

New report provides solution to NEET challenge in UK and abroad

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A new strategy, called Youth Resolution, to help young people find jobs that pay fair wages, accompanied by high quality training and better career opportunities, has been developed by Professor Robin Simmons from the University of Huddersfield. Credit: University of Huddersfield

A new strategy to help young people find jobs that pay fair wages, accompanied by high quality training and better career opportunities, has been developed by a University of Huddersfield professor. Outlined in a specially-commissioned research report, it is beginning to catch the

attention of policy-makers throughout the UK.

After conducting years of funded research into the challenges that face young people dubbed NEET – meaning that they are not in employment, education or training – Professor Robin Simmons has devised the concept of a Youth Resolution designed to tackle an entrenched social problem.

It is described as a "kitemarked partnership between local authorities, employers and education institutions which benefits business, gives young people fair opportunities and helps tackle [youth unemployment](#) and drives local growth".

The Youth Resolution, according to the new report, would be a locally co-ordinated national policy to drive up labour market standards. At its heart would be "a commitment by education and training providers, organisations providing advice and guidance and support services and, perhaps most importantly, employers, to commit to certain material and ethical standards when working with young people.

"This would not only entail offering fair levels of pay and other allowances, but provide young people with structured training opportunities, clear and accessible carer progression routes, access to workplace mentors, and programmes of personal development and enrichment activities."

The report states that employers would benefit too because they would draw from a wider pool of applicants. It is envisaged that organisations such as universities and colleges would act as beacons of excellence in promoting the Youth Resolution.

The Case for a Youth Resolution

In 2010, Professor Simmons and his colleagues Dr Ron Thompson and Dr Lisa Russell began work on a £124,000 research project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, to investigate the issues surrounding NEET [young people](#). Now a sequence of articles plus a book entitled Education, Work and Social Change, due for publication in May, have begun to present their findings.

The University and College Union (UCU) has also been researching the issue of youth unemployment and it sought advice from Professor Simmons. He developed his concept of a Youth Resolution and the report has now been issued. Co-authored with Dr Thompson, plus Gila Tabrizi and Angela Nartey of the UCU, it is entitled Engaging Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training: The Case for a Youth Resolution.

Before explaining the Youth Resolution proposal, the report delves into the economic and social developments over recent decades that have combined to create high levels of youth unemployment, with the result that "the journey from youth into adulthood is generally far more complex and convoluted today that was the case in previous generations".

Professor Simmons recently spoke about the Youth Resolution at the UCU's Knowledge Economy Conference at Westminster, where Business Secretary Vince Cable was the keynote speaker. He has also been invited to present his ideas to Skills Development Scotland – an arm of the Scottish Government – and will also deliver a talk at Stormont in Belfast, to the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders. The London-based Policy Network, which has international connections, has requested an article on the Youth Resolution.

"So the idea is starting to gather momentum," said Professor Simmons,

who is based in the University of Huddersfield's Centre for Lifelong Learning and Social Justice.

He acknowledges that the interventionist nature of his Youth Resolution concept means that it is may not be met with open arms by the present UK government, but he believes that he can help to move the debate forwards and that his ideas could have an influence in various parts of the UK and overseas.

Provided by University of Huddersfield

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