



# MILLION

**Raising Expectations: Staying in Education  
and Training Post-16**

**A response by 11 MILLION led by the  
Children's Commissioner**

**June 2007**

# Table of Contents



<b>1) Who are we?</b>	<b>p.4</b>
<b>2) Executive Summary</b>	<b>p.5</b>
<b>3) Introduction</b>	<b>p.7</b>
<b>4) Is there a case for introducing compulsory participation to age 18?</b>	<b>p.9</b>
<b>5) How should participation be defined?</b>	<b>p.19</b>
<b>6) Is there a suitable route for every young person?</b>	<b>p.23</b>
<b>7) Enabling all young people to participate</b>	<b>p.26</b>
<b>8) Employers playing their part</b>	<b>p.30</b>
<b>9) Making sure that young people participate</b>	<b>p.31</b>
<b>10) Words used in this document</b>	<b>p.35</b>
<b>Appendix – Consultation with young people in Prince’s Trust xl clubs</b>	<b>p.37</b>

# 1 Who are we?



## How were we established?

11 MILLION is a national organisation led by the Children's Commissioner, Professor Sir Al Aynsley-Green. The Children's Commissioner is a position created by the Children Act 2004.



## What do we do?

We have a statutory role to promote the views and interests of children and young people across England. This gives us a unique role in bringing children's ideas into the centre of the political process

## Meeting the challenges of the Children Act 2004

The Children Act requires the Children's Commissioner to be concerned with the five aspects of well-being covered in *Every Child Matters* – the national government initiative aimed at improving outcomes for all children. It also requires us to have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC underpins our work and informs which areas and issues on which we focus our efforts.



## Our long-term goals

Children and young people see significant improvements in their wellbeing and can freely enjoy their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).



Children and young people are more highly valued by adult society.

## Spotlight areas

Our 'Spotlights' are the areas where we will influence emerging policy and debate in 2007/8. 'Enjoying education and leisure' is one of these.

## 2 Executive Summary



11 MILLION worked with the Prince's Trust to explore the views of young people who will be most directly affected by the Green Paper's central proposal - raising the education and training participation age to 18. Educational underachievement is mainly affecting this country's most disadvantaged children and young people. The Green Paper rightly warns that, unless properly addressed, the social disadvantage faced by these young people will become more serious as the shape of the UK and world economy changes.

### Summary of recommendations

- 1. 11 MILLION supports the raising of the education and training participation age to 18. In doing so, we acknowledge a tension between children and young people's right to – and expectation – of choice in matters which affect them, and the Government's wish to meet all children and young people's right to education.**
- 2. Our support for a raised participation age is conditional on changes to the educational *culture* within schools. Meaningful participation must begin long before 18, and long before Key Stage 4. We look for greater evidence of progress towards giving students a more significant voice in their own education and the running of their own schools.**
- 3. We believe the participation age should not be raised until Diplomas are successfully established nationally, and their impact assessed. We welcome the new qualification options described in the Green Paper. If successfully introduced, they will increase choice and cater for a greater variety of learning styles, significantly improving young people's school experience.**
- 4. In terms of what students learn post-16, 11 MILLION believes that there should be a clear presumption in favour of accreditation, but that flexibility should be allowed to meet individual needs and allow space for building social and emotional skills. 11 MILLION is concerned that attainment targets within qualification frameworks should not distract from the more fundamental aims of education, which relate to nurture and personal achievement.**
- 5. 11 MILLION believes that supporting life-long learning, particularly for 18-25 year olds, is crucial in realising the potential of many of those who perform poorly at school.**
- 6. The expansion of Apprenticeship places and the new entitlement are both welcome developments. We look for assurances that new vetting and barring procedures being**

introduced as a result of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 will be applied appropriately in these settings.

7. **11 MILLION welcomes the planned introduction of the Foundation Learning Tier as a serious attempt to rationalise options below Level 2. We share the concerns expressed by the Commons Education and Skills Committee that the fit between Diplomas and existing qualifications has yet to be fully explained, and that this may increase confusion.**
8. **The Green Paper proposes enhanced information and advice on courses and careers. 11 MILLION agrees that this advice will have to be available from a range of providers. We also believe that schools have a crucial and long-term role to play. Participatory learning and support for social and emotional development have an indispensable part to play in preparing young people for choices at Key Stage 4. Therefore we look for the Department for Education and Skills to provide strong leadership and appropriate resourcing.**
9. **11 MILLION does not agree that 16 – 17 year olds in full-time employment should be required to participate in part-time accredited learning if they hold Level 2 qualifications.**
10. **11 MILLION looks for reassurances that *all* young people in full-time employment will be able to access part-time training and education without suffering a loss of income, or being forced to work unreasonable hours.**
11. **A review of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is reasonable if new arrangements can be devised which deliver *more* support, more flexibly to young people in need and from low income backgrounds.**
12. **11 MILLION will follow with care the proposed realignment of benefits following on from a requirement to be in training or education post-16, and will oppose any attempt to introduce the practice of conditionality in a way that would dilute existing rights and entitlements.**
13. **The Government should make a clear commitment to meeting the travel costs of 16-17 year old students from low income backgrounds, and regards assurances on this count as critical to the practicality and equity of compulsory post-16 education and training.**
14. **11 MILLION strongly opposes the introduction of Attendance Orders with criminal sanctions, and has serious doubts over whether Attendance Orders with civil penalty notices and fines would improve young people's outcomes. We urge the Government to consider alternative civil measures.**

### 3 Introduction



#### Supporting children and young people to enjoy and achieve

The proportion of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) has remained stubbornly high in recent years, rising slightly to 11% between 2004 and 2005. Too many young people underachieve at school, and disengage from education even before the current leaving age of 16. In the language of the Green Paper, as a society we need to raise our expectations.

The Children's Commissioner has urged Government to ask children and young people what they want and need. We are pleased to note that the DfES has invested considerable energy in making this happen. Their magazine-style publication - 'Reach' - features a list of changes to the school leaving age over the last century, concluding with the bold statement that in terms of changes in 2013 'You decide!'

Consulting widely is important because any changes will affect all children and young people in England. It seems likely that the majority may well agree with the Green Paper's key proposal of raising the education and training leaving age from 16 to 18 years of age.<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of young people are already voting with their feet in favour of post-16 participation: 87% are still in education or training the year after compulsory schooling, and 76% two years afterwards. Yet a judgement on the Green Paper's proposals cannot turn simply on the majority view. It is the views and actions of a minority that will determine the success or failure of any change. The proposals aim to improve the outcomes of the minority who are choosing to leave education: those who may be disaffected, underachieving, with complex needs and those who often experience challenging domestic circumstances. What does the Green Paper have to offer this marginalised group of young people?

To sample their views, 11 MILLION has worked with an organisation widely respected for its work with young people who are at risk of social and educational exclusion – the Prince's Trust (see Annex A). Through them, we listened to 128 young people, explaining what the Green Paper proposes, and asking for their views. Unless otherwise specified, all quotations in this report are from these young people. The majority of young people thought that raising the leaving age would be a good idea, but almost as many had mixed views or were strongly opposed.

The views of young people not involved in Prince's Trust projects have also been drawn upon. Since the Children's Commissioner took up



**'The reason why they're leaving school and they're going straight into getting a job and not even doing anything is because what they want is not being offered ... people don't enjoy it'**

**Young person, Prince's Trust xl project**

---

<sup>1</sup> Recent polling suggest that 50.5% of teenagers are in favour of raising the leaving age, but that 71.3% are also in favour of retaining their right to stay on or leave. Villeneuve-Smith, F., Marshall, L. and Munoz, S. 2007. *Raising the leaving age: are the public convinced? A survey of parents and teenagers*. Learning and Skills Network. p.12 & 14.

office, one of the largest single categories of complaint and concern from children and young people has been education and the school experience. For example, 53% of those who entered our 'Shout: Turn up the Volume!' competition in 2006 said that they were concerned about education. It is a message which has been repeated to us in frequent visits to schools, education projects and youth groups. 11 MILLION recently talked with young people at The Arts Included at Thornhill (TAIT) project. This inclusion project for students at risk of disengagement within Thornhill School in Sunderland, ran its own discussion group on the Green Paper proposals and sent their views to the Children's Commissioner. We are grateful to all the children and young people who have shared their thoughts and ideas.

We aim to make our reports easy to read for people without specialist knowledge. Section 10 contains a list of words and abbreviations used in this document that might need further explanation.



**'if you are [in]  
the sort of state  
of mind that you  
could learn after  
16, I think that  
maybe it'd be a  
brilliant thing'**

**Young person,  
Prince's Trust xl  
project**



## 4 Is there a case for introducing compulsory participation to age 18? - our response to chapter 2 of the Green Paper

- **11 MILLION supports raising of the education and training participation age to 18 if it is matched with more a effective commitment to participative and holistic approaches in schools.**

### **Children’s right to education and children’s right to have their views taken into account: a difficult tension**

Children’s right to education is set out in Articles 28 and 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Governments are expected to act ‘progressively and on the basis of equal opportunities’ to ensure that this right can be enjoyed by all children. With regard to primary education, it must be both free and compulsory. Governments must ‘Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.’(28, 1 [e]). Children’s education must be directed towards ‘Development of the child’s personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential’, and form part of the ‘preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society’ (29, 1 [a] & [d]).

The UNCRC also guarantees to children and young people a right to express their views about decisions that affect them, and have these given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity (Article 12). A minority of the young people who expressed their views to 11 MILLION opposed the Green Paper’s proposal to increase the education and training leaving age because, in their view, being made to stay in education – compulsion - would interfere with this right. The choice to leave education or training before 18 was seen as a way to ‘get more experience of how to be a young adult.’



**‘16 year olds are old enough to be able to make their own choices. It is, or should be, a free country.’**

**‘Wrong because we want the freedom to choose.’**

**‘It’s not fair for others to have had the choice and not us.’**

There is a tension between young people’s rights to – and expectation of – choice, and how government meets their right to education. It would hardly be surprising if children and young people felt that they were getting mixed messages. Important social and cultural currents are running in contrary directions. On the one hand, there has been a general trend to recognise children and young people as decision-



making citizens in their own right. For example, their capacity to give or withhold consent for medical intervention has been recognised in law at an increasingly young age, except where this would expose them or others to significant risks. On the other hand, the economy is demanding of young people an ever higher level of formal skills if they are ultimately to enjoy choice and opportunity in the workplace.

The Green Paper argues that the need to equip young people to succeed in adult life, and contribute to the common good in doing so, is of overriding importance.

In the very near future, those without skills will find it increasingly difficult to find employment... We have a duty to prepare all young people for a labour market which will be radically different to the one their parents faced.<sup>2</sup>

In these changing circumstances, 11 MILLION agrees that it is reasonable to reassess what the right to education entails, and how sensitive this should be to young people's individual wishes. The right to an education which prepares the child for 'responsible life in a free society' must be framed in terms of the skills needed to function in that society.

However, the right of young people to have a say in decisions that affect them remains a serious consideration. At the very least, their practical co-operation, engagement and consent will affect the success or failure of the Green Paper proposals. As one young person consulted by 11 MILLION remarked: **'Pupils don't even come to school very often now, so what makes you think they are going to stay in school until they're 18?'**

Are the risks of educational disengagement and low achievement so serious that young people aged 16 and 17 cannot be allowed to judge them for themselves? To answer this question, the following sections assess the level of risk faced by young people in terms of employment, unemployment, crime, health and early parenting.

### **The risks of low achievement: poorly paid employment**

Most adults and young people believe that a good level of educational achievement is crucial in being able to enjoy the full range of life-chances. Learning and Skills Network research shows that 60.5% of teenagers think that staying-on until 18 will give them the skills they need to build a happy and fulfilling career, and 72.4% believe it will reduce the risk of unemployment.<sup>3</sup> The young people consulted for this response identified, in particular, better income prospects and career choices as being dependent on success in education.

---

<sup>2</sup> Department for Education and Skills. 2007. *Raising expectations: staying in education and training post-16*. DfES. p.3. Hereafter referred to in the text as *RE*.

<sup>3</sup> Villeneuve-Smith, F., Marshall, L. and Munoz, S. 2007. *op cit*. pp.21-22. Parent figures are 72.4% and 51.3%.



**‘They’re gonna get an education so they can get a good job and earn loads of money and then they’re gonna be able to have a nice house for ... family and stuff like that[.]’**

**‘I wanna have a good job. And when I’m older, get a nice car and nice house and like a family, and I could provide for them.’**

**‘If you are looking for a good job and earn a good amount of money, you’re going to have to stay at school and work hard.’**

The statistics presented in the Green Paper support these arguments. They are presented simply and dramatically: ‘People with five or more good GCSEs earn on average around £100,000 more over their lifetime than those who leave learning with qualifications below Level 1’ (*RE* 2.4). Behind this average, there is a lot of variation. The wage return on Level 2 vocational qualifications differs greatly by type, where they are delivered, and by gender, ranging from delivering no significant benefit to delivering a 22% return.<sup>4</sup> Given the central importance of work-related Diplomas in the Green Paper’s package of reforms, and continued uncertainty about their ultimate value to students and employers (see section 8), this range of variation is disturbing, and underlines the case for a carefully evaluated roll-out of the new offer.

Nevertheless, the broad proposition that staying in education until 18 substantially improves the likelihood of achieving Level 2 qualifications, and subsequently enjoying significantly higher employability and income than at Level 1, is unquestionable. At the moment, too many young people who perform comparatively poorly at 16 become disengaged and lose out on the chance to progress. Only a fifth of those who have yet to attain Level 2 qualifications are still in education by their eighteenth birthday.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Dearden, L., McGranahan, M., and Sainnesi, B. 2004. *An in depth analysis of the returns to national qualifications obtained at Level 2*. CEE discussion Paper 46; cited in DfES. 2007. *Raising Expectations: Initial Regulatory Impact Assessment*. Department for Education and Skills.

<sup>5</sup> National Statistics. 2006. *Youth cohort study: the activities and experiences of 18 year olds: England and Wales 2006*. SFR 47/2006. Department for Education and Skills.

## The risks of low achievement: unemployment



**'most of the people that I know that were in year 11, when I was like in year 9, and they totally left school just to get a job and now they're telling me, "You need to get to college".'**

**Young person,  
Prince's Trust xl  
project**

The Government sees its Public Service Agreement (PSA) to increase the proportion of 19 year olds achieving Level 2 qualifications<sup>6</sup> as strongly linked to its PSA for young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The Government's Level 2 PSA is on target, but its NEET PSA is not on target. Unless things change, the Government is unlikely to reduce the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are NEET by 2% by 2010. Currently, the NEET population is about 11% of the age group, and the great majority of these young people are poorly qualified, with only 28% having Level 2 qualifications.

The NEET population is complex, and includes some of our most vulnerable young people.<sup>7</sup> Many move in and out of employment and training, unable or unwilling to settle successfully in a course of study or employment – known as 'churn'. Even for this group, their periods of unemployment are likely to be damaging. Short-term unemployment can have a long-term impact on someone's future working life and earning potential. Youth unemployment, particularly if repeated, reduces someone's earning potential at the age of 42 by 12-15%.<sup>8</sup>

Finding a way out of a NEET situation for some young people involves complex, personalised work by specialist services to address issues ranging from homelessness to drug and alcohol dependence. Their learning needs have to be addressed flexibly, but at some point formal educational progression will normally play an important role in helping them move forward. Level 1 vocational qualifications do improve young people's chances of employment - by 4% for young men and (somewhat surprisingly) by 16% for young women – but it is through achieving higher level qualifications that young people's chances of escaping unemployment rise significantly. Young men have a 10 or 12 % improved likelihood of finding employment if they have obtained Level 2 or Level 3 qualifications. Young women's likelihood of finding employment goes up by 19% at either Level 1 or Level 3.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> The level 2 PSA is a rise of 3% between 2004 and 2006, and a further 2% between 2006 and 2008. By 2006, the target had been exceeded (66.3% raised to 71.4%); the 2008 target is now therefore 73.4%. The Government has, in addition, announced a long term aspiration to raise level 2 attainment to 85% by 2013.

<sup>7</sup> The NEET population is generally broken down into three categories: core NEET: those with social and behavioural problems who come from families where worklessness is entrenched; floating NEET: those young people who lack direction and may be in and out of short courses and work without training; and transition / gap year young people: those who have taken the opportunity to take time out, but for whom it may be unclear when they will re-engage.

<sup>8</sup> Gregg, P. and Tominey, E. 2004. 'The wage scar from youth unemployment'. CMPO Working Paper Series No. 04/097. University of Bristol. Cited in The Prince's Trust. 2007. *The cost of exclusion: counting the cost of youth disadvantage in the UK*. p.18.

<sup>9</sup> McIntosh, S. 2004. 'The impact of vocational qualifications on the labour market'. CEP Discussion Paper No. 621. Cited in The Prince's Trust. April 2007. *The Cost of Exclusion: Counting the Cost of Youth Disadvantage in the UK*. p.42.

## The risks of low achievement - offending and anti-social behaviour

The stigma and prejudice faced by young people Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) can add to their difficulties in finding employment or training. One of the strongest prejudices is a belief that their situation makes them dangerous in public spaces and likely to commit crime. The Children's Commissioner condemns the stereotyping of young people, and has criticised a strain within contemporary culture that sees many young people as a threat to be contained or regulated.

However, there *are* strong association between NEET status and the possibility of coming into conflict with the law, and it would be unhelpful to ignore these. Indeed, some young people consulted for this response frame their views of the risks of early school leaving in just these terms.



**'[Staying in education keeps] younger people out of trouble. And when they get older, like, instead of going to the pub and getting in trouble all the time, they can learn more and get a better job.'**

**'It's gonna keeps people off the streets.'**

**'You can ... get good jobs, instead of being on the roads.'**

There are strong associations between unemployment and youth crime. Nearly two-thirds of young people who are arrested are unemployed when this happens, compared to 46% of people over 25 years old.<sup>10</sup> 75% of young men aged 16-17 who are charged and appear before the Youth Court are NEET.<sup>11</sup> Recent measures aimed at increasing education stay-on rates have been linked to modest reductions in property crime, although their relationship with other variables, and the actual level of increased participation have not been established.<sup>12</sup> For NEET young people who have become involved in crime, the chances of re-entering education or gaining employment are severely affected.<sup>13</sup>

## The risks of low achievement – poor health and early parenting

The links between how long someone stays in education, how well they perform there, and how healthy they are in later life are complicated, but

<sup>10</sup> Social Exclusion Unit. 2005. 'Transitions: young adults with complex needs'. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. London; cited in Prince's Trust. 2007. *The Cost of Exclusion: Counting the Cost of Youth Disadvantage in the UK*. P.31.

<sup>11</sup> DfES. 2005. *Youth Matters*. Department for Education and Skills

<sup>12</sup> Feinstein, L. and Sabates, R. 2005. 'Education and Youth Crime: effects of introduce the Education Maintenance Allowance Programme'. DfES Research Brief RCB01-05.

<sup>13</sup> Coles, B. *et al.* 2002. 'Literature Review of the Costs of being 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' at Age 16-18. DfES Research Brief 347.

we believe that it is right for the Green Paper to draw attention to their importance. For example, not attending school because of poor health can put educational achievement at risk; while low educational achievement is itself linked to low levels of attendance, which can then put future health at risk. Studies suggest that the physical and mental health of those who leave education with low level qualifications is worse than that of high academic achievers and that these health inequalities continue into adulthood. Chevalier and Feinstein's work shows that the risk of depression is 6% lower for adults who have Level 2 rather than Level 1 qualifications. 'The positive effect of education is present at all ages ... and remains even after accounting for work and family characteristics.'<sup>14</sup> Studies in the United States have described the positive, long-term relationship between physical health and additional years in schooling. For individuals born between 1914 and 1939, an additional year of schooling is estimated to reduce the probability of dying within the next ten years by 3.6%; and for those born between 1937 and 1956, an additional year of college education decreases smoking prevalence from 52% to 48.2%.<sup>15</sup> The health benefits of high academic achievement to the next generation are also substantial, with the prevalence of mental disorders in children varying, from 4.4% in a parent educated to degree level to 17% in children of a parent with no qualifications.

Teenage or early pregnancy exposes both mother and child to increased risk of ill health and social exclusion. Early pregnancy can seriously disrupt education (nearly 40% of teenage mothers leave school with no qualifications) and among young women who leave school with no qualifications, 29% will have a birth under 18, compared with 1% of those who leave at 17 or over. There is clear evidence that education acts as a protective factor: deprived wards with poor levels of educational attainment have an under-18 conception rate double that found in similarly deprived wards with higher attainment levels.<sup>16</sup>

### **The risks of low achievement – perpetuating disadvantage**

Children's experience of the current education system is more likely to reflect social injustice than to overcome it. The risks of low achievement described above – poor employment, unemployment, criminality and ill-health - are experienced unequally. Despite skilled and dedicated practice by many schools and considerable new investment by Government to reduce inequalities, the differences between groups are profound.

The single largest attainment gap is between deprived and affluent children. Just over 30% of young people eligible for Free School Meals

---

<sup>14</sup> Chevalier, A. and Feinstein, L. 2006. 'Sheepskin or Prozac: the causal effect of education on mental health.' Discussion Paper. Centre for the Economics of Education. London. p.25.

<sup>15</sup> Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning. 2006. 'The wider benefits of learning: a synthesis of findings from the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, 1999-2006.' DfES Research Brief No. RCB05-06.

<sup>16</sup> DfES. 2006. *Teenage pregnancy: accelerating the strategy to 2010*. Department for Education and Skills.

(FSM) attain Level 1 qualifications, whereas just over 60% of non-FSM young people achieve them.<sup>17</sup> This gap has barely narrowed since 1999, although overall attainment has risen for both groups.<sup>18</sup> At 16, even controlling for attainment, the young people least likely to stay in education and training are those whose parents are from poorer social economic backgrounds. And of those who do leave education and training at this point, it is those from poorer social and economic backgrounds who are most likely to be unemployed.<sup>19</sup>

Alongside social class, numerous other distinctions affect a child's likelihood of doing well or badly at school. The most significant of these include gender, race, Special Education Needs (SEN) status, disability, looked-after status and parental attainment, educational experience and aspirations. For example:

- Although the present NEET level at 18 is 13%, young people with a disability or health problem experience NEET levels of 29% at this age.
- 84% of Indian young people are in full-time education at 18, as opposed to 44% of white young people.
- White young people at 18 are much more likely to be in a full-time job than their peers from the other main ethnic groups (25% compared to 6% of black young people).<sup>20</sup>
- Gypsy Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils perform least well at school by a considerable margin: 33% of FSM pupils of Irish Traveller Heritage achieve no GCSE passes at KS4, as opposed to 4% of FSM black Caribbean and 3% of FSM Pakistani pupils.<sup>21</sup>

### Will a raised participation age reduce the risks of low achievement?

The Green Paper identifies a situation in which England's most vulnerable children are benefiting least from the education system. It rests its case for forcing all young people to 'stay on' beyond 16 on the belief that it will transform these young people's experience and outcomes:

'Introducing compulsion would mean that the whole system would need to focus on the needs of this group who are least likely at present to choose to participate'. (RE 2.27)

---

<sup>17</sup> H.M. Treasury. 2007. *Aiming high for children: supporting families*. H. M. Treasury and Department for Education and Department for Education and Skills. p.20.

<sup>18</sup> National Statistics. 2006. *Statistics of education: trends in attainment gaps: 2005*. Department for Education and Skills.

<sup>19</sup> EdComs. 2007. *90% participation project: desk research*. DfES Research Report RW102. p.16.

<sup>20</sup> National Statistics. 2006. *Youth Cohort Study: the activities and experiences of 18 year olds: England and Wales 2006*. DfES.

<sup>21</sup> National Statistics. 2006. National curriculum assessment, GCSE and equivalent attainment and post-16 attainment by pupil characteristics in England 2005/6 (provisional). SFR 46/2006. Department for Education and Skills.

Yet this begs the question. Why would it not be possible to focus on the needs of this group *without* introducing compulsion? Or put another way, if the focussing is successful, why should there be any need for compulsion?

The implicit answer given by the Green Paper is that some young people, families and communities are so set against education that they will not be in a position to make an informed choice in line with their real longer-term interests.

‘Without compulsion, there is a risk that young people with lower aspirations, who may come from families and communities which have had a poor experience of schooling, are missed as participation increases.’ (RE 2.26)

This answer is reasonable, but it should serve as a caution against neglecting an holistic view of children and childhood in the desire to focus on formal educational achievement. Low educational achievement exists in a complex matrix of social, personal and familial risk, disadvantage and discrimination. High achievement at school can powerfully reduce an individual’s risk of social exclusion, but in most cases, educational outcomes mirror disadvantage rather than overcome it. Formal education by itself will in most cases play a limited role in transforming young people’s situation.

11 MILLION recognises that the Government’s programme for children is as serious attempt to provide multi-dimensional support. *Every Child Matters*, Children’s Trusts and integrated working are designed to meet the whole child’s needs. Since the Education and Inspections Act 2006, schools have been required to have regard to all five of the *ECM* outcomes - enjoying and achieving; staying safe, being healthy, making a positive contribution and enjoying economic wellbeing. With measures such as Tax Credits to address the family’s economic situation, significant progress has been made in reducing child poverty, though the Government is not on course to meet its target, and progress has stalled. Improved support to parents in the early years through Children’s Centres and specialist support of the kind delivered through the Nurse Family Partnerships pilots recognise the importance of children’s development long before they reach the school gate. Targeted Youth Support should deliver valuable co-ordinated interventions, tailored around the needs of the individual, at an early stage. And measures for families with some of the most complex needs are put forward in the Social Exclusion Action Plan. But the question remains as to whether the reforms set out in the Green Paper are a positive new element within this total package of support.

Up to this point, the Government’s ‘standards’ agenda for schools, which emphasises levels of formal attainment, particularly at Key Stage 4, and encourages schools to compete with each other largely on the basis of these,<sup>22</sup> has raised overall attainment – the numbers achieving

---

<sup>22</sup> For the extent to which a school’s overall attainment levels can mask the poor performance of vulnerable pupils, see Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review Group.

good grades and staying in education to do so – but has barely reduced inequality. Children with the greatest social and emotional needs have not been well enough served by this testing and target-driven culture. Simply doing the same, or similar things for a longer period of time is unlikely to improve the situation, and may even create additional problems for children in the most challenging circumstances, with the lowest aspirations and the lowest self-esteem.



**‘It’s basic things that makes people want to do big things.’**

**Young person, Prince’s Trust xl project**

While fully recognising the importance of accredited skills,<sup>23</sup> we are concerned that if crudely applied, the Green Paper reforms could add to those pressures in the system that distract from supporting children and young people’s *achievement*, by focussing unduly on their *attainment*. For example, Government is considering the creation of a full subject GCSE for citizenship. Research, however, suggests that delivery as a stand-alone subject can limit the types of ‘citizenship-rich’ benefits with which it is currently associated, which include high levels of participation, interactive teaching methods, peer assessment and opportunities for students to make a difference in and beyond the school.<sup>24</sup> Other research links the level of participative practice in schools to young people’s self esteem and levels of attendance and exclusion.<sup>25</sup>

Our views on the adequacy of the Green Paper’s proposed changes to educational options are discussed below (Section 6). What we would like to stress at this point is that changes to the system need to take hold long before a young person reaches 14 – for example, long before the loss of motivation experienced by students at year 8;<sup>26</sup> and these changes need to bring children’s views, and their social and emotional needs to the centre of schooling. Successful participation post-16 depends heavily on participation pre-16 - valuing children and young people as agents rather than subjects in their own learning.

The quality of the educational experience is key to ensuring that young people remain engaged with learning as they move into early adulthood and beyond. Academically, children in the United Kingdom perform reasonably well at 15 years of age against their peers in other industrialised countries. The Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme of International Student Assessment places UK children 9<sup>th</sup> out of 25 in an overview of reading, mathematical and scientific literacy.<sup>27</sup> Yet by aged 17, the level of

---

2006. 2020 Vision: Report of the Teaching and Learning in 20020 Review Group. Department for Health and Social Security. p.37.

<sup>23</sup> For the importance, in particular, of basic English and maths, see Vignoles, A., De Coulon, A. and Marcenaro-Gutierrez, O. 2007. *The value of basic skills in the British labour market*. DfES Research Brief CEE02-07. Department for Education and Skills.

<sup>24</sup> Kerr, D. *et al.* 2007. *Vision versus pragmatism: citizenship in the secondary school curriculum in England*. DfES Research Brief RB845. Department for Education and Skills.

<sup>25</sup> Hasley, K. *et al.* 2006. *The voice of young people: an engine for improvement? Scoping the evidence*. NFER for CfBT Education Trust. p.23.

<sup>26</sup> Lord, P. and Jones, M. 2006. *Pupils’ experiences and perspectives of the national curriculum and assessment: final report for the research review*. NFER. p.32.

<sup>27</sup> See Innocenti Research Centre. 2007. *Child poverty in perspective: an overview of child well-being in rich countries*. Report Card 7. UNICEF. p.19.



participation in education or training is well below average (20<sup>th</sup> out of 30 countries), and well below that of many countries which actually have lower school leaving ages (for example, the Czech Republic and Switzerland). Crucially, our children and young people's expectations have not been raised as high by their schooling as that of their peers in similar countries. Only in four other OECD countries are young people more likely to expect getting work requiring low skills.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p.21

## 5 How should participation be defined?

### - our response to chapter 3 of the Green Paper

#### The central importance of the school experience: when does participation start?

- **11 MILLION welcomes the reforms announced in the *14-19 Education and Skills White Paper (2005)* aimed at increasing choice and catering for a greater variety of learning styles. If fully implemented as part of Personalised Learning, they will significantly improve young people's school experience. However, we look for greater evidence of progress towards giving students more of a voice in their own education and running of their schools. We are also concerned that the Green Paper says so little about the need to improve pupil engagement before Key Stage 4.**

11 MILLION broadly welcomes the diversity of the new education and training options described in Chapter 3 of the Green Paper. This diversity is essential if young people aged 14-19 are to be engaged in useful learning. Yet it will be children and young people's experience at school overall - and over years – that either supports or damages the reforms.



**'Well, no offence, but I think it needs to be more entertaining, because I think I don't want to stay until I'm 18, if it weren't like that.'**

**Young person,  
Prince's Trust xl  
project**

We know that for many children and young people, school is a positive experience. Research among year 7 and year 10 students in metropolitan areas suggests that 84% are usually happy at school. But we also know that their experience of learning itself is far less positive – 53% do not find their lessons particularly interesting.<sup>29</sup> For a minority of the young people consulted for this response, the school experience has been so negative that their overriding impulse is simply to try and escape from it without delay. One young person expressed how deep this antipathy can become. The most enjoyable thing about school, he said, was **'going into school breaking every single rule never learning your discipline, a single thing'**. As noted above (Section 4), where reactions are so extreme and needs so great, schools must be full partners in assessing a child's needs holistically, and working co-operatively with health, social care and the voluntary sector to deliver the necessary packages of support.

In some cases, disengagement has been strongly associated with not feeling safe at school. When 11 MILLION discussed the Green Paper with the London Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Council, members were deeply concerned that young people identifying, or being identified as LGBT would effectively be trapped in intolerable bullying situations. We know that bullying, on whatever grounds, plays an important part in disengaging children and young

<sup>29</sup> Wilson, S. *et al.* 2007. *London Challenge: survey of pupils and teachers 2006*. DfES Research Report RR823. p.8 & p.74.

people from learning, first in terms of absence from school,<sup>30</sup> and ultimately in leading them to become Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET).<sup>31</sup>

The most common complaint of the young people consulted for this response was being bored and frustrated at school. It was clear to them that boredom would probably stop young people staying in education or training post-16.



**'If I had to stay in school until I was 18, I think I'd rip out my hair, cause school's quite boring.'**

**'I think that is why they leave school, because they just get bored of it all.'**

**'[W]hen they leave secondary school they think it's gonna get more boring, but I think ... they're not right, because throughout secondary school, they think it is going to be the same thing over and over again, but as you go, like, to another stage it gets more interesting'.**

It is significant, and unfortunate, that so many young people at 16 look to Further Education or Sixth Form College as the only setting in which teaching and learning styles, relationships with tutors and flexible choices can start to meet their needs and aspirations, believing that schools fall short on all these counts. For many of the young people we consulted, Personalised Learning, and its prospect of varied, choice-based engagement at school, feels a distant prospect. They are still looking for:



**'ways of teaching that people might enjoy ... and support as well. I don't think schools do enough to try and understand people individually, so people they feel that they're not listened to'.**

---

<sup>30</sup> Malcolm, H., Wilson, V. and Kirk, S. 2003. *Absence from school: a study of its causes and effects in seven LEAs*. Research Report 424. Department for Education and Skills. p.viii.

<sup>31</sup> Sachdev, D., Harries, B. and Roberts, T. 2006. *Regional and sub-regional variation in NEETs: reasons, remedies and impact*. Learning and Skills Development Agency. p.72.

## Employment and the requirement to participate in education or training

- **11 MILLION believes that 16 – 17 year olds in full-time employment should not be required to participate in part-time accredited learning if they hold Level 2 qualifications. We also believe that young people’s progression should be encouraged and supported.**

The reason for leaving education at 16 most commonly given by the young people consulted by 11 MILLION was to get a job and money. For some, this seemed to reflect generational employment patterns and opportunities:



**‘They can go and find a job with their dad ... if their dad’s got their own business’.**

**‘They might just want to get out there and work with their father, you know, or family job’**

Unfortunately, much of this employment – largely in retail and building – proves temporary. There is legitimate concern that so many who enter jobs without training are liable to move in and out of the Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) population and face the same severely limited prospects. Those who enter jobs without training without having achieved Level 2 are barely more likely than their NEET peers to have progressed to Level 2 by aged 18 (11% and 10% respectively).

However, the Green Paper fails to make a clear case for why those in full-time employment at 16 and 17 who have already succeeded in achieving minimum qualifications should still be required to study for 280 guided hours per year. Currently, 48% of those in jobs without training have at least Level 2 qualifications. The case for being made to stay in education – compulsion - described in Section 3 of this report relates to those young people whose low level of academic achievement, and disengagement from the structures of work and learning pose a significant risk to their immediate and future wellbeing. While it is highly desirable for employed young people with Level 2 qualifications to progress further and enhance their skills, they do not face this level of risk. Involving them in a system based on compulsion would therefore not be proportionate.

## The requirement to work towards accredited qualifications

- **11 MILLION** believes that there should be a clear presumption in favour of accredited learning post-16, but that flexibility should be allowed to meet individual young people's needs. **11 MILLION** believes that supporting life-long learning, particularly for 18-25 year olds, is crucial in realising the potential of many of those who perform poorly during schooling.

In most cases it will be reasonable to expect education and training to lead to accredited qualifications. There is evidence that most young people value, and are motivated by, accreditation and qualification frameworks.<sup>32</sup> To engage successfully with some of the young people in the most challenging circumstances, however, requires flexibility, a degree of informality and freedom to address areas such as self-esteem and social skills. Research into work with those Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) in Liverpool, for example, concludes that 'softer outcomes' are more realistic in some cases.<sup>33</sup> Other work with NEETs highlights the importance of developing trust, and encouraging young people's confidence in their own ability to make choices. Introducing compulsion and the possibility of sanctions (see section 9) is likely to complicate the relationship between support workers and young people.

any element of compulsion to participate in Education, Employment and Training (EET) will challenge what we know about successful young people NEET work ... because a critical component of successful work preventing or re-engaging young people NEET is that the young person feels they are the main decision makers in any choice made of an EET path to follow.<sup>34</sup>

Forcing workers and young people to progress within too tight a framework of accreditation would make this worse. The system needs to reflect the need for young people to progress formally and informally, including beyond the age of 18.

---

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* pp.47-48.

<sup>33</sup> Pemberton, S., Cross, J. and Stevens, C. 2006. *The influence of parents / intergenerational factors – as opposed to other influences – on levels of NEET on Greater Merseyside*. Merseyside Social Inclusion Observatory Research Report 9. p.33.

<sup>34</sup> Research as Evidence. 2007. *What works in preventing and re-engaging young people NEET in London*. Greater London Authority. p.48.

## 6 Is there a suitable route for every young person?

### - Our response to chapter 4 of the Green Paper

#### Promising reform: potential and pitfalls

- **11 MILLION warmly supports the development of Diplomas, and recognises that they are central to the Green Paper's vision. It would not, therefore, be right to raise the education and training leaving age until the full range of Diplomas has been successfully introduced in all parts of the country, and their impact assessed.**

The package of reforms described in the Green Paper amount to the most radical change to secondary education for a generation. It is hugely ambitious – and rightly so. Young people consulted for this response called for a more varied, practical, work-related and experiential education system.



**'I don't want to be sitting behind a desk every day of the week writing and writing and writing and writing, and not feeling I am getting anywhere'.**

**'Schools should take students out more and let them try different things ... if you offer more, then people will give more'.**

**'Find different ways to learn'.**

The key part of the Government's reforms is the Diploma. It is designed to be the 'third track' between traditional 'academic' qualifications, and the strictly vocational option offered by an expanded Apprenticeship programme. As a modular award, the Diploma it is designed to offer good opportunities for young people to personalise their learning. A minimum of 10 days work experience with an employer in the relevant sector will provide practical insights, as well as additional motivation.

The Green Paper makes it clear that the Diploma is not just another qualification to sit alongside existing qualifications such as the BTEC National and First Diploma awards. It is a new type of award designed and delivered by new, dedicated partnerships between employers, schools and colleges. The House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee's recent report,<sup>35</sup> while supportive of what is planned, sounded several notes of caution:

<sup>35</sup> House of Commons Education and Skills Committee. 2007. *14-19 Diplomas: Fifth Report of Session 2006-07*. HC249.

- There are still communications challenges – and possibly unresolved conceptual difficulties – in setting out the exact nature of this ‘third track’ award, which is neither strictly vocational nor strictly academic.
- The implementation timescale is extremely demanding, with the risk that quality will be compromised.
- There may be pressure, over time, to increase the desk-based, theoretical element of the award to make it measurable and credible in comparison with academic qualifications.
- The workforce may not be adequately prepared to deliver them.
- Employers may not recognise and trust them.
- Students may not value them.

The Green Paper proposes to extend the leaving age to 17 in 2013 – the point at which a universal entitlement to the full range of Diplomas is due to be offered.

### The Apprenticeship entitlement and the Foundation Learning Tier

- **11 MILLION welcomes the expansion of Apprenticeship places and the new entitlement. We look for assurances that new vetting and barring procedures being introduced as a result of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 will be applied appropriately in these settings.**
- **11 MILLION welcomes the planned introduction of the Foundation Learning Tier as a serious attempt to rationalise options below Level 2. We share the concerns expressed by the Commons Education and Skills Committee that the fit between Diplomas and existing qualifications has yet to be fully explained, and that this may increase confusion.**



**‘Too many choices that are not clearly explained.’**

**‘Too confusing’.**

Apprenticeships have been dramatically over-subscribed, and young people who have spoken to us have expressed frustration at being unable to access places. The new apprenticeship entitlement will therefore be welcomed by many young people who want to experience the world of work and learn from applying practical skills.

We note that a pre-Apprenticeship programme will be available for young people who do not fit the entry criteria, and look for further details of what will be offered. Entry to Employment (E2E), when introduced, was described as providing pre-Apprenticeship learning,<sup>36</sup> but some

<sup>36</sup> E2E. 2006. *The framework for Entry to Employment programmes*. Issue 2. E2E and Learning and Skills Council.

practitioner feedback has indicated that there is too wide a gap between E2E and modern Apprenticeships for it to be of practical use.<sup>37</sup>

E2E was also intended to supersede the existing arrangements for pre-employment and also the other provision below NVQ Level 2. For most of the young people we consulted, simplification, along with better explanation, would be welcome.



**‘two weeks of work experience is not enough, I feel, to understand about working.’**

**Young person,  
Prince’s Trust xl  
project**

---

<sup>37</sup> Pemberton, S., Cross, J. and Stevens, C. 2006. *op cit.* pp.26-27.



## 7 Enabling all young people to participate

### - our response to chapter 5 of the Green Paper

#### Information, guidance and the skills to choose



'I'd love to stay till I'm 18, cause, like, right not, I'm not even sure if I'm ready to leave school yet, and go to college, cause like, I know I'm struggling in school ... and I'm kinda worried of doing my exams right now.'

Young person,  
Prince's Trust xl  
project

- The Green Paper proposes better information, advice and guidance on course and careers. 11 MILLION agrees that this advice should be available from a range of providers. We also believe that schools have a crucial, long term role to play in preparing young people for choices at Key Stage 4. Schools need to establish a culture of choice, and support the personal and emotional skills necessary for children and young people to make choices and take responsibility. We look for the Department for Education and Skills to provide strong leadership and appropriate resourcing for both student voice and social and emotional learning.

Young people consulted for this response reported some poor practice by schools in supporting students' career and qualification planning.



'I spoke to my first year sixth form [head] ... and he offered me business studies and ICT and double English. I have nothing that makes me want to do business studies. ICT – I have never done it in the school'.

This resonates with more systematic evidence of rushed and shallow support for students in some schools:

The postponement of discussions about post-16 courses until Year 11 that characterised most of these 11-18 schools was also criticised by a few young interviewees, who felt they were expected to make decisions with too little lead-in time. While this was not a widely expressed view, a feeling of disappointment ('*I felt I was let down by the school*') and panic was evident in some cases ('*we didn't have enough time to make our decisions. We didn't get enough warning really, because they kept pounding into our heads about GCSEs and then all of a sudden they say "Here are your A level choices. You've got to decide now".*')<sup>38</sup>

We agree with the Green Paper's proposition that advice and support for young people needs to be available from different services in a variety of formats. The young people consulted for this response said that they would seek advice from friends, youth workers, mentors, adults in work placements, Connexions, parents and friends, as well as school and college staff. Young people also commented on problems

<sup>38</sup> Blenkinslop, S. *et al.* 2006. *How do young people make choices at 14 and 16?* DfES Research Report RR773. NFER and Department for Education and Skills. p.31.

when expected grades are not achieved and there has been no contingency planning. At its most serious, this can lead to young people becoming Not in Employment Education or Training; and it underlines how important it is to make good quality advice throughout young people's time in secondary school in ways that are responsive to their changing needs.

Young people's ability to make choices on the basis of information, advice and guidance also needs to be addressed. Schools have a crucial role in developing these skills within whole school cultures that value children and young people's participation. The study cited above notes that 'there appeared to be a link between student-centred schools and more effective decision-making.'<sup>39</sup> Better support for children and young people's social and emotional skills is now available through SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) material for primary schools, and later this year, for secondaries. Though each of these sets of resources is best understood as a coherent package, the 'Going for Goals' theme in primary SEAL, and its secondary equivalent 'Motivation' are perhaps most immediately relevant, with a learning aim for a Year 7 student being that that: 'I can take responsibility for myself, I know how to help myself believe that I can influence what happens to me.'<sup>40</sup> Good schools are building an ethos of pupil voice and democratic learning that enables children and young people to develop this self-belief through practical action. Children and young people who have not been given opportunities to practise choice before Key Stage 4 may struggle to choose the most appropriate qualifications pathway.

### Financial support to study

- **11 MILLION accepts that a review of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is reasonable if new arrangements can be devised which deliver *more* support, more flexibly to young people in need and from low income backgrounds.**

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was well known to the young people we consulted. For some of them it felt like due appreciation for their efforts: '**we should get something in return.**' A minority were anxious about existing financial pressures and the prospect of these becoming worse for themselves and their families because of a raised leaving age.

---

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p.93.

<sup>40</sup> Secondary National Strategy. 2007. *Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) for secondary schools: Year 7 resource – theme 3: keep on learning.* Department for Education and Skills. p.1.



**'It's going to cost parents a lot more if they have to pay for their kids, even when their kids are 18.'**

**'If you don't have the basics, like a computer ... if you don't have one of them, you are stuffed really.'**<sup>41</sup>

Section 4 of this report has already noted and criticised the Government's failure to reduce the strong and persistent link between low family income and educational achievement. EMA has been a serious attempt to tackle this problem, and has established an important and welcome principle by making payments directly to students themselves. However, looking at young people's choices and behaviours overall, there is no strong evidence that introduction of EMA nationally has made a significant difference to young people's choices and behaviours. Participation has not risen as much as the pilots have indicated;<sup>42</sup> and retention on courses seems unaffected, despite its financial link to attendance.<sup>43</sup> Young people have also reported practical problems and discrepancies, such as the stopping of EMA during holiday periods, and difficulty in accessing EMA for short courses.

There is a case for reviewing the future of educational maintenance allowances if the leaving age is raised. Clearly, continued financial support for low income groups is crucial both in terms of social justice and retention and achievement. For the most marginalised, and those in the most challenging circumstances, such as core young people Not in Employment Education or Training, there is evidence that financial incentives tailored sensitively to individual need, have an extremely useful role to play.<sup>44</sup>

- **11 MILLION will follow with care the proposed realignment of benefits following on from a raising of the compulsory education and training age, and will oppose any attempt to introduce the practice of conditionality in a way that would dilute existing rights and entitlements.**

We note the Green Paper's commitment to consult further on appropriate changes to benefits prior to any extension of compulsory

---

<sup>41</sup> Research backs this young person's view. Schmidt, J. and Wadsworth, J. 2004. *Is there an impact of household computer ownership on children's educational attainment in Britain?* Centre for Economic Performance.

<sup>42</sup> Delorenzi, S. and Robinson, P. 2005. *Choosing to learn: improving participation after compulsory education.* IPPR.

<sup>43</sup> Middleton, s. et al. 2003. *The evaluation of EMA pilots. Three years evidence: a quantitative evaluation.* DfES Research Report RR499. Department for Education and Skills; and EdComs. 2007. *op cit.* p.68.

<sup>44</sup> Research as Evidence. 2007. *What works in preventing and re-engaging young people NEET in London.* *op cit.* pp.24-5.

education and training. In relation to other proposed changes in benefit entitlement, the Children's Commissioner has raised strong objections to the introduction of conditionality.<sup>45</sup> While we would be interested in exploring the potential of incentives to achievement – similar to those which currently exist under EMA – these cannot substitute for benefits which meet children's and families' rights through assessment on the basis of need. In this context, it is somewhat worrying that the Green Paper put forward the idea of withholding driving licences from non-compliant young people as an example of its possible 'incentives' (*RE: 5.31*). It is an idea worth further consideration, but as a *sanction*, not an incentive (see Section 9).

- **11 MILLION calls for a clear commitment to meeting the travel costs of 16-17 year old students from low income backgrounds, and regards assurances on this count as critical to the practicality and equity of compulsory post-16 education and training.**

The Green Paper acknowledges that 'transport can be one of the biggest barriers to participation' (*RE: 5.16*), but is tentative in its commitment to overcoming the problem. Children and young people have used 11 MILLION's *Shout: Turn Up the Volume* competition to express their frustration at limited and inaccessible public transport. Diplomas delivered in partnership between schools, colleges and employers, and an expansion in work-based learning, mean that it will be more important than ever for young people to be able to have access to public transport or cycle loans. It would be clearly unjust to consider penalising young people for non-attendance at education or training if they do not have the resources to make the journey.

---

<sup>45</sup> Children's Commissioner. 2007. *Response from the Children's Commissioner to the Home Office consultation paper on strengthening powers to tackle anti-social behaviour.*

## 8 Employers playing their part

### - Our response to chapter 6 of the Green Paper

- **11 MILLION** looks for reassurances that all young people in full-time employment will be able to access part-time training and education without suffering any loss of income, or being forced to undertake unreasonable hours.

Section 5 expressed our view that young people who have gained Level 2 qualifications and are in full time employment should not be required to participate in part-time education and training. However, we believe that there should be opportunities for all young people in full-time employment to access training or education. On this point, we believe that the Green Paper's proposals lack strength and clarity.

Employers would be required to release young people for 280 hours of guided learning over the course of a year, yet it is simply stated that they '*should not*' (*RE: 6.18, emphasis added*) require them to access this learning outside normal working hours.

The Green Paper notes that employers would not be required to pay for young people's study leave, raising the prospect that young people already earning below the National Minimum Wage level for adults could be pushed deeper into employment poverty.

## 9 Making sure that young people participate

### - Our response to chapter 7 of the Green Paper

- **11 MILLION strongly opposes the introduction of Attendance Orders with criminal sanctions, and has serious doubts over whether Attendance Orders with civil penalty notices and fines would improve young people's outcomes. We urge the Government to consider alternative civil measures.**

#### Compulsion and consequences



**'trying to pressure them ... to staying in further may make them want to rebel.'**

**Young person, Prince's Trust xl project**

We accept that raising the compulsory leaving age without at the same time introducing some measures through which non-compliance would be penalised, would be legally and logically inconsistent. The Green Paper describes measures to force young people to stay in education and training as 'a last resort'. Clearly, the Government's intention is to encourage voluntary participation, and minimise the number of cases in which young people who refuse to comply become subject to penalties. For example, considerable thought has been given to the support needs of some specific groups, such as young mothers, young offenders, the homeless and care leavers.

However, it is alarming that the Department's own projections indicate that under these proposals, 6,000 young people every year will be issued with an Attendance Order.<sup>46</sup> Sanctions, through either the criminal or civil route would follow from non-compliance with this Order.

Most of the young people we consulted for this response were against imposing penalties, especially financial penalties. A minority were extremely hostile. Some believed that anyone forced to stay in education against their will would make things very difficult for the institution and the other students. The unfairness of making students with behaviour difficulties stay in education, when their needs have not been well properly met up until this point, was also noted.



**'Why should young people be blackmailed to stay on by force and threats of punishment?'**

**'some kids might end up just getting into trouble to get kicked out of school'.**

**'not enough is done for people that might have behaviour problems.... So, like people might have learning difficulties and for some people to stay at school ... I don't think is a very good idea.'**

<sup>46</sup> Confirmed to 11 MILLION by the DfES in clarification of costs in: 2007. *Initial Regulatory Impact Assessment for Raising Expectations: staying in education and training post-16*. s.61.

The Green Paper proposes a new type of civil order – an Attendance Order. Whereas Penalty Notices and Parenting Orders for non-attendance up until 16 are placed on parents and carers, the Attendance Order would be placed on the young person themselves. We believe that this change of approach is appropriate, but we are concerned that in practice the treatment of over young people post-16 would be affected by the attitudes and assumptions which have encouraged an increasingly punitive attitude to school non-attendance.

The Government has clearly and rightly recognised the importance of attendance. In 2002, a quarter of persistent truants gained no qualifications, compared to only 2% of non-truants.<sup>47</sup> Key parts of the Government's strategy to tackle this problem, though, have been of questionable value. Powers to impose Parenting Orders or Parenting Contracts and Penalty Notices have been introduced to strengthen existing sanctions under the Education Act 1996, Section 444(1) and the Children Act 1989, Section 36. Having provided local authorities with new punitive tools, the Government has publicly urged their vigorous use against parents they believe are simply unwilling to get their children into school.

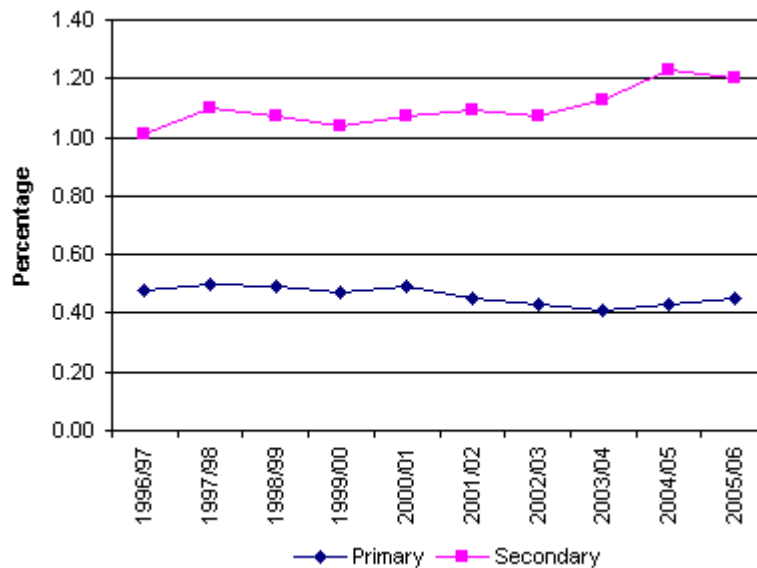
This call for 'tough' action has been taken up much more vigorously by some local authorities than others. From September 2006 to December 2006, Barnsley issued the highest number of penalty notices (520), while the majority issued less than 10. The highest number of prosecutions for non-payment of fines was by Newcastle-upon-Tyne, which took action in 80 cases during the same period as it was issuing a further 106 penalty notices.<sup>48</sup> Such dramatically wide variation raises questions about equity and proportionality. It also makes it hard to account definitively for overall changes in behaviour. In any case, such changes as there have been during the last decade have not been particularly encouraging:

---

<sup>47</sup> National Statistics. 2005. *Summary Article of Focus on Social Inequalities*. Office for National Statistics. p.10.

<sup>48</sup> Department for Education and Skills. 2007. *Data on penalty notices, Fast-Track to attendance, Parenting Orders and Parenting contracts for period 2 September 2006 to 31 December 2006*.

**Percentage of half days missed due to unauthorised absence in maintained primary and secondary schools, England, 1996/97 to 2005/06<sup>49</sup>**



The Government's insistence that punitive measures are an effective sanction against parents who refuse to co-operate has yet to be proved. Though the National Audit Office concluded in 2005 that sanctions against parents can be useful as one of a range of actions, it noted the lack of evidence linking absence rates and the number of prosecutions, and based its rather muted support for sanctions on interviews with local authority officers.<sup>50</sup> Other research indicates that the impact of punitive measures in improving individual children's attendance is at best short-lived.<sup>51</sup> We are worried that despite the Green Paper's stated intention of only resorting to sanctions as a last resort, Government rhetoric and policy have heavily emphasised punitive measures for under 16s, and that this would inevitably affect the culture and practice of enforcement post-16.

We know that school-refusers and persistent truants are among those most likely to become Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET). The Green Paper therefore assumes that those children and young people whose behaviour could not be substantially changed by parental fines, will prove more responsive to fines for which they are personally responsible. It is an unconvincing proposition. When we look at who, statistically, is most likely to refuse school, it is exactly those vulnerable and disadvantaged children that we already know

<sup>49</sup> National Statistics. Trends in education and skills. Online resource: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/trends/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.showChart&cid=3&iid=12&chid=45>

<sup>50</sup> National Audit Office. 2005. *Improving school attendance in England*. National Audit Office. pp.35-37.

<sup>51</sup> Zhang, M. 2007. 'School absenteeism and the implementation of truancy related penalty notices.' In press.



have been least well served by the education system – bullied children, those with poorly-met SEN, those with problematic home lives (see Section 4).<sup>52</sup> For example, over a fifth (22%) of children with conduct disorders probably play truant, and a third have been excluded.<sup>53</sup>

We know from specialists who work with disengaged young people, that bringing the threat, or even the spectre of compulsion into work with NEET is likely to deepen alienation and reduce trust (see Section 5). Financially penalising young people who will in all likelihood already be in poverty, or at the margins of poverty, is practically unwise and ethically dubious. Attaching a criminal record to a young person – as could be the case if she or he breached their Attendance Order – would make them substantially less employable.

---

<sup>52</sup> Malcolm, H. *et al.* 2003. *Absence from school: a study of its causes and effects in seven LEAs*. DfES Research Report 424. Department for Education and Skills.

<sup>53</sup> National Statistics. 2005. *Mental health of children and young people in Great Britain, 2004*. Department of Health and the Scottish Executive. p. 6.

## 10 Words used in this document



**We aim to make our reports easy to read for people without specialist knowledge. Listed below are words and abbreviations used in this document that might need further explanation:**

### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**

Every child and young person under the age of 18 has rights, no matter who they are, where they live or what they believe in. These rights are protected by an agreement between almost all the world's countries. This is called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **Green Paper**

When the Government is thinking about changing laws and policies it publishes its ideas in what is called a Green Paper. This gives people a chance to say whether they like or do not like the ideas. Anyone can respond to a Green Paper consultation. The Government published 'Raising Expectations: Staying in Education and Training Post-16' in March 2007.

### **Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET)**

If someone has left school and is able to work, but has not got a job and is not studying, they are described as Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET). The Government is particularly worried about young people who are in this situation.

### **Diplomas**

Diplomas are new qualifications which will combine practical skills that can help with particular types of job, and basic skills that everybody needs. There will be Diplomas in 14 different subject areas, like Construction, Information Technology and Society, Health and Development. Students will be able to do Diplomas at three different levels. At level one, a Diploma will be comparable to doing four or five GCSEs; at level two it will be comparable to doing five to six GCSEs; and at level three it will be comparable to doing three A levels. The Government plans to introduce the first few Diplomas for some students later this year. If everything goes well, all the Diplomas should be available to all young people in 2013.

### **Education Maintenance Allowance**

The Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was brought in across the country in 2004. It is a payment to young students (16-19). Students can get it if their parents or carers get less than £30,810 every year. It is £30 a week for students from the poorest families. If students do not attend classes, they can lose payments. If they meet their goals, they can get extra 'bonus payments'.

## Key Stages

These are the important steps that children and young people take as they move up through school. At each step – or Key Stage - they learn different things and different skills. At the end of each Key Stage there are tests to see how well they are doing. Key Stage 1 covers Years 1 and 2; Key Stage 2 covers Years 3 and 6; Key Stage 3 covers Years 7 and 9; and Key Stage 4 covers 10 and 11. At Key Stage 4 students chose the subjects they will take exams in.

## Level 1 and Level 2 Qualifications

There are many different qualifications in England. A framework has been established that makes it possible to compare them by putting them all into bands - or 'Levels' – depending on how difficult they are. If a student gets enough qualifications in a particular band, she or he can be described as being at that Level of education. Level 1 qualifications include GCSE grades D-G and NVQ1; Level 2 qualifications include GCSE A\*-C and NVQ2. Level 1 shows that you have basic knowledge and skills. Level 2 shows you have good knowledge and skills. The Government wants more people to get the 5 or more GCSE A\*-C grades that mean you are educated to Level 2.

## Appendix

### Consultation with young people in Prince's Trust xl clubs

**The Prince's Trust and 11 MILLION have worked together to ensure that young people's views are included in the Green Paper consultation. Both organisations believe that the views of disadvantaged young people at risk of social exclusion are particularly important in deciding education reform.**

The Prince's Trust is a charity that believes in young people who often don't believe in themselves. It seeks out those young people that need its help the most and work with young people who struggle at school, are in or leaving care, are long-term unemployed or have been in trouble with the law. It works with young people aged 14-30 to help them get back into work, education and training.

11 MILLION provided briefing material and methodological advice and support to enable Prince's Trust staff and volunteers to conduct work with young people. It was decided that young people in XI clubs would be most relevant.

Prince's Trust xl Clubs operate in 621 schools across the UK, supporting 13,886 young people in 2005-6. The clubs deliver a personal development programme to young people at risk of truanting and under-achievement. Their aim is to improve attendance, self-esteem, motivation and social skills.

10 different xl Clubs conducted discussion groups with young people to explore their views of the Green Paper - 9 clubs from the Yorkshire and Humber region, and one from the North East. The clubs include both Year 10 and Year 11 students. Views from the clubs were summarised by facilitators. 114 young people took part in this process.

An xl London celebration event in April 2007 allowed enabled more in-depth work with individual young people, who were supported to give their views using a 'Big Brother', video diary format. 21 young people took part in this process. Of these:

- 42% thought that the proposals were a good idea
- 24% could see both positives and negatives
- 21% thought the proposals were a bad idea

Because of the discussion group format used in Yorkshire and Humber, and in the North East, it is not possible to statistically weight their responses, but the balance of opinion appears to be broadly similar.



**“The 11 MILLION children  
and young people in  
England have a voice”**

Children’s Commissioner for  
England, Professor Sir Albert  
Aynsley-Green



**MILLION**

11 MILLION, 1 London Bridge, London, SE1 9BG

Telephone: 0844 800 9113 Fax: 020 7357 8329

Email: [info.request@11MILLION.org.uk](mailto:info.request@11MILLION.org.uk)

[www.11million.org.uk](http://www.11million.org.uk)

CR002