

Amanda Solloway MP

Speech on Youth Unemployment and the DWP, 28th October 2015

Can I start by thanking my Honourable friend for securing this important debate, and thank the YMCA for putting together their report which I found very interesting and informative.

For many years I've had close ties with the YMCA in my home city of Derby and, as a YMCA Mentor, I know first-hand what fantastic work they do and the challenges they face in order to help young people not only in Derby but across the country.

The report provided by the YMCA has highlighted concerns regarding levels of youth unemployment when compared to other age groups and the issues that they face when trying to find work.

Reading cases where young people have experienced disappointment and frustration is really concerning and we need to ensure that all young individuals who are showing the aspiration to employment are aware of the various paths that can help them find work

I was particularly touched by the case of Beth in Derby, who said that "jobcentres look down on you and belittle you". It should not be the case that a young person entering their local Jobcentre should feel belittled or looked down on.

I am encouraged that this Government has introduced several new schemes that are aimed at improving job opportunities for young people. It's vital to give young people the skills and experience required to meet the demands of a particular position, and these schemes provide them with the support they need to achieve their goals before they even get to the Jobcentre.

In Derby a scheme has been introduced by Enterprise 4 Education (E4E), which links local employers to local schools and helps young people find careers suitable to them. By providing mock interviews and help with CV writing, they are ensuring we have work ready young people entering the job market.

Apprenticeships have also proven to be very successful in Derby, with partnerships set up between local colleges and schools. Companies like Rolls Royce, Bombardier, and Toyota are leading the way locally, and I'm happy to report that the number of young people taking up apprenticeships continues to rise.

The recent announcement of 40 new apprenticeship places being created at a construction training academy in Derby is a perfect example of this. It's testament to the Government's commitment to helping young people and addressing long-term youth unemployment.

Through provisions and schemes such as the ones I have mentioned we are providing the help and support to ensure that Jobcentres are not the only option available.

Education and experience are two key considerations if we are going to improve the job opportunities for our younger generation.

The confidence of knowing you have the required skills and qualifications, and having a clear picture of the work you want to find means that young people entering their local Jobcentre or even applying online know that they are ready to work.

We must however take into account recommendations from the YMCA to ensure that solutions are realistic, applicable and achievable and that job centres focus on the needs and aspirations of these young people.