an overall youth policy (O'Higgins, 2001). Aligning the education and training systems seeks to avoid competition for young people and place them on a more equal footing. The dual system, which is common in German-speaking countries, is an enhanced example of this model. However, even where such arrangements are well-established, a substantial expansion of training places for young people through the apprenticeship route, during times of recession, has proved to be difficult to achieve (Scarpetta et al, 2010).

Understanding young people's and employers' needs

Introducing 'knee-jerk' policies without understanding the needs of young people and the labour market can be both costly and damaging. The early examples of youth training provision in the UK soundly illustrate

this point. Despite huge sums of money being spent, the result was the introduction of a series of different measures which tried to simultaneously tackle youth unemployment, as well as create a youth training system. The outcome was damaging to young people and employers, who often regarded programmes as 'cheap labour', and resulted in a failure to deliver quality training and sustainable employment.

Programme evaluation has highlighted the importance of targeting. Clearly, targeted programmes that are better tailored to meet the needs and abilities of specific groups are more successful (ILO, 2001). Achieving this objective is dependent upon having in place tracking systems able to produce robust, reliable and efficient data on young people's intended and actual destinations, alongside accurate labour market information (LMI) which is sensitive to the needs of regional and local labour markets.

The evidence suggests that a 'one size fits all approach' simply will not work and that a range of interventions, while costly, will be needed to meet the needs of a diverse population. The New Deal for Young People (NDYP) (see page 5) provides a good example of a programme which offered assessment and initial support, a range of training with support options and follow-up if required. It was also ground-breaking in its recognition of needing to develop training in green skills, as part of a youth training programme. A meta-analysis of 113 impact evaluations of youth employment programmes world-wide concluded that programmes which combine multiple interventions and services are more likely to do better. That is, programmes which: a) recognise that young people comprise a heterogeneous group; b) offer a portfolio of services and provision; and c) target their needs, are more successful (Kluve et al, 2016).

Funding

While in the UK and internationally, government-supported funding is most common, in recent years the UK has utilised other forms of funding to underpin the cost of employment programmes for young people. This has included funds from dormant bank accounts, windfall taxes and raising finance through social impact bonds (SIBs). Due to austerity measures and government funding cuts since 2010, charities and philanthropic organisations have increased their profile, particularly in England, through funding and supporting youth employment and engagement programmes.

Employers have a role to play too. For example, the CBI has recently suggested that the apprenticeship levy should be replaced with a skills challenge fund, so that the UK matches European average levels of skills investment. It also proposes that an independent Council for Future Skills is established, with a focus on matching training towards anticipated economic demand⁸. Also, employers could make a greater contribution to the direct costs associated with job subsidy programmes, such as the Kickstart Scheme.

Across the UK, funding through ESF/ YEI has made an important contribution to the costs of employment and re-engagement programmes. However, there remains uncertainty over replacement funding through the new Shared Prosperity Fund.

Measurement

Despite the volume of evaluations that have been conducted on individual employment programmes for young people, as well as international meta-analyses, there remains a lack of emphatic evidence about 'what works and at what cost'. The costs of Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) are often vague, inconsistent and incomplete. Robust and longitudinal impact assessments are also thin on the ground. Success measures are invariably linked to how many young people have

obtained jobs. Data on the type, quality and sustainability of employment, however, is patchy. Crucially, such measures of impact and performance eliminate young people who are 'harder to help' from such programmes at the outset, particularly if payment by results, based on job outcomes, is also the criteria for success.

Moving forward

Lessons learned from over fifty years of trying to shape youth transitions through costly policy interventions are that ongoing change and a plethora of different initiatives have failed to be widely effective. Nonetheless, key lessons should be derived from previous interventions before lurching into new policy implementation. Policymakers too should be honest about the fact that, for many years, youth transitions into the labour market were not a key priority, with a focus being on expanding full-time learning opportunities at the expense of nurturing work-based learning and development. This needs to change in an era where it should be the norm to expect that all young people deserve access to good quality jobs and training; support to nurture their talents; and, crucially, real and measurable equality of opportunity. Were this to come about, young people could be more enabled to make a significant contribution to society and the wider economy in a post-pandemic and climate crisis era.



⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/feb/02/cbi-says-britain-risks-cycle-of-low-growth-without-higher-investment>

Appendix 1

This section offers examples of different types of Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) which have been implemented across the UK, and their effects. ALMPs can be differentiated into five types: job search assistance; training programmes; subsidised employment; direct job creation and self-employment assistance and support (Eichhorst et al, 2016⁹).

TYPE OF ALMP		
1. Job-search Assistance		
Programme	Objectives	Evaluation evidence
Youth Obligation Support Programme (YOSP) DWP 2017 - 2020 Great Britain 18-21-year-old new Universal Credit (UC) claimants.	Intensive support for 6 months through workshops and interventions. Expected participants to be offered apprenticeship, traineeship or work experience after 6 months.	Focused on new claimants. Initially, large numbers left the programme with unknown destinations ¹⁰ . 63,000 participants on YOSP between October 2018 and April 2019. Three in 10 YOSP participants from the October 2018 cohort 'finished their YOSP journey', just over 17 per cent who completed were referred to provision, and just over 40 per cent of this cohort who completed went into work. Among later cohorts, over 60 per cent of completers moved into work ¹¹ . No data are provided about the type or nature of work secured or its sustainability.

⁹ Eichhorst, W., Hinte, H. and Rinne, U. (2016) Promoting Youth Employment in Europe: Evidence-based Policy Lessons. IZA Policy Paper No. 119, Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit, Bonn.

¹⁰ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/youth-obligation-jobs-scheme-government-conservativetraining-employment-theresa-may-a8399406.html>

¹¹ Department for Work and Pensions (2019) Youth Obligation Support Programme Statistics. Ad hoc Official Statistics. July. London: DWP.

2. Training programmes		
Programme	Objectives	Evaluation evidence
<p>Youth Training Scheme (YTS)</p> <p>MSC</p> <p>1983-88</p> <p>Great Britain</p> <p>Transferred to TECs in 1989 and renamed Youth Training.</p> <p>Targeted at 16-and 17-year-old school leavers who received a training allowance.</p> <p>Initial funding of £1 billion per year.</p> <p>Guaranteed young people a place on the programme.</p>	<p>Large scale programme with a compulsory training component.</p> <p>Provision of at least 13 weeks off-the-job training each year in FE colleges or training organisations. This would include life skills and social skills. Trainees were paid a training allowance and therefore lost eligibility to unemployment benefit.</p> <p>Offered on-the-job training courses, initially lasting 6 months or one year, but extended to 2 years in 1986.</p> <p>Government training subsidy to support the first year of apprenticeship.</p>	<p>Cost-effectiveness never measured¹².</p> <p>Failed to operate as a high- quality training programme.</p> <p>Variability in the amounts of training, qualification attainment and chances of employment¹³.</p> <p>Deadweight and substitution effects varied between 40 per cent and 80 per cent, according to the period studied¹⁴.</p>
<p>Youth Training (YT)</p> <p>1990 -1996</p> <p>Great Britain</p> <p>TECs and LECs</p> <p>Targeted at 16-and 17-year-old school leavers who received a training allowance.</p> <p>Guaranteed young people a place on the programme.</p> <p>Cuts to employer grant.</p> <p>Cuts to training budget.</p>	<p>As above</p> <p>Trainees had either employed status or trainee status, depending on whether or not they had an employment contract with their employer.</p> <p>FE training costs and an employer subsidy were offered.</p>	<p>Numbers entering YT plummeted to 10.5 per cent of all school leavers in 1995 (from 21.7 per cent in 1989¹⁵).</p> <p>Modern Apprenticeships were piloted from 1994 and rolled out from 1996 with high entry standards and diminished the value of YT, which became a 'second best' option¹⁶.</p>
<p>Training Credits</p> <p>11 pilot programmes set up in April 1991 supported by funding of £115 million by 1992-1993¹⁷.</p> <p>Second round of pilots implemented in 1992.</p> <p>Rolled out in 1996.</p> <p>TECs and LECs</p> <p>Targeted at 16-and 17-year-old school leavers who received a training allowance.</p>	<p>Credit based youth training scheme and shift towards young people negotiating their own training needs within a training market.</p>	<p>Qualitative evidence showed a lack of understanding of the concept among employers and mistrust among young people¹⁸.</p> <p>Designed in an era of economic boom and implemented when youth unemployment was high and young people lacked strong labour market credentials to many employers¹⁹.</p> <p>Programme was linked to output-related funding in terms of NVQ attainment, which made training providers and employers more selective in their recruitment patterns²⁰.</p>

¹² Skilbeck, M., Connell, H., Lowe, N. and Tait, K. (1994) *The Vocational Quest: New Directions in Education and Training*. London: Routledge.

¹³ Lee, D. et al (1990) *Scheming for Youth: A study of YTS in the Enterprise Culture*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

¹⁴ Begg, I.G. et al (1991) YTS and the labour market. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 29 No. 2, pp. 223-236.

¹⁵ Slade, D. and Yates, J. (eds) (1993) *School-leavers Destinations 1992*. London: UK Heads of Careers Services Association.

¹⁶ MacLagan, I. (1996) 'Only half of YT leavers get jobs or qualifications, survey reveals.' *Working Brief*, Unemployment Unit, March 9-11.

¹⁷ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/RP97-98/RP97-98.pdf> (p.15).

¹⁸ Unwin, L. (1993) *Dropping out in the 1990s: A Study of Post-16 Patterns in Derbyshire 1987-1992*. ESRC Seminar Group: Issue Paper, September.

¹⁹ Keep, E. (1994) 'Vocational education and training for the young', in Sisson, K. (ed) *Personnel Management in Britain*. Second Edition. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

²⁰ Maguire, S. (2001) *The Evolving Youth Labour Market: A Study of Continuity and Change*. Unpublished PhD. Coventry: University of Warwick.

3. Subsidised employment		
Programme	Objectives	Evaluation evidence
<p>Jobs Growth Wales (JGW)</p> <p>Welsh Government</p> <p>The key lever underpinning the programme was to offer wage subsidies to employers in return for taking on young people (16-24-year-olds) as employees.</p> <p>Introduced in post-2008 recession to address rising levels of youth unemployment</p>	<p>First version (JGW1) April 2012 to April 2015</p> <p>Young people paid at or above the National Minimum Wage (NMW) for 25-40 hours per week.</p> <p>Second version (JGW 2) Sept 2015 to 2021</p> <p>The wage subsidy was reduced from 100 per cent to 50 per cent of the NMW, and the programme solely worked with the private sector.</p>	<p>April 2012 to June 2015 JGW1 filled 14,984 jobs²¹, including 392 business start-ups, and achieved 135 per cent of its combined target for jobs filled/ businesses supported.</p> <p>Secondary benefits for the Welsh economy through support to Welsh businesses, particularly SMEs.</p> <p>The private sector strand over-performed against targets, the third sector and self-employment strand performed less well against their original targets.</p> <p>JGW has performed well against its core objective of creating job opportunities for young people in Wales and exceeded most of its ESF targets for post-JGW outcomes²¹.</p>
<p>Future Jobs Fund (FJF)</p> <p>DWP</p> <p>2009-11</p> <p>Great Britain</p> <p>Unemployed 18-24-year-olds receiving Jobseeker's Allowance</p> <p>Total cost of £680 million.</p>	<p>Employers could bid for subsidies, of up to £6,500, to take on a young person, paying at least the National Minimum Wage on a minimum of a 26-hours a week contract.</p>	<p>Between October 2009 and March 2011, just over 105,000 jobs were created.</p> <p>The majority of employers engaged in the programme were public and third sector organisations.</p> <p>The data estimated that the Exchequer had recouped roughly 50 pence for each pound that was spent on the Programme²².</p> <p>Qualitative evaluation results demonstrated a positive impact on participants' skills, especially transferable skills, and self-confidence, but some evidence of insufficient support from some employers in preparing them for future job-search²³.</p>

²¹ Welsh Government (2020) *Jobs Growth Wales: September 2015 to March 2020*. Statistical Release. March. Ipsos MORI, Wavehill Consulting, WISERD (2016) Evaluation of Jobs Growth Wales: Final Report. Welsh Government. Social Research No.44, 2016.

²² Department for Work and Pensions (2012) Impacts and Costs and Benefits of the Future Jobs Fund. London: DWP. November.

²³ Fishwick, T. et al (2011) Future Jobs Fund: an independent national evaluation. London: Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion.

4. Direct job creation		
Programme	Objectives	Evaluation evidence
Youth Opportunities Programme 1977-1983	<p>Offered 16 and 17-year-olds 6-month work experience placements with limited training provision. Young people could repeat the programme. Provided young people with a weekly training allowance with no subsidy offered from/to employers.</p> <p>Most work experience was offered on employers' premises, although some placements were offered in community/voluntary organisations.</p>	<p>Over 1.8 million young people entered the programme. Estimated job substitution effect – 30%.</p> <p>Average employment placement rate of 42%.²⁴</p> <p>YOP had a poor image – 'cheap labour' and offered little quality training.</p> <p>Replaced due to escalating levels of youth unemployment.</p>
5. Self-employment		
Programme	Objectives	Evaluation evidence
Enterprise Allowance Scheme (EAS) Piloted in January 1982 and rolled out from 1983-1991.	<p>Provided an allowance of £40 per week for 52 weeks to eligible young people to set up their own businesses.</p> <p>Recipients had to have been unemployed for at least 8 weeks and have savings or loans of at least £1000.</p>	<p>Up to 100,000 entered the programme each year and it is estimated that 325,000 people became self-employed²⁵.</p> <p>A qualitative study of young people found that:</p> <p>EAS was viewed positively by some, as a means of retaining independence and avoiding poor work,</p> <p>Acquiring £1000 start-up funding was extremely difficult for some, and</p> <p>There was a lack of support once they had started the programme, which added to the risk of business failure.</p> <p>The evidence also highlighted high displacement and deadweight effects emanating from EAS²⁶.</p>

²⁴ Edwards, D.S. (1985) *The History and Politics of the Youth Opportunities Programme*. Unpublished PhD. London: University of London, Institute of Education.

²⁵ <https://www.thersa.org/blog/2017/12/the-peculiar-story-of-margaret-thatcher-and-basic-income>

²⁶ MacDonald, R. and Coffield, F. (1991) *Risky Business? Youth and the Enterprise Culture*. London: The Falmer Press.

6. Multi-element programmes

Programme	Objectives	Evaluation evidence
<p>Pathways to Success</p> <p>Northern Ireland</p> <p>Department of the Economy</p> <p>2012 - 2020</p> <p>Introduced post-2008 recession to address the NEET agenda.</p>	<p>Key strands:</p> <p>First Start – targeted at 18-24-year-olds in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance for at least 26 weeks. Offered waged jobs for a minimum of 6 months.</p> <p>Lead Contractors source jobs and provide support.</p> <p>LEMIS – an adviser-led, community employment initiative with emphasis on 'hardest to reach' 16-24 -year-olds.</p> <p>Targeted at 8 areas of multiple deprivation.</p> <p>Youth Employment Scheme (YES) offered: an Enhanced Employer Subsidy of up to £5,750 in first year; work experience placements; and 26-week skills development placements.</p>	<p>An overall positive impact on participants.</p> <p>A positive return for the Exchequer and the wider economy.</p> <p>Generated around £61 million of additional value for Northern Ireland.</p> <p>59% of First Start leavers entered employment, but there was a tendency to focus on 'job ready' participants.</p> <p>Only 18% of LEMIS participants found jobs, but cost-benefit analysis found it to be 'good value for money'.</p> <p>YES – 27% of leavers entered subsidised or unsubsidised employment²⁷.</p>
<p>Activity Agreements (AAs)</p> <p>Piloted in England between 2006 – 2011 with initial two-year funding of £60 million.</p> <p>Piloted in Scotland between 2009-2011 in ten localities, with a budget of £12.3 million. AAs were subsequently rolled out across Scotland and remain operational.</p> <p>Targeted at 16-17-year-olds in the NEET group and have been extended up to the age of 19-years in Scotland.</p>	<p>AAs comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a financial allowance, • tailored learning, and • intensive support 	<p>Large scale evaluation showed:</p> <p>Intensive support and tailored learning helped to support the needs of young people who had failed to engage through mainstream interventions²⁸ and,</p> <p>Paying young people to participate in AAs acted as a powerful mechanism for engaging them, as well as being important in retaining some young people's participation²⁹.</p> <p>Two-years after participation, AA participants were more likely to be undertaking studying or work-based training; to have completed qualifications; and to be working at a higher occupational level in comparison with a control group³⁰.</p> <p>Survey evidence identified a significant deadweight effect (72 per cent) and MI data from the first two years of the pilots estimated high costs of £2,122 per participant.³¹</p> <p>An EU study on reducing drop-out rates reported that the AA pilots were one of the more effective programmes in the UK³².</p>

²⁷ Wilson, T. et al (2015) Evaluation of Pathways to Success NI: Final Report. London: Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion.

²⁸ Scottish Government. (2011) Evaluation of the Activity Agreement Pilots. Final Report. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government. Maguire, S. and Newton, B. (2011) Activity Agreement Pilots – Trialling Different Approaches to Re-engaging Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET): Evaluation of the 2009-10 Extension. Research Report RR086. London: Department for Education.

²⁹ Hillage, J., Johnson, C., Newton, B., Maguire, S., Tanner, E. and Purdon, S. (2008) Activity Agreements Evaluation Synthesis Report. Report No. RR063. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

³⁰ Tanner, E., D'Souza, J., Taylor, E., Finch, S., Purdon, S. and Maguire, M. (2010) Activity Agreement Pilots – Follow-up Survey of 2007-8 Participants. Research Report DFE-RR010. London: Department for Education.

³¹ DFE (Department for Education). 2011 What Works Re-Engaging Young People who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)? Summary of Evidence from the Activity Agreement Pilots and the Entry to Learning Pilots. Research Report DFERR065. London: Department for Education.

³² European Union. (2011) Reducing Early School Leaving in the EU. Luxembourg: European Parliament's Committee on Education and Culture.

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