

Reference number 5/2

**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON THE IMPACT
OF THE INTRODUCTION OF A MINIMUM
WAGE ON THE LABOUR MARKET
BEHAVIOUR OF 16 AND 17 YEAR OLDS**

**Produced for the Low Pay Commission by the
British Youth Council**

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1. Introduction

The British Youth Council (BYC), as the national youth council for the UK, is a unique network of national and local youth organisations bringing together a diverse and inspiring range of young people with many different backgrounds and experiences.

BYC has a reputation for carrying out high quality consultations with young people – using innovative ‘young people friendly’ approaches to ensure that we get the most out of the young participants and meet the needs of our clients.

BYC aims to put young people’s own stories and experiences at the heart of public policy making and we draw on the breadth and diversity of our network to ensure that our research captures a representative sample of young people’s views across different social and economic circumstances.

1.1 Background

The Low Pay Commission (LPC) commissioned BYC to explore the factors affecting the labour market decisions of 16-17 year olds.

BYC were briefed to examine the reasons underlying the labour market decisions of 16 and 17 year olds in order to assess whether the introduction of a minimum wage for this age group would affect their behaviour.

BYC’s consultation focused on young people aged 14-16, before they made their decisions as to whether or not to leave school and also on young people who have reached the minimum school leaving age but are under 18 years old.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The consultation explored the reasons why young people choose to work or study, and the link between hours worked, participation in education, training and availability of jobs.

BYC also examined whether the level of wages offered is an important factor in the decision to undertake work, education and/or training, or whether other factors predominate.

BYC looked at the possible implications of the introduction of a minimum wage on some young people not in education, training or employment.

BYC also considered the following issues:

- What other factors are important in making decisions, and which predominate;
- Whether these factors vary across different groups of 16-17 year olds, for example by gender, ethnic origin, level of qualification or family circumstances;
- Which types of young people are most likely to be affected by the introduction of a minimum wage, and how they are likely to be affected in terms of their choice of education and/or work.

1.3 Methodology

BYC surveyed young people in two separate groups: young people aged 14-16 in compulsory education; and young people aged 16-17 including those in education, employment, unemployment or training. The questionnaire asked the young people for their ages at 1 September 2003 to help us identify where they would be in the education system.

BYC worked with our network of youth organisations to reach the young people in our target sample, across the four countries of the UK.

We carried out the research through two key methods:

1. Focus groups and
2. A postal and online questionnaire

These two methods allowed us to survey a representative and wide range of young people in the UK.

The research was conducted in two stages. The focus groups were carried out over the summer months, so that the young people were able to attend

during the day. The lessons learnt from the focus groups helped us to identify additional issues to explore through the questionnaires. The questionnaires were conducted in September when the young people were back in school and we were able to test the results of the focus groups through the questionnaires.

BYC worked with the LPC throughout the 6-month project to ensure that the research methods were meeting the LPC research objectives. As well as this final report, BYC produced a detailed report of the focus group workshops, an interim report and submitted oral evidence to the LPC.

1.4 Target sample for the focus group and questionnaire

BYC worked with our network of youth organisations to recruit a representative sample of young people to participate in the consultation workshops and complete the questionnaires. Particular attention was paid to including diversity across a range of criteria including age, gender, ethnicity, disability and those who live in the four countries of the UK.

The questionnaires aimed to collect 1000 responses from young people between 14-17 years of age including those in education, employment, unemployment and training.

2. Focus Group Workshops

2.1 Format

Eight consultation workshops were conducted:

1. One workshop in each country of the UK, involving young people between 14-16 years of age (in compulsory education) and
2. One workshop in each country of the UK, involving young people aged 16-17 including those in education, employment, unemployment or training.

2.1.1 Logistics and conduct of the focus group workshops

BYC recruited a representative group of between 5 -10 young people to each focus group workshop and recorded the age, gender, ethnicity, disability,

current education, training or employment status and qualifications of attendees.

The young people who agreed to be involved were sent a brief about the purpose of the workshop, to help them prepare for the discussions. All the young people involved in a youth organisation were asked by their youth worker if they would be interested in taking part in the focus group and were given a letter and consent form, explaining the aims of the focus group, how the information would be used and reminded that all names would remain confidential.

The workshops were held in central locations in each of the four countries. The layout of the rooms were developed to create an environment that would make the young people feel relaxed and at ease during the workshops.

2.1.2 Design of the focus group workshop

A trained young person, to help foster peer-to-peer discussions, facilitated the workshop.

The workshops took an interactive form, based on a guidance sheet (a copy of the focus group brief can be found in Appendix 2), which listed key themes and topics to be addressed. Although the guide was used by the facilitator to ensure coverage across the topic areas, the facilitator was flexible and allowed issues of relevance to individual respondents to be covered.

2.2 Demographics

65 young people attended the eight focus groups, which were held in the four countries of the UK. 36 young people took part in the 14-16 year age group and 29 took part in the 16-17 year age group. The young people in the groups, were either in full-time education, undertaking modern apprenticeship schemes, in post 16 education, working part or full-time or unemployed. A full copy of the demographics for the focus groups can be found in Appendix 3.

2.2.1 Age

- In the 14-16 year old age group, nine were 14 years old, 23 were 15 years old and four were 16 years old.

- In the 16-17 year old age group, 15 were 16 years old, 12 were 17 years old and 2 did not specify.

2.2.2 Gender

- In the 14-16 year old age group, 28 were female and 8 were male.
- In the 16-17 year old age group, 16 were female and 13 were male.

2.2.3 Ethnicity

- In the 14-16 year old age group, 29 were White British, one was Black Caribbean, one was of mixed race, three were Irish and two specified themselves as other.
- In the 16-17 year age group, 25 were White British, two were Black Caribbean, one was Indian and one was of Mixed Race.

2.2.4 Disability

- In the 14-16 year old age group, one young person had a disability.
- In the 16-17 year old age group, one young person had a disability.

2.2.5 Country

- In the 14-16 year old age group, six were from England, 11 were from Wales, eight were from Scotland and 11 were from Northern Ireland.
- In the 16-17 year old age group, nine were from England, five were from Wales, five were from Scotland and 10 were from Northern Ireland.

3. Questionnaires

3.1 Format

In consultation with the Low Pay Commission, using the outcomes of the focus groups and by consulting a small test group of young people, BYC was able to develop a questionnaire, which was user friendly and relevant to all young people across the four countries in the UK.

The questionnaire contained information to explain the purpose of the questionnaire, instructions on how to complete it, a deadline for responding and an assurance of confidentiality.

The questionnaire was developed in a 'young person friendly', format and used appropriate fonts, colours and language for young people. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

3.1.1 Distribution of questionnaire

The postal and online questionnaire allowed us to survey a large number of young people. We distributed the postal questionnaire to 5000 young people from across the UK and provided stamped addressed envelopes, to improve the response rate.

The questionnaires were distributed to the following matrix of bodies/organisations to capture our representative sample of young people:

- BYC's 150 member organisations and network of 700 youth councils
- Regional and local student and youth organisations across the UK
- Local youth action agencies via the Youth Action Network
- A selection of schools across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Local Connexions Partnerships
- Local Authorities

In addition, youth/participation workers, teachers, BYC volunteers, student representatives and young people were encouraged to further distribute the questionnaire to other young people.

3.1.2 Promotion of the questionnaire

To encourage young people to complete the questionnaire by email, BYC developed promotional materials, which were distributed to our network of youth organisations for promotion through their publications/websites and email bulletins.

3.2 Demographics

The questionnaire responses came from a wide spread of young people across the 14-17 year age range from both rural and urban areas in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We asked the young people to indicate where they received a copy of the questionnaire. The following is a breakdown of their answers:

- 205 from Local Youth Councils
- 869 from School
- 671 from a youth worker/organisation
- 66 from a Friend
- 5 from email and internet
- 343 from Connexions
- 191 from other
- 143 gave no answer

3.2.1 Age

2493 questionnaires were analysed:

- 667 were completed by 14 year olds
- 928 were completed by 15 year olds
- 496 were completed by 16 year olds
- 393 were completed by 17 year olds
- 9 young people did not specify their age on their questionnaire, but did indicate whether or not they were of compulsory school age through their answers in the questionnaire.

3.2.2 Gender

Out of the 2493 questionnaires analysed:

- 1249 were completed by females
- 1227 were completed by males
- 17 young people did not specify their gender on the questionnaire

3.2.3 Ethnicity

Out of the 2493 questionnaires analysed:

- 2082 were White British
- 61 were Black Caribbean

- 32 were Black African
- 29 were Indian
- 15 were Chinese
- 70 were Mixed Race
- 53 were White European
- 14 were Irish
- 9 were Black Other
- 47 were Pakistani
- 22 were Bangladeshi
- 49 classified themselves as other.
- 10 young people did not specify their ethnicity

Overall 83% of the young people who completed the questionnaires were White British and 16% were young people from the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups.

3.2.4 Disability

Out of the 2493 questionnaires analysed:

- 2318 young people did not have a disability
- 137 young people indicated that they did have a disability
- 38 young people did not specify

3.2.5 Country

Out of the 2493 questionnaires analysed:

1429, 57% were completed by young people in England

- 822 were 14 -15 year olds from England, which represents 52% of all 14-15 year olds who answered the questionnaire and gave their country.
- 607 were 16-17 year olds from England, which represents 69% of all 16–17 year olds who answered the questionnaire and gave their country.

508, 20% were completed by young people in Wales

- 371 were 14 –15 year olds from Wales, which represents 24% of all 14-15 year olds who answered the questionnaire and gave their country.

- 137 were 16-17 year olds from Wales, which represents 16% of all 16-17 year olds who answered the questionnaire and gave their country.

508, 20% were completed by young people in Scotland

- 377 were 14-15 year olds from Scotland, which represents 24% of all 14-15 year olds who answered the questionnaire and gave their country.
- 129 were 16-17 year olds from Scotland, which represents 15% of all 16-17 year olds that completed the questionnaire and gave their country.

11, 0.5% were completed by young people in Northern Ireland

- 7 were 14-15 year olds from Northern Ireland, which represents 0.4% of all 14-15 year olds who answered the questionnaire and gave their country.
- 4 were 16-17 year olds from Northern Ireland, which represents 0.5% of all 16-17 year olds who answered the questionnaire and gave their country.

37, 1.5% were completed by young people who did not specify which country they were from.

Very little weight should be attached to the subsequent analysis of questionnaires from Northern Ireland due to the low number of responses.

3.2.6 Qualifications

- 455 of the 16 and 17 year olds had GCSE's grades A-C
- 317 of the 16 and 17 year olds had GCSE's grades D-G
- 61 of the 15, 16 and 17 year olds had an NVQ qualification
- 137 of the 16 and 17 year olds had an As-levels
- 92 of the 15, 16 and 17 year olds had a GNVQ qualification
- 18 of the 16 and 17 year olds had a Diploma
- 8 of the 15, 16 and 17 year olds had a Technical Certificate
- 269 of the young people had Standard qualifications
- 44 of the young people had Higher Grade qualifications

3.2.7 Education, training and employment

Out of the 2493 analysed questionnaires

- 1626 of the young people were in school
- 298 were college students
- 169 were on a training or an apprenticeship scheme
- 8 were on a gap year
- 145 indicated that they were unemployed, but 48 of those were still school or college students
- 23 young people were parents or carers

3.2.7.1 Activities undertaken by young people in compulsory education

- 13 were working full-time, but included in this number were 4 college students
- 252 young people indicated that they were working part-time
- 51 young people were volunteering part-time
- 5 were volunteering full-time

3.2.7.2 Activities undertaken by young people post-compulsory school age

- 35 were working full-time, but included in this number were 4 college students and 1 parent/carer
- 197 young people indicated that they were working part-time
- 57 young people were volunteering part-time
- 6 were volunteering full-time.

4. Views of the young people in compulsory education

This section combines the results of both the focus groups and the questionnaire to outline the factors affecting young people's planned labour market activities after compulsory education – across age, gender, ethnic origin, country, disability.

4.1 Questionnaire results

BYC's questionnaire asked all 14 and 15 year olds whether they were intending to stay on in full-time education after year 11.

1032 of the 14 and 15 year olds indicated that they would stay on in education after 16. This represents nearly 65% of all the 14 and 15 year olds who completed the questionnaires.

70% of females and 60% of males aged 14-15 indicated that they would stay on in education after 16. Of those young people who said they would stay in full-time education after year 11, 49% were from England, 25% were from Wales, 24% were from Scotland and less than 1% were from Northern Ireland.

The majority, 82% of the young people staying on in education were White British and 65% of the young people with disabilities said that they would stay in education.

4.1.1 Reasons for staying in education

The young people, who said they would stay on in education after year 11, gave the following reasons for their decisions.

- 5% said their parents gave them no choice
- 3% said there were no jobs to go to
- 31% said they wanted to study further
- 29% said they could earn more with qualifications
- 29% said qualifications were important for the future
- 2% said other
- 1% did not give a reason.

The reasons given by the young people in the questionnaire were also reflected in the focus group workshops. The young people were asked to think about what they might do in the next two years and why. Many of the young people said that they would like to stay in education for the following reasons: so that they could earn more money in the long run, enable them to go onto University, get better qualifications, continue seeing friends whilst doing something worthwhile with their time.

4.1.2 Reasons for leaving education at 16

The questionnaire also asked the young people if they wanted to leave education at 16.

379 of the young people said they did want to leave at 16, which represents 24% of all the 14 and 15 year olds who answered the questionnaire. 11% did not answer this question.

19% of females and 29% of males indicated that they would leave education at 16. Of the young people who said they would not stay in education after 16, 48% were from England, 23% were from Wales, 26% were from Scotland and less than 1% were from Northern Ireland.

The majority, 86% of the young people intending to leave school at age 16, were White British. 24% of all the young people with disabilities were also intending to leave education at 16.

The young people indicated that they would leave education at 16 for the following reasons.

- 4% said they needed to earn money
- 20% said their parent's wouldn't let them stay in education
- 1% said their school wouldn't let them stay on
- 20% said they wanted to get a place on a training scheme
- 11% said they wanted to do something else

The young people were able to give more than one reason, but a number of young people did not specify any reasons.

The young people in the focus group workshops also gave similar reasons as to why they might not stay on in education or training after 16. The young people outlined reasons why they might get a job, which included giving them independence, to earn money and not wanting to study further.

4.1.3 Other factors which influence young people's decisions

The focus groups also looked at whether young people believed the long-term financial benefit of education was a reason for staying in education and how much the young people might have to earn to tempt them away from their education or training schemes.

Long-term financial benefits

The majority of the young people in the focus groups indicated that they either mildly or strongly believed that it was worth staying in education after the age of 16 due to the long-term financial benefits.

Wage rates

The young people debated how much they would need to earn to leave education and training. This figure ranged from £5-10 an hour. Some of the young people in the English workshop said that nothing would tempt them away from education as they wanted to go to University and knew they needed further qualifications to enable them to do this.

The young people also cited other things that may encourage them to leave education or apprenticeships, such as free driving lessons and good training programmes.

5. Views of post compulsory school age young people

This section combines the results of both the focus groups and the questionnaire to outline the factors that affected young people's labour market decisions after compulsory education – across age, gender, ethnic origin, country, disability.

5.1. Young people in post -16 education

BYC asked all 16 and 17 year olds if they were in post -16 education. 551 said that they were still in full-time education. Which represents 62% of all 16 and 17 year olds who answered the questionnaire.

Out of those who gave their gender and answered this question, 73% were in post 16 education. A higher percentage of females (79%) than males (67%) were in post-16 education.

Of all the young people who were in post -16 education, 60% were from England, 19% were from Wales, 19% were from Scotland and less than 1% were from Northern Ireland.

56% of the young people with disabilities were in post -16 education. The majority, 83% of those still in full-time education were White British.

5.1.1 Reasons for staying in education

The young people still in education gave the following reasons for their decisions, (they were able to give more than one reason, although not all the young people gave any reasons).

- 41% said they wanted to study further
- 3% said there were no jobs to go to
- 4% said their parents gave them no choice
- 30% said qualifications were important for the future
- 18% said they could earn more with qualifications

The young people in the workshops also indicated that parent's expectations, the need for additional qualifications to go to University, a desire to earn more money and to have a career, influenced their decisions to stay in education after 16.

5.1.2 Young people not in education at 16

201, 16 and 17 years said that they were not in education. This represents 23% of all the 16 and 17 year olds that completed the questionnaire. 16% did not answer this question.

Out of those who gave their gender and answered this question, 27% were not in education. A higher percentage of males (33%) than females (21%) had left education.

87% were from England, 6% were from Wales, 5% were from Scotland and less than 1% were from Northern Ireland.

5.1.3 Reasons for leaving full-time education

The young people gave the following reasons for leaving education at 16. The young people were invited to give more than one reason, but many did not give any reasons. The young people were able to give more than one reason, however some young people did not give any reasons.

- 10% Need to earn money
- 17% Parents wouldn't let me stay on
- 1% School wouldn't let me stay on
- 5% No point in staying on in school
- 16% Job related training will help me find work
- 6% Other

5.1.4 Other reasons expressed in the workshops for leaving education

Of those young people who took up apprenticeship and training schemes, the majority felt that hands on experience, the desire to undertake training and training schemes having a better image than school influenced their decision to leave education and take up a training scheme.

A small number of the young people in the workshops were working full-time and said that they chose a particular career path that did not need additional qualifications, but required them to gain work experience. Another young person decided to take up full-time employment, as a temporary measure whilst on a gap year, before deciding what to do in the future.

6. Implications for 14-15 year olds

Both the focus groups and the questionnaire sought to discover what impact a NMW for 16 and 17 year olds would have on the intentions of 14 and 15 year olds.

6.1.1 Focus group findings

The majority of the young people in the focus groups either strongly or mildly believed that a NMW of £3 or £3.25 would not encourage them to leave full-time education at 16. They said that it was simply not enough money.

The majority of the young people argued that they would rather join a training programme such as an apprenticeship than take a job with either £3 or £3.25 an hour. They believed that training would be better in the long run and they would be willing to sacrifice the low rates of pay for better rates in the future.

Most of the young people thought that there should be a NMW for 16-17 year olds. However there was not a general consensus on the rates for 18 and over - some argued that 16-21 year olds should all be paid the same, 18 and upwards should all be paid the same and some argued that 21's and over should be paid more than under 21's because of their extra financial responsibilities such as families or accommodation etc.

Some young people also said that there should be more training opportunities and that free transport should be provided for young people aged 16-17.

6.1.2 Questionnaire findings

The questionnaires found similar responses. The young people were asked if a NMW of £3.00- £3.50 per hour was introduced for 16-17 year olds how would it affect their decisions about education, training and work.

Young people intending to stay in education after year 11

- 9% of the young people said that they would go out to work
- 14% said they would study part-time
- 47% said they would stay in full-time education
- 3% said they would reduce the hours they work
- 12% said that a NMW would have no impact on what they do
- 2% said they would go into job related training
- Less than 1% said they wouldn't consider an apprenticeship
- Only 2% said they would increase the hours they work
- The remaining young people said other or no answer.

Young people intending to leave education after year 11

- 39% of the young people said that they would go out to work
- 15% said they would study part-time
- 9% said they would stay in full-time education
- 3% said they would reduce the hours they work
- 10% said that a NMW would have no impact on what they do
- 6% said they would go into job related training
- 3% said they wouldn't consider an apprenticeship
- 3% said they would increase the hours they work
- The remaining young people said other or no answer.

The young people were also asked to explain their reasons to this answer and a full transcript of these answers can be found in Appendix 4.

Below is a selection of common answers from the young people:

“I would study part-time because I need the money but need and want better qualifications for myself in the future”. Girl age 15

“Would give me some form of income and at the same time allow me to improve my qualifications”. Boy age 15.

“I don't have time for a job”. Boy age 14.

“I wouldn't work for less than £3 an hour”. Boy age 15.

6.2. Implications for 16 and 17 year olds

Both the focus groups and the questionnaire sought to discover what impact a NMW for 16 and 17 year olds would have had on the choices of 16 and 17 year olds.

6.2.1 Focus group findings

The majority of the young people in the focus groups thought it was worth staying in full-time education after the age of 16 due to the long-term financial

benefit and many thought it was easier to get better jobs with more qualifications.

The majority of the young people argued that they would work more hours if they were paid £3 or £3.25 an hour as it was still not enough money, some were already earning more than £3 an hour.

The majority of the young people said that they would not leave education or their training programmes for a NMW £3 or £3.25 an hour. Some thought that less than £3.50 was an insult. The majority of young people felt that they would not leave their training, because they could earn more in the long run.

The majority of the young people felt that there were few jobs for young people and that they couldn't get jobs without qualifications. Some felt that they were better off staying in school.

Many of the young people with jobs argued that a NMW of £3 or £3.25 would make no difference to them, since they already earned this amount, but that there should be a NMW to protect other young people from exploitation.

Young people's opinions on how much they would have to earn to leave education ranged from £5-12 an hour. The majority also talked about working conditions and said that it wasn't just about money, they would also want a job with a pension, good holidays and career prospects.

All the young people agreed that there should be a NMW, however there were a range of different ideas which included: 16-21 year olds being paid the same, under 21's being paid 25% less than over 21's, £4-5 an hour for 16-17 year olds and £5-6 an hour for 18 and above.

The young people also said that the government should give young people more money to stay in education so that they would not end up with massive debts.

6.2.2 Questionnaire findings

The questionnaires found similar responses. The young people were asked if a NMW of £3.00 - £3.50 per hour was introduced for 16-17 year old would it affect their decisions about education, training and work.

Young people in post-16 education

- 6% of the young people said that they would go out to work
- 7% said they would study part-time
- 55% said they would stay in full-time education
- 5% said they would reduce the hours they work
- 19% said that a NMW would have no impact on what they do
- Less than 1% said they would go into job related training
- Less than 1% said they wouldn't consider an apprenticeship
- 1% said they would increase the hours they work
- The remaining young people said other or no answer.

Young people not in post-16 education

- 37% of the young people said that they would go out to work
- 8% said they would study part-time
- 5% said they would stay in full-time education
- 4% said they would reduce the hours they work
- 19% said that a NMW would have no impact on what they do
- 8% said they would go into job related training
- 1% said they wouldn't consider an apprenticeship
- 5% said they would increase the hours they work
- The remaining young people said other or no answer.

The young people were also asked to explain their reasons to this answer and a full transcript of these answers can be found in Appendix 4.

6.3. Implications of a NMW across the 4 countries of the UK

The questionnaire responses were analysed to see if there were any differences in the decisions made by young people who were in post-compulsory education and intending to stay in education after 16 and those that were not in post compulsory education and not intending to stay in

education after 16. We also sought to understand how these decisions varied across each of the four countries.

6.3.1 Young people in post-compulsory education and those intending to stay in education after 16.

- 8% of the young people in post compulsory education and those intending to stay in education after 16 said they would go out to work. The young people from Scotland (11%) were more likely to go out to work than those from England (8%) and Wales (7%).
- 4% of the young people in compulsory education and intending to stay in education after 16 said they would reduce the hours they work. The young people from England, Scotland and Wales were all just as likely (4%) to reduce the hours they worked.

The figures for Northern Ireland were too small to be included in these calculations.

6.3.2 Young people not in education and not intending to stay in education after 16.

- 7% of the young people not in education and not intending to stay in education after 16 said they would stay in full-time education. The young people from Scotland (10%) were more likely to stay in education than those from England (7%) and Wales (7%).
- 7% of young people not in education and not intending to stay in education after 16 said that they would go into job related training. The young people from Wales (8%) were more likely to go into job related training than England (7%) and Scotland (5%).

The figures for Northern Ireland were too small to be included in these calculations.

6.4 Implications of a NMW on apprenticeships and training

The questionnaire results were also able to show whether young people currently on training or apprenticeship courses or intending to leave education at 16 were influenced by the possibility of a NMW of £3.00 - £3.50 an hour.

6.4.1 Apprenticeships

In total 19 young people said that they would not consider an apprenticeship if a NMW of £3.00 - £3.50 per hour was introduced.

Of the 19 young people who said they would not consider an apprenticeship scheme, 10 young people were not planning to stay in education after 16 and six were planning to stay in full-time education. 3 young people did not specify what they were doing.

None of the young people who stated they were currently on an apprenticeship or training scheme, indicated that they would not consider an apprenticeship scheme if there was a NMW of £3.00 - £3.50 an hour.

Only one of the young people that said he left education at 16 because job related training would help him find work said that he would not consider an apprenticeship because of the possibility of a NMW of £3.00 - £3.50 an hour.

6.4.2 Training

In total 78 young people said that they would go into job related training if a NMW of £3.00 - £3.50 per hour was introduced.

20 young people currently on an apprenticeship or training scheme, indicated that they would go into job related training if there was a NMW of £3.00 - £3.50 an hour.

Of the 78 young people who said they would go into job related training, 32 were not planning to stay in full-time education after 16 and 20 were planning to stay in full-time education after 16. The remaining young people did not specify what they were doing.

6.5 Implication of a NMW across gender

We also cross referenced the answers of all the 14-17 year olds to see if there were any differences in decisions based on gender. The decisions made by males and females were largely the same although the females were more likely to stay in full-time education than the males, however this was identified for the whole group even before we asked about a NMW. The males were more likely to go out to work as a result of the NMW compared to the females.

- 14% of females said that they would go out to work, compared to 21% of the males.
- 13% of the females said they would study part-time, compared to 10% of the males.
- 42% of the females said they would stay in full-time education, compared to 32% of the males.
- 3% of the females said they would reduce the hours they work, compared to 4% of the males.
- 16% of the females said that a NMW would have no impact on what they do, compared to 14% of the males.
- 2% of the females said they would go into job related training, compared to 4% of the males.
- 1% of both females and males said they wouldn't consider an apprenticeship.
- 2% of the females said they would increase the hours they work, compared to 3% of the males.

7. Conclusions

The results of the focus groups and the questionnaires have been able to provide an in-depth insight into the reasons, which influence young people's decisions around education, training and employment. However they can only be viewed as a snap shot of the experiences of 14-17 year olds in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland between July and December 2003.

The results suggest that many young people have very clear goals about what they want to achieve and how they can achieve it. Many young people said

that they needed to invest time in education so that they could follow a particular career path and command a good rate of pay. Some young people were more interested in vocational training, which would enable them to do a job that they would enjoy. Most of the young people believed that they would not be able to earn good rates of pay and have additional job related benefits such as pensions etc without some form of qualifications. However some young people felt that they would have to work either because of parental pressure or the need to earn a wage.

The focus groups showed that a NMW of £3.00 –3.50 would have little impact on the decisions of young people on whether to stay in education, training or go into employment. Many young people said that they would not sacrifice their education for £3.00-3.50 an hour and the majority of those that were thinking of undertaking an apprenticeship didn't appear to be discouraged by such a NMW.

The questionnaires showed that a NMW for 16-17 year olds would have little impact on the decisions of young people. Only 9% of 14-15 year olds intending to stay in education said that they would go out to work if there was a NMW for 16 and 17 year olds compared to 6% of 16-17 year olds in post-education who said they'd go out to work as a result of a NMW for 16-17 year olds. However the results are difficult to interpret as 9% of 14-15 year olds currently intending to leave education at 16 said that they would stay in full-time education if there was a NMW for 16 and 17 year olds, while 5% of 16–17 year olds who have left education said they would have remained in full-time education as a result of a NMW for 16-17 year olds. Very few of the young people who answered the questionnaire said they'd reduce the hours they worked as a result of a NMW for 16-17 year olds.

The questionnaires also showed that if there were a NMW of 16-17 year olds it would be more likely to affect the decisions of males than females. Males were more likely to go out to work and less likely to stay in full-time education. However, we should be cautious when looking at these figures because we also found this pattern even before we introduced the idea of a NMW.