



TUC Young Worker Issues

Policy briefing

Introduction

JOBS GROWTH AND A NEW ECONOMY

Full Employment

A youth guarantee

Quality apprenticeships

Quality work experience programmes

Affordable housing

FAIR PAY AND A LIVING WAGE

Increase the minimum wage

Living wage

Paid internships

Equal pay

GOOD SERVICES AND DECENT WELFARE

Full funded Youth services

Fair Fares

Publically owned National Health Service

Equal access to Education

Justice

Decent Welfare

RESPECT AND A VOICE AT WORK

Decent jobs

- an end to exploitation of zero hour contracts
- better rights for agency workers
- tackle underemployment
- rights for all

Voice

- political education
- Votes at 16
- power to reform, recall

STRONG UNIONS

Active participation in trade union membership

Young workers organising strategy

Strong workplace rights

Protect democratic structures of trade unions

Introduction

Although they did least to cause the financial crash and subsequent recession, young people have borne some of its worst consequences. Youth unemployment remains scandalously high. Many young workers are trapped in low-paid, casual work far below their skill level. And austerity has exacted a heavy toll, with Educational Maintenance Allowance scrapped, university top-up fees introduced and benefits cut.

Young people desperately need change. They need good jobs, not unpaid internships. They need real access to higher education, not an invitation to rack up huge debt. They need high-quality apprenticeships, not workfare. But this will only happen if young people have a proper voice in our political system.

This policy document outlines some of the main issues facing young people at work and in the wider community; it also sets out the relevant TUC policy, asks and campaigns concerning those issues.

JOBS GROWTH AND A NEW ECONOMY

Full Employment

Every young person deserves decent secure employment when they leave education. However, there are currently three quarters of a million 16-24 year olds unemployed, According to the Department for Work and Pensions the 16-24 unemployment rate is almost one in every two for Pakistani, Bangladeshi and African Caribbean, and one in every three for Chinese & Indian young people. The total rate of youth unemployment in the UK is 17%.

The TUC is concerned about the lack of government interest in and action on the issue of young women who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). The issue of NEETs is regularly presented in the media as a problem affecting young men yet amongst 18-24 year olds, there are more young women NEET than young men and this has been consistently the case for at least the last decade. There are 423,000 young women aged 18-24 who are NEET accounting for 17.9% of women from that aged group.

Many young women and young men leave school with few or no qualifications. Of those that achieve GCSEs, young women are more likely to have secured qualifications in subjects that do not lead to any work opportunities in their localities. For these reasons, funding should be made available to enable young people to train or re-train in Levels 1-4 in subjects which tally with work availability in the area. This should be available up to age 25 as a minimum.

The TUC calls for

- A Job guarantee for every unemployed young person out of work for 4 months.
- Funding to enable young people (25 and under) to train or re-train in Levels 1-4 in subjects which tally with work availability in the area.
- A particular focus on supporting and enabling young women to enter occupations in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) where they are currently under-represented.

Youth Guarantee

The TUC notes that action is being taken at European level to try and tackle youth unemployment, the TUC calls on the UK Government to put forward proposals for a robust new plan that guarantees young people in the UK: a job, apprenticeship or a place on a training programme. The TUC rejects the current 'youth contract' which offers no guarantees, is based on existing failed measures and does not involve trade union consultation and a tripartite approach to implementation.

TUC is a strong supporter of the job guarantee element of the European Youth Guarantee (EYG), as with the last government's Future Jobs Fund (FJF).

FJF jobs were real jobs with employee rights. This means that they were paid a wage (at least the minimum wage), not benefits. It also means that laws against

discrimination, on health and safety at work, unfair dismissal, rights to holidays and maximum working time all applied. One of the first acts of the current government, in June 2010, was to abolish the FJF. This is a shame, as the statistics published at the end of the programme show that it delivered 105,000 jobs in just 18 months.

The TUC believes young people 25 or under, unemployed for 4 months or more should be eligible for the job guarantee program and will be guaranteed the offer of paid job, apprenticeship or training. The TUC calls for the program to last at least a year and should not be compulsory. Young people should be entitled to voluntarily enrol on the program and not fear benefit sanctions if they turn down a job offer or placement.

The TUC calls for a Youth Allowance, which will provide funding to enable young people to get the skills they need to get started on a decent career. Eligibility for the allowance should not be based on family means-testing. Young people in their early 20s who have left home shouldn't be denied this support because of their parents' incomes.

The TUC calls for

- A Job guarantee for every unemployed young person out of work for **4 months** (not a year to two years as currently proposed)
- A Youth Allowance that is available to all and not means- tested
- Job guarantee offers to remain voluntary (even after 2 years unemployment)
- Failure to accept job guarantee after 2 years unemployment to not result in removal of benefits
- A robust youth guarantee proposal with new systems put in place to help every young person into work, training or quality apprenticeship
- Trade unions to be properly consulted on youth employment practices
- Investment in professional independent careers advice services
- Careers advice linked to where the UK's current skills shortages are, so that young people in Britain can aim to get the skills for the jobs that are available and that our economy needs.

Quality apprenticeships

The TUC believes that high quality apprenticeships are a great way for young people to “earn and learn”. The Apprenticeship route should be seen by society as a viable alternative to university which enables young people to gain the skills and qualifications to find secure, fairly paid employment.

Trade unions play an important role in promoting and negotiating high quality Apprenticeship programmes. They have experience of being actively involved in the design, delivery and assessment of Apprenticeship programmes ensuring that programmes are high quality. They also give young Apprentices a voice in the workplace and in the national policy debate, ensuring that the voice of Apprentices is still heard in the UK “employer led” Apprenticeship system.

The TUC is concerned at the under-representation of women in well paid but typically male sectors such as engineering and construction. Young women account for just 3% of apprenticeships in engineering but dominate in low paid sectors. The TUC has long called for improved careers advice, and targeted employer action to recruit more young women and to challenge sexist workplace cultures which may act as a deterrent. The TUC has also called for the use of public sector procurement to force employers to actively recruit young women apprentices.

The TUC calls for

- An increase in the National Minimum Wage rate for Apprentices and improved and targeted enforcement of the NMW to ensure that the shocking number of young Apprentices (nearly a quarter of them paid below the minimum wage) who are not paid the NMW dramatically decreases
- Genuine opportunities for trade union involvement in Apprenticeship development at a workplace, sectoral and national level to ensure that the voice of young Apprentices is heard and that any programmes are high quality, meeting the needs of young people as well as employers
- Equality of opportunity and increased diversity for underrepresented groups in Apprenticeship programmes. Gender segregation is evident in certain Apprenticeships and employers need to take targeted action to ensure young women take up Apprenticeships in the more highly paid Apprenticeships such as engineering.
- The TUC is calling for improved data collection relating to Apprenticeship participation. The current available statistics are not adequate to properly understand the participation of those from underrepresented groups such as disabled and LGBT apprentices
- Improved careers advice for young people ensuring that young people hear about the benefits that an Apprenticeship can offer and targeted employer action to recruit more young people onto Apprenticeships
- The TUC has also called for the increased use of public sector procurement to ensure contractors increase the number of Apprenticeship places they offer
- The TUC has in the past defended the Care to Learn scheme which provides assistance with childcare for young mothers in full time study. The TUC is now working with NUS to campaign for this scheme to be extended

to young mothers on apprenticeship schemes (who are currently not eligible).

Quality work experience programmes

The TUC recognises that high-quality work experience is an important factor in helping young people into work. However, it is concerned that poor quality schemes could lead to exploitation, with trainees being used as free labour and possibly even displacing existing workers. Young people can also become disillusioned with schemes if they do not receive financial support, do not receive relevant high-quality training and work experience or see any chance of progression to a job at the end of a placement.

The TUC is concerned by the fact that the government has made the Traineeships and Work Experience programmes exempt from the requirement to pay national minimum wage. The TUC is firmly opposed to workfare and support for high quality work experience placements is on the condition that placements are entirely voluntary. Work experience should not, under any circumstances, lead to a young unemployed person losing their benefits as a result of sanctions.

The TUC calls for

- Traineeships to be paid where work of equal value is done by a trainee
- Trade unions to be involved in the Traineeship programme to monitor the quality of programmes and also to provide a route for young people to voice their concerns about any poor quality provision
- As a minimum, travel and expenses should be paid
- Placements should help young people gain the skills relevant to their aims and the needs of the local labour market to raise their chances of future employment.
- Trainees should be offered careers guidance and advice on other work-related issues such as health and safety and employment rights.
- Qualifications received on a traineeship should count towards an apprenticeship framework.

Affordable housing

The UK is suffering a housing crisis which particularly affects young people. As a consequence of the unavailability of both social housing and affordable mortgages the under-35 age group now make up over half the tenants in the private rented sector. Increased pressure on the private rented sector (PRS) has made choice more limited and raised prices. The private rented sector is now the most expensive form of housing and yet a third of the homes fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard. In addition, cuts to housing benefit have hit young people hardest; the Housing Benefit for shared room allowance has been raised from under-25s to under 35s.

The TUC calls for

- Build 1 million more homes
- Suspend the right to buy scheme until the need for social housing is met
- Review the 'affordable housing scheme'
- Introduce 'Use it or lose it' powers to act on land hoarding
- Stop excessive rent increases
- Introduce a national standard for private rented property
- Introduce sanctions for bad landlords
- National register of landlords
- Improved rights for tenants
- End lettings agencies fees
- Outlaw 'income discrimination' in private rented sector
- Bring empty homes and office buildings into housing use
- Abolish housing benefit cap for shared accommodation rate
- Move Local Housing Allowance entitlement back to local market rate

Campaigns

- The TUC run 'Voice of the apprentice' campaign every year
- The TUC supports the campaign by Prospect union in promoting women roles models working in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).
- The TUC Young Workers forum is developing a joint housing campaign working with affiliates and external housing campaign organisation Generation Rent.

FAIR PAY AND A LIVING WAGE

Young workers deserve the chance to live independently and to support themselves. The TUC believes young workers deserve the right to be able to earn a decent wage, a living wage.

Increase the minimum wage

Since 2010 the number of 16-20 year-olds illegally not being paid the minimum wage has increased by 52%. 183,000 of national minimum wage jobs are done by 18-20 year olds (17.8 per cent of jobs in the age group), and 39,000 jobs held by 16-17 year olds (14.7 per cent of jobs in the age group). The minimum wage for 18-20 year olds is just £5.13 and for apprentices just £2.73, compared to £6.21 for workers 21 and over.

Too many low paid industries are stuck in a low wage model. The government should pilot new ways of improving sectoral productivity and wages, using the expertise of the Low Pay Commission, as recommended by the report "Low Pay: the Nation's Challenge".

The TUC calls for

- New institutions to raise pay and productivity in the low paying sectors
- An increase in the minimum wage to more accurately reflect the cost of living
- An increase of the national minimum wage and greater pressure on employers, who can afford it, to pay the living wage.
- Greater sanctions for employers found not to be paying minimum wage

Living wage

Research by the Resolution Foundation found that almost three in 10 (29%) of young people aged 21 to 30 are now low paid – equating to almost 1.5 million young workers.

The TUC calls for

- All public sector bodies to pay Living Wage
- Praise and promotion of employers who pay a living wage
- Greater pressure on business that can afford to, to pay living wage
- Greater use of procurement and commissioning to increase the scope of businesses paying the LW

Paid internships and bogus volunteers

The TUC have campaigned for an end to the exploitation of young people working for free in unpaid internships. The TUC notes that due to successful lobbying, the government re-claimed arrears for unpaid internships totalling £193,873 last year. However this action, rather than leading to a reduction of unpaid work, has led employers to try to exploit the law in a different way by advertising for bogus 'volunteers'.

The TUC calls for

- All Internships to be paid (at very least minimum wage)
- Interns should be entitled to apply for internal vacancies in host companies
- Investigation to be launched into the use of bogus 'volunteers' to evade the minimum wage.

Equal pay

Young working women want and deserve the opportunity to lead successful careers. The Equality Act states that women are entitled to equal pay for work of equal value. However, recent statistics show women are still earning less than men for doing the same jobs. Part of the issue is caused by negative stereotyping about women's capabilities and skills, however many women find they have to take a step down to access flexible or reduced hours once they become mothers, and their earnings never recover even when they return to full-time work.

The TUC calls for

- Pay for paternity leave and a "use it or lose it" period of leave for fathers to encourage greater participation of men in childcare and to share the caring responsibilities
- More security for young women to return to work and entitlement to flexible working when they do
- The right to request flexible working as a day one right
- Increased government supply side investment in childcare to ensure that there is sufficient low cost, high quality childcare to enable young mothers to return to work if they want to.
- Greater employer investment in childcare, either in the form of direct subsidies or in the form of on-site nurseries. This is particularly crucial where large employers are depending on a predominantly female workforce on zero hours contracts.
- An extension of the Care to Learn scheme to age 25 and to apprentices to ensure that the cost of childcare isn't a barrier to young women obtaining the skills and qualifications that they need.

Campaigns

- Fair Pay Fortnight 16 Feb-1 March 2015 / Two weeks of campaigning and events around Britain's cost of living crisis.
- TUC actively supports the Living Wage campaign
- Equal Pay Day – early November (varies from year to year depending on gender pay gap)

GOOD SERVICES AND DECENT WELFARE

Young people continue to pay the price for a crisis they did not create. Cuts to public spending and public services have hit young people hard. The coalition's Austerity measures have seen a dramatic cut to youth services and young people find themselves facing an uncertain future.

Fully Funded Youth Services

Voluntary organisations have been brought to run a dramatically reduced service often employing workers on voluntary basis or short term, fixed term contracts (as project bids are short term) which is neither good for the workers or service users and their families. As the Government sets charities against each other in a bid for competition it is vulnerable young people who are negatively affected by the disruption instability and change.

The TUC calls for

- The government to stop cutting corners when it comes to investing in good quality, professional youth services. Any money saved in short term will be spent in the long term covering the detrimental effects of turning their backs on the disadvantaged, vulnerable young people of today.

Fair Fares

Young people deserve safe and affordable public transport but privatisation of our railways has led to a fragmented and dysfunctional system. The cost of rail fare is the highest in Europe. Fare hikes mean young people struggle to afford travel to work, education or training. The cost of the 16-25 railcard has doubled over the past 20 years. Recent proposals to close ticket offices and cut staff will leave young women travelling alone at night and young disabled people feeling more vulnerable.

The TUC calls for

- Railways to be brought back into public ownership.
- Ticket offices to remain open and staffed to improve safety and accessibility
- The cost of 16-24 railcards to be reduced and discount raised to 40%
- The cut off age for the 16-24 railcards to be increased to 27

Publicly owned National Health Service

The TUC is concerned that since 2010 one third of NHS contracts have gone to private sector providers. Young people deserve the security of a free health care system for all, not a fragmented privatised NHS.

The TUC is shocked by the rising number of young people with mental health problems and is not surprised that this coincides with high levels of insecure employment, personal debt, chronic housing shortages and cuts in support services.

TUC calls for

- NHS to remain in public hands
- An immediate stop to privatisation and outsourcing
- Increased funding to alleviate pressures on staff and provide decent service
- The pay cap for NHS workers to be removed
- Increase funding in the care and provision facilities for young people at risk of and suffering with mental health.

Equal access to Education

Young people deserve a properly funded public education system, free at the point of entry, funded by progressive taxation gathered via the income tax system.

The academies and free schools programme has resulted in unnecessary fragmentation, costing the tax payer millions.

The TUC condemns the scrapping of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) which was a vital method of providing financial support to help young people stay in further education. Young people deserve financial support in the form of EMA and a student grant that properly reflects the cost of living.

The TUC is concerned that funding cuts in education are narrowing students' options post-16. In particular Music, Arts and Drama has been sidelined. Cuts to Further Education and Skills means young adults are obliged to take out a loan to pay for the costs of any vocational course at an intermediate or advanced level and it is anticipated that the government will shortly announce a further extension of this loan system.

In higher education, the TUC is extremely worried that students are leaving university with increasing debts as fees have increased to £9,000 per year. The TUC opposes the stark rise in tuition fees which act as a barrier and a deterrent to participation.

The TUC would also like to see the Care to Learn scheme extended from the current age of 20 to those up to the age of 25 in recognition of the fact that many young mothers take time out of education and may wish to return at a later point but are unable to do so because of the lack of support with childcare and cuts to funding for mature students.

The TUC calls for

- Introduction of a new Learning Allowance for learners aged 19+, especially those coming within the remit of the FE loan system, that would be funded by reforming the current tax relief given to employers for work-related training
- Defence of Arts and Music education
- Education to remain a public service and a public good
- The Government to stop opening up a market for companies to run education services for profit
- Re-introduction of the Education Maintenance Allowance
- A review of FE funding
- A review of student tuition fees in HE and a national audit looking into the impact of student debt on young people
- A working party to be set up to act upon the findings of the audit and to report back
- Care to Learn scheme extended

Justice

The TUC is concerned that the number of young people entering the criminal justice system has risen sharply in the last few years. Reconviction rates for the under-18s are very high with 75% re-convicted within a year. Increasing privatisation is fragmenting the justice system and the cuts to legal aid are denying young people access to justice.

Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) have the highest assault rates of any prisons in England and Wales. The TUC believes the Government's recent staff cuts in YOI's puts health and safety of young people and staff at risk. Fewer staff will increase the risk of assault and will make assaults harder to break up. Fewer staff also means that young offenders have to be detained in their cells for longer, kept in isolation because there are not enough staff to manage the wings. This can have an extremely negative effect on mental health and well being which is detrimental to rehabilitation

The TUC believes there should be real investment in accessible and high quality support services for young offenders with mental health, drug, alcohol or other social problems. Rehabilitation training programs should be provided for prisoners and their families and should be delivered by qualified staff, not outsourced.

The TUC calls for

- Access to legal aid to be based on need, and a sufficient budget to ensure access to justice for all
- Justice to be not-for-profit public service run in the interests of local communities and the wider public.
- Reforms to the justice system to be developed in consultation with service users, professionals and trade unions.

Decent Welfare

Young people have been heavily impacted by the cuts to welfare. 42 per cent of all sanctions were imposed on under-25s even though they only accounted for 27 per cent of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants. Young people have been especially hard hit by tougher sanctions introduced in 2012, which mean that young people who do not comply with JSA rules can lose their benefit for up to 3 years. At this year's Conservative Party conference the Chancellor announced post-election plans to end under-21s' rights to JSA after 6 months of unemployment while the Prime Minister emphasised plans to take away their Housing Benefit.

The TUC believes young people deserve access to decent welfare provision and should not be discriminated on the grounds of age.

TUC calls for

- A review of sanctions and their impact on young people
- Abolish the cap on housing benefit
- Under 21s' right to claim JSA to be protected

Campaigns

- 'Save our Safety net' online campaign
- Action for Rail campaign for a public owned railway which will bring costs down and puts people before profit.
- TUC joint trade union campaign 'Speak up for Justice' calling for end to privatisation, cuts and calling for improvements in the justice sector
- 'Altogether for the NHS' campaign to save the NHS from privatisation

RESPECT AND A VOICE AT WORK

Decent jobs

Since the recession a growing number of young people are trapped in insecure jobs, with no regular hours, no regular pay and very poor career prospects. Rather than permanent contracts that offer stability, a high proportion of under 35s are employed on zero-hours contracts, agency work, fixed term contracts and in involuntary part-time jobs.

Those in insecure employment are far less likely to have access to training or career development opportunities. According to research commissioned by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) workers on temporary or zero hours contracts are less likely to have career development opportunities than those on permanent contracts. Only three in five 58% of people on temporary contracts who had received training in the past three months had it paid for by their employer, compared to 74% of permanent workers.

End exploitative zero-hours contracts

According to the Office of National Statistics in 2014 there are at least 1.4 million zero-hours contracts in use in the UK. Fifty percent of all zero-hours contract workers are aged under 30.

Employers argue that zero-hours contract offer employees welcome flexibility. However research carried out by the TUC shows that being on a zero hours contract is not a positive choice for many young workers. Fifty eight per of zero hours contract workers aged 25-29 report they are only doing temporary work because they could not find a permanent job.

In *Decent Jobs Deficit* the TUC exposed the human cost of growing casualisation in the UK. It found that workers on zero-hours contracts on average earn nearly £300 less a week than those with permanent contracts; whilst many are paid poverty wage. According to TUC nearly two in five zero hours contract workers earn less £111 a week and therefore lose out on basic workplace benefits such as statutory sick pay. One in three zero-hours contract worker have no regular take-home pay, meaning they find it difficult to budget, access a mortgage or even to get a tenancy agreement.

The TUC calls for

- Decent jobs – with decent hours and decent pay - to give young people a chance to build a secure future

- If an individual works regular hours they should have a right to a contract guaranteeing those hours on an on-going basis. Individuals who work irregular hours should be paid an allowance on top on their normal pay to reward the flexibility they provide employers.
- Workers should be give reasonable notice before their work is cancelled. If a shift is cancelled at short notice they should have a right to be paid in full.

Equal pay for agency workers

The numbers employed in agency work has risen sharply following the recession. According to official statistics, in 2014 37 per cent of all agency workers were aged under 30. Employers argue that agency work offers a welcome stepping stone, particularly for young people, into more secure employment. However temporary agency working is far from a positive choice for many year workers. A massive 81 per cent of those aged 20-24 and 64 per cent of those aged 25-29 say they are only doing temporary agency work because they cannot find a permanent job.

In 2011, thanks to TUC and unions campaigns, the government introduced rights for agency workers to the same rates of pay as permanent staff after twelve weeks. However many agency workers are losing out on these rights. Employers and agencies are exploiting a loophole in the Agency Worker Regulations which means that agency workers employed on permanent, pay-between-assignment contracts lose out on equal pay. Some agency workers on these contracts are paid as much as £145 less per week than permanent staff they work alongside doing the exact same job.

The TUC calls for

- All agency workers should have the same rights to equal pay. The so-called Swedish derogation should therefore be repealed.

Rights for all

Young workers in precarious employment such as zero-hours and agency working are particularly vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace. Due to their uncertain employment status and gaps between periods of work they lose out on basic rights at work. They can be fired without notice or good cause. Or they are told the work has dried up and are offered no more shifts. Being in such a precarious situation means it is very difficult for workers to complain if they are treated badly. As a result they risk having the few rights they do have disregarded.

Since the introduction of employment tribunal fees, many young workers have simply been priced out of justice. If workers are sexually harassed or discriminated against because of their age or the colour of their skin they are required to pay up

to £1,200 for their claim to be decided by an employment tribunal. If they do not receive the national minimum wage or their holiday pay, in order to take their employer to a tribunal they must find up to £390 – which is often more than the value of their claim

The TUC calls for

- All workers to have the same decent rights at work, including the right to redundancy pay, protection from unfair dismissal and the right to return to their job after maternity or paternity leave.
- Individuals should not lose out on workplace rights because they have had a gap of a week or more from work.
- Employment tribunal fees should be abolished.
- Enforcement agencies should be properly resourced so that they can police the law and protect young workers from mistreatment at work.

Protection from dismissal

In 2012, the government doubled the qualifying period for unfair dismissal rights from 12 months to two years. As a result, nearly three million employees lost out on job security rights. Young and black and ethnic minority employees were disproportionately affected by this change. In 2011, 61 per cent of all employees aged 24 and under had less than two years service with their current employer. This compares with 24 per cent of employees aged 30 to 40 years and 17 per cent of those aged 40 to 50 years.

The TUC calls for

- Unfair dismissal rights to apply from day one of employment
- The current cap on compensation for unfair dismissal claims should be removed.
- All workers should also be entitled to statutory redundancy pay from day one of their employment. Redundancy pay should also be increased in line with earnings.

Voice

The TUC is concerned that too many young people are not registered to vote, especially young black people, and welcomes the work of voter registration organisation Bite the Ballot and Operation Black Vote. The TUC believes the government's reforms which state every citizen has to apply individually to be registered to vote, will only increase the amount of young people who are disenfranchised in this country.

Political education

Barriers to young people voting (such as a lack of information about why to vote, how to register and how to vote in person, by post or by proxy) need to be tackled. Political and citizenship education in schools should provide young with a basic knowledge of the political process in the UK at a local, national and international level. Education about rights, the law and democracy should be fundamental elements in every young person's education.

Votes at 16

The TUC has supported lowering the voting age to 16 since its Congress in 1999. The TUC believes Votes at 16 will empower 16 and 17 year olds, through a democratic right, to influence decisions that will define their future. There are over 1.5 million 16 and 17 year olds in the UK, these young people are knowledgeable and passionate about the world in which they live, and are as capable of engaging in the democratic system as any other citizen.

Reaching out, reform and recall

Elected representatives should regularly meet with young people in their constituencies and work with their local youth councils to help engage young people in politics and improve understanding of the political system and who represents them. The TUC believes MPs should engage young people in the process of reforming UK politics, to make it more accessible and representative of all society. Voters should have the power to recall their MP if their MP has been found to have engaged in serious wrongdoing or a petition has been signed by 10% of constituents calling for a by-election

The TUC calls for

- A national target to 80% registration rate amongst young people
- Support for campaign organisations like Bite the Ballot who engage with young people in schools and in the community to increase awareness and voter registration
- All political parties to pledge to change the legal voting age to 16
- Citizenship education to be strengthened in the secondary curriculum and further extended into primary schools and post-16 settings.

Campaigns

- TUC Young Workers Forum Young Voter Registration Drive
- The Young Workers Forum supports the TUC's campaign for Decent Jobs and will continue to run activities aimed at engaging with young workers to raise awareness of the issues around precarious work
- TUC young workers forum supports the Bakers union campaign to end Zero hour Contracts in the fast food industry where there is a high proportion of young workers on zero hours contracts

STRONG UNIONS

Strong trade unions are a vital part of any fair and prosperous society. Societies with weak unions are less fair and more unequal.

The TUC is concerned by the low union membership and density amongst young workers. The 2013 Labour Force Survey found that union density amongst workers aged 16-24 was just 7.7 per cent and that this was the only age group in which union density had fallen over the previous twelve months.

One of the main reasons for low levels of density amongst young workers is their relative over-representation in sectors of the economy where union density is low, such as accommodation and food services and retail sectors. It is no surprise that these are areas of the economy where young people are employed on low pay and zero hour contracts.

Support young people to actively participate in trade union membership

Membership of, and active participation in, trade unions is the most effective way for workers to act collectively to win improvements in the workplace. It also offers the opportunity to act collectively to campaign for improvements in the wider society. The TUC believes the role of trade unions should be more positively promoted and young people should be supported to take part in trade union activity. The recent attack on facility time for trade union representatives will only discourage young people from taking up union positions and without access to time off for training they will be prevented from acquiring a wide range of skills and knowledge, which will also support them in becoming active citizens.

Young workers organising strategy

Acting collectively is the best way for working people to improve their pay, terms and conditions, their working lives, and wider society. The TUC is working to establish new ways to make it easier for young workers in non-unionised workplaces and sectors to join unions and gain access to information on rights at work and support to enforce those rights.

Protect democratic structures of trade unions

The TUC notes the recent attack of the check off system, the increase of the percentage vote in strike ballot and the changes to the lobbying bill which restrict campaign activity. In addition, unions are not being allowed to ballot their members online which makes meeting the new restrictions even harder.

The TUC calls for

- Grater promotion of the value of trade unions
- Support for young people to actively participate in trade union membership

- An end to the attack on facility time for union representatives
- Development of a young workers organising strategy to help organise young workers in sectors of the economy where membership is low
- Defend check-off, oppose limitations on industrial action in public services and defend simple majority industrial action ballots
- All young workers should have better access to trade union representation and collective bargaining

Campaigns

- The TUC Young Workers forum are developing an organising strategy to help union reach out to young people in non unionised sectors
- TUC campaigns to show the 'union advantage', producing leaflets, publications and videos that highlight the benefit of young people joining a union.
- The TUC has produced the 'Unions into schools' materials for teachers to include sessions on trade union history and workers rights in the classroom.
- The TUC and NUS are working on a new 'gateway' to union membership