Submission to the Education and Culture Committee
The Education Attainment Gap
February 2015

Key Messages

The drivers of the attainment gap

➢ The reasons young people struggle for success in attaining skills, qualifications and jobs are many and varied.

➢ Only support solutions that address individual needs will address those factors.

The Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce

➢ We welcomed the findings of the Commission, but think it could have done more to recognise the value of the work that organisations such as The Prince’s Trust do to deliver positive outcomes for young people in deprived communities.

➢ The Commission should also have recommended setting targets to drive support for the most disadvantaged, including young NEETs and long-term unemployed.

Maximising the links between charities, business and the education system

➢ Our experience and research shows the readiness of businesses to work with charities and the public sector to train the hardest to reach.

➢ It should be recognised that organisations such as The Prince’s Trust can engage major employers and source jobs and enterprise opportunities for young people across Scotland. PTS can also secure additional private sector finance to help drive this forward and create more opportunities for young people.

➢ Volunteers make a valuable difference to young people’s lives every day, fulfilling a variety of roles that will support them to take the next positive steps in life. PTS Volunteers are from a range of backgrounds and can support links and identify employment and enterprise opportunities.

➢ Charities and businesses require flexibility from their partners in order to do more, and our programmes have highlighted how that can happen. At the same time employers and public sector partners need to know that initiatives used to tackle the attainment gap are giving young people the skills to succeed.
1. Introduction

1.1. The Prince’s Trust Scotland (PTS) welcomes this opportunity to help inform the Education and Culture Committee’s work on the educational attainment gap. This briefing addresses the questions in the committee’s call for evidence relating to the implications of the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce and the role of the third sector and the private sector in improving attainment for all school pupils.1

2. Supporting the hardest to reach

2.1. The PTS gives practical and financial support to disadvantaged young people, developing key workplace skills such as confidence and motivation. We helped more than 8,000 vulnerable young people last year and aim to help a similar number in 2015. Three in four young people supported by The Prince’s Trust move into work, education and training or business.

2.2. The reasons why many young people struggle to attain skills and qualifications in mainstream education, and then find it difficult to secure jobs later in life, are many and varied. We work with 13 to 30-year-olds who have struggled at school, have been in care, are long-term unemployed or have been in trouble with the law. Many - though not all - come from Scotland’s most disadvantaged communities, and we work hard to target programmes at areas with the most need.

2.3. The latest Prince’s Trust Macquarie Youth Indexii suggests that young people from hugely varied postcodes and social circumstances can face similar problems coping with attainment. The research paints a broad picture of large proportions of young people struggling to cope with confidence and attainment.

CASE STUDY: DANI BOYD

Dani was a quiet pupil who lacked self-confidence and needed a lot of encouragement to engage with lessons. She joined the xl programme, delivered by The Prince’s Trust and Smithycroft Secondary School, and her energy and enthusiasm began to shine.

Although Dani, 16, from Glasgow, had received learning support in previous programmes at school, she still struggled to surpass her fears.

In two years on xl her cheerful, vivacious personality made a strong impact on the group. Her supportive influence could always be felt by classmates, as she recognised what each person needed and would continually encourage them in activities.

When the group helped sail a boat across the English Channel in the Rhona Sailing Challenge, Dani kept everyone going by singing, dancing and making them laugh. She was one of just three pupils to win a Scot Award and has shown the potential to take part in the Tall Ships Race.

Dani now takes up opportunities that she wouldn’t have previously done by herself. With The Prince’s Trust, she has been involved in activities ranging from fundraising for a project to help homeless people to gardening, outdoor pursuits and dance. She has chosen to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme too.

Before joining the xl club, Dani’s career options seemed limited but now she is thinking of becoming a PE teacher. Dani will always give 100 per cent in everything she does.

“I’ve become a lot more active since joining xl,” says Dani. “I feel so much more positive about everything and about myself as a person; it’s been brilliant for me.

“If it hadn’t been for The Prince’s Trust xl club I don’t think I would ever have had much chance of having a career. I was really struggling but now I think I can do something good that makes me happy.”
2.4. Looking beyond the statistics though, each young person referred to the PTS has in common a potential to reach unnoticed or untapped potential and contribute positively to Scotland’s economy. The programmes run by the PTS offer young people on the wrong side of the attainment gap solutions that suit their individual needs, as well as those of future employers, by giving them invaluable experience that will boost their confidence and self-worth.

2.5. The principal challenge lies in identifying the right support solutions for every individual, so that young people lacking confidence and hope can get onto a better path.

3. Does the Commission fit with the attainment agenda?

3.1. We fundamentally agreed with the final recommendations of the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce that more should be done to help young people make the best transition from a broad general education into a comprehensive range of opportunities which improve their employment and enterprise prospects.

3.2. However, we thought it could have done more to recognise that organisations such as The Prince’s Trust can engage major employers and source jobs and enterprise opportunities for young people across Scotland. PTS, and organisations like it, can make a huge impact both as education and training providers, and as successful partners who can join the dots with the both the public and private sector.

3.3. In fact the PTS already have a track record of getting the most from private sector organisations, as well as the capacity to bring new ideas and methods to tackling underachievement. For example, our new Get into Healthcare Facilities programme with NHS Lothian will give unemployed young people aged 18-25 hands-on work experience in a hospital setting within the healthcare facilities sector. There needs to be a clear understanding of this role from the public sector going forward, especially in view of the proposed development of regional industry-led Invest in Youth groups. These will only deliver to their full potential as single points of contact in each region if they include third sector providers like the PTS from the outset.

3.4. We know that youth unemployment is falling; however, there is concern that this hides the true impact of underemployment and inactivity rates in Scotland. Yet, while the Commission set a range of specific and useful targets for improving outcomes among young people, it could have gone further, by setting a target that specifically drives support for the most disadvantaged young people, including young NEETs and those who are long-term unemployed.

4. Leveraging business support

4.1. Among the most important recommendations of the Commission were those associated with building links between industry, schools and colleges. In practice, encouraging substantial and sustainable links between a wide range of leading businesses and the education sector can prove difficult. Yet, amid a recovering economy, the PTS’s Skills Crunch research shows that a majority of senior business executives in Scotland are worried that a shortage of skills in their sector will hinder growth.

4.2. The PTS has more than 30 years’ track record delivering programmes that harness joint working between business, education providers and the third sector. That means we are trusted to meet the needs of our private sector partners as well as the young people on our programmes. As a case in point, the PTS’s ‘Movement to Work’ programme gives a recent example of success in the area involving blue chip companies like Marks and Spencer, Accenture, BAE Systems, Barclays, BT, Centrica, Diageo, HSBC, Kingfisher, National Grid, Tesco, Unilever and WPP. In practice, offering flexibility is crucial to securing the involvement of businesses that we need.
4.3. As the Scottish economy continues to grow it becomes increasingly important that young people are able to access employment and training opportunities across geographical and local authority boundaries.

**CASE STUDY: NICOLE GALLAGHER**

Nicole, 19, from Bishopbriggs faced a long search for work as she struggled to get a first foot on the career ladder.

While Nicole had worked various jobs after studying make-up at college she was determined to create a rewarding and sustainable career for herself where there was real scope to learn and progress.

During her search for work Nicole sent out applications every weekday and worked at a nightclub on the weekends, on anti-social hours for low pay. While her seven month search for work did see her secure a couple of interviews she struggled to find a job, and was even told by one employer that they received so many applications they ended up throwing many of them away.

While eager to start a career Nicole worried she had left it too late to begin learning something completely new. However after finding out about Get into Car Mechanics at the Jobcentre she jumped at the chance to take part.

"I didn’t know what the options were but as soon as I heard about Get into Car Mechanics I knew it was what I wanted to do," Nicole said.

"It couldn’t have come at a better time. The Prince’s Trust has been amazing. I wake up before my alarm, all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed for the job. It doesn’t even feel like work.

"The best part about the course was proving that to myself and everybody that doubted me—girls can do it too, it is not just a male dominated environment."

Nicole has secured a four year apprenticeship with Arnold Clark and is optimistic for the future. She added: “I have thought about starting my own business, an all-female garage. I might even consider management in the future. It’s a huge opportunity at Arnold Clark and an honour to work there.”

4.4. The PTS is setting out a new way of providing services to disadvantaged young people with the opening of Scotland’s largest Youth Employment and Enterprise HUB later this year. **Based in Glasgow City Centre and providing opportunities across Clyde Valley, The Prince’s Trust’s Wolfson Centre will be a combined effort to meet the needs of young people and the careers and business opportunities they aspire to.** We currently have a number of young people from across the Clyde Valley area who travel to multiple delivery locations across Clyde Valley for our programmes. For example, a young person living in Paisley could access a Get into Retail M&S programme in Argyle Street, Glasgow in as little as 10 minutes by train. Our new Centre will be a visible and inspiring place that delivers a platform to support disadvantaged young people across geographical and skills boundaries.

5. How can charities work effectively with the public sector?

5.1. Many of the PTS’s public sector partners understand that its programmes help young people because they successfully target young people who have already had problems dealing with mainstream education. This year, we will work in all 32 local authorities in Scotland because our partners know that the interventions we deliver are flexible, cost effective, and easily scalable to reach more young people in more areas to meet new demand. In addition, we will partner with a range of FE college providers, as well as agencies like Skills Development Scotland and Jobcentre Plus.
5.2. In January, the PTS has received new investment of £145,000 from the Scottish Government to deliver a new programme, ‘Future Starts’, in collaboration with schools, colleges and employers. The projects are being piloted in North Lanarkshire, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee – all priority locations for the PTS based on youth employment levels, economic and social need. The programme is specifically targeted at young people in education who are at risk of disengagement by helping them raise their ambitions and build up their confidence so they can move towards vocational training or employment.

5.3. Future Starts is about looking at the challenges set out by the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce and adapting them innovatively to target unemployed young people most in need of support. Shaped by a process of formal evaluation at the end of Year 1, the PTS will aim to further develop and grow the programme in Year 2 through expansion into new schools within the existing pilot areas, as well as expansion into new local authority areas. Beyond this, The Trust will look to mainstream the delivery of Future Starts through the new Prince’s Trust Education Product, which is currently under development and due to be rolled out as part of core Prince’s Trust provision during 2016, as well as linking with other vocational Prince’s Trust programmes that provide employment and enterprise opportunities.

5.4. What we would like to see is more local authorities being ready to look at the evidence of success from programmes like Future Starts and replicate them more readily and flexibly across Scotland.

6. Benchmarking attainment

6.1. The PTS has recognised the need to ensure that the young people participating in our programmes not only acquire new skills and confidence, but also attain formal qualifications where possible. Our xl programme works with young people aged 13-19 who are facing problems at school, aiming to help them to re-engage in compulsory education.

**CASE STUDY: GARY WILLIAMS**

Struggling to cope with his autism at school, Gary found communication challenging and his frustration spilled out into negative behaviour. Then he joined the xl programme at Hollybrook Academy in Glasgow and slowly transformed into a confident, engaged student.

Gary’s problems interacting with others and being understood were hard for him to deal with. He couldn’t focus and was disillusioned with education. With little self-esteem or direction in life, it was looking like he would leave school with few prospects.

After Gary (15) was encouraged to join xl, his problems continued initially. With the perseverance and patience of staff and other members of the group, he eventually began to settle in, change his behaviour and work with his learning difficulties. He developed the ability to be patient and consider the feelings of others, and show respect to himself and others.

Gary is now a strong team player and able to take his time when communicating. He understands instructions well and after two years in the xl club is a hard-working, dedicated and responsible member of the group. He is the kind of student who picks everyone up with his positive attitude and humour when they are feeling down.

“I couldn’t enjoy school at all before and couldn’t see the point in anything. I just felt uncomfortable all the time and things were just getting worse,” says Gary. “Joining the xl club saved me.”

“The past two years on xl have really helped me to feel better about myself. They’ve been so patient with me, so I’ve learned to do the same and stop reacting in the heat of the moment when I felt frustrated.”

Gary’s teachers are proud of his determination and of what he has achieved.
6.2. The xl development programme runs through informal clubs in schools and community facilities that provide settings for young people to learn, get involved in shaping activities and projects, and take on responsibility as leaders and decision makers. Its aims, flexible model of delivery, and five key activity areas focused on in each xl club are directly aligned to the seven Curriculum for Excellence approaches to learning.

6.3. Our enhanced xl now provides an Employability Qualification. The new programme goes further by providing full SCQF accreditation, together with registration through the Insight benchmarking tool. The crucial thing is that young people achieve formal credit via the SCQF framework for the dedication they demonstrate during the programme – something that will ultimately help them move into further education or employment. Moreover, Insight gives education provider due assurance that xl will count toward measuring its own overall performance each year.

6.4. We believe that by measuring attainment and setting benchmarks, our enhanced xl programme provides an excellent model for proactive cooperation between the third sector and public sector education providers that can be rolled out elsewhere.

7. Concluding remarks

7.1. The Prince’s Trust Scotland would be happy to provide the committee with further written or oral evidence on any of the issues discussed in this paper.

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1 http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/85486.aspx
2 The Prince’s Trust Macquarie Youth Index (January 2015) suggested more than half of young people surveyed in Scotland (58 per cent) said they ‘always’ or ‘often’ feel stressed, while more than a third (38 per cent) said they feel down or depressed ‘always’ or ‘often’. More than one in ten reported feeling unable to leave the house due to anxiety issues, while one in five admit in the survey to “falling apart” emotionally on a regular basis: http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about_the_trust/what_we_do/research/youth_index_2015.aspx
3 Commission Recommendation 14
4 The Prince’s Trust, The Skills Crunch: Upskilling the Workforce of the Future (August 2014) highlighted concerns among leading businesses about how workforces often lack the skills to help them grow sustainably. More than two-thirds of Scottish business leaders questioned believed that a skills shortage would result in losing work to competitors (68 per cent). The ramifications of this could be severe, both for individual companies and the wider economy too: http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/pdf/skillsCrunchScotland.pdf