

The Economic Impact of Covid-19 on Young People

September 15th 2020

Blackpool HeadStart <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/.../contact-headstart.aspx>
Centre of Resilience for Social Justice, University of Brighton www.brighton.ac.uk/crsj/index.aspx
and Boingboing CiC www.boingboing.org.uk/
on behalf of the Resilience Revolution www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Health-and-social-care/HeadStart-Blackpool/HeadStart-Blackpool.aspx

Professor Angie Hart, Oliver Gibbs, Patrick Valentine, Laura Zakubinska, Danielle Aoslin, Hannah Eaglestone, Kie Foster, Kayleigh Bland, Ellie-May Harrison, Mirika Flegg, Sam Richardson, Jordan Wood, Andrew Fletcher, Pauline Wigglesworth

Introduction:

In this submission to [Youth Affairs APPG's Economic Impact Inquiry Opens Call for Evidence](#), we share our collective organisational and personal experiences in the aim of improving economic and employment opportunities for young people. Together, we are a group of young people (including young people facing multiple systemic disadvantages), researchers, youth support workers and senior managers of youth organisations. We are all co-leaders of the [Resilience Revolution](#). The Resilience Revolution is a whole town approach to addressing the mental health needs of children and young people with its first pilot being in Blackpool; one that both supports individuals to overcome challenges and develop their resilience AND through tackling structural inequalities that impact on people's lives.

Youth Voice, especially from young people facing multiple systemic disadvantages and Co-production is an integral part of our work. Co-production is an opportunity for young people, young professionals, senior professionals, parents and carers, teachers and community members to be able to work together, alongside one another, to make improvements to a community, a service or as in this case, to national policy. Taking a co-productive approach in this submission, we begin by reporting the responses that young people collectively provided to the specific questions in the call for evidence. We follow this with a discussion drawing from our collective practice-based experience and relevant research. Here, we also draw from living and working in an economically deprived community. Understanding the deprivation our community faces, contextualises the responses from young people and highlights the need to consider wider socioeconomic inequalities in policy. Lastly, we provide a list of recommendations and suggested time lines for their implementation.

Young People's Responses to Inquiry Questions:

We begin by presenting the answers young people provided to the specific questions attached to this inquiry.

The table below was prepared by a group of young people who work and live in Blackpool. They range from aged 17 to 23 with some of them in full time employment and others working part time whilst studying. They are all co-leaders of the Resilience Revolution and draw on their personal and professional expertise. Their names and roles are: Oliver Gibbs (Trainee Youth Engagement



Worker); Patrick Valentine (Apprentice Youth Engagement Worker); Laura Zakubinska (Administration Assistant); Danielle Aoslin (Peer Sessional Youth Engagement Worker); Hannah Eaglestone (Peer Sessional Youth Engagement Worker); Kie Foster (Peer Sessional Youth Engagement Worker); Kayleigh Bland (Youth Engagement Apprentice); Ellie-May Harrison (Youth Engagement Apprentice). Young people were supported in this process by Sam Richardson (Youth Engagement Worker); Jordan Wood (Youth Engagement Worker); Andrew Fletcher (Youth Engagement Lead). This group of young professionals worked to create the below table of thoughts young people have around Covid-19 and the economic impact it has had on young people. To keep it authentic and true to the voice of the young people involved, we believe it is important to keep the format the same so that their views and opinions are not lost or changed in any way.

Table 1: Youth Responses to APPG questions:

APPG Questions	Youth Responses
What is your analysis of the immediate economic impacts of COVID-19 on young people?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - House deposits for first time buyers have increased from 10% to 25% making it very difficult for young people to buy their first home. - Negative impacts on job security. - Fewer jobs for newly qualified young people. - Money loss (income: furlough, 80% originally and reducing, young people AND their family members). - Social impact - Anxiety around not being allowed out through lockdown, lacking confidence to find a job. - Potential to lose jobs in redundancy processes as they are less experienced in the roles and with interviews. - Less job opportunities as business struggle with financial losses.
How do you see the future employment and financial health of the country impacting in general, and specifically how these impacts will affect young people?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher unemployment rate. - Higher interest rates. - Entering into a recession (high chance, budgets already spent, massive overspend). - Still economic impacts from previous recessions, compounded by this one. - Younger generation still suffering from the impacts of these (housing market, tax, interest rates, and exchange rates). Caused by badly managed economies and countries by previous generations. - Young people will be paying back the national debt potentially for the rest of their lives. - Bleak.
What do young people tell you are their biggest concerns related to COVID-19 and the aftermath of COVID-19?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of loved ones. - Being taken away from their friends again. - Increased numbers of mental health issues and the strain on ongoing mental health issues that have not been handled correctly.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Going back into education and the immediate impact while the sector adapts and changes. Being part of the potential mistakes for future generations to learn from. - Stress (financial, family, loss) How do you recover from that? - JOBS (will there be any?)
How do you see COVID-19 (and aftermath) impacting specifically on young people's ability to afford basic needs such as bills, rent, or getting on the property ladder for the first time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Struggling to get onto the property ladder due to deposits changing from 10% to 25%. - Not eligible for a First Time Buyer Scheme as do not earn enough which highlights how these schemes set out to help people to get onto the property ladder only help those with money. - Those who have been furloughed are now trying to catch up on paying rent and bills. - No Job, no income. - Extra impact on areas of seasonal income (money earnt across 6 -9 months of the year, totally missed).
How do you see COVID-19 (and aftermath) impacting specifically on young people's ability to find and sustain employment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There will be a higher unemployment rate on the aftermath of COVID-19 resulting in more competition for the few job roles available. - Individuals who are overly qualified for roles may be forced to apply for roles that were once open for young people to get the experience they require to move up. - As unemployment rises, young people will be competing for jobs with professionals and people with years of experience. - Young people bottom of the pile. - Local lockdown and tourist areas – those who don't follow guidance are more likely to infect those in the service and tourist industries, causing local lockdown and compounding issues. - Young people are already missing out on work experience opportunities that are normally given to them through school when they are in year 10 in England.
What is your analysis of the long term concerns that could be felt because of these pressures?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negative impacts on young people's mental health and physical wellbeing. - Increased social anxiety. - Stress due to money worries, job worries or health. - Long term stresses around caring responsibilities and supporting parents/family members with their personal financial fallout. - Potential eating disorders caused by the links of obesity to increased risk of death when infected by Covid and hospitalised. - Lower school attendance and lower grades due to missing schoolwork.
What do you think the impact will be of the measure the Government has announced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The KickStart scheme only works for large corporate business that can take on more than 30 young people as employees. This means that small local business where young people are more likely to get one on one training,



to support young people into employment e.g. the Kickstart scheme?	<p>support, experience and a career at the end of it cannot provide this experience for young people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where is the long-term sustainability? - Reducing pressure on welfare circle and reducing rates of unemployment.... but.... taking money from the welfare circle. - Local organisations going under (liquidised, bankrupt).
What more can the Government do to support young people specifically?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide Help to Buy schemes that are reachable on a young person's wage. - Provide opportunities for small businesses to take on young people as employees to train them up and offer them a permanent position. - Fund youth clubs, youth activities, community centres and other social settings for young people. - Value the importance of all subjects in the school setting. Maths and English for example can easily be taught through an art, music or DT lesson. - Stop using targeted messaging which is aimed at young people with regards to COVID-19 as this provides the general public with the ammunition they require to blame young people for the spread of the virus. Some have found that it is the older generations who do not follow the rules/guidelines. - Extra support for young people returning to education, employment or training and staying safe. - Don't stick all the blame on young people! (Highest increase from 16-21 year olds). - BE CONSISTENT. - BE CLEAR. - Life skills and finances in curriculum to help learn and manage the fallout (employability skills and tutors). - More funding for mental health help for young people and stop ignoring them.

As the above table suggests, young people collectively are worried about their futures and about the futures of their peers. They expressed concerns surrounding the ability for government policy to support those seen as most disadvantaged. They suggest that communication is insufficient and may perpetuate negative social attitudes towards them and their peers. Yet they further suggest innovative solutions that may improve outcomes for young people. We explore these further in the next section, drawing from our lived experience alongside wider practice-based and research experiences.

Youth Voice in Context:

In this section we expand on the voices of young people presented in Table 1. We begin by explaining the wider context of deprivation experienced by these young people and suggest how unrepresented voices can be included in current government initiatives. We then support and build



on specific points raised by young people drawing from our practiced based experience and relevant research.

The young people that co-produced this submission, all reside in Blackpool, UK and neighbouring areas. As a seaside town on the North West coast of England, Blackpool is often on the sharp end of statistics around child poverty, deprivation and a range of Health & Social inequalities (see for e.g. [2018/2019 Child Poverty Indicators](#)). For example, the 2018/2019 Child Poverty Reports suggest Blackpool has one of the highest child poverty rates in the country. As youth responses to this inquiry suggest, impacts associated with COVID 19 are expected to compound the challenges communities like ours face. In light of this, we recommend that representatives from struggling localities, and especially young people facing multiple systemic disadvantages be prioritised for participation in, and systematically supported to do so by initiatives such as the Youth Employment Group (YEG). This would include young people living in care and Care Leavers, Young Carers, those living in poverty, young people with disabilities, including learning disabilities, and young people discriminated against because of race, religion or sexuality. In Blackpool, our [Young People's Executive Group \(YPEG\)](#) contributes to key decision making in our locality, including around employment. We would welcome opportunities to support these young people to contribute to initiatives more nationally, for example by way of providing oral evidence associated with this inquiry.

As was found in Table 1, young people expressed great concern that their future employment opportunities would be impacted directly as the result of COVID 19. In our community, many young people are living in poverty and report similar economic responsibilities to adults in terms of financial commitments. For example, many young people in our community help to financially support their siblings and other family members. Some also have caring responsibilities and/or dependents. Prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, young people in Blackpool established a youth-led campaign called; '[Same Pay For the Same Day](#)'. Here, 434 young people across the town shared their views on employment. Thirty three percent of respondents reported that they did not earn enough money to live. Our work with young people around the '[Same Pay For the Same Day](#)' campaign highlighted the immense economic strain many were under prior to COVID 19. Thus, it is not surprising that young people in our community described the economic and employment situation post COVID 19 as "bleak". Enabling opportunities and providing adequate safety-nets, are more important now than ever.

Young people's recommendations for improving employment and economic impacts post COVID 19 are not dissimilar from those that arose from the '[Same Pay For the Same Day](#)' campaign. Young people clearly favour policies and practices that are inclusive, fair/equitable and that promote sustainability. However, as demonstrated in Table 1, young people now are experiencing distrust in government and wider society. This distrust is not helped by the timing of this inquiry where young people may have been excluded from contributing as it was launched as they were returning to school. This leaves young people with the impression that their opinions are not really welcome. We recommend a follow-up inquiry to this, and/or a Youth Voice event, to take place in the New Year. Longer submission time frames and explicit support to include the voices of the most marginalised young people including assistance for learning disabled young people to be involved, would enable maximum youth contributions and demonstrate to young people that their voices are valued. This inquiry and/or Youth Voice event may also seek views from young people surrounding how clear and consistent information can be best provided.

Trust in government may additionally be improved by reviewing existing schemes and altering them to promote more equitable uptake. The youth co-authors in this submission, report that some



schemes- such as the [Help to Buy Scheme](#)- are not accessible to them. Wider discussions suggested many young entrepreneurs were unable to access supports under the [Self-Employment Income Support Scheme](#) because their age limited their length of time in self-employment. Initiatives such as the [KickStart Scheme](#), may additionally have unintended consequences. As youth co-authors highlighted, the [KickStart Scheme](#) limits smaller sized organisations from participating. Young people suggested these smaller organisations were likely to provide them with the employment support they require and leading to sustainable employment. Looking at this a different way, the majority of businesses in Blackpool (as well as many struggling communities) are small or medium size. Thus, initiatives such as the [KickStart Scheme](#), are likely to disproportionately benefit communities with stronger business and innovation economies. Communities where child poverty is high like ours for example, may therefore be less able to benefit. We recommend that the [KickStart Scheme](#) be expanded to include businesses and organisations of a smaller size in regions where communities are facing economic hardship. Partnership working with struggling localities may enable this.

Additional supports may be provided to these communities which may optimise employment opportunities for the most disadvantaged young people. Additional supports may additionally be provided to racialised communities, disabled people and others known to face additional barriers to employment. These additional supports should include increases to mental health funding. They may also include initiatives to enable young people's equitable access to training and resources. Access to community spaces and supports are essential to enable all young people to prepare CVs, complete job applications, be successful in interviews and to optimise opportunities. Involvement with community activities may also be an avenue for building social networks and developing interpersonal and other transferrable skills. Additional supports such as these are especially important when young people face additional barriers such as living in poverty, experience disability and/or are excluded by the digital divide (see for e.g. [Submission of evidence on the disproportionate impact of COVID-19, and the UK government response, on people with disabilities](#), March 2020).

More general supports may be provided via schools. For example, youth co-authors suggested that life skills and financial planning be embedded in the national curriculum. Additional training may be provided via the [Oak National Academy](#) to support students excluded from school due to vulnerabilities to COVID 19. They highlighted the need for a sensitive public awareness approach around obesity and COVID 19. They highlighted the need to counter discourses that seek to blame young people for infections. It may be suggested that the government employ young people to specifically consider these suggestions further. Providing paid and volunteer employment opportunities to young people directly within government departments would help promote youth voice and identify youth-led solutions. A review of global approaches may be helpful here. [New Zealand's Youth Parliament](#) for example, includes youth MPs. Here, youth participation is embedded within parliamentary processes and complemented by wider engagement initiatives. Thus, approaches taken by others may provide direction towards increasing youth voice in UK parliament and policy.

Recommendations:

This section provides a summary of short and long term recommendations and suggests time lines for their implementation.



Within the next month:

- Plan for and begin promotions for a Youth Voice event in the New Year to enable young people to participate in reviews of existing government provisions and schemes.
- Prepare an action plan for including young people facing multiple systemic disadvantages in this event with targets for inclusion of specific groups and imaginative support for their inclusion.
- Review existing government provisions and schemes in partnership with struggling localities-in particular those areas where child poverty indicators are disproportionately high. Consider if existing schemes may be adapted and/or modified for equitable uptake.
- Create structures and resources to enable young people and representatives from economically deprived areas as well as other young people facing multiple systemic disadvantages to contribute to key committees relating to youth employment. Provide sufficient notice of opportunities and ensure opportunities do not conflict with other important events in young peoples' lives, such as the start of school. Ensure that the involvement of young people with learning difficulties is given specific consideration and resources.
- Counter public discourses that may perpetuate discrimination against young people such as those that may suggest young people are to blame for rising infections.
- Sensitively review all government communications surrounding COVID 19 and obesity. Provide safe and supportive opportunities for young people to improve their health. Involve young people in these processes.

Within the next six months:

- Embed opportunities within the national curriculum (and online equivalents) to build young people's knowledge around finances and life skills. Provide similar programmes in community settings and ensure that young people in special schools are included.
- Provide funding and supports to communities to enable young people to access technology, resources and training to support job searching and otherwise maximise employment opportunities. Explore what additional supports may remove barriers for those facing additional challenges.
- Embed youth voice within parliamentary processes, beginning with a youth voice event around employment in the New Year. Consider the role of Youth MPs. Consider employing young people to review specific government initiatives from a young person's perspective. Ensure that in all of these young people facing multiple systemic disadvantages are provided with support and resources to participate and monitor the degree to which they are included.
- In partnership with young people, develop a youth communication strategy. Ensure that all government agencies are providing clear and consistent communication to young people in ways acceptable to them.

