

**Westminster Employment Forum policy conference:  
Next steps for youth employment and improving pathways to work**

Timing: Morning, Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2026

\*\*\*Taking place online\*\*\*



Draft agenda subject to change

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **Examining the youth employment landscape and drivers of economic inactivity in the context of the Government's upcoming *Young People and Work Report***  
**Professor Ewart Keep**, Chair, Education, Training and Skills, University of Oxford
- 9.15 **Tackling structural barriers to youth employment**  
*implications of the Employment Rights Act 2025 for young people's access to sustainable employment opportunities | improving workplace accessibility and implementing reasonable adjustments | findings and recommendations from the Keep Britain Working Review | service coordination between employers, health providers and local employment services | impact of reform to zero and low hours contracts on employer recruitment strategies | improving employer confidence and engagement | cost, administration and operational pressures | impact of AI on workforce planning, recruitment and retention practices | tailoring stay-in-work strategies for young people | approaches to supporting young people with health conditions, disabilities, or ill mental health, including potential expansion of an Individual Placement and Support Service*  
**Lisa Scales**, Director, Talent and Talent Acquisition, Royal Mail Group  
**Fliss Miller**, Director, Skills and Employment, East Midlands Combined County Authority  
**Katy Neep**, Head, Employer Engagement and Partnerships, Youth Futures Foundation  
Senior representative, health  
Senior representative, legal
- 9.40 Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.05 **Priorities for delivering sustainable employment opportunities for young people - skills development, cross-sector partnerships and the role of youth voices**  
**Laura-Jane Rawlings**, CEO, Youth Employment UK  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.25 **Chair's closing remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.30 Break
- 10.40 **Chair's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.45 **Assessing the role of employers in delivering community-based support and opportunities for young people**  
**Clare Sumner CBE**, Chief Policy and Social Impact Officer, Premier League
- 10.55 **Examining pathways into work - measuring quality, framework design and alignment with skills needs**  
*impact of reform in the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper | implications for quality, completion and progression | introduction of Foundation Apprenticeships and modular apprenticeship units | aligning scheme design and resource allocation with employer needs | practical considerations for implementation of expanded Youth Guarantee provisions, including the Jobs Guarantee and Youth Jobs Grant | eligibility and referral routes | impact of the Growth and Skills Levy on employer behaviour | role of youth voices in framework design and development | improving access to career hubs*  
**Sharon Weetman**, Head, Youth Employment and Apprenticeships, Greater Manchester Combined Authority  
**Gemma Kenyon**, Director, Employability, City St George's, University of London  
**Mike Blakeley**, Executive Director, Partnerships and Apprenticeships, Exeter College
- 11.10 Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.35 **Approaches to tackling regional inequalities and socioeconomic barriers to work**  
**Resham Kotecha**, Deputy Chair, Social Mobility Commission  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.55 **Priorities for expanding access to employment opportunities for young people - employer participation, local delivery and job quality**  
*strategies for reducing key barriers to employers hiring young people | funding and incentives for smaller businesses, including apprenticeship training support and employer incentives | support for employers recruiting eligible young people on Universal Credit | addressing regional variation in access to jobs | improving local provision, including transport links and digital infrastructure | access to careers guidance, workplace experience and Youth Hubs | tailored support for care leavers and young people with SEND | introduction of the new Jobs and Careers Service from October 2026 | coordination between local authorities, education and training providers, employers and other local partners | considerations for predictable hours, job security, fair treatment and progression routes | employer standards and duties | long-term considerations for youth service funding, local employment support, accountability and outcome benchmarks*  
**Tom Dower**, Principal and CEO, UTC South Durham  
**Melissa Milner**, Director, External Affairs and Partnerships, Catch22  
**Naz Kauser**, Head, Employment Enterprise and Apprenticeship, Ealing Council  
Senior representative, SMEs  
Senior representative, workforce advocacy  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.45 **Next steps for youth employment policy - delivery, accountability and outcomes**  
**Katya Srivastava**, Deputy Director, Youth Policy, Department for Work and Pensions  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 13.10 **Chair's and Westminster Employment Forum closing remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian  
**Harry Nelson**, Westminster Employment Forum