



HANSARD
SOCIETY

HeadsUp Forum

www.HeadsUp.org.uk

‘Whistle while you work? How do you rate your job prospects?’

(June 12th – 30th 2006)

An online platform providing young people with a secure and structured space to discuss their perspectives on job prospects

When they reach 16 young people now have some big decisions to make. Continue on into further education? Look for a job? Complete an NVQ? With such a massive array of options available it is no wonder then that young people find this a tricky step to make.

During this Forum timely new statistics were released documenting a further rise in the UK jobless total, which only serves to highlight just how topical an issue employment is. This is particularly true for young people at a significant moment of their academic career for some of them.

Given the subject matter for this Forum, covering big questions in the fields of education and work, it was unsurprising that the debate was much-anticipated by a range of interested parties, key decision-makers, young people, teachers and parliamentarians.

Young people in this HeadsUp debate demonstrated their knowledge of a wide range of educational and employment-related issues being deliberated. They pushed their own opinions and tried to see all sides of the argument. This debate gained educational and work and pensions expertise from an excellent range of well qualified MPs, taking part online.

This job prospects debate was the first, but hopefully not the last, to benefit from the involvement of three DfES Ministers (we greatly appreciate the help of Susan Counsell at the DfES in managing the ministerial responses). Overall, the following MPs took part in the debate:

- **Beverley Hughes MP** - Minister of State for Children and Families
- **Bill Rammell MP** - Minister of State for Higher Education and Lifelong Learning
- **Parmjit Dhandu MP** - Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families
- **Justine Greening MP*** - Vice Chairman of the Conservative Party and a member of the Work and Pensions Select Committee
- **Barry Sheerman MP*** - Chairman of the Education and Skills Select Committee
- **Maria Miller MP*** - Shadow Minister for Education
- **David Laws MP** - Liberal Democrat Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
- **Stephen Williams MP** - Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Further and Higher Education

- **Natascha Engel MP** - Member of the Work and Pensions Select Committee
- **Tim Boswell MP** - Shadow Minister for Work and Pensions
- **Michael Foster MP*** - Member of the Work and Pensions Select Committee
- **Danny Alexander MP*** - Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Work and Pensions

* These decision-makers provided a statement of support before the debate began and will be asked to respond to this report.

Over the course of the last five Forums, held during the 2005 – 2006 academic year, the HeadsUp team have offered short, one-to-one online training sessions to all participating decision-makers. This training has paid dividends as all HeadsUp participants are reaping the benefits of the continued involvement of expert decision-makers in all our Forums. These sessions, help familiarise them with the key features of HeadsUp.org.uk and encourage their participation in the debates once they can see for themselves how simple and straightforward the website is to use.

Senior Ministers and MPs from all political parties continue to see HeadsUp as a must. This development was highlighted after the HeadsUp team invited all the Ministers from the DfES to participate. Beverley Hughes MP, Bill Rammell MP and Parmjit Dhandra MP all accepted. In addition the HeadsUp team received a letter from Jim Knight MP, Minister of State for Schools, asking to see the outcomes of this Forum.

The common perception is that everyone needs to work to support their lifestyles. However, the big, wide world of work can be a particularly daunting place for anyone looking for a career and it is no longer possible to walk from one job into another, as was the case 20 or 30 years ago. So you have to be well prepared.

In light of this information, HeadsUp held a timely Forum to establish young people's perceptions of job prospects including an analysis of whether they feel obliged to go to university, the value of NVQs, work experience and reliable careers advice.

Before this debate began, the HeadsUp team decided as there was a multitude of possible areas for discussion under the broad job prospects umbrella, that it would benefit from being divided into four more manageable sections; on how whether young people have to go to university to get a decent job, on the value of vocational courses, on the value of work experience and if they feel they are receiving reliable careers advice.

An ever-increasing number of comments are posted in the Forum out of school hours, up to 44% in this debate. This is a particularly welcome development as it underlines how keen young people are to use this resource, so much so that they will give up some of their precious spare time to keep on top of the debate as it develops. Students could visit the Forum as often as they liked during the three weeks that the job prospects debate ran. Young people were given the opportunity to find out more about the issues and to discuss their own job prospects and respond to the opinions of their peers.

The main HeadsUp objective is not only to enable peer-to-peer deliberation on hot political issues, policies or events but also to provide students with a means of informing themselves about the topic. In keeping with the youth participation agenda, a summary report outlining key findings and quotes is disseminated to interested parties, particularly parliamentarians and government, enabling young people's voices to be heard by key decision-makers.

This job prospects Forum, like all previous HeadsUp debates, was supported by structured, student-centred background notes that included an explanation of the key areas surrounding the current job prospects legalisation, an overview of the key issues around job prospects, a comprehensive glossary and summaries of arguments for and against specific education and work-related issues, such as NVQs and the minimum wage. These and other relevant facts and figures were presented in a student-centred tone, with a deliberate effort to keep jargon to a minimum.

Students aged between 11 and 17 from secondary schools right across the UK took part in this job prospects debate. Recent HeadsUp debates on gritty issues have led to a core group of students participating regularly in the Forums. Even more impressive is that HeadsUp still manages to attract new schools, teachers, and young people to register to take part in the debates. The participants made multiple visits over the three-week duration of the debate and there were 121 posts in total.

This summary report gives an account of the debate that took place and includes key posts from students. Conclusions from the debate are to be found at the end of the report. Special care has been taken to ensure that the report is non-partisan and representative of the views expressed by the participants.

Summarising every HeadsUp debate is a particularly tricky, yet fascinating, process. In particular, the difficult task of accurately capturing the deliberations without taking participant's opinions out of context. We address this issue to some extent by attaching all the transcripts from the debate at the end of the longer version of the summary report, so those interested readers can follow the debate as it actually unfolded.

We would all like to convey our thanks and appreciation to the parliamentarians who gave up their time to participate in this debate. We would also like to extend an invitation to interested parties, particularly parliamentarians and government, and interested NGOs, academics and journalists to respond to the findings.

Responses and requests for further information should be directed to:

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'Whistle while you work? How do you rate your job prospects?'

Forum Summary

Do you have to go to University to complete a degree in order to get a decent job?

Moderators asked HeadsUp participants to assess whether they felt obliged to go to university to complete a degree in order to get a decent job. This particular discussion space proved to be the most popular in the whole Forum. These MPs, from different political parties, hopped online to categorically disagree with the opening question posed:

"I think that everyone starting a career needs proper advice, advance preparation and suitable qualification. This may be a degree (or more than one) but essentially it could be a suitable vocational qualification. Some people will need a little of both." Tim Boswell MP

"I think each individual has to make their own decisions about what suits them - some people may decide that studying will benefit them, others may prefer vocational courses, and others still may see on-the-job training as the way forward. The important thing is finding a job that you enjoy and which interests you." David Laws MP

However, these young people seemed sceptical about the value of choosing not to go to university. Their comments showed that they reluctantly agreed with the opening question, and highlighted a range of pressures placed on them to get a degree:

"if you want a good job you now have to go to university, because half of all people now go - so a degree is going to be commonplace, and will be expected by employers, rather than how it used to be"

"There is no way ramming in all these young people into universities will do any good if they do not want to be there... once the government realises that a rounded individual doing what they are best at after compulsory schooling will benefit our society more than hundreds of thousands with pieces of paper that have less and less value as we try to reach a target, we will achieve an equilibrium that will suit everyone."

"Personally i feel that higher education has been drummed into us as the way to go. I constantly hear of the benefits that university will give us but at the same time i am worried that it will leave me with a huge debt sitting over me for the rest of my life."

In contrast to these opinions, other HeadsUp commentators strongly felt that you don't necessarily have to go to university to get a good job. However, one participant acknowledges that those who do not go to university will need some luck and to work hard in order to advance:

"I think people can get good jobs by other routes too, but that involves luck as well as spending a long time working their way up."

“I think that people can have a good job by not going to university, indeed going to uni accesses you to higher skilled and paid jobs.”

Furthermore, Natascha Engel MP criticised the snobbery attached to studying:

“i agree that there is still too much snobbery about studying - that it is somehow better to have a university education than to do a vocational course and come out with a skill. we (and you) have to help change that.”

The involvement of parliamentarians in all HeadsUp debates is crucial and it was particularly pleasing to have three DfES Ministers taking part in this one. Bill Rammell MP, the Minister of State for Higher Education and Lifelong Learning, responded directly to this young person’s astute point about the difficulty of making choices and tried to offer encouragement and informed participants about new developments which might make this process ‘easier’:

“Do you agree that so many young people make the wrong choices for them at 16?”

“I agree that it is difficult to choose a subject area when you have no experience of what it involves. The Government is currently looking at ways to enable young people to try out vocational learning through ‘tasters’, to find out what’s available and what it really involves before having to decide. In order for young people to make the right choices, they need to know of all of the options open to them. This is why, from autumn 2007, all local areas will have a prospectus of courses for 14-19 year olds, linked to a national website. This prospectus will be a key tool available to young people when making decisions at aged 16.”

Bill Rammell MP

Continuing on the tricky issue of choice, more participants voiced their support for the widely held view that young people should be allowed to try out or test the subjects before they are committed to studying them full-time:

“I don’t think people can pick A levels or Vocational courses correctly as they have not tried studying most of the subjects before”

“not knowing exactly what job I would like in the future makes this an even harder choice since course choice will inevitably restrict me from some professions.”

Natascha Engel MP picked up directly on these comments from young people and she went further by suggesting that students should be allowed to almost test-drive universities:

“i think another good idea would be to allow people at school to spend some time at university, in the same way that they can do work experience now. has anyone already done this?”

However, the bureaucracy of some universities was criticised by this participant who even stated that they have been put off going due to the lack of choice on different key services once you get there:

“Is anyone else put right off university because of the organisation of it, and the immaturity of some things? ...at the universities with the best reputation there’s no choice but to live in their accommodation, and often buy all of your food from them. I really don’t like that, I think it’s wrong, it just drives the cost up for people and stops those who don’t want to do that and just want the education from getting it.”

Several parliamentarians used their own personal experience of university to encourage and enthuse those participants who expressed concerns about going. Stephen Williams MP informed HeadsUp users that he came from a poor background and was still able to go to university and thoroughly enjoyed the experience:

“I went to Bristol University from a poor family background. It undoubtedly changed my life for the better. It’s not just about the fantastic education on offer at university. You also get to mix with like minded people from all over the country and from all sorts of backgrounds. Some of the friends you make at university will be with you for many years to come”

One young person used the Forum to positively tell their peers that they were intending to go to university for the experience which Stephen Williams MP and others waxed lyrical about:

“I personally am aiming to go to university as much for the experience as anything!”

The focus of the debate turned specifically to degrees in this discussion thread. Participants analysed the value of degrees, with one young person arguing that those with degrees deserve higher paid jobs. Another student underlined that the government could not guarantee graduates jobs:

“Its not arrogant to say that if you get a degree you deserve a higher paid job. After all those who choose to give up there own time in order to go into further education will put more into the economy”

“The value of a degree is relative to the individual and how or where he/she chooses to work. It is also up to Business and employers but these are organisations the Govt cannot control. They cannot force business to employ graduates nor can they put a value on a degree.”

The Minister of State for Children and Families, Beverley Hughes MP, used the debate to stress the all-round benefit and flexibility of degrees. Namely that young people don’t have to study merely academic subjects, as was the case 20 years ago:

“A degree doesn’t necessarily have to be in an academic subject – there are Foundation Degrees for students who want to take a more practical, vocational route. Employers value Foundation Degrees because they know they provide ‘hands on’ vocational experience which means graduates can make an immediate contribution to their business.”

Participants made several recommendations during this job prospects debate to decision-makers and their peers. This young person astutely assessed that a degree is only one element of what is required to get a good job, underlining this fact for their peers:

“Does anyone else feel that the degree is only a small factor of what is needed for a good job, the more significant part being how much experience and non-academic activities have been pursued?”

On the subject of graduates gaining experience, Bill Rammell MP, posted these words of encouragement, stressing the importance of graduates having several strings to their bow:

“We know that students of all disciplines are increasingly developing highly marketable, work-related skills through their higher education study, with immediate and tangible value to

employers. These skills are being acquired not only through academic learning but also extra-curricular activities and work experience.”

The spiralling costs of going to university were a topic of hot contention in this discussion space, mirroring the conjecture in society at large about this issue. Once again, Bill Rammell MP, informed the HeadsUp participants about a new fairer system allowing more students to go to university, whatever their financial status:

“We are introducing a different, fairer system from this September. There has never been a better time to consider Higher Education. Demand for graduate level skills remains high and the benefits are good. From 2006 new students are being asked to contribute more to the cost of their higher education, but this should not present a barrier for any student. No student has to find their fees at the start of their course, they can choose to take out a loan which they don't pay back until they have left their studies and are earning over £15,000...It is important to remember that graduates earn, on average, substantially more than people with A levels who did not go to university. Projected over a working lifetime, the difference is something like over £100,000 at today's valuation. Higher education is likely to be the best investment you ever make.”

Responding directly to the Minister's point, this young person clearly appreciated being given details of the government higher education policy. The participant underlined their intention to go at all costs, especially economic:

“That's true we do have a lot on offer financially but for people like me, coming out of university with £30k worth of debt hanging above my head is hassle we could do without...I still think going to university is the right thing if its for you but its so confusing when you're being told its the best path while making it harder financially at the same time.”

As a result of the MPs dipping into the debate at regular intervals, participants certainly had their interest sparked in a whole range of financial issues relating to going to university. These students, for example, questioned whether restrictions could be imposed on what undergraduates spend grants on, whilst another asked if the debt was wiped after 5 years:

“Isn't there rules on what you can spend that grant on, aren't you forbidden from spending it on living cost like food and stuff?”

“I may be totally wrong but I would rather ask and be corrected then not ask at all. Is it true that if you do not pay a penny back after 5+ years then your debt gets cleared?”

Moderators picked up on a news article which reported a further rise in the UK jobless total and brought this to the attention of the participants by asking what impact this sort of information had on their decision to go to university, start an NVQ or begin working. These two comments underlined the different approaches adopted by users in the debate, the first is adamant that they will strive harder to get to university and not add to the statistics. The second young person uses the multitude of job adverts in their local paper to highlight the amount of jobs out there, if people look hard enough:

“it makes me want to work harder to get into a university not only because I want to prove the statistics wrong but because I have an opportunity to do so and the choice. I also think that there is not enough done to get people into work once they are unemployed because they see that if they don't work they get money for doing nothing. and that for people with little or no qualifications it is harder for them to get into work.”

“Despite those statistics, I think people could get jobs if they wanted, at least in this area (it's probably much more difficult in cities.) My local paper has plenty jobs in it each week, all inside the town, and for graduates and none graduates.”

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Forum Summary

**Are there good vocational courses out there?
Are they as valued as university degrees?**

In this discussion space, focus turned to the value of vocational courses as a viable alternative to degrees. Amongst society in general, a negative perception exists about vocational courses perhaps partly caused by the media and some schools. A host of passionate young people helped kick off the debate, and collectively criticised the unjustified, negative stigma attached to vocational courses and also complained that they did not know enough about them:

“I don’t really know that much about vocational courses so I would be inclined to say that if their are a lot a valuable we aren’t informed enough about them. Please no-one take offence to this : I was always given the impression that people who take vocational courses struggle in the other educational courses????”

“There is a need for students to enter vocational areas but we are constantly being told to strive higher I feel and an emphasis of importance is a always placed that a student should have a degree before entering work level.”

“I was always given the impression at school that vocational courses were for "under-achievers". Our school made us choose 1 vocational option when choosing GCSE's but the choice was so limited. It was a choice between business, IT, Health and social care and Art and Design. Then more vocational options were offered to those not expected to achieve the 5 A* - C grades. When we are given information about sixth forms almost all information is focused around A-levels and AS - levels. Almost no information of vocational courses is given.”

Furthermore, another group of participants went further in support of vocational courses and those people who choose to take one. One commented that those who take the vocational course route are usually people who know what they want to do, another felt that more emphasis should be put on this option, and finally another user used their own experience of studying for a betec, for their HeadsUp peers to read and respond to:

“I don't really think there's a necessary difference between people who do vocational and people who do academic qualifications, I think the one who do vocational are just people who know what they want to do and know there's a separate course for it.”

“I still do not fully believe enough emphasis is being put on vocational courses. Contrary to common belief, university is not right for everyone. Recently there have been huge increases in the number of university graduates, and although I am sure many would say this is a result of "better education" it does ultimately de-value degrees. This often drives universities (like Oxford and Cambridge) to introduce their own entry exams, but more importantly it creates a vocational job void. There are simply not enough plumbers, electricians and builders these days.”

“I think vocational courses are a great idea. I am 15 years old and am doing my GCSE. I my school we have to do a vocational course for gcse. They are worth four gcses. I like it. I am doing betec media studies. this course is a practical one with few essays. it is easy and enjoyable. I think that it is useful, because I have learnt a lot of things. I think vocational courses are a good idea and should be available to everyone.”

In support of these pro-vocational course participants, David Laws MP provided his assessment of the value of such courses. Above all else he advised young people to do their homework with regard to vocational courses and shop around until they were happy with their choice:

“Vocational courses are a useful addition to the education canon, and yes, there are courses out there which are extremely well-structured and beneficial. If you are considering entering particular areas, vocational courses may be the vastly preferred route by many employers. It is important to shop around, see what suits you, and then go with it.”

For this young person, the primary concern was that there should be more vocational courses, covering every area:

“I feel that there are not enough vocational course in every subject area. what can be done about this?”

Interestingly, this query was picked on by Beverley Hughes MP. Similar to the other DfES Ministers in this debate, she stressed that the government had introduced a range of expert diplomas for people to choose from:

“From September 2008, we are introducing a whole new range of Specialised Diplomas. These qualifications will suit any young person who likes to approach subjects and develop skills in a practical way.”

After discussing some of the reasons behind why vocational courses get a bad press, some participants offered solutions to different parts of the problem. One young person felt that vocational courses should be available to people earlier in their academic career, whilst another put forward an idea of practical exams to help assess vocational courses:

“What do people think of the idea of taking vocational routes earlier, like how some people start placements at 14? I think this is a good idea for maybe one afternoon a week, like how a lot of people from my school have done engineering, but not for more than that, I think people should try more things before leaving school rather than less.”

“Do you think vocational subjects and exams do not go together? Vocational subjects all seem to be about creating folders of work. Why not have an exam, but a practical exam?”

Using their own experiences, one young person put themselves in the shoes of an employer, saying that they would not give much value to an ICT GNVQ:

“Personally, I wouldn't value ICT GNVQ much if I was an employer (that's the GNVQ I know about as that's the one I did.) All it is millions of repetitive, skillless tasks.”



‘Whistle while you work? How do you rate your job prospects?’

Forum Summary

Have you undertaken work experience or do you plan to in the future?

Work experience could be the magic ingredient in young people's quest for their chosen career. According to HeadsUp participants, we have established earlier on this debate that university degrees are being seen as increasingly common and now almost expected from most young people.

Arguably the strongest unique selling point (USP) for young people is their ability to go above and beyond the call of duty by completing one or more work experience placements with organisations. These placements are usually unpaid and display a real desire by young people to build a successful, long-term career.

The majority of young people commenting in this discussion space consistently underlined their collective belief that work experience was invaluable. These positive comments were typical of the diverse experience and careers young people were aspiring to, including placements with vets, a nursing home, a regional magistrate's court and with Dan Rogerson MP:

“At my school, work experience is mandatory, and I am currently undergoing mine now, in my 2nd week. I am working at a vets, and it has showed me the good - and the bad- of the job. For those who are less academic, their work experience also runs over the term, and they do one day a week, another thing that will be valuable in life.”

“work experience is something that everyone should have the chance to do. I did my own work experience in a nursing home because at the time i wished to be a carer but working there for a week showed me the harsh reality of it and i found the job to emotionally draining. My advice is - should the opportunity arise take it because it may stop you making a big mistake.”

“My work experience was really valuable. I worked in a large regional magistrate’s court and then a three person engineering company. The insight it gave me into different parts of the working world was invaluable. I heard the same from everyone I talked to back in school. BUT, a lot of people did also just use it as a holiday, a few people applied for jobs that basically required 1 hour a day jobs. I am not quite sure whether rules are in place to prevent such occurrences, but such things did undoubtedly happen, at least in my school.”

“I have already been on one work experience this year, and that was with the north Cornwall M.P Dan Rogerson, I really valued it as a very important opportunity to have an insight into politics, and I view work experience as being very important as it does aid young and old people to know what the job really entails before they make any large decisions into their career path.”

Following on from these positive endorsements from students of completing work experience, Bill Rammell MP and David Laws MP, underlined its value from their prospective – stating that it gives young people an appreciation of work, and an all important foot in the door with potential employers:

“I am pleased to read contributions saying that work experience is valuable, and I agree that, when properly planned and with commitment from all involved, work experience develops young people’s employability skills and helps them develop an understanding of work.” Bill Rammell MP

“Work experience can be hugely valuable, both as a way to see whether a certain job suits you but also as a way to get a foot in the door. Many employers are very keen to take on graduates with or without specific work experience, but it can be the extra boost that your CV may need.” David Laws MP

However, some participants issued a word of caution that the benefit of work experience is maximised fully when it is relevant to their potential future careers. Schools or colleges come in for criticism from some participants, as they felt that they did not do enough to ensure a first choice placement:

“work experience is valuable as long as it is in the line of work that the person wants to go into. when the chance comes up for work experience they either apply correctly for a placement in which it will help them or they apply for a placement that won’t help them which will mean that they won’t do anything. I also feel that if they ask for a placement the school or college don’t do enough to get the pupil into that placement, so they stick them anywhere that will have them.”

According to Beverley Hughes MP, that scenario was unacceptable and she encouraged students who are faced with an unwanted placement to talk to a teacher about alternatives:

“No pupil should be put into a placement they do not want. If a young person feels they are being offered a placement they do not want they should talk to their teacher about what other options might be available. That said, we know from school inspections that most young people find work experience valuable and enjoyable.”

Once more on the topic of unwanted placements, some participants went further by questioning the value of completing such experience. Using their own experience, one young person stressed how enjoyable their placement as a teacher was even though it was not for them:

“I still have no real idea what I want to do for a job. I did work experience as a teacher in my primary school. It was enjoyable, I did an extra week so I got two off school, but I don't really think I learned anything valuable from it.”

In response to the point about no value placements, Natascha Engel MP felt strongly that any work experience gained is invaluable to those who complete it:

“the person who wrote about doing work experience and finding out that it wasn't the job for them had just as valuable an experience - one person who came to work with me came along to a meeting with police in the constituency and has now decided that he will join the police force - he certainly didn't want to be an mp...”

Volunteering was another subject of much conjecture in this discussion space. Similar to work experience, volunteering was seen by the majority of participants as a positive step in their own personal development and a contribution towards a thriving community. Importantly, several participants pointed to a misconception that volunteering is a task solely for retired pensioners, which they wanted to address:

“Volunteering is a valuable part of our community and can be great fun too. Its not just a load of old retired pensioners that do it to fill up the day. It allows you to meet a lot of new people which you perhaps wouldn't talk to in everyday life.”

“I think many people have the wrong idea about volunteering. For the duke of edinburgh award at my school many people worked in charity shops for their service, and I find that this is generally the perception....Volunteering can be about anything you want it to be. For me, I am a member of the youth councils in this area, but you can do anything from debating competitions to a group of people in your area deciding on where the next skate park should be. Not enough information is given about this kind of volunteering and I think the scheme should pay for publicity of this.”

Bill Rammell MP was full of praise for these active HeadsUp citizens who were giving up some of their spare time to volunteer. He clearly felt that the long- and short-term benefits of volunteering were clear for all to see:

“I totally agree that through volunteering, every person can be an active citizen and so make a difference to their local community. Volunteering helps people develop an awareness of what is around them and to realise that they can change things for the better. Young people can also gain recognition for their achievements, and enhance their self development and work related skills.”

One young person used the HeadsUp debate to testify that they were extremely keen to volunteer and visited a website detailing lots of volunteering opportunities. This HeadsUp participant was turned down for these volunteer roles for being too young, but they made a plea for a volunteering website for young people:

“Last year I went on a website that was asking for volunteers for lots of different things. I applied for about five of them, but only one replied and they just said I was too young. A scheme for people who actually want volunteers would be good, but all that would be needed would be a website, which doesn't cost very much.”

Moving the discussion on, the HeadsUp moderators asked participants if they had part-time jobs currently to help finance their lifestyles, or whether they planned to get one in the future. This HeadsUp user highlighted some of the problems young people have to consistently face, in order to get a part-time job. The main reasons for this snub include the fact that so many people are competing for evening jobs and that young people are overlooked for older ones:

“I've been looking for a part time job for years now, but with no success. There're so many people want evening time jobs, people have no reason to choose younger people so they only employ the older ones. I did Avon for a while... I can't get any job where intellegance and skills really matter, as they are all during the day.”

On the subject of age discrimination, one young person stressed that the law now is fairer for all people looking for jobs, irrespective of age. The result should be a fairer job market for all:

“Luckily for us, there are new laws coming in about age discrimination, meaning employers can't discriminate against a person because they are too young or old for the job. It means that it will be based purely on our skills and competence to undertake the job in hand. It is fairer for everyone this way.”

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Forum Summary

Is there a sufficient amount of reliable career advice being given to you?

Careers advice, if delivered to a high and reliable standard, could be the difference between helping young people identify the right job for them and their perfect career slipping through their fingers.

As someone who has served as an Education Minister and therefore has experience in this field, Tim Boswell MP, was quick to stress the priority areas in his opinion - excellent careers advice from an early age, complemented by interviews:

“I think all schools should give more emphasis on high quality careers advice at an early stage, and that everyone should have a proper guidance interview before starting their career choices.”

In stark contrast to this view however, some young people believed that careers advice is given to students too early on in their academic career, making it easy to forget or fall on deaf ears. Interestingly, one participant noted the best method of passing on information to young people is to signpost or alert them to it then allow them to revisit it at their leisure:

“I think that too much careers advice is heaped onto pupils from a young age. I'm all up for giving advice to kids but sometimes i think it is best to alert them to where the information can be found and then leave the research to them unless they personally ask for help”

“I think that the careers advice we get is given to us too early and that when we need the advice to use, everyone has forgotten it or cannot be bothered.”

Still on the subject of careers advice in schools, young people in this job prospects debate continued to audit this provision further. Some participants gave a snapshot of the standard of careers advice in their school, which painted a very mixed picture overall. Interestingly, these young people believed that too many options can make a tough decision harder and that some 16 year olds are surprisingly ignorant about the career options open to them:

“In our PSHE (Physical Social and Health Education) lessons, the teacher does nothing but ramble on about how to get a job. It is completely useless”

“There are many decisions which students need to make at this time in their life and if they are overrun with options it can make the situation worse. However I do think that people need to be made aware of the opportunities and given advice to help them make the decisions through this period. My advice would be to show the students where they can gain the information from and if they need any help then be there for them.”

“I think a lot of 16 year olds are amazingly ignorant of their careers options. There's too little advice given in my school, but from everyone's responses I think all the schools vary a lot. As I said before, people who want to go to college for A levels are not because the town's sixth form is too schoolly and the FE college has little emphasis on A levels. The college I'm going to in the nearby town is a perfect mix, but few of them will have even heard of it. Everyone seems very badly researched. One girl who I'd expect to be a very knowledgeable one (she's one who revises loads and knows all the facts for her subjects) didn't know that she'd have to do general studies at the college she's going to, and when I pointed it out the four other people there going to that college didn't know either”

The focus of this debate shifted with one HeadsUp participant calling on the government to put pressure on businesses to employ more young people, and also added their support to the criticism aimed at the careers advice currently on offer:

“In my opinion the Govt should put more emphasis on encouraging the employers to take on young workers....If the Govt switched funding away from the useless careers advice into providing incentives for employers to take on younger workers then both parties would benefit.”

Similar to other important stages of the debate, Bill Rammell MP responded to these searching yet innovative questions when he stressed the government’s work and focus on apprenticeships:

“We are encouraging employers to take on apprentices from the age of 14 upwards, over 130,000 employers are involved in the apprenticeship programme and this number is growing. Apprenticeships provide training that is truly based in a working environment, is tailored to the needs of a specific job role and also provides transferable skills that will be needed throughout a working life.”

As touched on briefly, one of the key issues in this discussion space was an evaluation of the range of Connexions services, where the majority of young people were critical about some aspect of these services. Participants underlined that the timing of the interviews with careers advisors were absolutely crucial and one even called for these to be made compulsory:

“I think connexions are utterly rubbish. I filled out a form to get an interview at the end of year ten, when I had some things I was wondering about college. I got my interview half way through year eleven, when I was all sorted. The interview was useless.... I think we should have compulsory interviews. Most people never had an interview all through school, it was only the people in the bottom set.”

“Connexions has really gone down hill recently, I have heard a lot of people say it and have seen little to prove me wrong. Connexions advisors should totally emphasise on one thing, the next step. After I expressed an interest in politics, law and the army (a very very weird mix I know) the advisor was instantly hooked onto the law of it. I discovered one thing in that interview, and that was that University X is better than University Y at law. It was really not what I wanted to hear.”

One HeadsUp participant tried to stick up for and explain what they understood by the Connexions services, to help inform their peers. However, they still came to the same negative conclusions despite its different guises, but did say their best careers advice came from a teacher. The same student posed an excellent question of the participating MPs – whether any had received good careers advice themselves:

“the Connexions service is pushed hard through advertising and schools yet it rarely works for many people. If asked about connexions, 16-18 year olds will say the card. Under 16s will say it’s that little office in the library. The best careers advice I had was when I was talking to my maths teacher who said I should consider looking at jobs in the city to put maths and business into practice....Just out of interest, did any of our MPs get any careers advice or somebody to talk to about options after studies?”

Parmjit Dhanda MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, got involved in the debate and tackled these Connexions criticisms head on by apologising to participants. He did, however, point to DfES research which shows 71% of young people using Connexions said it helped their future career decision. Finally, he does address the question asking if any participating MPs received careers advice and his answer was he was informed he should consider tree surgery:

“I’m really sorry some of you have not received the help you wanted from the Connexions Service. We do expect Connexions Personal Advisers to give young people the help and advice they need, when they need it. Our research shows that 71% of the young people who use Connexions said it helped them to make decisions about their futures. However I know there are occasions when young people don’t get the best support, and we are planning to improve services to young people. If you would like to know more about our plans you can download a summary here (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/ACFA64E.pdf>)

I’ve got to be honest, when I received careers advice at school, I filled out a form which suggested that I should consider becoming a Tree Surgeon. That was some time ago and I am sure that things have improved since then, but the advice I received at the time wasn’t great. However, I went on to have a meeting with a Careers Advisor which was more useful, but it wasn’t for many years that I realised what I wanted to do for a career.”

Finally, Natascha Engel MP added her support to a comment by another HeadsUp participant after stating that the best careers advice they received came from a teacher. She wholeheartedly agreed with this insightful comment and went on to highlight the importance of knowing people, and exploiting those contacts:

“i think that personal/careers advisers are great for a lot of people, but nothing beats talking to people doing a job. work experience is a good way of doing that, but after that, it depends on who you know. has anyone got any good ideas on how to improve careers advice?”



'Whistle while you work? How do you rate your job prospects?'

Conclusions

- * University degrees strived for but not right for everyone**
- * Vocational courses receive an unmerited bad press**
- * Work experience is a must as long as it's relevant**
- * Connexions services need thorough overhaul**

Deliberations between all HeadsUp users were of an exceptionally high standard and this outcome was particularly pleasing, given the timing of this debate during a busy timetable for schools across the UK. Those participants who did have their say during the Forum ranged from young people aged 11-18 to a range of relevant decision-makers in the UK Parliament.

Four primary conclusions were made by young people in this debate...

When looking at whether young people felt they had to go to university to get a good job, participants strongly felt that it was not essential to go to university. However, several HeadsUp users were aware of the benefits and potential career boost which university can offer. MPs involved in the debate, such as Stephen Williams MP, used their own first hand experience of making it to university despite his poor family background, to help young people make an informed choice.

When analysing vocational courses as an alternative to degrees, young people thought more could be done to promote these courses as well as making a wider range available. Participants could not understand why vocational courses receive such a bad press, as they all felt they were viable alternatives to degrees. Young people were quick to identify and criticise an unwanted culture of "snobbery about studying" as Natascha Engel MP called it.

The majority of students strongly believed in the value of work experience especially if it is relevant to their future careers. However, some participants were critical of schools that could have done more to find them an appropriate work experience placement, rather than see it as a tick the box exercise. Students who are faced with an unwanted placement were encouraged to talk to a teacher about alternatives by Beverley Hughes MP.

The standard of Connexions services was the subject of some stern criticism from young people. Arguably, this was the most worrying conclusion made by young people as without a fully-functioning careers advice service where do young people go for reliable advice and expertise? After much consultation amongst themselves the majority noted that the Connexions services they had used were of a poor standard, as advisors seemed to latch onto specific interests which were of little interest to young people. Parmjit Dhanda MP apologised for their bad experiences of the Connexions services.

The range of enthusiastic and relevant parliamentarians taking part online during all three weeks, gave the debate added momentum and a stamp of parliamentary approval from the

young people's collective viewpoint. The interaction between young people and decision-makers from all parties (in particular Ministers) was a significant moment as it was more than likely one of their first ever interactions with a parliamentarian. It is also a significant step for HeadsUp, that so many relevant parliamentarians were active in the job prospects Forum space. We are extremely grateful to all the decision-makers who dedicated their time to respond to young people's opinions in this job prospects debate.

This debate, 'Whistle while you work? How do you rate your job prospects?', was another highly topical issue for a HeadsUp Forum and therefore one that was welcomed by young people who participated, other NGOs and MPs from across the political spectrum. It provided a secure, structured but non-sanitised platform for young people to voice their perspectives on the job prospects debate.

HeadsUp tackles complex political problems but is not designed to make set recommendations. Like adults, young people have a range of perspectives on political events, issues and policies, and often favour different solutions. This resource was established not to give the 'definitive line'; rather it is about providing a space for people to share their views, challenge those of others and, in turn, be challenged.

FORUM TRANSCRIPTS

Whistle while you work? University or bust...

12/06/2006 09:00:00

justice

Subject: Welcome to the job prospects debate

Young people now have a huge amount of key decisions to make when they reach 16 - whether they continue on into further education, or look for a job or complete an NVQ. With such a massive array of options available it is no wonder then that young people find this a tricky step to make. Now, you will get the opportunity to make your voice heard in this HeadsUp Forum.

A range of parliamentarians want to hear your views on all aspects of job prospects and careers – see who's listening (http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s115_1). As much as possible, try to BackUp (http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=home_Job%20Prospects%20BackUp) your opinions with facts, where you will find loads of info on job prospects.

Do you feel that you have to go to university to complete a degree in order to get a decent job? If you do plan to go to university why not tell us all where you plan to go and what you want to study? Try and explain your answer....

12/06/2006 11:00:00

masterzen

Subject: Questions for Bill Rammell MP

Bill Rammell MP, the Minister for higher education and lifelong learning, is hopping online in the next day or so. Have you got any questions about his role or higher education in general?

His role..."He takes an overview of Higher Education, Further Education, adult skills, and lifelong learning ensuring the overall coherence of all post-19 policy."

His statement of support..."In the next decade, the competition to recruit young people will be immense. Employers will be looking for young people with talent, energy and commitment ; with a positive approach to work and a keen awareness of the world of work. But they will want people with skills. Skills to help them be competitive organisations; skills to help them meet the challenges to business from international competitors. I am interested to hear from young people about how they think their schools and colleges are preparing them for employment and what challenges they face in accessing the learning and skills they need for their future careers. **"Any burning questions you would like answered - now's the time to get them heard by a host of key decision-makers!!"**

12/06/2006 13:15:00

Tomo

Subject: Pressure

I do feel pressure from my parents, school and the media to go to university. I'm not sure this is fair as you can still get a good job without having to go to uni, and save some money as well.

12/06/2006 17:16:00

Levitica

Subject: Comment to MP

Connect to MP, about Further Education, really:

Do you agree that so many young people make the wrong choices for them at 16? Most of my friends seem to just have taken the routes everyone expects them to take, when others might be more like what they want. I've heard a number of people who are interested in A levels say they they are not doing them as the town's sixth form college is too schooly and the FE college has little emphasis on A levels. I'm going to a sixth form college out of town for this reason, but few other people will even have heard about it, nevermind research it. People can't do their best when they're not in the right place. I don't think people can pick A levels or Vocational courses correctly as they have not tried studying most of the subjects before. I picked history for GCSE as I disliked history slightly less than my other options, but now it's my favourite subject. I bet a lot of people have A level subjects they would really enjoy but they don't know that so they never try them. I think people should be... made, really, to try everything, maybe doing lots of compulsory visits to colleges after the GCSE exams.

12/06/2006 17:17:00

Levitica

Subject: University and Jobs

I think people can get good jobs by other routes too, but that involves luck as well as spending a long time working their way up.

13/06/2006 09:10:00

joen

Subject: University Exclusivity

Of course it is necessary to go to university to get a decent job! This is because under New Labour the percentage of people going to university has hit 50%! This is preposterous; if you want a good job you now have to go to university, because half of all people now go - so a degree is going to be commonplace, and will be expected by employers, rather than how it used to be, with university being an exclusive set, taking in only the elite of the population. A degree was very valuable, it is now commonplace. Think of it like the German hyperinflation in the 1920s - the more notes there are - the less they are worth.

13/06/2006 13:58:00

biged

Subject: Future Forum topics...

Once you are logged in, make sure you visit the Polling Station (http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s3_4) and have your say on what topics you would like as future HeadsUp Forums...

- * Environmental - e.g. Do you think its important for people to save energy by turning their TV off standby?
- * Law and Order - e.g. Do you think there are enough police on the streets?
- * Defence - e.g. Is the continued British military presence in Iraq a good idea?
- * World - e.g. How do you think poverty around the world could be solved?
- * Health - e.g. Are you worried about the spread of the bird flu virus to the UK?
- * Education - e.g. Do you think that you want to go to University with all the added costs associated with this decision?
- * Sport - e.g. Will we be ready to host such an important world event as the 2012 London Olympics?
- * Family Breakdown - e.g. Parental separation/divorce, Government involvement and support, and You.
- * The constitution e.g. Does the UK need a written constitution?

- * Young people and formal politics e.g. What needs to change to encourage you to get more involved in the formal political process?
- * Young people's awareness of elections e.g. What would encourage you to get on the electoral register?
- * Party funding e.g. What should be done to address the controversy currently surrounding the issue of party funding?
- * Alternative voting methods e.g. As well as using polling stations and postal voting, is using the internet, SMS or telephone to vote in elections a good idea?
- * Devolution e.g. Would you like to share and listen to the experiences of students from different parts of the UK in a devolution forum?

Or is there another topic not on this list that you would like to discuss/debate? Let us know!

13/06/2006 14:02:00

arsenal5inter1

Subject: uni or bust

I think that people can have a good job by not going to university, indeed going to uni accesses you to higher skilled and paid jobs. Also in my eyes though it seems people can go from full time education or after a levels and still achieve high paid and skilled jobs without going to university a good example of this is Sir Alan Sugar. Here is a classic rags to riches story in which he went from education to being a junkie before becoming (eventually) the chief executive of Tottenham FC

13/06/2006 14:03:00

Han

Subject: Pressure

Today's society carries many pressures and one of them is to go to university and get a degree this is because the job market is now overrun and employers can take their pick. I personally am aiming to go to university as much for the experience as anything! but also because I feel that is the only way of getting a decently paid job!

13/06/2006 14:04:00

Bub

Subject: Unemployment Risks

When looking for potential jobs on the internet jobsites it seems to be that there are very few if any jobs for graduates. All the jobs require some kind of experience related to the work to be taken on. Unfortunately for a job such as economic advisor or any economics based job it is very hard to get any kind of work experience. How do University graduates gain experience when most firms are reluctant to take on inexperienced workers? and how do graduates avoid falling into this rut?

13/06/2006 14:06:00

Philipio

Subject: Confused

Personally I feel that higher education has been drummed into us as the way to go. I constantly hear of the benefits that university will give us but at the same time I am worried that it will leave me with a huge debt sitting over me for the rest of my life. I would like to go to university myself but I don't feel that I know enough about what's really on offer for me while I am there. I would like to know how much taking a course at university would benefit me in future life. I am not too worried about the money it costs as long as I will be able to make it back in the future. I am also considering leaving college with A-Levels and getting a full time job and would like to know how much more is on offer after university rather than A Levels.

13/06/2006 14:17:00

emz

Subject: uni

many people are now demoting the people that gain degrees. ERM hello they still work for what they have achieved and got themselves into huge amounts of debt therefore they do deserve higher paid jobs. those with the view that degrees are not a huge achievement because of the number of people able to complete a degree are very narrow minded. the government are now forgetting what their originally stood for and the introduction of top up fees stop the working class from being able to further their lives. therefore degrees are essential in getting good jobs after all the doctors, nurses and teachers that are important roles in everyone's life have degrees

13/06/2006 14:22:00

thomasd

Subject: University courses

When choosing a potential course for future study at university it can be a little daunting. There are so many variations on subjects. Furthermore, not knowing exactly what job I would like in the future makes this an even harder choice since course choice will inevitably restrict me from some professions.

Some tips on how to choose a suitable course will be useful, thanks.

13/06/2006 14:25:00

Han

Subject: Right on ...

GO EMZ!!! Though i don't agree with the semi-conspiracy theory you've got going against the working classes!!!!!!!

13/06/2006 14:34:00

emzy

Subject: RAMBLE

There does seem to be a lot of pressure on people to go to university and there appears to be a myth being created that you need to go to uni in order to get a decent job. This is a load of rubbish many people are in or have been in great jobs and have done so by working through the ranks. Just because some choose not to go through the route of university they should not be put at a disadvantage. It is a case of people need to decide which route is the best option for them. The transition can be a vary daunting time from college to higher education or employment. People should be supported in the decisions which they make :)

13/06/2006 14:36:00

mitch

Subject: re: emz

I understand your point of view, but you can't brand people who say that degrees aren't a huge achievement as 'narrow minded'. I say this because degrees are so much more common and diverse now than they've ever been, and so it's not recognised as such a large achievement. Either rightly or wrongly this development has led to the degrading of the majority view of degree status. Employers are now looking for personalities and previous work experience, rather than just academic achievements. Everyone is entitled to their own individual opinion, so you cannot negatively label their views and ideas.

13/06/2006 14:46:00

adsnewman1989

Subject: RE: emz

i totally agree with mitch, as i feel the attitude and personality of an employee is a bigger factor in a workplace and an interview than just simply your qualifications, otherwise they would only ask for a CV.

13/06/2006 14:46:00

thomasd

Subject: Is pressure to enrol really that b

Yes, i would agree that today there is a lot of pressure on people to go to university, but this does not have to be a bad thing (although too much can be bad) . If there was no pressure then perhaps less people would enrol at uni and then they may miss the opportunity to fulfill their future career ambitions. -Although I would also like to add that if an individual really does dread the thought of university education, then these feelings should indeed be respected. Too much pressure can be a negative thing, but equally no pressure could be much worse.

13/06/2006 14:52:00

Joe

Subject: Increased opportunities, not pressure

I think that people are misleading themselves over feeling pressurised about going to university. There has been an increased emphasis on getting more people to enter higher education, which is surely a good thing. It doesn't mean that people are being pressurised into going. People should be thankful that they are getting increased opportunities to go into higher education, whereas thirty years ago people didn't necessarily get that opportunity.

13/06/2006 14:57:00

emzy

Subject: Pressure????

Perhaps pressure is not the right word but you must agree that do not receive the same amount of advice about entering a career as we are about applying for university.

13/06/2006 14:59:00

emz

Subject: mitch

no i never said that on the basis alone degrees should automatically get an advantage over others however my point was that since degees have become more accessable to a wider amount of people all of a sudden it has become not as much accredited but yet degees are just as hard as they were say 30/40 years but because more people can do them who others never thought they could because they didnt have opportunities it is not as accredited WHY???? because aof narrow minded people!

13/06/2006 14:59:00

mrh89

Subject: sorry emz

Sorry Emily but i have to agree with mitch and ads. Building on their points, isn't it narrow-minded to say that just because they've got themselves into debt they deserve a higher paid job? And isn't it arrogant to say that if you get a degree you deserve a higher paid job?

13/06/2006 15:04:00

Bub

Subject: Not really

If you get a degree you have proved you have a high level of ability and intelligence. This means that you are more likely to earn more money as your skills would be more valuable. Its does not mean that they are better human beings and deserve more money but, in a free market they will most likely earn more as they have more to offer than their counterparts.

13/06/2006 15:06:00

thomasd

Subject: degrees should provide a higher

Its not arrogant to say that if you get a degree you deserve a higher paid job. Afterall those who choose to give up there own time in order to go into further education will put more into the economy. Therefore these are the kind of people who do deserve more.

13/06/2006 15:06:00

Joe

Subject: I'm sorry, mrh89

How is it arrogant to say that if you get a degree you don't deserve a higher paid job? People sacrifice entering the world of work and the opportunity to earn money by going to university; where they work hard for at least three years. Ok, more people are getting degrees but it isn't all plain sailing. People actually have to work hard to get them, so I think that university graduates are entitled to think that they will get a better-paid job.

13/06/2006 15:18:00

Bub

Subject: I know best

None of the latest posts are at all relevant to the real world. The UK economy rewards those with skills and those that work hard as it is a capitalst society. The value of a degree is relative to the individual and how or where he/she chooses to work. Its is also up to Business and employers but these are organisations the Govt cannot control. They cannot force business to employ graduates nor can they put a value on a degree.

13/06/2006 15:20:00

mrh89

Subject: sorry joe

Sorry Joe, but I think that you may have missed my point. A degree doesn't guarantee that you earn more or even get a job. Degrees are just tools to open more doors which can (but not necessarily will) lead to higher salaries and better jobs.

13/06/2006 16:25:00

emzy

Subject: re: thomasd

Sorry tom but i completely disagree that those with degrees deserve to get the highest jobs above others. Many choose to work through the ranks to get to these 'higher' jobs, and they work dame hard to do so. This isnt to say that those who obtain degrees do not work hard. I am a strong believer in equal opportunities and there are many pathways into jobs, all those which work hard either by working through the ranks or by obtaining degrees should be equally able to gain the highest jobs.

14/06/2006 07:30:00

Levitica

Subject: everyone surely deserves whatever job they are the best candidate for...

Is anyone else put right off university because of the organisation of it, and the immaturity of some things? My boyfriend is starting university in September. Of course, it depends on his A level results so he doesn't know for absolute definite that he's going, and he can't arrange accomodation until he knows for definite. That seems not enough organisation for me, surely things should be more... planned out than that. It's going to get even worse in the future as all the university stuff is going to be after A level results. I'm not the most "must plan" type person, but that would worry me. If I go to university, I'm going to do deferred entry. The other thing is at the universities with the best reputation there's no choice

but to live in their accomodation, and often buy all of your food from them. I really don't like that, I think it's wrong, it just drives the cost up for people and stops those who don't want to do that and just want the education from getting it.

14/06/2006 10:14:00

Jayesh

Subject: University or Bust

Although theres a huge push to get half of us into university I don't think thats helped us in anyway. I have always felt the need to pursue university to get a decent job because it only made sense to me that the more qualified you are the more prospects you have in front of you. I want to go into investment banking hence a degree is almost essential.

However, because of this push degrees are becoming of less value and while before having a degree was great, now you need at least a 2:1 to stand any chance of getting a good job. And even having a top degree no longer means an easy job hunt. I agree that doing a degree is a good path to follow but only if it is right for you. There is no way ramming in all these young people into universities will do any good if they do not want to be there , I reckon the focus should be more on the help available to make an informed decision rather than only picking out the academic side of the world. To conclude, once the government realises that a rounded individual doing what they are best at after compulsory schooling will benefit our society more than hundreds of thousands with pieces of paper that have less and less value as we try to reach a target, we will achieve an equilibrium that will suit everyone.

14/06/2006 14:00:00

gruff

Subject: Further rise in UK jobless total

The number of people out of work in the UK has increased yet again, Office for National Statistics figures have shown. The jobless total rose by 77,000 to 1.61 million from February to April, lifting the unemployment rate to 5.3%. The number of people out of work and claiming unemployment benefit increased by 5,800 in May to 950,900. **Does this sort of information effect your decision over whether to go to university or start an NVQ or start working? Or do you just try and put the increasing unemployment figures to the back of your mind?**

14/06/2006 14:28:00

swarby

Subject: you dont need to go to university.

I dont think you need to have a degree or go to university to get a decent job. I think it is how hard you work at your job and what kind of job you are in to get up the promotion ladder. however thses days workplaces who are looking for new employers, often go for the people who have better qualifications.

14/06/2006 14:34:00

swarby

Subject: uni

after reading the post by Gruff and the statistics, it makes me want to work harder to get into an university not only because i want to prove the statistics wrong but because i have an oppertunity to do so and the choice. i also think that there is not enough done to get people into work once they are unemployed because they see that if they dont work they get money for doing nothing. and that for people with little or no qualifications it is harder for them to get into work.

14/06/2006 14:50:00

Elissa

Subject: Uni

I think that uni is a great opertunity for any one if they wish to take there education on further, it gives you a wide range of opertunities wish can take you in a career direction of your choice, how ever i think that it is to expensive?

14/06/2006 17:27:00

Levitica

Subject: Statistics

Despite those statistics, I think people could get jobs if they wanted, at least in this area (it's probably much more difficult in cities.) My local paper has plenty jobs in it each week, all inside the town, and for graduates and none graduates. My mother used to work at the job centre, and would get a lot of people refusing jobs because they were on the other side of their town, or, shock horror, in another town. They kept saying "How am I going to get there? I haven't got a car!" My mother doesn't have a car yet she always managed to get to her job an hour's bus away. The people seemed to only want a job that's within walking distance, which seems unreasonable to me.

I think a lot of the people who are unemployed are so because they're too fussy or not truely wanting a job.

14/06/2006 19:14:00

swarby

Subject: exactly

the problem with people is that they are too fussy and that if a job doesn't suit them then they don't bother or quit. There are many jobs that people could get into no matter what qualifications they have. There are too many jobs in my local paper, and some repeats each week as they have had no takers, which would suit any person seeking work. But the problem is that people want high pay rates and prestigious jobs to fuel their ever-increasing extravagant lifestyles.

15/06/2006 08:12:00

emzy

Subject: degree does not always mean high

I think people often get caught up in the idea of a degree but forget a little factor. A degree can open pathways for you but doesn't always get you that job you want. People should be reminded of this

16/06/2006 22:44:00

Jayesh

Subject: Re: exactly

I totally agree with Swarby in that there is a growing number of people who feel getting a degree gives them the key to wealth. Could it be that there are always statistics flying around about how much more you earn on average if you have a degree compared to someone who hasn't got one? I remember on all the visits to universities as a year group there would always be a part of earning more and the prestige factor of a degree but I don't think that is applicable anymore. Does anyone else feel that the degree is only a small factor of what is needed for a good job, the more significant part being how much experience and non-academic activities have been pursued?

19/06/2006 11:47:00

TimBoswellMP

Subject: Degrees

(Question posed - Do you think that you have to go to a university to complete a degree in order to get a decent job?)
My response: No – but I think that everyone starting a career needs proper advice, advance preparation and suitable qualification. This may be a degree (or more than one) but essentially it could be a suitable vocational qualification. Some people will need a little of both. I hope you will avoid thinking that everything academic has to be completed before you start work. It is often better to get started with a career plan and then study for further qualifications.

19/06/2006 13:57:00

BillRammellMP

Subject: Making Choices

Young people today face a huge variety of choices, and it is vital that they receive the information, advice and guidance they need to know what's out there and to make an informed decision. I agree that it is difficult to choose a subject area when you have no experience of what it involves. The Government is currently looking at ways to enable young people to try out vocational learning through 'tasters', to find out what's available and what it really involves before having to decide. In order for young people to make the right choices, they need to know of all of the options open to them. This is why, from autumn 2007, all local areas will have a prospectus of courses for 14-19 year olds, linked to a national website. This prospectus will be a key tool available to young people when making decisions at aged 16.

19/06/2006 14:00:00

BillRammellMP

Subject: Graduates gaining experience

We know that students of all disciplines are increasingly developing highly marketable, work-related skills through their higher education study, with immediate and tangible value to employers. These skills are being acquired not only through academic learning but also extra-curricular activities and work experience. A number of work experience schemes are supported by universities in partnership with Regional Development Agencies and organisations like National Association of Student Employment Services (NASES). You could find out further information on the website of the National Council for Work Experience (www.work-experience.org)

19/06/2006 14:02:00

BillRammellMP

Subject: Financing your degree

We are introducing a different, fairer system from this September. There has never been a better time to consider Higher Education. Demand for graduate level skills remains high and the benefits are good. From 2006 new students are being asked to contribute more to the cost of their higher education, but this should not present a barrier for any student. No student has to find their fees at the start of their course, they can choose to take out a loan which they don't pay back until they have left their studies and are earning over £15,000.

On an average starting salary of £18,000 for a graduate level job, repayments would be £5.19 per week. Repayments are linked to earnings not how much you owe. In addition to loans for fees and maintenance there is a non-repayable grant of up to £2,700 for those students whose family income is less than £37,425. Up to half of all new students are expected to benefit. Those students receiving the full grant and paying the full £3000 tuition fee can expect a minimum non-repayable bursary of £300 from their University or College. But many are offering much more.

This means that over the duration of a three year course, students on the full grant and paying the full £3000 tuition fee can expect a total of at least £9000 of non repayable support. It is important to remember that graduates earn, on average, substantially more than people with A levels who did not go to university. Projected over a working lifetime, the difference is something like over £100,000 at today's valuation. Higher education is likely to be the best investment you ever make.

19/06/2006 18:02:00

Jayesh

Subject: Re: financing your degree

That's true we do have a lot on offer financially but for people like me, coming out of university with £30k worth of debt hanging above my head is a hassle we could do without. The worst thing is that the decision was made by those who probably had their university studies paid for them. And with actual time with a lecturer decreasing all the time it can make you wonder where all this money is going to? I will be paying £3k a year for the next 3 years but receive no breakdown on where it's being spent or what exactly I am paying for. I still think going to university is the right thing if it's for you but it's so confusing when you're being told it's the best path while making it harder financially at the same time.

20/06/2006 11:31:00

Levitica

Subject: Re

Isn't there rules on what you can spend that grant on, aren't you forbidden from spending it on living costs like food and stuff? It's so confusing about what you will and won't get, I don't know how people can rely on it.

23/06/2006 10:20:00

DavidLawsMP

Subject: Degrees

(Question - Do you think that you have to go to a university to complete a degree in order to get a decent job?)

This isn't the case, and there are a variety of examples of people who have worked their way up or got into good jobs without degrees. Nevertheless, a degree is a solid platform, and increasingly is a key to unlock particular doors. I think each individual has to make their own decisions about what suits them - some people may decide that studying will benefit them, others may prefer vocational courses, and others still may see on-the-job training as the way forward. The important thing is finding a job that you enjoy and which interests you.

23/06/2006 14:00:00

StephenWilliamsMP

Subject: Making decisions

Young people have difficult, but exciting, choices to make. University is a great experience but is not for everyone. As some people have highlighted, it is possible to get good jobs if you have not been to university. Employers make their decisions on a number of factors, one of which is academic qualifications. But work experience and personal characteristics such as social skills or a willingness to work hard can be as important as a degree in many instances. If you want to be an investment banker then a degree is probably essential, but there are other lines of work that do not necessarily require the skills gained from a degree programme.

However, on average, university graduates do receive higher salaries. This is because the skills gained from higher education can be transferred into many different fields. Graduates have more working options, and employers believe that on average they tend to be more effective workers.

University education should be available for all young people. It will play a key role in the development of an able and efficient workforce for the future. It will be difficult to harness all of the talent that this country has to offer, so long as people are being discouraged to apply because of the debt that will follow.

I went to Bristol University from a poor family background. It undoubtedly changed my life for the better. It's not just about the fantastic education on offer at university. You also get to mix with like minded people from all over the country and from all sorts of backgrounds. Some of the friends you make at university will be with you for many years to come.

23/06/2006 15:04:00

BeverleyHughesMP

Subject: Higher education

I know that Bill Rammell has already outlined some of the benefits of higher education, so I'll simply add a little to his comments. Higher education is not about pieces of paper, but expanding young people's horizons, their knowledge and skills, and thereby raising their ability to secure their own future as well as our national economic future in the face of global competition.

23/06/2006 15:09:00

BeverleyHughesMP

Subject: Degrees

Having a degree is an important part of getting good quality employment. A degree doesn't necessarily have to be in an academic subject – there are Foundation Degrees for students who want to take a more practical, vocational route. Employers value Foundation Degrees because they know they provide ‘hands on’ vocational experience which means graduates can make an immediate contribution to their business. That said, I agree that other experience and individual achievements are also important in getting a good job. To find out more about Foundation Degrees you can visit www.foundationdegree.org.uk

23/06/2006 15:50:00

Freols

Subject: Money

Rules or no rules, such loans rarely take living costs into account. The "family income rules" also seem a little unfair to me (selfishly) as father earns around £37k a year, as a university lecturer incidently, and my mother earns somewhere in the region of £2k a year part time, perhaps less. The low down we would be better of in univeristy if my mum simply stopped working. What is there to safe guard such things? I also think it is a strange that receiving payment in univeristy relies solely on income. I have a sister too, and the money my family receives from the government for having two children may cover added living costs, but there is no way it will cover univerity costs too.

24/06/2006 21:01:00

hilaryhooper

Subject: just wandering

I may be totally wrong but I would rather ask and be corrected then not ask at all. Is it true that if you do not pay a penny back after 5+ years then your debt gets cleared? Hilary

27/06/2006 09:30:00

gruff

Subject: The Minimum Wage...did you know

On the subject of working and your careers, what do you think about the minimum wage - in particular, the fact that you get a different amount depending on your age rather than just a set amount? Check out the BackUp to get the Minimum Wage explained (http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s117_7)

What you need to know...

Employees aged 16 or over are legally entitled to be paid a Minimum Wage Rate per hour, as set by the Government. National Minimum Wage rates vary according to your age and employment terms. The latest legislation has recently been reviewed and changed by the Government.

Main (adult) rate for workers aged 22 and over

Current rate £5.05 per hour from 1 October 2006 rises to £5.35 per hour

Development rate for workers aged 18-21 inclusive

Current rate £4.25 per hour from 1 October 2006 rises to £4.45 per hour

(NB: The development rate can also apply to workers aged 22 and above during their first 6 months in a new job with a new employer and who are receiving accredited training).

Does this approach make sense to you or do you think it could be made more straight forward?

29/06/2006 11:30:00

NataschaEngelMP

Subject: degree v no degree

it's good coming into this debate a bit later because it gives you the chance to read what everyone else has written. from my personal experience, i wasn't sure what i wanted to do when i left school. the information and advice both for studying or working was really bad. i ended up talking to friends who had gone to uni but were still in the same position - they still didn't know what they wanted to do. so i decided to study something that i enjoyed at school (modern languages). i loved it and ended up spending quite a long time travelling abroad and working. i'm now an mp and i never really get a chance to use languages but it did teach me that studying generally can be very enjoyable and i think it did help me get lots of jobs that i might not have had otherwise. i also think it gave me self-confidence. i've read what bill rammell has written, and i think another good idea would be to allow people at school to spend some time at university, in the same way that they can do work experience now. has anyone already done this?

29/06/2006 11:36:00

NataschaEngelMP

Subject: feeling pressure to study

it's a shame if parents/teachers/media/politicians or anyone else is making people feel pressurised into going to university. this should be about giving you the chance to do what you want to do - study at uni or learn a skill. i agree that there is still too much snobbery about studying - that it is somehow better to have a university education than to do

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a vocational course and come out with a skill. we (and you) have to help change that. but everyone needs better information, advice and their own experience to make that choice and that's down to all of us.

Whistle while you work? Vocation, Vocation, Vocation...

12/06/2006 09:00:00

justice

Subject: Welcome to the job prospects debate

Young people now have a huge amount of key decisions to make when they reach 16 - whether they continue on into further education, or look for a job or complete an NVQ. With such a massive array of options available it is no wonder then that young people find this a tricky step to make. Now, you will get the opportunity to make your voice heard in this HeadsUp Forum.

A range of parliamentarians want to hear your views on all aspects of job prospects and careers – see who's listening (http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=3115_1) . As much as possible, try to BackUp (http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=home_Job%20Prospects%20BackUp) your opinions with facts, where you will find loads of info on job prospects.

Are there good vocational courses out there? If so, tell us about them... Are they as valued as university degrees? Do you need degrees? Try and explain your answer....

13/06/2006 14:12:00

biged

Subject: Further education = cinderella service

What is your reaction to a recent news report stating that Further education should stop being seen as a Cinderella service, according to Education Secretary, Alan Johnson?

He said the perception should be buried. Instead, further education should be at the pinnacle of England's education system, an "engine for prosperity". Mr Johnson repeated the government's call for colleges to focus on improving adult basic skills - and charge people more for "leisure" courses. He argued that the priority must be areas that benefit society as a whole. **Do you think this is the correct approach?**

14/06/2006 14:32:00

Elissa

Subject: There are not enough Vocational courses

I feel that there are not enough vocational course in every subject area. what can be done about this?

14/06/2006 17:29:00

Levitica

Subject: In school

What do people think of the idea of taking vocational reutes earlier, like how some people start placements at 14? I think this is a good idea for maybe one afternoon a week, like how a lot of people from my school have done engineering, but not for more than that, I think people should try more things before leaving school rather than less.

15/06/2006 08:02:00

emzy

Subject: UNINFORMED

I dont really know that much about vocational courses so i would be inclined to say that if their are a lot a valuable we arent informed enough about them. Please no-one take offence to this : i was always given the impression that people who take vocational courses struggle in the other educational courses????

15/06/2006 08:08:00

emzy

Subject: re: biged

There is a need for students to enter vocational areas but we are constantly being told to strive higher i feel and an emphasis of importance is aalways placed that a student should have a degree before entering work level. I obtain b-a grades at school and have never before been told about the vocational courses available. Infact when i was in Key stage 3 i was discouraged from doing this. Is that a bad thing or not and should we b informing our students more about the vocational courses? This is a subject which i have very little knowledge of!

15/06/2006 10:59:00

Levitica

Subject: Vocational courses

You mentioned KS3, but I've found there isn't really much choice on whether you do vocational or academic courses in school, they just what everyone's doing and don't base it on people's choices. Everyone in our school has to do ICT GNVQ, a vocational course (I'm yet to see any vacation for which it would be useful though.) Why? Because a pass is the equivalent of 4 Cs so people only need one more to be half a percent on the league table. It's not because we're vocationally minded or anything (Everyone in the year did it.) I think courses should be broader based in secondary school. I don't really think there's a necessary difference between people who do vocational and people who do academic qualifications, I think the one who do vocational are just people who know what they want to do and know there's a separate course for it.

19/06/2006 09:51:00

chilli

Subject: Alan Johnson MP on vocational courses

In a speech delivered earlier this month, the new education Minister outlined his priority areas in the immediate future, referring directly to the 'bad press' given to vocational courses:

"First, we must focus on the right people at the right time in the right subjects. 16 is a vital age. It's not just what they can learn, but what they can 'earn'. They must see a correlation between a good education and a successful career."

"Less Pilates, more Plumbing. Tai Chi may be useful to those studying it, but it has not much use in the economy. Courses should appeal to students. It is entirely possible that colleges could raise fees and enrolment."

"We have to end our endemic bad thinking of vocational courses, and we must embed earning for life. Most of today's workers grew up without a PC – you can't foresee what the world will be like in 20 years. Standing still means slipping back."

Is the Minister correct in his assessment of the perceived 'bad press' surrounding NVQs or is he wide of the mark? If you agree with him, what do you think could be done to redress this situation and improve the image of vocational courses?

19/06/2006 11:48:00

TimBoswellMP

Subject: Vocational courses

(Question posed - Are there good vocational courses out there? Are they as valued as university degrees? Do you need degrees?)

My response: There are good vocational courses and you can find out which are best for you. I would define their fitness for purpose as including both a good study experience, and a clear understanding of the way forward into a career. Many specialist courses will result in recruiting straight into employment after the qualification is complete.

23/06/2006 10:23:00

DavidLawsMP

Subject: Vocational courses

(Question - Are there good vocational courses out there?)

Vocational courses are a useful addition to the education canon, and yes, there are courses out there which are extremely well-structured and beneficial. If you are considering entering particular areas, vocational courses may be the vastly preferred route by many employers. It is important to shop around, see what suits you, and then go with it.

23/06/2006 15:15:00

BeverleyHughesMP

Subject: Vocational Courses

There is a wide range of vocational courses on offer. However, it was clear to us that there needed to be more choice. From September 2008, we are introducing a whole new range of Specialised Diplomas. These qualifications will suit any young person who likes to approach subjects and develop skills in a practical way. They will help young people gain the skills that employers value.

23/06/2006 16:01:00

Freols

Subject: Re: Vocational Courses

I still do not fully believe enough emphasis is being put on vocational courses. Contrary to common belief, university is not right for everyone. Recently there have been huge increases in the number of university graduates, and although I am sure many would say this is a result of "better education" it does ultimately de-value degrees. This often drives universities (like Oxford and Cambridge) to introduce their own entry exams, but more importantly it creates a vocational job void. There are simply not enough plumbers, electricians and builders these days. I believe, as mentioned before, it is because these jobs are no longer respected. Endless emphasis is put on making sure every man and his dog in England has a degree by 2020, but there are very few labour front bench ministers that recognise the fact that degrees should be a sign of a person excelling in a certain academic subject, not a just a general qualification that allows a person to get a better job. I am not really sure how this opinion came to be believed, but it really does need to stop. There is no need to put the whole country through university, or even academic college courses. Even if we have less graduates than other EU countries at least they can be more valued.

23/06/2006 18:56:00

st10

Subject: media

i think vocational courses are a great idea. i am 15 years old and am doing my GCSE. i my school we have to do a vocational course for gcse. they are worth four gcse. i like it. i am doing betec media studies. this course is a practical one with few essays. it is easy and enjoyable. i think that it is usefull, because i have learnt a lot of things. i think vocational courses are a good idea and should be available to everyone.

24/06/2006 20:27:00

hilaryhooper

Subject: my opinion

'A vocational graduate course can open up a host of new career opportunities for you and make it easier for you to market yourself to potential employers. Whether you're already working in your chosen field and want to develop your existing skills, or if you're an unemployed graduate looking to break into a new career, a vocational graduate course will give you all the training and expertise you need.' this is what i found from a site on the internet, and to me, why shouldn't they both be classed as equals, after all many people do say that people learn in different ways. ok i know its obviously that this site is bias, but does it really matter at the end of the day? all that is really important is that you make the right choice for you. and the question 'Do you need degrees?'- it all depends on what line of work you want to go into. hilary

24/06/2006 20:29:00

hilaryhooper

Subject: Vocational courses

'A vocational graduate course can open up a host of new career opportunities for you and make it easier for you to market yourself to potential employers. Whether you're already working in your chosen field and want to develop your existing skills, or if you're an unemployed graduate looking to break into a new career, a vocational graduate course will give you all the training and expertise you need.' this is what i found from a site on the internet, and to me, why shouldn't they both be classed as equals, after all many people do say that people learn in different ways. ok i know its obviously that this site is bias, but does it really matter at the end of the day? all that is really important is that you make the right choice for you. and the question 'Do you need degrees?'- it all depends on what line of work you want to go into. Hilary

25/06/2006 21:07:00

aileen

Subject: vocational courses

I was always given the impression at school that vocational courses were for "under-achievers". Our school made us choose 1 vocational option when choosing GCSE's but the choice was so limited. It was a choice between business, IT, Health and social care and Art and Design. Then more vocational options were offered to those not expected to achieve the 5 A* - C grades. When we are given information about sixth forms almost all information is focused around A-levels and AS - levels. Almost no information of vocational courses is given. My GNVQ is just as much work as my GCSE's and I can see no clear difference between them, except that my GNVQ is more geared towards work we would do in a job, instead of information preparing us for exams.

When choosing my GCSE options both my parents and my sister (who's 25) said that I wouldn't want to take a vocational course and that it is not valued by employers as much. Is this a common or correct attitude towards them?

26/06/2006 12:27:00

Levitica

Subject: GNVQs and Value

Personally, I wouldn't value ICT GNVQ much if I was an employer (that's the GNVQ I know about as that's the one I did.) All it is is millions of repetitive, skillless tasks. Even if the odd thing is slightly complicated, the teacher either did it himself and got us to change the colour or walked us through it step by step, telling us what to click and type. Utterly pointless, I don't think it demonstrates that the person has any skills, and I never learned anything during the course.

26/06/2006 12:30:00

Levitica

Subject: Vocational and Exams

Do you think vocational subjects and exams do not go together?

Vocational subjects all seem to be about creating folders of work. Why not have an exam, but a practical exam? I think to test IT skills, a practical exam is important. What would happen would be someone would have a list of tasks, like... find information about oak trees on the internet, or edit this image to make it look like this one, and things like that, and you'd have to complete them. This seems to me the only way to assess if someone has good computer skills, I don't see why we don't have more practical exams.

26/06/2006 12:40:00

Levitica

Subject: Aileen

"was always given the impression at school that vocational courses were for "under-achievers"."

Your school will have got the "underachievers" to do more vocational courses as they wanted to get them up to 5 Cs. The vocational courses are worth more, like two and four GCSEs, so they have more of a chance at getting their five Cs with them than normal GCSEs.

Schools only do GNVQs and other qualifications to get their Cs up. In five of the seven "most improved" schools in England, no one got over a C in double science. In lots of these "most improved" schools, which are being rewarded and praised to death, people aren't doing GCSE science, because they have to do GNVQ instead, giving people 4 Cs if they pass meaning they only need one more. It doesn't fit the needs of the pupils, surely they have some pupils who want to be doctors and such and need academic science, it just helps with the league tables.

27/06/2006 09:38:00

masterzen

Subject: Saving for your retirement?

As you have probably noticed you can't watch the news, or read a newspaper, or listen to the radio without the issue of pensions being mentioned. **How important are pensions on your radar - are you worried about saving for your retirement when you start full-time work? Or is it not important to you just yet - do you have other things to worry about - if so, what are they?**

29/06/2006 11:56:00

NataschaEngelIMP

Subject: vocational courses

i think alan johnson is right to say that we should be putting money into courses that are going to be useful for people to get jobs. i think that's the role of government. i don't think, though, that this means that people shouldn't do courses just because they enjoy them. it just shouldn't be the majority of where taxpayer money goes. sometimes formal classroom-type education isn't the right thing for people and the way to get them back into wanting to learn and get a skill is by starting them off on learning something totally different. my view is that all learning is good and makes you a better person - in whatever shape that learning comes.

Whistle while you work? Value of work experience...

12/06/2006 09:00:00

justice

Subject: Welcome to the job prospects debate

Young people now have a huge amount of key decisions to make when they reach 16 - whether they continue on into further education, or look for a job or complete an NVQ. With such a massive array of options available it is no wonder then that young people find this a tricky step to make. Now, you will get the opportunity to make your voice heard in this HeadsUp Forum.

A range of parliamentarians want to hear your views on all aspects of job prospects and careers – see who's listening (http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s115_1) . As much as possible, try to BackUp (http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=home_Job%20Prospects%20BackUp) your opinions with facts, where you will find loads of info on job prospects.

Have you undertaken work experience or volunteering yet or do you plan to in the future? What was it like? Why do you think work experience is so important?

13/06/2006 14:08:00

Han

Subject: practice

work experiance is something that everyone should have the chance to do. I did my own work experiance in a nursing home because at the time i wished to be a carer but working there for a week showed me the harsh reality of it and i found the job to emotionally draining. My advice is - should the oppertunity arise take it because it may stop you making a big mistake.

13/06/2006 14:41:00

emzy

Subject: Valuable opportunity

I have taken many weeks of work experience and will continue to do so. It enables you to take a look at working life but also to evaluate the future career options which you have. I would definitely encourage anyone to take up the opportunity.

Volunteering is a valuable part of our community and can be great fun too. Its not just a load of old retired pensioners that do it to fill up the day. It allows you to meet a lot of new people which you perhaps wouldnt talk to in everyday life.

14/06/2006 14:17:00

chilli

Subject: Barry Sheerman MP

Have you read Barry Sheerman's statement of support yet? Have you got any answers/responses to the questions he poses below...

"As Chair of the Education and Skills Select Committee, I am pleased that debates around education have taken centre stage in recent years. Unfortunately these debates are often dominated by those whose firsthand experience of education is a distant memory. Most companies considering restructuring wouldn't dream of doing so without consulting their customers, education should be no different. It is therefore important for us to listen to the experiences and views of young people currently in education or with recent experience of the education system.

We are lucky to have a strong economy with many opportunities for young people, but it is clear that many young people are still missing out. Are young people receiving sufficient guidance about the options available? Should so many young people be able to leave education at 16 without further training? Should it be made compulsory for young people to stay in education or training until the age of 18? These are some of the questions I have been asking recently and I look forward to reading the contributions to the forum and feeding them in to ongoing and future Select Committee inquiries."

14/06/2006 14:35:00

Elissa

Subject: Work experience

Work experience is a good opportunity for any one to get involved with how ever i feel its important to do this in there career options?

14/06/2006 14:43:00

Elissa

Subject: Work experience

Work experience is an opportunity for students in secondary school to take a weeks placement in a work environment. I feel its important for students to do so but in the right area/line of work they wish to go into. Its very valuable and you can learn a lot about the work life style.

14/06/2006 14:52:00

swarby

Subject: i agree

i agree totally with Elissa, work experience is valuable as long as it is in the line of work that the person wants to go into. when the chance comes up for work experience they either apply correctly for a placement in which it will help them or they apply for a placement that wont help them which will mean that they wont do anything. i also feel that if they ask for a placement the school or college dont do enough to get the pupil into that placement, so they stick them anywhere that will have them.

14/06/2006 17:31:00

Levitica

Subject: 18

I don't think anything should be compulsory until 18. If I had to spend another two years at school... I still wouldn't like it if people just had to choose further education or training rather than getting a job as then people will be going on courses they don't want to, and what's the point in that?

14/06/2006 17:34:00

Levitica

Subject: Work Experience

Do enough people know what they want to do by secondary school, and if they do, do they get a placement in that? I still have no real idea what I want to do for a job. I did work experience as a teacher in my primary school. It was enjoyable, I did an extra week so I got two off school, but I don't really think I learned anything valuable from it. I don't know anyone who did a work experience placement in a field they were actually interested in. Our school also offered only a week (me and the other girls at the school asked very nicely on the friday if we could do another week and were allowed) but another school in the town lets people do three different week long placements. If people are getting worthwhile placements, I think that would be good.

14/06/2006 18:40:00

emzy

Subject: re: elissa

Sorry elissa but i totally disagree that people who take work experience should take it in their career options. Surely work experience is there so that people can get a look at the variety of options and a way to help them make their options in what they are going to do.

14/06/2006 21:35:00

swarby

Subject: work experiance

we only got a week in which to have a placement, and we got the choice to set the work placement ourselves or give three options to the school so they set it up for us. as far as i know everyone i talked too went for a placement that they were generally interested in and got the placement aswell.

what work experiance is all about is finding out or experiancing the line of work you are interested in or want to move into, you dont have to know exactly what you want to do when you have finished your schooling. i also think that it is up to the person to get something out of the work experiance, because if you didnt get anything out of it then you are not suited to the line of work or if you are interested then your not pushing yourslef hard enough.

15/06/2006 11:05:00

Levitica

Subject: Re: Swarby

I set my own placement, leaving it to the school meant you got the hospital, a hospital in another town or Tesco or Asda... I have no idea what I want to do. Things I could do are maybe law or journalism. I asked and the school said it would be impossible to do work experience with a barrister or something like that. I was going to go to the local newspaper but I know someone who went there a year before and he said they hadn't let him do anything, he had been basically ignored and not got to fo anything pointful. I chose teaching as teaching is something I'm reasonably interested in. I taught year six as I wouldn't mind teaching year six, and after the end of the week, my perceptions of the job were exactly the same. I wouldn't mind, but it's not perfect.

16/06/2006 13:14:00

masterzen

Subject: Government backs youth volunteering scheme

In March this year, Gordon Brown launched a £150m youth volunteering scheme which includes the involvement of 1,000 voluntary organisations and 20 of Britain's largest companies.

Brown said his ideas had been inspired by John F Kennedy's 1960s Peace Corps in America and developed over several years.

"Doing our duty and service to the community is at the heart of what we mean by being British... Every day across Britain thousands of young people are silently and selfishly making an enormous contribution to their families, schools and communities...It is to the credit of today's young generation that over 40 per cent do some form of voluntary work to help their communities. But we can and must do better to make volunteering opportunities available not just for some young people, but all young people."

What is your reaction to this scheme and the amount of money invested in it by the Chancellor?

16/06/2006 23:17:00

emzy

Subject: re:masterzen

that scheme is ridiculous and how can so much money be spent on this. I think volunteering is an important part of society but surely with so many financial problems in our country such as the NHS that is too much money in my eyes. Do you know why so much money has been invested and where the money has gone?

19/06/2006 11:49:00

TimBoswellMP

Subject: Work experience

(Question - Have you undertaken work experience or volunteering yet or do you plan to in the future? What was it like?)

My response: I am very anxious to encourage good quality work experience, which in my view should be available from primary school onwards. You also need to remember that volunteering and other activities outside the minimum are very popular with future employers.

19/06/2006 14:09:00

BillRammellMP

Subject: Work experience

I am pleased to read contributions saying that work experience is valuable, and I agree that, when properly planned and with commitment from all involved, work experience develops young people's employability skills and helps them develop an understanding of work. And it benefits and enthuses employees, too.

19/06/2006 14:13:00

BillRammellMP

Subject: Volunteering

I am pleased to read your views about the value of volunteering, and I totally agree that through volunteering, every person can be an active citizen and so make a difference to their local community. Volunteering helps people develop an awareness of what is around them and to realise that they can change things for the better. Young people can also gain recognition for their achievements, and enhance their self development and work related skills. I believe volunteering has a key role to play in the whole process of personal development.

20/06/2006 11:35:00

Levitica

Subject: I agree with the other person

Volunteering is good, but what is that money spent on? Advertising? They'd have to be more specific on what it's spent on before I approved of it. Last year I went on a website that was asking for volunteers for lots of different things. I applied for about five of them, but only one replied and they just said I was too young. A scheme for people who actually want volunteers would be good, but all that would be needed would be a website, which doesn't cost very much.

23/06/2006 10:27:00

DavidLawsMP

Subject: Work experience

Work experience can be hugely valuable, both as a way to see whether a certain job suits you but also as a way to get a foot in the door. Many employers are very keen to take on graduates with or without specific work experience, but it can be the extra boost that your CV may need. I think that the quality of work experience has improved considerably in recent years - people are much more willing to take on people for short amounts of time, as they realise the potential benefit.

23/06/2006 15:20:00

BeverleyHughesMP

Subject: Work Experience Placements

No pupil should be put into a placement they do not want. If a young person feels they are being offered a placement they do not want they should talk to their teacher about what other options might be available. That said, we know from school inspections that most young people find work experience valuable and enjoyable. I think work experience can be useful even if it's not in the area of work you want to do - through work experience some young people find a line of work that they'd never considered before. And others realise their chosen area of work might not be what they want after all! Schools can get help from Education Business Partnerships and the Trident Trust to organise placements. The key thing is to involve the young person in the choice, making sure they, the employer and the school understand what they should be getting out of it

23/06/2006 16:08:00

Freols

Subject: Re

I agree, young people should be given the chance to really make a difference through helping others in their community. Often age is seen as a barrier, but I can't really see why, unless the job involves things already restricted to adults by law. My work experience was really valuable. I worked in a large regional magistrate's court and then a three person engineering company. The insight it gave me into different parts of the working world was invaluable. I heard the same from everyone I talked to back in school. BUT, a lot of people did also just use it as a holiday, a few people applied for jobs that basically required 1 hour a day jobs. I am not quite sure whether rules are in place to prevent such occurrences, but such things did undoubtedly happen, at least in my school.

24/06/2006 17:25:00

hilarityhooper

Subject: Work Experience

I have already been on one work experience this year, and that was with the north Cornwall M.P Dan Rogerson, I really valued it as a very important opportunity to have an insight into politics, and I view work experience as being very important as it does aid young and old people to know what the job really entails before they make any large decisions into their career path. Hilary

25/06/2006 20:56:00

aileen

Subject: volunteering

I think many people have the wrong idea about volunteering. For the duke of edinburgh award at my school many people worked in charity shops for their service, and I find that this is generally the perception. I do volunteering often, but it is very different to this. I am on my town's youth council, my county's youth cabinet, my county's youth interview panel. I didn't think of any of this as volunteering until a councillor at my town's youth council told me about the Millenium Volunteer award. Volunteering can be about anything you want it to be. For me, I am a member of the youth councils in this area, but you can do anything from debating competitions to a group of people in your area deciding on where the next skate park should be. Not enough information is given about this kind of volunteering and I think the scheme should pay for publicity of this.

27/06/2006 09:46:00

chilli

Subject: Part-time jobs

Have any of you got any part-time jobs currently to help pay for going out etc or do you plan to get one in near future? Maybe, you are going to university/college in September and will work over the summer to help pay for it? Let us know if you are...

27/06/2006 17:55:00

littles

Subject: mandatory work experience

At my school, work experience is mandatory, and I am currently undergoing mine now, in my 2nd week. I am working at a vets, and it has showed me the good - and the bad- of the job. For those who are less academic, their work experience also runs over the term, and they do one day a week, another thing that will be valuable in life. It's great to put in your CV as well, as it shows you are not a complete novice to work. Work is very different to school, and it just reinforces this view.

27/06/2006 17:58:00

littles

Subject: Age Discrimination

Luckily for us, there are new laws coming in about age discrimination, meaning employers can't discriminate against a person because they are too young or old for the job. It means that it will be based purely on our skills and competence to undertake the job in hand. It is fairer for everyone this way.

27/06/2006 22:12:00

Levitica

Subject: Part time jobs

I've been looking for a part time job for years now, but with no success. There're so many people want evening time jobs, people have no reason to choose younger people so they only employ the older ones. I did Avon for a while... I can't get any job where intelligence and skills really matter, as they are all during the day. An adult will always win for the kind of jobs that are only on an evening.

29/06/2006 12:14:00

NataschaEngelMP

Subject: work experience

We never got an opportunity to do work experience when I was at school and I think - even if it isn't always perfect and some places do it better than others - that on the whole it's fantastic. I have had a couple of people come and do work experience with me and as an 'employer' it is quite difficult to make sure that the experience is useful in such a short space of time. The person who wrote about doing work experience and finding out that it wasn't the job for them had just as valuable an experience - one person who came to work with me came along to a meeting with police in the constituency and has now decided that he will join the police force - he certainly didn't want to be an MP...

Whistle while you work? Talk the talk...

12/06/2006 09:00:00

justice

Subject: Welcome to the job prospects debate

Young people now have a huge amount of key decisions to make when they reach 16 - whether they continue on into further education, or look for a job or complete an NVQ. With such a massive array of options available it is no wonder then that young people find this a tricky step to make. Now, you will get the opportunity to make your voice heard in this HeadsUp Forum.

A range of parliamentarians want to hear your views on all aspects of job prospects and careers - see who's listening (http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s115_1). As much as possible, try to BackUp (http://www.headsup.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=home_Job%20Prospects%20BackUp) your opinions with facts, where you will find loads of info on job prospects.

Is there a sufficient amount of reliable career advice being given to you at school or elsewhere about your possible future career path? Has anyone decided what career they would like to pursue? Why not tell everyone else and try and explain your thinking...

13/06/2006 09:28:00

joen

Subject: Value of PSHE

In our PSHE (Physical Social and Health Education) lessons, the teacher does nothing but ramble on about how to get a job. It is completely useless - the teacher assumes we are all dullards with room-temperature IQs who want to leave school at sixteen with one F at GCSE Domestic Science and work as a dustbin man (or 'waste official' or whatever they are called now), and the brighter ones who want to go to university (mind you, that is half of us now) are ignored and our needs are not fulfilled. So the school 'talks the talk', just not any useful talk.

13/06/2006 14:14:00

Han

Subject: hmmm.....

I think that too much careers advice is heaped onto pupils from a young age. I'm all up for giving advice to kids but sometimes i think it is best to alert them to where the information can be found and then leave the research to them unless they personally ask for help

13/06/2006 14:16:00

gruff

Subject: Careers advice

Did you hear about a recent survey which reported that careers advice for girls 'biased'?

According to the survey, many girls are put off working in the construction industry due to biased careers advice. The poll found 70% of girls felt discouraged from entering male-dominated industries. In the survey of 2,400 girls between the ages of 11 and 18, 42% thought the options presented to them were limited on the basis of their gender. What's your take on this information?

13/06/2006 14:36:00

Bub

Subject: Careers Advice of little use

In my opinion the Govt should put more emphasis on encouraging the employers to take on young workers. A lot of time and money is put into careers advisors and information packs which are usually no more use than a quick search on google. Anyone with even a little ambition in life finds little use of the advice and what they really need is a better job market to move into. If the Govt switched funding away from the useless careers advice into providing incentives for employers to take on younger workers then both parties would benefit.

13/06/2006 14:53:00

emzy

Subject: Split mind

I'm kind of split on this argument i think that sometimes too much information can be given to students and they become confused. There are many decisions which students need to make at this time in their life and if they are overrun with options it can make the situation worse. However i do think that people need to be made aware of the opportunities and given advice to help them make the decisions through this period. My advice would be to show the students where they can gain the information from and if they need any help then be there for them.

14/06/2006 07:35:00

Levitica

Subject: Ignorance

I think a lot of 16 year olds are amazingly ignorant of their careers options. There's too little advice given in my school, but from everyone's responses I think all the schools vary a lot. As I said before, people who want to go to college for A levels are not because the town's sixth form is too schooly and the FE college has little emphasis on A levels. The college I'm going to in the nearby town is a perfect mix, but few of them will have even heard of it. Everyone seems very badly researched. One girl who I'd expect to be a very knowledgeable one (she's one who revises loads and knows all the facts for her subjects) didn't know that she'd have to do general studies at the college she's going to, and when I pointed it out the four other people there going to that college didn't know either.

It seems most people just take the route they're expected to take no matter what.

14/06/2006 14:44:00

swarby

Subject: career advice given too early

I think that the careers advice we get is given to us too early and that when we need the advice to use, everyone has forgotten it or cannot be bothered. Also when this valuable advice comes round, people don't want to turn up as they see it as a waste of time even if it was in the school day.

19/06/2006 11:51:00

TimBoswellIMP

Subject: Careers advice

(Question - Is there a sufficient amount of reliable career advice being given to you at school or elsewhere about your possible future career path?)

My response: Again I think all schools should give more emphasis on high quality careers advice at an early stage, and that everyone should have a proper guidance interview before starting their career choices.

19/06/2006 14:17:00

BillRammellIMP

Subject: Careers information and advice

I think it is important to realise that individual students will require different levels of advice and guidance. Some people are happy to make a decision based on the information available, but others may need more help. Those

who offer careers advice, such as Connexions Personal Advisers, will bear this in mind and will offer advice and guidance tailored to your preferences.

19/06/2006 14:22:00

BillRammellMP

Subject: Encouraging employers to take apprentices

We are encouraging employers to take on apprentices from the age of 14 upwards, over 130,000 employers are involved in the apprenticeship programme and this number is growing. Apprenticeships provide training that is truly based in a working environment, is tailored to the needs of a specific job role and also provides transferable skills that will be needed throughout a working life.

Effective careers advice is important to support young people in making decisions that will affect their whole lives. This includes whether the right option for them is to go into employment / work based learning straight from school or into further or higher education.

20/06/2006 11:41:00

Levitica

Subject: Connexions

I think connexions are utterly rubbish. I filled out a form to get an interview at the end of year ten, when I had some things I was wondering about college. I got my interview half way through year eleven, when I was all sorted. The interview was useless, the man asked me what job I wanted to do and I said I was unsure. He pushed and asked if I had any ideas, and I said I was a bit interested in journalism and law and being the person who writes letters for a politician. He spent the rest of the hour getting books out about jobs and showing me all this information about journalism, most of which I already knew. He seemed to think because I thought I might want to be a journalist but wasn't at all sure that was because I didn't know enough information. He hardly spoke about colleges or even university, which are the decisions I really need to be making now. He just would not accept that I just am not sure what job I want. I think he was too pushy, I just mentioned journalism, I probably don't want to do it.

I think we should have compulsory interviews. Most people never had an interview all through school, it was only the people in the bottom set.

23/06/2006 16:28:00

Freols

Subject: Re

In my opinion you are totally right. Connexions has really gone down hill recently, i have heard alot of people say it and have seen little to prove me wrong. Connexions advisors should totally emphasise on one thing, the next step. After I expressed an interest in politics, law and the army (a very very wierd mix i know) the advisor was instantly hooked onto the law of it. I discovered one thing in that interview, and that was that University X is better than Univeristy Y at law. It was really not what I wanted to hear. I learnt far more in my college interviews to be frank, they stressed that law at A level is best left alone if you want to do law at uni, that more people enter Sandhurst as univeristy graduates than not and that there were no set qualifications needed for politcs, which I kind of already knew. Ultimately connexions fails, the very concept of "connecting" me, or showing me the next step in the life was completley lost in a pile of univeristy league tables. I can imagine it being even worse for those wanting to follow vocational careers as the connexions people would need to source local employers or aprenticeships in the area... uninformed as I am on vocational subjects, I do not believe the connexions have the correct structure to find source such information. There are also problems with communication between organisations, colleges and schools. When I enter college I will already have completed a general studies course, yet my college also runs a compulsory general studies course for all students. My school told us we wouldn't have to attend lectures, my connexions "officer" said the college would make a special exception and allow us to do a general studies A2 in the first year and the actual college told us that no exceptions would be made and we would have to attend the lectures regardless. I suppose I will just have to sit through alot of meaningless (yet interesting as it is G.S.) lectures. It would be nice if somebody had told me a little ealier though, not in my college interview.

23/06/2006 22:42:00

Jayesh

Subject: What advice??

I completely agree, the Connexions service is pushed hard through advertising and schools yet it rarely works for many people. If asked about connexions, 16-18 year olds will say the card. Under 16s will say its that little office in the library. The best careers advice I had was when I was talking to my maths teacher who said I should consider looking at jobs in the city to put maths and business into practice. I am in agreement with Levitica in that some form of interview is compulsory - we need some experience before going out into the job world. Only those with behavioural problems or those underachieving in lessons would have some form of guidance - the one on one interaction is like an interview in itself. Just out of interest, did any of our MPs get any careers advice or somebody to talk to about options after studies?

25/06/2006 20:42:00

aileen

Subject: careers advice

I think that although there is lots of information about sixth forms and universities, but that is the only information given. Apprenteships and scholarships are rarely metioned and there is little encouragement to start earning after GCSE's. Lots of information is given about courses and universities, but no offers of support are given to those

wanting to start a career straight away, and who will need just as much support and advice as those going onto higher education. More options and opportunities need to be offered to those leaving education, after GCSE's or A-levels, as promises of jobs are given with no real information of how to start applying for scholarships or apprenticeships without as many qualifications.

26/06/2006 12:20:00

Levitica

Subject: Information about colleges

In my school, people came in to speak about the two colleges in the town. Not a word was said about the school with has a sixth form in the town, where a lot of people are going to, and the colleges in other nearby towns. Surely some information should be given on what all the different colleges you could go to are.

29/06/2006 12:23:00

NataschaEngelMP

Subject: careers' advice

i find this a really difficult area. i had such a bad experience when i was younger that i'm concerned it should be better today. we used to have to fill in a questionnaire - if you ticked the box that said you liked working outside then they told you to become a landscape gardener. the problem is, how do you make sure that the advice suits the person asking for it? i think that personal/careers advisers are great for a lot of people, but nothing beats talking to people doing a job. work experience is a good way of doing that, but after that, it depends on who you know. has anyone got any good ideas on how to improve careers advice?

30/06/2006 10:26:00

ParmjitDhandaMP

Subject: Careers Advice

I'm really sorry some of you have not received the help you wanted from the Connexions Service. We do expect Connexions Personal Advisers to give young people the help and advice they need, when they need it. Our research shows that 71% of the young people who use Connexions said it helped them to make decisions about their futures. However I know there are occasions when young people don't get the best support, and we are planning to improve services to young people. If you would like to know more about our plans you can download a summary here (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/ACFA64E.pdf>).

I've got to be honest, when I received careers advice at school, I filled out a form which suggested that I should consider becoming a Tree Surgeon. That was some time ago and I am sure that things have improved since then, but the advice I received at the time wasn't great. However, I went on to have a meeting with a Careers Advisor which was more useful, but it wasn't for many years that I realised what I wanted to do for a career. In our plans we make it clear that careers advice is not just about an interview at school. There are lots of other ways you can get ideas about what kind of job you might like to do – from careers education lessons, work experience, from websites like Connexions Direct, from your parents, teachers and friends. I think it helps to talk to as many people as possible before making a decision.
