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**Commentary Series**

**Young People Out Of Work In South West Newham: Two Years On**

**Alice Sampson**



# **Young People Out Of Work In South West Newham: Two Years On**

**Alice Sampson**

Centre for Institutional Studies  
University of East London

December 2002

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Alice Sampson  
December 2002

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This research project presents findings from a follow-up study of 500 young people who were out of work in South West Newham in 1997/8. Three hundred and thirteen of these young people agreed to participate in the second survey.

In July 2000 275 of the young people who participated in the original survey were contacted and 120 were interviewed. The findings provide information on the effect of the training and employment programmes on the lives of these young people and information about their life styles and aspirations.

### **Summary of main findings**

The survey findings show that Canning Town SRB, and other initiatives within Newham, have successfully enabled young people to access training courses and that young people are obtaining jobs at a greater rate than the national average.

#### *The non-participants*

The interviewers visited each address at least three times and found that many young people had moved since the last interview. Up to 40 per cent of the young people are likely to have moved.

#### *The participants*

There were equal numbers of young men and women. The majority of young people were aged between 19 and 21 years and White. Twelve per cent said that they had a disability or a long term illness. Nearly three quarters lived with their parents or a relative. Two thirds lived in rented accommodation.

#### *Home, family and social life*

Three quarters of the young people would like to move out of their present accommodation. Some were waiting for local authority accommodation whilst others cited high rents and unsuitable accommodation as reasons for not moving. Most young people aspired to owning their own home in the near future.

Sixty per cent wanted to leave the area. Reasons for this included the poor and dirty environment, the wrong place to raise children, feelings of lack of safety and wanting a new beginning.

Listening to music, visiting friends in their homes and going to the cinema are popular leisure activities for these young people. Fifty five per cent played sport, usually football, basketball and swimming.

Sports and leisure centres and libraries were the most used facilities by young people. Few frequented community centres or youth clubs. Young people used facilities and services within their immediate area and in the rest of Newham.

A minority of young people felt that they were well treated by a range of agencies providing services for young people. They felt that service providers didn't listen to young people, or understand and respect them.

Under a quarter of the young people (22 per cent) 'hung out' in public places. A minority of young people attended youth clubs.

### *Employment history*

Sixty three per cent of the young people were in employment at the time of the interview. Thirty per cent had been in continuous employment since they were last interviewed.

Those registered as unemployed fell from 56 per cent in 1997/8 to 27 per cent in the year 2000. During this period there was a rise in young people who were unemployed but not claiming benefit (from 17 per cent to 29 per cent).

Many young people (57 per cent) had been in and out of work in the last two years with most (68 per cent) staying in the same job for a year or less. A minority had not worked at all.

Young people were more likely to stay in a job when they were satisfied with their pay.

Neither gender nor ethnicity made a significant difference with respect to explaining why some young people were in continuous employment since the last survey and others were not.

Most of the jobs held by the young people were unskilled or semi-skilled.

Over half (54 per cent) wanted to set up their own business but lacked the finances and confidence to do so.

### *Job search activities*

Most young people looked for work in Newham and other local boroughs. The most popular method of looking for work was reading local newspapers followed by visiting the Job Centre. These habits remain unchanged since the time of the first interviews.

The most successful method of finding work was through friends, personal contacts and family.

### *Education and training history*

During the last two years over a third of the young people had gained qualifications at school, college or university.

Just over a half of the young people had attended at least one training course since they were last interviewed.

Many young people attended more than one training course to progress to a higher level of qualification.

More young people had heard about the training courses through their own personal contacts, their family and voluntary organisations than through the Job Centre or from a Careers Advisor.

Over 26 different agencies organised the courses for the young people. Work experience was offered in over half (57 per cent) of these courses. The time spent on work experience varied from occasionally to the entire length of the course. Most of the courses were vocational.

Only 37 per cent of those who attended training courses in the last two years said that the course had helped them find a job. This is less than the first survey when half the young people said that the course had helped them find a job.

Young people were very positive about their experiences on training courses. Most said they had learnt a new skill, made new friends and that the courses had given them a sense of personal achievement. Very few said that their training was a waste of time.

### *How young people feel about being out of work*

Many young people did not like being out of work. Two thirds of the young people felt bored and fed up with having no money. A third experienced depression, worry and felt less confident in their abilities. Fewer young people experienced these negative feelings about being out of work compared to the first survey. The same proportion of young people felt frustrated by services at the Job Centre.

Few people had given up looking for work.

### *Young people's perceptions of barriers to employment*

Young people's perceptions of their attributes (or lack of them) as barriers to employment declined significantly between the surveys suggesting that the training projects have enabled more young people to feel that they are less discriminated against in the labour market. In the 2000 survey just under half said that they lacked the right training/qualifications for the job and did not have enough work experience compared to two thirds in the first survey.

Young people thought that fewer employers were prejudice against their ethnic origin, their standard of reading and writing, and their spoken English.

Barriers to employment which are 'external' to young people have on the whole declined since the first survey. The most common barriers are perceived to be 'insiders getting jobs' and 'jobs not paying enough to make it worthwhile working'.

### *Looking for work*

The proportion of young people wanting interview practice and assistance with job search skills declined, sometimes significantly. At the time of the first survey over half the young people wanted such help compared to a quarter at the time of the second survey suggesting that projects have successfully achieved their aims with respect to improving the job search skills of many young people looking for work.

Fewer young people thought that they lacked interview experience; a decline from 39 to 36 per cent.

Over half those who were a parent found that childcare arrangements and costs made it difficult to attend an interview. The proportion of parents experiencing difficulties has increased since the last survey.

### **Thinking about a way forward**

Many young people appear to have moved out of the area or intend to move on. The factors contributing to this restless include:

- a poor environment
- a lack of available and affordable housing
- a demand for higher quality, better paid jobs
- suitable and affordable childcare
- feelings of being under-valued by the adult community and being defined as a 'problem'
- a perception by young people that they are not well-treated or respected by service providers
- a lack of support during the transition to young adulthood. Typically this transitional period is made more difficult when young people lack confidence and have low self-esteem.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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This report presents the findings from a follow up survey of young people who participated in a baseline study of 500 young people out of work which took place between November 1997 and March 1998.

The aim of the follow up survey is to provide information on any changes in young peoples' success in finding work in the context of the Canning Town SRB and other regeneration initiatives taking place in Newham.

### **Employment issues for young people in Newham**

The unemployment rate for young men and women aged 16 to 24 years living in Newham has fallen steadily since January 1998 and in south west Newham has fallen since January 1999. Between January 1998 and September 2000 the rate of decline in the four south west wards: Canning Town and Grange, Ordance, Beckton and Custom House and Silvertown, has been greater than the average for the borough. Nevertheless the Borough rates of unemployment remain higher than the London average, although the gap between the two has closed slightly since January 1998. In September 2000 the youth unemployment rate of the borough was almost twice that of the London average.

**TABLE 1**  
**Unemployment rates for 16 - 24 year olds**

	Jan 1998	Jan 1999	Jan 2000	Sept 2000
South West Newham	12.7	12.7	11.0	9.8
Borough	11.6	11.4	9.9	9.1
London	7.0	6.4	5.6	4.9

Source: GLA & ONS claimant count, London Research Centre, December 2000.

Differences in the rate of unemployment between the wards remain, with the highest rate of unemployment in Ordance ward and in September 2000 the rate of unemployment for young men was more than twice the rate for young women in each of the wards. Moreover the differential rate of unemployment between young men and women has increased since the research began.

This study has therefore taken place at a time when an increasing proportion of young people have found employment and in particular young women although the rate of unemployment for young people, in September 2000, in South West Newham was twice the London average.

**TABLE 2**  
**Unemployment rates for 16 - 24 year olds by ward**

	Jan 1998		Sept 2000	
	Men 16 -24 years	Women 16 - 24 years	Men 16 -24 years	Women 16 - 24 years
Beckton	17.0	9.7	12.6	5.0
Canning Town and Grange	14.5	14.3	11.8	5.6
Custom House and Silvertown	15.3	10.2	10.6	5.3
Ordance	22.6	11.3	19.6	8.4

### **The SRB**

Canning Town SRB began in April 1996 and is now in its fifth year. The programme aims to bring new employment opportunities to the area and to provide pathways to employment through training and links with the business sector (Canning Town SRB Delivery Plan 1996). Several projects within the SRB programme have been working towards enhancing the employment prospects, educational standards and skills of local people. These include training projects and projects aiming to:

- assist people obtain employment such as Canning Town Local Labour Hire, Newham Wise Training Programme, Customised and Targeted Training, Training Outreach and Training Marketing
- assist and attract businesses including Accelerating Development and Encouraging Business and the Development of the Industrial Lands projects
- improve properties, increase the diversity of properties and broaden the choice of tenure to include private ownership and housing associations
- support and encourage community groups, tackle drugs issues and assist young offenders and young people at risk of offending through the Crime Diversion projects and provide youth services and support more generally for young people through the refurbished Shipman Centre and a Youth Information and Advice service.

During the five years of the SRB programme the Partnership has been sensitive to the needs of local people and has approved additional projects. These include First Call to address the difficulties local people have in competing in the labour market and the Pioneers Project for supporting school/college leavers and those out of work whilst they complete vocational training<sup>1</sup>.

Collectively these SRB initiatives have the potential to provide new opportunities for young people to enable them to secure employment, access housing and become active citizens within their community. The findings from the survey will provide some assessment of how these activities and programmes have affected the lives of some young people.

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<sup>1</sup> This project had not started at the time of the research but as the research findings suggest this project has the potential of meeting the needs of young people in the area.

## Methodology

In the baseline study 500 young people were interviewed between November 1997 and March 1998. At the time of these interviews 313 young people agreed to be re-interviewed in 18 months to 2 years time. In 1998 the researchers anticipated that it was likely that 100 of these young people would participate in the follow up survey (Roberts 1999).

In July 2000 275 of the young people who participated in the original survey were contacted<sup>2</sup> using the addresses and telephone numbers or just telephone numbers provided by the young people. Where addresses were provided researchers visited the addresses at least three times on different days of the week and at different times of the day/evening.

One hundred and twenty young people were successfully interviewed between July and September 2000 using a structured questionnaire. Interviewers were drawn from the research team at CIS and 12 students who underwent a short training course in interviewing techniques. Interviews took place at various locations in and around the area including the homes of young people. The questionnaire covered a number of issues including:

- background details such as length of time unemployed, education, skills, training, housing, family circumstances, leisure activities, facilities used etc
- job search habits, such as type of work looked for, how and where they look for work, wages they expect, aspirations etc
- perceived barriers, including discrimination, childcare responsibilities, language, basic skills problems, lack of skills or qualifications etc.

Many of the questions about family background, employment, and job search activities were identical to the base line questionnaire. In 2000 at the request of the Partnership, additional questions were asked about young peoples' lifestyles.

The young people were asked about training programmes and the periods they had spent in employment since they were last interviewed which could have been over two years ago. The recall of the young people may not have been completely accurate, given that many young people had been in and out of work and attended several training courses during the two years. Nevertheless many young people provided the interviewers with a detailed resume of their job search and training activities during the last two years.

An analysis of the available information on the 155 young people who were contacted but not successfully re-interviewed shows that:

- sixteen gave addresses or telephone numbers which did not exist
- no contact was made with six young people who were travelling or seriously ill
- twenty-one young people refused to participate
- one hundred and twelve young people were 'not known at this address' or the researchers were told that the young person 'does not live here'.

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<sup>2</sup> Thirty eight addresses were found to be too incomplete or inaccurate to make it worth contacting the young person again.

The main findings from the 2000 survey are described in the following section. Where the findings are particularly relevant to the activities of SRB projects some comparisons with the findings of the initial survey are included. The main comparisons of the findings from the surveys are summarised in the second section. The report ends with a discussion on some of the main issues arising from the findings of both surveys.

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## 2. FINDINGS

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### The sample

There is a strong suggestion from the information gathered from the process of contacting the young people that many had moved to a different address during the two year interlude between the surveys. It may be that as many as 275 young people have moved in the last two years. Since there is some evidence that a minority of young people gave researchers misleading information about their address it is possible that some young people who were no longer 'known at the address', had also given researchers an address at which they never lived. Even so, it does appear that up to 40 per cent of the young people are likely to have moved. We do not know where these young people had moved to but on the few occasions where parents had been prepared to give information to researchers, the young people had moved out of the London Borough of Newham.

### Personal characteristics of young people interviewed

Equal numbers of women and men were interviewed. The majority of interviewees were aged between 19 and 21 years and 16 per cent were over the age of 25 years. The self-defined ethnic origins of the respondents varied. The largest group were White (40 per cent) followed by Asian (25 per cent) and African-Caribbean (15 per cent). Twelve per cent of the respondents said that they had a disability or a long term illness.

**TABLE 3**  
**Ethnic origin of respondents**

	%
African	6
African-Caribbean	15
Asian	25
Mixed parentage	8
White	40
Other	7

Note: The 'Other' category includes for example Iraqi, Chinese, Irish, Turkish Cypriot. The percentages do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding up.

### Home, family and social life

Two thirds of the respondents lived in rented accommodation. Most rented from the local authority (40 per cent), and the others rented accommodation in equal numbers from private landlords and housing associations (13 per cent each). Just over a quarter of the sample were home owners (26 per cent). Nearly three quarters (73 per cent) of the respondents lived with their parents or relatives and seventeen per cent had children of their own. Forty five per cent of the respondents said that at least one member of their immediate family was registered as unemployed which is a 23 per cent increase since the last survey (Roberts 1999). Half of the young people had 'some' or 'most' of their friends unemployed.

Three quarters of the young people would like to move out of their present accommodation. They gave a variety of explanations for why they have not moved. Whilst many found their current accommodation convenient more young people were prevented from moving due to high rents, lack of suitable accommodation or they were waiting for a local authority property.

**TABLE 4**  
**Reasons for not moving (n=90)**

	%
Convenient where living at moment	42
Rents too high	31
No suitable accommodation	11
Don't know what they want	8
Landlords/ladies are put off by me	1
Other*	23

Notes:

1. The majority of the Other category included 'waiting to move', 'on the council waiting list' (10).
2. Percentages will not necessarily add up to 100 per cent as respondents could give more than one response and the percentage has been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Nearly two thirds (64 per cent) would like to own their own home and to move out of the area in the near future (60 per cent). The prime reasons for young people wanting to move were a dirty, unpleasant and rundown environment unsuitable for raising children and residents who were socially unacceptable.

**TABLE 5**  
**Main reasons for wanting to move out of area (n=72)**

	%
Dirty, polluted, crowded, rundown and unpleasant environment	34
Not the place to bring up children, don't like the people	19
Crime, feel unsafe	15
Want a new place, new beginning	14
Lack of facilities, good schools, transport	11
Boring area	8

Note: Percentages will not necessarily add up to 100 per cent as respondents could give more than one response and the percentage has been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Many young people were satisfied with their current income and of those that were not (53 per cent) the overwhelming majority were planning to improve their situation by getting a job, looking for another job or planning to study or attend further training courses. Only two dissatisfied young people were not planning to change their current situation.

The young people were asked about their future goals. The most common goals were to own their own business (24 per cent) and buy a house and car, and start a

family and have a career (20 per cent). Others aspired to being an electrician or administrator or to be promoted, whilst others wished to move out of the borough.

The young people spent their leisure time in a variety of ways. The most popular activity was listening to music. Under half surfed the net and few visited chat lines.

**TABLE 6**  
**Home based leisure activities**

	Every day/most days %	Most weeks/sometimes %	never %
Watch TV/Video	60	38	3
Have friends over to their home	31	58	12
Read a book	30	47	23
Listen to music	88	11	0
Play computer games	15	43	42
Surfing the net	17	31	53
Visiting chat lines on internet	3	17	80

Note. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding up or down to the nearest number.

Outside their own home young people regularly visited friends at their home and went to the cinema. Few went to amusement arcades or 'hung around' on the streets.

**TABLE 7**  
**Leisure activities outside own home**

	Every day/most days %	Most weeks/sometimes %	never %
Go to amusement arcades	0	22	78
Go to parties, dances, discos	8	65	28
Go to pubs	3	48	50
Visit friends at their home	40	52	7
Hang around on street/in town	8	14	78
Go to the cinema	9	74	18

Note. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding up.

The majority of young people did not attend any religious services or activities (61 per cent). Those who did participate in religious activities usually did so with their family.



Over half the young people played a sport (55 per cent) usually 'most weeks' or 'sometimes' (70 per cent) with just under a third playing 'most days' or 'every day' (30 per cent). The most popular sports were football, basketball and swimming.

Young people were also asked about groups and organisations they belonged to and where they were situated. As may be expected from the above findings many young people (58 per cent) used a sports or leisure centre or gym. These centres were typically located either in the young person's local area (47 per cent) or in Newham (51 per cent). Slightly fewer young people used libraries (55 per cent). Few young people went to community centres (17 per cent), attended youth clubs (14 per cent), were in contact with a detached youth worker (13 per cent) or attended Tenants' Associations meetings (5 per cent). Broadly speaking an equal number of young people used these services locally as they did in the rest of Newham. For example, 44 per cent used a local youth club and 41 per cent used a youth club in Newham. Likewise 48 per cent used a local library whilst 55 per cent used a library within another part of Newham.

With respect to accessing organisations that may assist with finding employment, half the young people used a Job Centre (51 per cent) whilst a few used local training agencies (11 per cent) and local drop-in agencies (12 per cent). More young people used the local Job Centre (70 per cent) rather than the Job Centres in other areas of Newham (40 per cent)<sup>3</sup>.

A minority of young people felt that they had been well treated by a range of agencies providing services for young people. Only at Youth Centres did more than half the young people feel well treated. One in four felt well treated at school and in local shops whilst one in five felt well treated at the Job Centre.

**TABLE 8**  
**How young people felt they were treated by service providers in their area**

	Well %	OK %	Badly %
At the Job Centre	20	56	24
At the doctor	30	53	18
At the hospital	22	51	27
At college	42	47	11
At school	26	55	19
At Youth Centre	51	44	4
At Leisure Centre	43	53	4
At local shops	25	55	20

Note: percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding up.

Young people who said that they were treated badly were asked for their opinions about the services. The following are examples of their comments about Job Centres, doctors and hospitals, and local shops:

<sup>3</sup> Some young people used more than one Job Centre. The percentages are therefore more than 100 per cent. Note: the young people may not necessarily have used local drop-in agencies for obtaining employment.

#### *Job Centre:*

*'Don't like young people, they think we are lazy. Don't believe you want a job'.*

*'Can't relate or emphasis with your social position'.*

*'The Job Centre is prejudiced towards your age. They don't listen to what you want'.*

*'On New Deal they force you into jobs, they don't want to help'.*

#### *Doctors and hospitals:*

*'Doctors do not treat you as an adult. You get pushed around'.*

*'They ask if you take drugs and if you do they don't want to know'.*

*'They do not listen to what you say'.*

*'They lack sensitivity, they are cold with young people'.*

#### *Local shops:*

*'Signs limiting children entry assume all kids steal'*

*'Young people are seen as troublemakers and thieves'*

*'Not very welcoming or patient'*

The experiences of two young people were summarised by researchers and illustrate some typical responses to the services they receive:

*Julie, a 19 year old White woman, has stopped going for her benefit as she felt she was treated as a lazy young person by the Job Centre. This arose because they wanted her to go on a course she had no interest in. Julie said that many people are put on training courses that they had to attend otherwise their benefit would be cut. She does 'cash in hand' jobs to support herself financially. She says she lacks confidence at interviews and this makes it difficult to get a 'proper' job.*

*Brian, a 20 year old White man, felt that the Job Centre discriminates against youths who had just finished school and that this leaves school leavers on the streets with nothing to do which according to Brian, explains the crime rate. In his experience training programmes have been useless as they do not offer the young person the opportunity to learn the skills they would like for their future career. Brian feels that young people's goals and aspirations are seldom listened to or taken seriously.*

## **Youth clubs and hanging around on streets**

A minority of young people attended youth clubs (17); nine were male and eight female, and the majority were Asian (8), African/African-Caribbean (4) and White (3). The majority of these young people lived at home (16) and many of their families owned their home (10). Most were employed at the time of the interview (13) and 'never hang around on the streets' (13). A small minority who used the youth clubs appeared to be 'high risk' young people, and two admitted to having criminal records.

Of those hanging around on the streets (26) the majority were women (16) and mostly Asian (11), White (7), and African/African-Caribbean (5). The majority lived with their parents or other relatives (24). Three were in full time education and 12 had left school since the first interview. Whilst the majority were in employment at the time of the interview (16), most had been in and out of work in the last two years. Five were on a training course. One young person admitted to having a criminal record.

Most of the young people 'hung out' in a group (24) - several (9) 'hung out' most or every day. Few appeared to be in contact with services for young people. Three young people attended youth clubs and two were in contact with a detached youth worker. Four visited community centres.

Thus under a quarter (22 per cent) of the young people 'hung out' in public places. Most of these young people did not use youth or community centres and were not in contact with detached youth workers. The reasons for this were not explored in the survey but a better understanding of why these young people preferred to meet on streets and parks might enable policy makers and practitioners to develop actions that would assist the integration of young people into their local community.

## **Employment history**

Nearly two thirds (63 per cent) of the young people were in employment at the time of the interview. Of these young people over three quarters (77 per cent) were in full time employment. Nearly a third (30 per cent) had been in continuous employment since they last spoke to a researcher. Just over a quarter (27 per cent) of all the young people were registered unemployed at the time of the interview which was a significant decline since the first phase of the research when over half the sample (56 per cent) were registered unemployed (Roberts 1999). There was however a significant rise from 17 per cent in the first survey to 29 per cent in the second survey, of those who were unemployed and not claiming benefits.

Since they were last interviewed the majority of young people had either been in and out of work (57 per cent), or had not worked at all (13 per cent). Over half (53 per cent) the young people who were unemployed at the time of the interview in 2000 had been out of work for less than six months and over a quarter (27 per cent) out of work between six months and a year.

An analysis of the data found that there was no statistically significant difference with respect to age and continuous employment or gender and continuous

employment since the last interview.<sup>4</sup> Differences in the employment rate and different ethnic groups were also examined and this was not found to be statistically significant.<sup>5</sup> Thus it appears that explanations other than age, gender and ethnicity are required to explain why some of the young people have been continuously employed for the last two years whilst others have not.

Most of the 68 young people who had been in and out of work had had two jobs. Between them they had had a total of 147 jobs.

**TABLE 9**  
**The number of times young people had been in and out of work in the last 18 months**

No. of jobs	No. of young people
1	12
2	37
3	16
4	2
5	1

Over two thirds (69 per cent) of these jobs were full time and although just over half were permanent (54 per cent), most of the young people were in these jobs for a year or less. Only a few had had the same job for over two years.

**TABLE 10**  
**Length of time young people were in a job**

	%
Two months or less	21
Three months to one year	47
Thirteen months to 2 years	20
Over 2 years	11

Note: information was given on a total of 162 jobs.

Unfortunately we do not know exactly why the young people changed jobs. The young people did not necessarily stay in jobs which they said were permanent; over half (53 per cent) the young people left permanent jobs within a year. This suggests that either many young people were dissatisfied with their position or that employers were dissatisfied with their performance. Of those young people working at the time of the interview (75) most were working in businesses, factories or banks performing unskilled or semi-skilled jobs (24), or providing a service including catering, personnel work, nursery assistant, lifeguard (22) or working in shops/supermarkets (16). It is possible that this work did not meet their aspirations. Nevertheless many of those who had stayed in the same job for two years had the same types of jobs including cashier at McDonalds, shop assistance, working in a laundrette, barmaid in a public house, night porter at a hotel and cashier at Asda. The significant difference between the two groups of young people was however their financial situation; 58 per cent of those who have been

<sup>4</sup> An independent sample T test was used to examine the difference between age and employment, and gender and employment, neither of which were significant at the 5 per cent level of significance. The scores were 0.261 and 0.255 respectively.

<sup>5</sup> A one way ANOVA test was used and this was not significant at the 5 per cent level of significance (0.974).

continuously in work were satisfied with their current pay compared to 36 per cent who have been in and out of work.

Over half (54 per cent) of the young people wanted to set up their own business but had not done so mainly due to financial constraints (75 per cent). Over a quarter (28 per cent) said that they lacked the confidence and necessary skills to set up their own business. Not surprisingly the young people wanted financial assistance as well as training and support to enable them to do so.

### Job search activities

Most young people out of work at the time of the interview were looking for work in Newham (75 per cent) and other local boroughs (67 per cent). Two thirds were looking for work in Central London, less than a third (31 per cent) on the outskirts of London and under a quarter (22 per cent) in other places in the country or abroad. The young people were using various methods to look for jobs, the most popular being local newspapers (81 per cent).

**TABLE 11**  
**How out of work young people were looking for work at the time of the interview (n= 36)**

	%
Local newspapers	81
Visit the Job Centre	72
Personal contacts (family and friends)	47
National newspapers	36
Approach employers directly	31
Magazines/specialist journals	25
Internet	22
Private employment agencies	19
Other*	28

Note: The 'Other' category includes looking at notices in shop windows and visiting employers directly.

The young people who were in work at the time of the interview had found their job using a variety of methods, but the most common by far was through friends. Informal methods of finding jobs seem to have been more successful.

**TABLE 12**  
**How young people found their current job**

	%
Through friends	30
Through temporary work, voluntary work or work placement	13
Private employment agency	13
Approached employer directly	12
Through family	10
Job Centre	8
Local newspapers	7
Other	7

Over the last 18 months the majority (57 per cent) of young people had looked for jobs. Again they had found personal contacts and informal methods of searching for jobs the most helpful.

**TABLE 13**  
**Most helpful ways of finding employment in last 18 months.**

	%
Friends/personal contacts	27
Family	16
Self	15
Private job agency/fair	14
Local newspapers	9
Job Centre	8
National newspapers	4
Other*	9

Notes:

1. The young people could give more than one helpful way of finding employment. 68 young people gave 116 responses.
2. The 'other' category includes finding jobs on the internet (2), through voluntary/temporary work (2), college/school (3) and training courses (2).

Very few (13) young people were not actively looking for work. Most were looking after children (6) whilst others were studying (4), did not think it was worth coming off benefits (3), or had given up looking (2).<sup>6</sup>

### **Education and training history**

At the time of the interviews a small number of respondents were either in full time education (12 per cent) or part time education (9 per cent). Most students were attending either Newham College or the University of East London. Other students were attending colleges and universities in other parts of London including Tower Hamlets, Tottenham, Westminster and Southwark. Since the researchers had last spoken to the young people almost half (48 per cent) had left school, college or university and of these students a third (19 students) had left without qualifications.

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<sup>6</sup> Respondents could give more than one response.

Over a third (34 per cent) of the young people gained qualifications at school, college or university over the last two years and a minority obtained more than one qualification. The majority obtained their qualifications at Newham College (46 per cent), and a few at Landmark Training, sixth form colleges including NewVic, and local education projects (15 per cent for each of these institutions). Fewer young people attended University (12 per cent). Most of the qualifications gained by the young people were vocational; typically NVQs levels 2 and 3, GNVQs and certificates or diplomas.

At the time of the interviews a minority of young people were on training courses, which probably reflects the fact that many interviews occurred during August. However since the last time they were interviewed over half (52 per cent) the young people had attended 120 training courses between them. Most of these young people had attended two courses during this period.

**TABLE 14**  
**The number of young people who have attended training courses in the last 18 months (n= 63)**

	No of young people
One course	25
Two courses	26
Three courses	7
Four courses	3
five courses	2

Note. The young people were asked about five courses or less.

The young people had heard about the training courses from a variety of different sources ranging from the more formal Job Centres and Careers Centres to informal contacts including friends and family. Just under half the young people heard about training courses more formally through Job Centres, Careers Advisors and College, whilst others had heard about training programmes through their own contacts and family and friends, emphasising the importance of the young person's informal networks and contacts in hearing about courses.

**TABLE 15**  
**How heard about courses**

	Percentage of young people
Job Centre	19
Previous job/training course	14
Friends/family	14
Careers advisor	11
College/university	11
Voluntary organisations	10
Leaflets/magazines	8
Careers Centre	5
Other*	8

Note: 'other' includes making an inquiry and current job.

Over 26 different statutory and voluntary agencies organised the training courses for the young people. The courses ranged from one day's training to three years.

**TABLE 16**  
**Length of training courses**

	No of young people
One day to six weeks	8
Seven weeks to six months	8
Seven months - one year	23
One - three years	14

Note: nine young people were uncertain how long their course was as they did not complete it and one person did not answer the question.

The type of training course typically attended were NVQ levels 1 and 2 and the more popular type of courses included business administration, childcare, painting and decorating, bricklaying and computing. Five young people stated that their NVQ course was level 3 and a few were taking professional qualifications such as accounting. Over half (57 per cent) of these courses offered work placements which were organised in a variety of different ways. Some young people gained work experience occasionally whilst others had one day a week for a limited period, whereas others had work experience everyday for four months or over, reflecting the different types of training courses.

With respect to gaining qualifications at the end of their course, just over half the young people obtained a qualification.

**TABLE 17**  
**Qualifications obtained**

	No of young people
None	21
Certificate of passing	16
NVQ 1 - 2	11
BTEC	3
NVQ3/GNVQ advanced	2
Other*	4

Note:

1. Six young people did not respond to the question.
2. The 'other' category includes 4 young people who weren't sure if they obtained a qualification.

As noted above many young people had attended more than one training course. Young people accessed their second and third courses in a similar way, and the courses were of a similar type, for example, childcare training, computer skills, and welding. The courses were organised by a wide range of agencies and less than half had work placements. Most of the young people either left before they completed a course, were still attending the course or had received a certificate. The following pen pictures are illustrative of young people attending more than one training course:

*A young African Caribbean man heard of a Digital Media course through friends. At the end of the 10 week course he received a certificate for attending and passing. He also attended a two week course organised by TS2K on film and T.V. production and a four week multi-media and special effects course at East Ham College and received certificates for both courses.*



*A 19 year old Pakistani woman took two courses with Landmark Training which a Careers Advisor had informed her about. The first was a NVQ level 1 in business administration and the second was NVQ level 2 also in business administration.*

*A White male, aged 21 years, completed a two week NVQ level 1 in security work at East Ham College and started a NVQ in Painting and Decorating at St Luke's Centre which he had heard about from Stratford Labour Hire. He did not complete this course as he found a job.*

Of the young people who had been on training courses in the last 18 months just over a third (37 per cent) thought that their training had helped them get a job. This limited success rate may have been due to a shortage of demand for the particular skills acquired by the young person (Lawless 1995) rather than any inadequacy in the training course. The majority (82 per cent) of young people thought that, in principle, training programmes did help young people get jobs and thought that the training would be useful in the future (69 per cent). These findings support the view that training for young people should be specifically tailored to the type of labour market they will have to enter (Hagell and Shaw 1996).

The young people were more positive about other aspects of their training courses. The overwhelming majority (83 per cent) felt that it had given them the chance to learn new skills, meet people and make new friends (75 per cent), given them a sense of personal achievement (72 per cent) and helped them see options for future work (67 per cent). Sixty per cent thought it was a good way of getting work experience. Very few young people thought that their training had been a waste of time (9 per cent).

### **How young people feel about being out of work**

For many young people being out of work was a negative experience, only a small minority were happy not going to work. Most felt bored and fed up with having no money.

**TABLE 18**  
**How young people feel about being out of work**

	%
Bored	68
Fed up with having no money	66
Frustrated and angry	45
Frustrated by experience at Job Centre	41
Dependent on family	40
Depressed	35
Worried	34
Less confident in your own abilities	34
Quite isolated and alone	28
Happy not to have to go to work	17
Other	4

Compared to the first survey fewer young people felt frustrated and angry, depressed, or worried about being unemployed (Roberts 1999). In the first survey over half the young people had these feelings about being out of work compared to under half in 2000. This suggests that young people out of work are now better supported. However, almost the same proportion of young people felt frustrated with the services at the Job Centre in 1997/8 as in 2000, suggesting that their services have not improved.

### Young people's perceptions of barriers to employment

Of the young people out of work at the time of the interview just over a third (35 per cent) couldn't find a job using the skills that they had and just under a third (31 per cent) said that they did not know what type of job they wanted. A few (13 per cent) said that they earned enough cash in hand and did not want a permanent job. Those who were out of work tended to lack confidence: some said they did not feel confident (42 per cent), or thought that they did not come across well in interviews (38 per cent).

Just under half the young people thought that they did not have the right training or qualifications or enough work experience. Nevertheless this is a notable decline compared to the initial survey when nearly two thirds of the young people thought that they did not have these skills or experience. Similarly fewer young people felt that they were discriminated against due to their ethnic origin, their reading or writing or spoken English.

**TABLE 19**  
**What young people think puts employers off them**

	2000 survey %	1997/8 survey %
I don't have the right training or qualifications	48	65
I don't have enough work experience	44	62
My age	25	44
It's a long time since I have worked	22	41
My ethnic origin/people are prejudiced against me	18	33
I'm not good enough at reading or writing	18	26
Employers are put off by the area I live in	15	28
My voice or accent puts employers off	15	26
My spoken English is not good enough	12	18

Note: In 2000 less than 10 young people responded to other questions such as having a criminal record, being a parent, or having a disability, as things they thought puts employers off them.

Young people also attributed external factors to their inability to find a job. Sixty four per cent thought that jobs don't pay enough to make it worth working, and 63 per cent that 'insiders', that is those already working in a particular firm or

organisation get the jobs. Over half (56 per cent) thought that there were too many applicants for each job vacancy. The proportion of young people attributing these external factors to their inability to find a job has declined for all the external barriers described in the original survey except public transport (Roberts 1999).<sup>7</sup>

**TABLE 20**  
**What young people perceive to be barriers to employment**

	2000 survey %	1997/8 survey %
Jobs don't pay to make it worth working	64	71
Insiders (already working in organisation/business) get the jobs	63	74
Benefits system makes it difficult to accept short term jobs	60	66
Too many applications for jobs	56	66
Need personal contacts to get jobs	46	58
There are not many jobs around anywhere	43	55
Public transport is poor in this area	38	34
There are more jobs for people from a different ethnic group	23	27

All the young people were asked about the difficulties in attending interviews. Almost three quarters (73 per cent) of the young people had had a job interview since the first survey emphasising the importance of preparing young people for interviews and enabling them to attend interviews. Over half of those who were a parent found that childcare arrangements and costs made it difficult to attend an interview and almost half of the parents felt disadvantaged due to their parental responsibilities.

A comparison between the findings of the two surveys shows mixed results. On the one hand proportionately fewer young people lack interview experience, and fewer have difficulties in having the right clothes, knowing how to get to interviews, and paying for travel fares whilst on the other, proportionately more young people lack confidence and have difficulties with childcare arrangements and childcare costs.

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<sup>7</sup> This is an interesting finding given that the Jubilee Line has a station at Canning Town. It is likely however that many young people use the buses and that their views are informed by their experiences of using the bus service.

**TABLE 21**  
**Difficulties in attending interviews**

	2000 survey %	1997/8 survey %
Lack of interview experience	36	39
Lack of confidence	33	31
Not knowing how to get there	27	29
Paying for travel fares	25	42
Not having the right clothes for the interview	17	26
Childcare arrangements	10	6
Childcare costs	9	5

Half of those who received assistance filling in job applications did so from friends and family. Others received support from the Job Centre and training organisations. Family and friends were also an important source of support for the other tasks. Agencies and the Job Centre offered young people assistance with job search skills whilst tutors and training supervisors assisted many young people to write CVs and built up their confidence for job interviews.

**TABLE 22**  
**Assistance received to find work and assistance required**

	Assistance received %	Assistance still required %
Job searching skills	23	14
Filling in job applications	27	22
Writing a CV	36	22
Building confidence at a job interview	18	18

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### 3. COMPARING THE BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP SURVEY FINDINGS

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To measure change, the same young people were asked a number of identical questions. The extent to which these changes have been brought about by the SRB programme is difficult to say, but in general the training and employment projects both in the area and Newham more generally appear to have had a positive effect on assisting young people find employment. Some young people attended educational courses and training programmes run by agencies and institutions which received Canning Town SRB funding whilst others may well have received assistance from other SRB funded initiatives.

#### The samples

The information on change is based only on the information from those who have, on the whole, remained in the same accommodation or who had family willing to pass on their new address to researchers. Not surprisingly the follow-up survey had a larger proportion of young people who lived with their family (an increase from over half to nearly three quarters). The percentage of those renting from the local authority also increased from 33 per cent to 40 per cent. Home owners fell slightly from 26 per cent to 28 per cent. As may be expected from a sample of young people the proportion of those with children rose, from 10 to 17 per cent. The increase in the sample of those with disabilities or long term illness from 7 to 12 per cent suggests that this group of young people may be more likely to remain in the area.

Proportionately more women were interviewed in the follow up survey; they were 38 per cent of the sample in the first survey and half the sample in the second, suggesting that more young women have remained in the area.

The follow-up survey was comparable to the initial survey in terms of self-definitions of ethnicity.

**TABLE 23**  
**Ethnic origin of respondents**

	1997/8 %	2000 %
African	10	6
African-Caribbean	12	15
Asian	22	25
White	41	40
Other	15	19

Note: The 'Other' category includes for example Iraqi, Chinese, Irish, Turkish Cypriot and those with mixed parentage.

## **Employment history**

- registered unemployment has fallen by half from 56 to 27 per cent
- those who were unemployed but not registered as such increased from 17 to 29 per cent
- in many cases youth employment continues to be short-term; most young people had a job for less than a year
- more young people had at least one member of their immediate family who was unemployed - an increase from 31 to 45 per cent
- those who had recently done 'cash in hand work' rose slightly from 21 to 25 per cent
- the proportion who had considered setting up their own business rose significantly from 42 to 54 per cent.

## **Job search activities**

- young people's methods of looking for work remained essentially the same; local newspapers, the Job Centre and personal contacts through friends and family remained the most common approaches
- the most successful methods of finding jobs were informally through friends and through contacts at existing work places, direct approaches to employers, and private employment agencies.

## **Education and training history**

- far fewer young people were in full time or part time education
- many young people continued attending training courses. Almost two thirds had attended or were attending training courses at the time of the first interview and just over half had attended or were attending training courses since the first interview
- the types of training courses continued to vary enormously
- work experience continued to vary in length and intensity
- there has been a notable decline in the proportion of young people who thought that their training had helped them get a job from half to 37 per cent
- young people continued to be positive about other aspects of their training courses including giving them a chance to learn new skills, to meet people and make new friends, and gave them a sense of achievement.

## **Perceptions of barriers to employment**

### *Personal attributes/circumstances*

- there has been a notable decline in the proportion of young people who think that they do not have the right training or qualifications (a decrease from 65 to 48 per cent) or enough work experience (a decrease from 62 to 44 per cent)
- there has been a significant decline in the proportion of young people thinking that employers are put off by the length of time they have been out of work (a decrease from 41 to 22 per cent)
- notably fewer young people perceive that employers are put off by the area they live in (a decrease from 28 to 15 per cent)

- fewer young people thought that their reading or writing was not good enough (a decrease from 26 to 18 per cent) or that their spoken English was not good enough (a decrease from 18 to 12 per cent).

#### *External barriers to employment*

- the mostly commonly perceived external barriers remain the same; insiders get the jobs, jobs don't pay enough to make it worth working, too many applications for jobs, and the benefits system makes it difficult to take short term jobs. The proportion of young people perceiving these factors as barriers to employment has decreased but over half the young people still perceive them as problematic.

#### *Difficulties attending interviews*

- the proportion of young people experiencing difficulties in paying for travel fares and not having the right clothes for the interview has decreased
- there has been a slight decrease in young people perceiving that they lack interview experience (a decrease from 39 to 36 per cent)
- there has been a slight increase in young people feeling a lack of confidence (an increase from 31 to 33 per cent)
- there has been an increase in the proportion of young people with children experiencing difficulties in attending interviews (an increase from 11 to 19 per cent).

#### *Looking for work*

- the proportion of young people requiring assistance for practical aspects of looking for work has significantly declined. Those who would like assistance with job searching skills has declined more than three fold from 52 per cent to 14 per cent. Those requiring assistance with CV writing skills has declined more than two fold from 49 per cent to 22 per cent.

### **Thinking about a way forward**

The findings from this study show that the Canning Town SRB and other SRB initiatives within Newham have successfully enabled young people to access training courses and obtain jobs. The rate of unemployment for young people in South West Newham during 1999 and 2000 moved closer to the borough average suggesting that the projects within the Canning Town SRB have been particularly successful in achieving their aims. Unemployment rates in South West Newham for young people fell by 2.9 cent between January 1999 and September 2000 which was a decline of almost twice the national average, which fell by 1.5 per cent during the same period. Nevertheless in September 2000 the unemployment rate for young people in the London Borough of Newham was twice as high as the average for London.

The findings from the survey suggest some action that could be taken to consolidate the progress being made in improving job opportunities for young people in South West Newham. A number of issues about providing support for

young people as they progress from school and college to the world of work and make the transition from teenagers to young adults are discussed. The main issues arising from the findings are discussed below.

### **Restless young people**

It is possible that up to 40 per cent of the young people contacted for the second interview moved accommodation, possibly out of the area. In addition the majority of young people who have remained at the same address wanted to move out of their current accommodation, which was often their parental home, and also to leave the area. Women and those with disabilities or long term illnesses were most likely to remain at the same address.

The reasons for this restlessness are likely to be more extensive, and complex, than identified in the survey. Nevertheless the findings indicate that the run down and unattractive environment which was perceived as dirty, polluted and unsafe, contributed to the young people's negative feelings about the area. Social tensions and a reluctance to bring children up in the locality also contributed to young people's lack of commitment to the neighbourhood. Some young people also wanted to move out 'to make a fresh start'. By way of contrast recent research has found that in one disadvantaged neighbourhood, with high rates of unemployment and crime, that the overwhelming majority of the young people did not want to move out (Johnston *et al* 2000). These findings suggest that young people do not necessarily wish to leave the disadvantaged communities in which they grow up. The challenge for policy makers and practitioners in Newham is therefore to create the conditions necessary to encourage young people to remain in the area as they make the transition into adulthood.

### **Available and affordable housing**

During the 1990s it has been increasingly difficult for young single people to make the transition to independent living. Less social housing was available for young single people in the 1990s (Coles *et al* 1999). The cuts in financial support for 16 and 17 year olds and reduced income support for those under 25 years together with low wages and the lack of priority given to housing young people moving out of their parental home, have all added to the problem (Rugg 1999). Not surprisingly there has been a growth of young people remaining in their parental home for longer (Rugg 1999).

The experiences of the young people who participated in the survey reflect this trend. The overwhelming majority lived with their parents or a relative, many were waiting to be rehoused by the local authority or were experiencing difficulties moving due to high rents and lack of suitable accommodation.

### **Linking education, training and the labour market**

Research findings highlight the importance of developing employment initiatives on the basis of reliable evidence obtained from employers, trainers and young people (Parsons and Marshall 1996; Green *et al* 1998; Roberts 1999). The findings suggest however that fewer young people are finding that training courses assist them



obtain jobs (a decline from 50 to 37 per cent), suggesting that a mis-match between young people's skills and available jobs may be developing. Research has also shown that where the relationships between employers, trainers and young people are well-established the quality of training is typically improved (Hodkinson *et al* 1996). Developing these relationships and having a more integrated overall training programme within Newham is part of the 'Access to Jobs Strategy' (LBN; Access to Jobs Strategy 1997), and these findings suggest that the progress of the implementation of this strategy might usefully be reviewed.

A plethora of agencies and organisations within Newham refer young people to training programmes and a wide range of organisations deliver training. For these reasons establishing a co-ordinated and quality training programme across the borough offering a wide range of opportunities for young people will inevitably be complex and take some time to develop. Building stronger links between education, training and the labour market is likely to bring further benefits to young people in their search for better employment opportunities.

### **Job aspirations and work opportunities**

The overwhelming majority of young people were committed to working and many had conventional aspirations - wanting a 'real' job, to own a house and have a family. A quarter of the young people aspired to setting up their own business. As the findings from the first survey showed many of these young people left school with few formal qualifications and had poor standards of basic literacy and numeracy (Roberts 1999). For these young people the transition from school into work has typically been a difficult and long process with many experiencing periods of employment interspersed with unemployment and attending training courses. At the time of the second survey many were still exploring the possibility of finding better paid work whilst others were intending to attend more training/education courses to gain higher grade qualifications and improve their earnings potential. These activities can be expected to continue given that many young people began with few, if any, educational qualifications.

Various studies have found that focussing training too extensively on vocational courses does not necessarily provide employment opportunities or meet the needs of young people (McGregor and McConnachie 1995). The aspirations of young people to own their business suggests that courses to provide them with a range of skills including financial management, marketing, product design and so on is likely to match with some of the young people's future aspirations.

A number of difficulties remain which are beyond the control of the young people themselves. The young people talked about the need for *'more work opportunities for real jobs not rotten jobs'* and the necessity to *'make jobs that people are interested in, not McDonalds' jobs'*. As more young people obtain more advanced qualifications and return to the labour market better qualified the demand for quality jobs is likely to increase. Having quality jobs easily accessible to the residents of Canning Town is likely to encourage more young people to remain in the area.

Related to the importance of the availability of quality jobs are rates of pay. The findings show that rates of pay are a very important factor in young people's decisions to apply for a job, 64 per cent did not think that jobs paid enough, and to

remain in the same job for over a year. Finding a job is not necessarily sufficient to meet the aspirations of many young people nor to enable them to become less marginalised. As Atkinson (1998) said 'Unemployment may cause social exclusion, but employment does not ensure social inclusion; whether or not it does so depends on the quality of the work offered' (p.v).

The findings show that young people with children have become more excluded due to difficulties in finding suitable childcare arrangements whilst they attend interviews and during their working hours. Increasing childcare provision would assist an increasing number of young people in their search for employment.

### **Integration into community life**

The findings from the survey indicate some of the reasons why young people feel marginalised from their local community. It is likely that the survey findings do not identify all the issues which contribute to young peoples' feelings of being undervalued but they provide a useful starting point.

Research has shown that it is not unusual for young people living in urban areas to feel that they are misunderstood and not listened to (see for example Brown *et al* 1995) and the findings in this report are similar. Many young people did not feel well-treated by those providing services which are often essential for young people such as the Job Centre, colleges, hospitals and local shop keepers. Typically they did not feel listened to or taken seriously. Some felt that they were pressurised into taking courses they were not interested in. Being defined as 'a problem' by local agencies and businesses is likely to marginalise young people and to contribute to their restlessness. The increase in the proportion of young people who are not registered as unemployed even though they are out of work, is a further indication that some young people are becoming increasingly marginalised by the system.

Building on existing interests is one way to engage young people. The findings show that most of all young people enjoyed listening to music, visiting each other in their homes and going to the cinema, parties and discos. Several young people expressed an interest in working in the music industry or owning their own music production business. Over half of the young people played a sport and therefore used sports or leisure centres. The most popular sports were football, basketball and swimming. Supporting and encouraging young people to participate in these activities may be one approach to increasing their commitment to the area.

A minority of young people participated in community activities through local community centres, youth clubs and tenants' associations. It would be useful to know more about these young people and their reasons for participating in local activities. This information may be used to develop programmes to enhance participation in community activities.

### **Overcoming personal uncertainties**

The everyday uncertainties experienced by young people as they become young adults has been well documented (for example Johnston *et al* 2000: Brown *et al* 1995). This transitional period is made more difficult when young people lack self confidence and one reason for low self-esteem is economic and social exclusion

(McGregor and McConnachie 1995). The comments of two young people illustrate how young people can feel:

*More help should be available to those looking for work. Leaving school and college is an uncertain and alienating and isolating period. Employers should have a responsibility to make themselves visible and accessible to potential workers (Indian male).*

*Young people need help with getting new skills but not stop benefits as it makes you more depressed. I am bored of doing nothing so I drink and smoke and think that I am getting into bad habits (African-Caribbean male).*

Removing these barriers which contributes to low self esteem and marginalisation will enable young people to becoming economically independent and socially confident. To achieve this an integrated system of support has been found to be effective (Banks and Ullah 1987) providing young people with social support as well as training to acquire skills. Local knowledge and informal social networks are also important in assisting young people find employment as this study, and others, demonstrate (Johnston *et al* 2000). Nevertheless the labour market more generally and job opportunities within London has a significant impact on the success of young people in securing well paid quality jobs (Turok 1992).

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