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5th February 2013

Dear Sir/Madam,

YMCA England response to the Department for Education and Department for Business Innovation and Skills discussion paper on Traineeships

The YMCA is a major provider of a whole range of employment and training programmes to help young people into work. These include apprenticeships, vocational training, training courses, informal education and volunteering opportunities. YMCA Training is one of the UK's largest voluntary sector training providers with more than 50 training centres across the country offering opportunities to over 18,000 young people and adults every year.

YMCA George Williams College develops innovative programmes and resources supporting the needs of workers and managers. Courses include youth and community work, informal education and working with homeless people. YMCA George Williams College offers the chance to study at pre-qualification through to doctorate levels.

In addition to the work of YMCA Training and YMCA George Williams College, a number of YMCAs have also integrated education and training provision into their day to day work and operate as local providers. Examples of this would include the Halton YMCA Community Academy and the Plymouth YMCA Community Learning model.

Following the publication of the Work and Pensions Committee's inquiry, the YMCA national body, YMCA England, carried out a consultation of the 121 YMCAs across England on apprenticeships and traineeships. Their comments and feedback form the basis of this response.

1. *What are your views on the elements that are essential for an effective programme to support young people to prepare for Apprenticeships and other jobs?*



- 1.1 There are numerous elements that are essential when delivering an effective programme to support young people into apprenticeships or jobs. The YMCA has encountered many young people who cannot or who are not ready to take up a full employed apprenticeship and it is these young people who will be able to benefit from the Traineeship programme greatly.
- 1.2 Traineeships should be a single all-embracing programme that bridges the gap between school and apprenticeships/employment. Offering maximum flexibility to providers to design the most appropriate package for individuals with their varying needs to progress them towards apprenticeships/sustainable employment outcomes.
- 1.3 When building a package to support young people their educational attainment must be incorporated into any programme in order to build on any educational deficits they may face before attempting to enter the job market. The YMCA welcomes the emphasis being placed on ensuring that young people are educated to English and Maths level 2 through the Traineeship model proposed.
- 1.4 One challenge which has been highlighted is that young people are not ready for the job application process, from CV writing to interview techniques. Thus part of the Traineeship elements should be to support young people in these areas. CV preparation and interview training are welcomed additions to any training programme being proposed.
- 1.5 When young people are entering the workplace, be this through a job or apprenticeship, employers are commenting about a lack of knowledge about what the young people were expecting to experience. A desired outcome of the Traineeship programme would be that young people leave with a thorough understanding of what working life will entail and what employers will be expecting from them gained through practical work experience and learning on the job, underpinned by appropriate information and guidance.
- 1.6 The Traineeships should incorporate on the job real tasks taking place which will allow young people to be able to make a smooth transition into applying these skills in a work place or apprenticeship.
- 1.7 There is clear evidence that the more exposure young people have to employers the more successful they are in gaining employment. The programme will need to ensure that the participants are given these opportunities and avoid some practices that resulted in previous pre-apprenticeships/programme led apprenticeships being delivered by (some) colleges in the classroom.
- 1.8 Any Traineeship programme which does not support young people financially will ultimately make them less accessible. As the programme aims to cover



those aged between 16-24 years old, the offer of financial support must be proficient enough to help support those wanting to join the programme. The impact any financial support would have on young people receiving benefits, especially vulnerable young people, would need to be thoroughly calculated in order to ensure Traineeships supported young people through the programme effectively.

- 1.9 There is a need for an element of careers guidance to be incorporated into the Traineeships model so that participants have the right knowledge of what is available to them, as and when they are completing their programme. Effective careers guidance will help the participants to progress and benefit the most from the Traineeship schemes.
- 1.10 A positive step for the Traineeships programmes is that they are not aimed simply at those with the lowest attainment or hardest to reach but to those young people who want to make a difference to their own lives and are seeking to gain employment or an apprenticeship.

2. Should a guaranteed interview be part of the core content of a Traineeship?

- 2.1 Including a guaranteed interview would be an essential element of the programme; the young person has to be able to practise the skills they have learned. They have to appreciate a 'real life' interview situation, to enable them to learn from experience and how to 'bounce back' from potential rejection. One of the key aims within the Traineeship programme should be building resilience when dealing with rejection.
- 2.2 Whilst advocating for a guaranteed interview, YMCA England would also like to see businesses monitored to check if those who choose not to participate do so because they have to include a guaranteed job interview.

3. What makes work placements high quality and effective?

- 3.1 A supportive employer is essential to quality work placements. Clear guidelines supplied by the provider to the employer about the process of the placement and the expectations, both for the young person and the employer are also needed to ensure quality and effectiveness.
- 3.2 Whilst not employed the young person will need to be linked to an employer or social enterprise based option to ensure the Traineeship is a practical, work based and employer based programme, which enables young people to develop the skills attitudes and behaviours along with relevant qualifications that employers really want.



4. Are you aware of other evidence from existing programmes that demonstrates the effectiveness of these elements?

- 4.1 The Environmental Task Force / Voluntary Sector Option provision of New Deal delivered high job success rates due to the vocational element which was tailored to the young person's Job Seekers agreement, combined with the employability skills learned throughout the thirteen week provision. The key to this success is that the programme has to be well managed and in YMCA's experience a diploma would further support the vocational element.

6. What are your views on the proposed Traineeships model? Are the core components right? Is the balance between flexibility and specification correct?

- 6.1 YMCA England believes the core content of the proposed Traineeships model attempts to support and develop young people before entering an apprenticeship or work offer effectively. The core components provide the right balance between flexibility and specification in order to give employers the right parameters to apply the Traineeships model to their organisations. A one-size-fits-all approach will not be an effective model to adopt and the core and flexible elements proposed should support those wanting to operate the programme effectively.

7. What are your views on the right age range for the programme (Paragraph 21)?

- 7.1 YMCA England would support the age range of 16-24. We are pleased that the age band extends to 24 year olds and also want to see Traineeships promoted as a positive choice for young people at 16 and 17 who are motivated by a practical and work based opportunity to continue their participation in education and training. Traineeships should not be positioned solely as a pre-apprenticeship programme; it instead needs to stand alone as a high class skills programme and a route into employment whilst recognising the importance of value of progressing to an apprenticeship.

8. What are your views on the right duration for the programme (Paragraph 24)?

- 8.1 The proposed six month duration would seem a sensible length given the need for the young person to progress onto a more substantial and longer period in either an apprentice or a work offer. As the duration would be flexible there would need to be appropriate objectives throughout the Traineeships in order to complete qualifications before finishing the programme. The ability to continue to work towards the level 2 qualification



if the young person moves on before completing the programme would be beneficial in order to develop their long term employment prospects.

8.2 The need for flexibility in the delivery of the programme is essential. Careful scheduling will need to take place to decide whether elements are studied simultaneously or if they are gained separately over 'semesters'. Whichever element is deemed the most valuable to the young people participating with that organisation will ideally be at the beginning of the programme to enable young people to move on if employment or an apprenticeship becomes available.

8.3 Leaving the programme early is not something which should necessarily be encouraged, but it does give young people the biggest opportunity to succeed if they are still able to leave the programme with skills and experience regardless of how long they participated in it.

9. *What other elements of flexible content would you expect to be added to the core locally?*

9.1 Job search support and careers guidance are two elements of the flexible support which YMCA would like to see added to the core content of the programme. The recommendation would be for these to come towards the end of the programme to avoid young people leaving earlier and also to prioritise the learning and work placement elements.

10. *What are your views on the most effective routes for delivering Traineeships? Do the funding systems set out in Paragraph 27 provide sufficient flexibility to achieve this?*

10.1 A funding system which was based on payment by results could cause concern; it has already been seen in Department for Work and Pensions contracts that "creaming" and "parking" has been demonstrated, this could happen with Traineeships dependent on what are determined as results.

10.2 Equal results weightings should be given to all progressions routes; Further Education, Apprenticeship or work – as long as the young person does not return to the being a NEET. The concern always with determining what constitutes a result (for payment) is a shift from the quality of provision.

10.3 Providers may place a young person with an employer that does not support them, offer good employment Terms and Conditions and has a high staff turnover because of the potential for a job, any job, at the end of their placement. Therefore sustainability as per the youth contract/work programme, needs to be built into the results mechanism.



11. *How can we ensure that Traineeships are a high quality route which delivers real progression for young people but minimises bureaucracy for employers and providers (Paragraph 30)?*

- 11.1 Pilot projects need to be established that cover a variety of different types of young people across the given age ranges. Not all young people are the same but there will be similarities and types within certain age brackets. Step by step guides on how employers and training providers can adapt their current setup to take on a Traineeship would assist in their widespread delivery.
- 11.2 Simple key measurements of the provision would reduce bureaucracy. There is also a desire to have more simplistic health and safety vetting of premises. The establishment of a clear contract between the employee, provider and young person which outlines expectations, process and duration would be advantageous.

12. *The success of Traineeships will rely on employers offering high quality work placements. How can we best support and encourage employers to offer these? What will employers see as the benefits of being involved in Traineeships?*

- 12.1 Tangible outcomes need to be demonstrable to employers in order for them to invest their time and funds into providing quality work placements. The discussion paper has outlined the need for work placements to give young people on the job experience and for them to progress from the programme with work based skills.
- 12.2 Employers would need to be confident that by investing their time and funds the young person would stay on to do an apprenticeship or job within their organisations. Whilst the societal benefit would be of importance to some businesses, there must be a reason for them to partake in the Traineeship.
- 12.3 Case studies and best practice examples of where Traineeships have been effective, for both the employer and the young person, would help to encourage business into joining the programme. The Department for Education and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills should invest in the collation and publication of these case studies and best practice examples, in order to grow the Traineeship programme further.
- 12.4 The key to quality placements is effective Government marketing campaigns; the programme has to be explicitly visible to small and medium enterprises as well as larger organisations. The delivery of the programme would also benefit from clear and transparent information on the website and an obvious benefit to the employer. Outlining clear contractual obligations of the provider would also help to ensure quality of service for



the young people. The DfE and BIS may also benefit from having a 'preferred employer list' for placement provision.

Yours faithfully,



Denise Hatton

YMCA England
Chief Executive

