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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

CSJ unveils bold new welfare plan to slash youth unemployment

'Make tackling youth unemployment your moral mission' leading think-tank urges political parties

- National primary school to adulthood assault on youth worklessness
- Ambitious and intensive 'Youth Offer' system to be created for 18-24-year-olds to ensure 'everybody is doing something'
- 'Community Wage' scheme to provide new training opportunities
- Unemployed school-leavers to spend a month looking for work before receiving welfare cash
- Jobcentre Plus reforms to get more help to the unemployed

A new welfare package should be offered to young people in an attempt to slash youth unemployment, according to a report published today from a leading think-tank.

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) wants politicians to make a commitment that tackling youth unemployment will be a 'moral mission' in the next Parliament and calls for a fresh relationship between young people and the State.

The ambitious four-stage blueprint outlines plans which will help and support young people develop work skills and training from primary school through to adulthood.

CSJ proposals include a scheme across the country where expert coaches are appointed to give intensive help for up to five years to 14-year-olds identified as most at risk of becoming unemployed.

The think-tank insists these plans will offer effective early intervention while creating a culture where everyone who can is expected to do something to engage with the working world.

More than 500,000 young people are currently looking and available for work, but are not in employment, education or training (NEET) in the UK*. The CSJ criticises the casual use of the larger one million figure regularly quoted because they say it contains many young people who are not able to work.

“We've had high levels of youth unemployment for too long in our country. Recent progress is very welcome, but in good economic times and bad, under successive Governments, the number has been stubbornly high and talent has been wasted”, said CSJ Director Christian Guy.

“We urge those planning for Government in 2015 to declare reducing youth unemployment their moral mission for the next Parliament.

“From primary school to adulthood, our dynamic proposals offer intensive support to prepare all young people for the world of work.”

The plans from the CSJ, a think-tank which heavily influenced many of the Coalition's social policy programmes, build on Prime Minister David Cameron's 'earn or learn' rallying cry last year.

It wants to see a national initiative where expert coaches are appointed to offer intensive help to schoolchildren who are identified as being most at risk of unemployment in the future.

This is in part inspired by schemes running in Tower Hamlets, Islington and Hackney which have secured a 95 per cent success rate in placing at-risk youngsters in post-16 education, employment or training.

A key part of the CSJ's 'Youth Offer' is that school and college leavers not applying for higher education would use a new UCAS-style system to apply for education, training or work opportunities during their final year at school or college.

Those who fail to land a place or work would move to a specialist intensive job search programme, where there would be no benefits paid for the first four weeks while young people look for work (similar to an approach used in the Netherlands).

After this, they would become eligible for a 'Young Person's Payment' equivalent to their welfare entitlement provided they continued their tailored job search for up to three months. (Those assessed as not able to work would not take part and would continue to be supported in the existing way).

Participants unable to find a job or those assessed as needing more support before entering employment would then join the 'Community Wage' scheme**.

Under the scheme they would train with voluntary and private sector organisations on full-time placements – the Government would pay their welfare entitlements to the provider who would pass on the 'Community Wage' to replicate the conditions of a workplace.

A payment-by-results system would reward organisations who help young people find work and stay in employment.

The report, *The Journey to Work: Welfare reform for the next Parliament*, also focuses on helping adults who have been long-term unemployed and outlines new ideas for reforming Jobcentre Plus (JCP).

It says that in the next Parliament JCP's dominance in providing back-to-work support should be challenged by effective voluntary and private sector organisations who could be allowed to compete to deliver employment support.

The research also highlights how living in social housing can be a barrier to employment and calls on the Government to pilot a relocation scheme where people would be offered cash to help with the cost of moving home for work if they wanted that opportunity.

The proposed scheme would apply to any jobseeker who has been out of work and claiming Housing Benefit for a year or more and has received a concrete job offer with a commute of further than 90 minutes each way.

This is the first of the CSJ's *Breakthrough Britain 2015* series of reports – which will outline a host of policy solutions to tackle the root causes of poverty and deprivation. Reports about family policy, education reform, problem debt, addiction and the future of the voluntary sector will be published throughout the summer.

It follows the original *Breakthrough Britain* report in 2007, which set out 190 policy recommendations and to which David Cameron recently singled out as “a major influence on his Government”. Two years later the CSJ published *Dynamic Benefits*, which paved the way for the Government's key welfare reform, Universal Credit.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

* Commentators commonly refer to the number of NEETs (16-24-year-olds) being “almost a million”. This report shows that only about half (507,000) of these young people defined as NEET are actually looking for and available for work (i.e. economically active).

The remaining 468,000 are either not looking for work and/or not able to start work, and therefore classified as economically inactive. Two of the biggest single reasons for this inactivity are caring responsibilities or sickness.

** Depending on a person's employability, they could be placed on the ‘Community Wage’ from the first day immediately after being assessed or through to the end of the intensive job search of up to three months.

About the CSJ

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) is an independent think-tank established in 2004 to put social justice at the heart of British politics. In June last year, the CSJ was awarded UK Social Policy Think Tank of the Year 2013 at Prospect magazine's Think Tank Awards.

In 2007 the CSJ published its landmark report, *Breakthrough Britain*. This publication, which set out 190 evidence-based policy recommendations to tackle poverty in Britain, transformed the social policy and political landscape and was awarded Publication of the Year by Prospect Magazine in 2008.

Since *Breakthrough Britain* the CSJ has published over 40 reports which have shaped government policy and influenced opposition parties. These have included the seminal papers *Dying to Belong* and *Dynamic Benefits*, which has led the Coalition Government's welfare reforms.

Further to this, the CSJ manages an Alliance of more than 300 of the most effective grass roots, poverty-fighting organisations. The CSJ is able to draw upon the expertise and experience of Alliance charities for research work and media inquiries. Journalists wishing to conduct grass-roots research into social problems can be put in touch with front-line charity directors and staff.