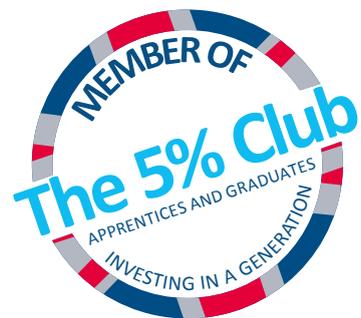




Playing to our strengths: Unlocking social mobility for economic good



About The 5% Club

The 5% Club is uniquely an employer-led not-for-profit organisation founded in 2013. It works with UK employers and key influencers to inspire, educate and retain a growing body of people into “earn and learn” placements in order to increase the number of apprentices, sponsored students and graduate trainees.

The goal of The Club is to increase the employment and career prospects of today’s youth and equip the UK with the skilled workforce it needs to compete globally. Members aspire to having at least 5% of their UK work force in “earn and learn” positions within 5 years of joining. Progress is measured annually and reported by the member in its Annual Report or equivalent.

In setting up The 5% Club, we wanted to encourage leading firms of all sizes to invest in a generation – to put their money where their mouth is and set a clear example for many more employers to follow. We believe that the aim should be to build a much broader way for people to enter the job market or reskill, moving away from the entrenched university focus and create a world-class vocational system in the UK that is on a par with, if not better than, systems such as that in Germany.

The 5% Club believes that employers are best placed to identify the skills that the economy will need in the future and best placed to drive high quality, relevant training which can be the bedrock to a long and fulfilling career. By joining The 5% Club, employers demonstrate to their customers, employees and potential recruits that they are a business committed to developing their workforce and building the skills the UK economy will need to thrive.



Leo Quinn
Founder and Chairman The 5% Club
Group Chief Executive, Balfour Beatty



Director General, Penelope,
Viscountess Cobham CBE

Foreword by Justin Madders MP



Improving social mobility is not only important from a moral standpoint but an economic one as well. By widening access, organisations benefit from an increased pool of skills and experience; the more a company's staff reflect their customers, the greater understanding they will have of their wishes. Having diverse workforces, which encompass many different talents, backgrounds and experiences, is crucial if we are to develop dynamic organisations. Put simply, improving social mobility is vital for the future of individuals, employers and the country as a whole.

One of the striking findings from the evidence sessions that the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility held as part of our inquiry into access to leading professions last year, was that despite the vast range of organisations that we spoke to, the challenges that they faced in widening access were extremely similar. Many

spoke of the fact that they just did not receive applications from highly able applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, too often what constitutes "highly able" is narrowly defined to academic achievement. It is clear that the earlier young people get an opportunity to broaden their horizons the more likely they are to want to consider careers that they might not otherwise.

The 5% Club, through its focus on "earn and learn" placements, plays a key role in rebalancing the relationship between academic and vocational education. This focus on potential and development allows firms to reach able applicants from a range of backgrounds and set a clear example for other employers to follow.

Justin Madders MP

Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility

Executive summary

Few people disagree with the principle that everyone should have access to opportunities to access fulfilling, stable employment, regardless of their background. Yet in the UK, a person's family circumstances still often dictate their employment prospects. For example, only 4% of doctors, 6% of barristers and 11% of journalists come from working-class backgrounds¹. Furthermore, where a child comes from in the country has a profound impact on their prospects for social mobility, with regional disparities in the UK now wider than in any other western European country².

On the other side of the equation, with many areas of the economy experiencing skills shortages, employers are increasingly looking at what action they can take to increase diversity in their businesses to ensure they are attracting the most talented people. A failure to develop and deploy the brightest and the best risks stifling the country's economic growth while also letting down the young people who are most in need of support.

Clearly, there is much to be done before many parts of the economy can claim to be truly diverse and helping to increase social mobility. A number of common themes emerged through the interviews we undertook with our members in preparation for the drafting of this paper:

“You want the best people to work for you no matter where they're from – someone's background shouldn't be a barrier to them working here.”

- While providing opportunities for work experience is endorsed across the economy, these opportunities still rely too much on an informal – often “friends and family” – network, thus de-selecting a large section of candidates and starting an early pattern of reinforcing social inequalities. Unpaid internships are equally exclusive of those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Those formal approaches that there are, for example the work placement element of the new T-Levels, are onerous for employers and inflexible.
- The disproportionately positive impact that these first links with employers can have for those from disadvantaged backgrounds means that employers must consider what more they can do to reach out to young people who might not otherwise have these opportunities. Businesses should get involved with schools and colleges as many of our members already do, offering work placements, internships and other engagement opportunities to assist with the transition from school to work.
- More must be done to inform young people about all the options available to them and to attract bright school leavers from all backgrounds to undertake apprenticeships and other vocational routes. Education about the range of careers and options on offer should also begin earlier, at primary school, while greater awareness-raising amongst parents and careers advisers must be a priority. Our hardworking teachers should be supported to become better skills advisers and society at large must be encouraged to change its perspective. Furthermore, while there has been some progress on making vocational and academic routes more equal, there is still a long way to go. We must reach parity of esteem between the two more quickly.
- The Apprenticeship Levy must be made to work so that it delivers the skilled workforce employers and the economy need. We must reverse the decline in the number of apprenticeship starts and ensure that more people are recruited onto – and complete – apprenticeships at all levels.
- Many of our members have concluded that relying solely on traditional routes to recruit staff is no longer enough to provide the talented – and diverse – workforce they need. Employers must look closely at how and where they recruit to ensure that it is fit for purpose and not needlessly excluding bright young people with potential.

¹ State of the Nation report, Social Mobility Commission, 2016

² Social Market Foundation, 2017

- The Further Education sector is critical both to the creation of a skilled workforce and to social mobility. However, it faces numerous challenges. It must be supported to ensure it is able to play its part in delivering a strong economy.

Meaningful improvements to social mobility and effective education and training are two key ways of addressing the UK's low productivity and of ensuring that we have the high-skill economy we need. Supporting social mobility is the right thing to do. If the UK is to ensure inclusive growth, we need the Government and business leaders to work together to find ways to drive opportunities for social mobility at the same time as ensuring a skilled workforce.





Key points and recommendations

1. Access to work experience and internships that enhance employability should not be dependent on who, rather than what, you know. The “default” practice of providing informal work experience for the children of friends and family reinforces social inequalities and must be looked at more closely by companies.
2. The disproportionately positive impact links with employers can have for those from disadvantaged backgrounds should encourage employers to consider what more they can do to reach out to young people who might not otherwise have these opportunities.
3. The 45-60 day specification for T-Level work placements should be made more flexible in order to ensure that the maximum number of employers are able engage with them, giving as many young people as possible the opportunity to undertake a work placement.
4. Learning about the workplace during the primary school years should be increased. This would be especially valuable for children who live in an environment of high unemployment, in order to raise ambitions, open up possibilities and to help to break down barriers.
5. More schools must allow employers in to speak to all children about the full range of opportunities on offer.
6. All students would benefit from much more systematic exposure to the range of possible careers - those who are certain that they will go to university as well as those who do not know which route to pursue.
7. The view that technical and vocational education is only ‘for other people’s children’ must be addressed more firmly, more quickly and in a more coordinated way. We must do more to genuinely achieve “parity of esteem” between vocational and academic qualifications.
8. All universities should consider providing degree apprenticeships. This would further increase opportunities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as others, to earn while they learn, mitigating the fact that students from the lowest income backgrounds often incur the highest debts whilst they are in higher education as they have few other sources of support.
9. Although some progress has been made, the non-graduate route still has no single admissions process comparable to UCAS. This makes it difficult for young people to access all of the options in one place, and to evaluate the quality and likely outcomes of the various alternatives. This should be addressed more quickly.
10. The Apprenticeship Levy should be evolved into a broader skills levy, with increased flexibility to allow it to be spent on other types of high-quality technical skills training.
11. Although the increased focus on higher and degree level apprenticeships is important and to be welcomed, intermediate apprenticeships are important starting points for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Provision for lower levels of apprenticeships deserves better protection – and Government funding – in order to help these young people onto the ladder.
12. Employers must ensure that their recruitment processes enable them to attract and recruit talented individuals from all backgrounds. They must also be wary of creating artificial barriers which limit social mobility, for example, requiring a degree for all roles as a matter of course, thereby excluding those who may have taken a vocational qualification.
13. Employers should also examine whether there are internal barriers within the company that hamper those from disadvantaged backgrounds who are appointed, from progressing up the career ladder, as well as developing programmes which support personal development.
14. Employers should improve how they collaborate and share best practice with one another, via forums such as The 5% Club, for example.
15. There is an inequality between academic and vocational education which is demonstrated in the difficulties faced by the FE sector. This ultimately restricts social mobility and does not meet the UK’s economic needs. In particular, the low funding and lack of investment is starting to affect the curriculum and quality of provision.

Ensuring a level playing field

The job market is extremely competitive. Undertaking internships and work experience offers individuals a way of making themselves more employable. Research³ has shown that work placements, while beneficial to all young people in helping them access future employment, are particularly valuable for young people from low socio-economic backgrounds, giving them access to the work environment and improving employability.

Securing such placements is in itself becoming increasingly competitive. Many young people are able to use their social networks – family friends or relatives who work somewhere useful to access informal internships. Indeed, in 2017, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) found⁴ that while around 11,000 internships are advertised each year, the real number on offer is closer to 70,000.

While these “invisible” work experience placements are useful for the individual, they perpetuate social inequality and do not necessarily produce the best result for both business and society.

Not only do people from disadvantaged backgrounds often lack the contacts to be able to access these opportunities, they can also lack the other essential elements of being able to undertake informal internships, even if one were offered. For example, while many are cushioned by their family’s financial and emotional support, accommodation they are able to stay in rent-free and other assistance, those from disadvantaged backgrounds lack these financial buffers and are therefore excluded. According to research by The Sutton Trust⁵, an unpaid internship costs a single person living in London a minimum of £1,019 per month, while in Manchester it costs at least £827 a month.



³ Michael Kerrigan, Amy Manktelow & Eunice Simmons, Nottingham Trent University, April 2018

⁴ The Inbetweeners: The new role of internships in the graduate labour market, IPPR, 2017

⁵ Unpaid, Unadvertised, Unfair, The Sutton Trust, 2018

Where work experience is being formalised and made accessible for people from all backgrounds, recent research⁶ has found that there are not enough placements available. For example, the new T-Level technical qualifications, the first of which will be introduced by 2020, will require a 45-60 day work experience placement for each student. They will not be able to complete the qualification until they have undertaken a placement. However, given the length of the placements and the fact that most of those undertaking them will be between 16-18 – meaning that they will require close supervision and have few existing skills to offer employers – only a quarter of employers⁷ are willing or able to provide such placements without any financial assistance. This is an issue which has been highlighted by our own members in the interviews for this paper. Only one in ten employers currently provides placements which meet these specifications⁸. The 5% Club believes that the length of these placements should be made more flexible in order to ensure that the maximum number of employers are able to engage with them, giving as many young people as possible the opportunity to undertake a work placement.

Informal internships will always be something individuals are keen to offer to the children of friends and relatives. However this gives those that are able to access them a competitive edge which they have not gained on a level playing field, via an open recruitment process. It means that people without the social capital of a support network of contacts with jobs are denied opportunities which might help them get onto the employment ladder, essentially undermining efforts to increase social mobility and bring out all that is the brightest and the best in our next generation. An emerging positive trend is that there is more negative press coverage of companies offering unfair unpaid internships.

“People will always want to help their friends, but it isn’t right that some kids get a hand up in this way while the ones who need it most are stuck where they are. The only way to end informal work experience is to legislate against it.”

Some of our members are of the view that the only way to end this practice is to make it illegal. Although there may be a case for legislating against informal internships, we believe that it would be very hard to enforce. While this should not necessarily be a reason not to legislate, The 5% Club believes that the way to resolve this is for more employers to develop strong links with schools and colleges in deprived areas and to increase the access young people in those areas have to workplaces, mentors and work experience. This should be teamed with more awareness-raising via collaborative employer forums of how unfair the practice is, and internal policies and procedures within companies discouraging it. Indeed, some of our members already have policies which do not allow any unpaid internships, including informal.

⁶ Reforming Technical Education, Employers views of T-Levels, CIPD, August 2018

⁷ Ibid

⁸ City & Guilds and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, May 2018

Increasing awareness and understanding

Technical and vocational education are critical to the economy and to providing the skilled workforce employers need to deliver growth. They also offer an excellent way to improve social mobility and provide routes into fulfilling careers for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, to play their part in doing this, people must know what is available and have confidence in the system. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds often do not have the informed support network in place to help them find out what options are available to them once they leave education. This can result in many pursuing lower-skilled routes due to a lack of awareness of vocational and technical training, to the detriment of their own life chances and to employers, who are missing out on the chance to employ talented individuals.

In countries with higher levels of social mobility, such as Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, Denmark and Sweden, pupils are offered information and advice at school on technical and vocational pathways which are respected by employers, and which do not carry the label of “second best”. This is what welcome recent UK policy announcements are aiming to deliver – but more must be done to achieve it and it must be done faster.

Part of the solution to this is about increasing awareness and understanding of what apprenticeships are and what they offer, to address outdated perceptions and improve take-up amongst people from all backgrounds. The 5% Club has a number of suggestions for what should happen to make this a reality:

- The 5% Club believes learning about the workplace during the primary school years should be increased. These early years are particularly formative. For all children, we believe it is important that they meet adults beyond their own local area and social networks, in order to gain a broader understanding about the types of work available and the range of different paths they could follow. However, this is especially valuable for children who live in an environment of high unemployment, in order to raise ambitions, open up possibilities and to help to break down barriers.

“Some parents still view apprenticeships as being very tied to one job – they don’t understand all the future possibilities. So there needs to be more communication around degree apprenticeships and other opportunities. Schools also need to embed that information, so children know that apprenticeships aren’t just for mechanics and hairdressers – there are a whole range of different areas that are covered and a huge amount of options for the future.”

- The same goes for delivering effective careers advice throughout school, to ensure that all young people have an understanding of the range of jobs and industries they could work in. We believe all students would benefit from much more systematic exposure to the range of possible careers - those who are certain that they will go to university as well as those who do not know which route to pursue.

“Where the schools have a designated careers officer, that has had a real impact.”

- The Government has positioned apprenticeships as the main alternative to the academic route. However, in spite of the Government's ambitions, there remains a view amongst many careers advisors, teachers and parents that apprenticeships are a second-best option. In 2015 research established that 92% of parents, when asked, expressed positive views about apprenticeships, but only a third were keen for their own children to undertake one⁹. In the experience of our members, this is a perception which persists three years later. However, vocational routes offer real opportunities to all, but especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to take their first steps onto the employment ladder with the security of being paid. They also offer long-term job security and high earning potential: for example, according to our members, in key sectors such as engineering and construction, higher level apprenticeships can offer better lifetime earnings than most undergraduate degrees.

“The Degree Apprenticeship is a great news story, but we aren't doing anywhere near enough as a country to publicise them or encourage bodies that wouldn't previously have had a degree approach, to explore and offer them.”

- The view that technical and vocational education is only 'for other people's children' must be addressed more firmly, more quickly and in a more coordinated way. We must do more to genuinely achieve “parity of esteem” between vocational and academic qualifications.

“There has been some really positive change over the past 7 or 8 years. We are finding that schools are inviting us to open days to tell the children how apprenticeship schemes operate. Unfortunately, we still can't get into private or grammar schools to talk to those children. There is still a bit of blind spot about apprenticeships not being for the brightest and the best.”

- Our members' view is that there remains a significant amount of awareness-raising to be done about apprenticeships. Understanding needs to be improved, firstly, about the fact that they are available in a wide range of sectors, offer fulfilling careers and paid learning on-the-job from day one for people from all backgrounds. More must also be done to raise awareness about the different levels available. Those undertaking higher vocational education funded by employers graduate without debt and go straight into a full-time job. They can go on to higher degrees. Indeed, we believe that all universities should be considering degree apprenticeships, which would further increase opportunities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as others, to be able to earn while they learn, mitigating the fact that students from the lowest income backgrounds often incur the highest debts whilst they are in higher education as they have few other sources of support.
- Although some progress has been made, the non-graduate route still has no single admissions process comparable to UCAS. This makes it difficult for young people to access all of the options in one place, and to evaluate the quality and likely outcomes of the various alternatives. This should be addressed more quickly.

⁹ The Commission on Apprenticeships, Demos, 2015



“One of our employees left school at 16 and was told by them that he would end up working in a factory. His interest in stripping down machines to find out why they aren’t working was not recognised or encouraged as something valuable at school, but this interest and curiosity – these skills – are something industry needs. This young man did a craft apprenticeship with us, was sponsored though HND and is just completing a part-time Engineering degree, again with our sponsorship. Not bad for somebody apparently “doomed” to be in a factory!”

“Careers advice still does not really signpost apprenticeships for bright kids. We do lots and lots of work with schools and you tend to get the more challenging students in the school rather than the whole class. It is extremely rare that you get an open platform. Ideally you want to do your pitch to everyone so that students are advised about all options available to them. We went into one school recently and were told that we shouldn’t mention apprenticeships. They wanted them to go on to A Levels and university – apprenticeships didn’t apply to their students as far as they were concerned.”

Making sure the Apprenticeship Levy works for everyone

The Apprenticeship Levy was introduced in April 2017. Although one of the Government's key aims in designing the Levy was to put employers in the driving seat in relation to training, the fact that the Levy is so prescriptive means that many are simply rebranding existing training in order to get as much of their Levy back as possible. While this is understandable and allowed – even encouraged – under the Levy's rules, it does not achieve what the economy needs, which is more training overall. Furthermore, in spite of this rebranding of existing training, recent figures¹⁰ show that skills training in the economy overall has also dropped at every level, with only 37% of Britons having undertaken any training over the past three years, down from 41% in 2015 and the majority of those surveyed indicating that they do not intend to undertake any training in the next three years either.

“The Apprenticeship Levy is not something which will sort itself out. It isn't teething problems. If it isn't fixed, it will do a generation of damage. It has to be fixed.”

Furthermore, it is well-documented that there has been a significant decline in apprenticeship starts since the introduction of the Levy¹¹, with 28% fewer starts in the last academic year on the previous year. Although some of this can be attributed to the fact that employers have been adjusting to the new approach, The 5% Club believes that the scale of the decline, teamed with the need for more skills and improved social mobility, calls for changes to the Levy. This could be addressed, for example, by evolving the Levy into a broader skills levy, allowing it to be spent on other types of high-quality technical skills training, as has been suggested by the CBI and others.

The biggest decline in starts was in “intermediate” apprenticeships, the basic level, which saw a decline of 38% to 52,000. Although the increased focus on higher and degree level apprenticeships is important and to be welcomed, intermediate apprenticeships are important starting points for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

There is now an imbalance in provision which is to the detriment of those who relied on lower-level apprenticeships as access points. The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission¹² has found that apprenticeship starts among the under-25s are now significantly fewer than those among the over-25s.

“Apprenticeships are a key way of future proofing the UK workforce, particularly in sectors where there is a skills shortage, such as construction.”

We therefore believe that provision for lower levels of apprenticeships deserves better protection – and Government funding – in order to help these young people onto the ladder. In order to better protect these routes, there should be no employer contribution for either non-Levy payers or for those that exceed their Levy when recruiting 16-24 year olds onto intermediate apprenticeships.

“The 24-month lifetime to draw down on funds is too short for smaller companies. For example, they may only take on one apprentice once every three years or every four years because this is all they have the capacity for. But they are losing a large amount of their funding. This needs to be extended.”

¹⁰ Department for Education, Learning and Work Institute, August 2018

¹¹ Apprenticeship and levy statistics, Department for Education, June 2018

¹² Apprenticeships, young people, and social mobility: The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission's submission to the Apprenticeships Inquiry by the subcommittee on Education, Skills and the Economy, Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2016

The role of employers

Most obviously, the role of employers is in ensuring that their recruitment processes enable them to attract and recruit talented individuals from all backgrounds. Many employers still rely on traditional methods in their recruiting practices. Furthermore, the increase in the number of people pursuing university studies has led to employers requesting degrees for traditionally non-graduate roles despite their being no change to the skills required for the role. In some cases, these artificial barriers are limiting social mobility and excluding those who may have taken a vocational qualification. Non-academic routes to the job market must be made easier to understand and must be supported by employers.

Where our members have implemented programmes which have delivered results, these are usually strategically planned, measured and supported at a senior level.

“In 2015 we removed UCAS points as one way to widen the range of people who applied to work here. We concluded that this was an indicator more related to social class rather than predictive of future potential. We have also widened the range of universities and schools we work with. We have always worked with schools around our offices, but we have started asking our people to think a bit differently – by mapping our office network against the map of social mobility hotspots, we realized that we could make a real difference just by travelling for half an hour to an hour. That’s been really powerful for us.”

Employers must examine their recruitment processes to ensure they understand where talented applicants from different backgrounds fall through the cracks. Of course, support should extend beyond those at entry level. Employers should also examine whether there are internal barriers within the company that hamper those from disadvantaged backgrounds who are appointed, from progressing up the career ladder, as well as developing programmes which support personal development.

“In 2013, we made the decision to drop academic entry requirements at graduate and school leaver entry level as one of a package of measures aimed at making it easier for people from a wide range of backgrounds to access our business. We have also redesigned our trainee application form, so it no longer has any weightings around extra-curricular activities or work experience. And we now engage with a wider range of target schools and universities.”

Finally, employers should also improve how they collaborate and share best practice with one another, via forums such as The 5% Club, for example.

“This year we will enter the Social Mobility Employer Index for the first time. We are also running our Movement to Work scheme for the first time in the UK – a programme which includes work placements for 16-24 year olds who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). We know that those from disadvantaged backgrounds can miss out on the contacts other young people have via their social networks and long-established links their schools have with employers. This is a way of giving young people from less well-off backgrounds an insight into the world of work and of reducing the numbers that are slipping through the net.”



Strengthening the Further Education sector

The 5% Club's members are very supportive of the UK's wide network of further education (FE) providers. As highlighted in our member survey earlier in 2018, 91% of our members feel that the FE sector is critical to vocational skills and training. It also plays an important role in social mobility, giving thousands of people every year the opportunity to upskill and improve their chances of securing employment or changing careers. Over 3 million people a year in the UK access some form of FE, in a range of different settings, from colleges and community centres, to prisons and the armed forces.

However, our members are concerned that there is an inequality between academic and vocational education which is demonstrated in the difficulties faced by the FE sector. This ultimately restricts social mobility and does not meet the UK's economic needs.

“We struggle with assessors, as a lot of the colleges are seeing massive turnover when it comes to their teaching staff, particularly for NVQs. Staff at FE colleges are very under resourced, working a lot of hours, without the time to develop their own understanding of what it's like to be in business. This has a massive impact on the students that are coming through. Quite often it is those from disadvantaged backgrounds that miss out.”

The challenges faced by the sector include the fact that there is no coherent strategy or vision for the future to ensure that FE is able to deliver for employers and the economy. There are concerns in some cases about the quality of the teachers and indeed, the number of them: official statistics show a sharp decline in teachers in further education colleges, a fall of nearly 20,000 between 2010 and 2017¹³. The biggest issue however, is the low funding and a lack of investment the FE sector has faced in recent years, which is starting to affect the curriculum and quality of provision.

Between 1998 and 2016, FE funding was halved, (primary and secondary school funding per pupil doubled in the same period). Indeed, the funding rate for 16 to 18 year olds has remained unchanged for six years in a row¹⁴, resulting in significant real-terms funding cut for FE providers in that period. Further education spending per student was 45% higher than secondary school spending in 1990 yet will be around 10% lower in 2019-20¹⁵. With current and predicted requirements for the skills training FE provides set to increase, these institutions need more investment in facilities such as high-tech laboratories and workshops, particularly in the digital and engineering spaces, moving more towards 'live environment' car workshops and restaurants. Additionally the FE sector needs to employ industry specialists who often expect high salaries to be incentivised away from their sector into the classroom.

“Careers advice at FE level is also really poor. They don't have the knowledge themselves to be able to advise the young people.”

¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/feb/04/30000-teacher-shortfall--secondary-schools-further-education>

¹⁴ <https://feweek.co.uk/2018/01/09/dfe-disappoint-as-16-to-18-funding-rate-rise-rejected/>

¹⁵ Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2017

The 5% Club is fully supportive of the FE sector. Individual and national prosperity will suffer significantly if both workers and employers cannot obtain access to world-class technical training across the country. But more needs to be done to strengthen it and ensure it is able to deliver the high-quality skills and training employers and the economy need. Funding for the sector needs to be stabilised. Relationships with employers must be strengthened – with both FE providers and employers taking responsibility for making this happen. And there must be a period of consolidation, to allow for the reforms to become established and for the sector to focus on making them a success. Over the past three years, there have been over 25 significant pieces of legislation relating to the FE sector which have left the further education landscape looking very different today compared to how it looked even ten years ago. While many of the changes have been positive, being in a permanent state of flux has left many working in the FE sector with reform fatigue – there must be greater stability over the next decade to allow the sector and those working in it to return to strength.

“We struggle with assessors, as a lot of the colleges are seeing massive turnover of assessors and tutors, particularly for NVQs.”







Conclusion

The expansion of technical and vocational education has the potential to make a real impact on improving social mobility. To achieve this, while simultaneously delivering for the economy, efforts to enhance the standing of vocational education must be increased and accelerated, while more employers should examine their recruitment and retention processes and consider increasing outreach with local schools.



Contact:

contactus@5percentclub.org.uk

Web:

www.5percentclub.org.uk