

# THE JOBLESS GENERATION

▶ Youngsters out of work to hit 1.2m in five years

▶ Quarter of unemployed youths on the dole for year

▶ Tory-led Coalition is wiping out job schemes

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**ONE in four of Britain's young people who are on the dole have been out of work for more than a year – and the figure is rising.**

The shocking statistics show a generation of children are being thrown on to the scrapheap as Coalition cuts bite.

A total of 935,000 people aged 16 to 24 are on the dole and when new school and college leavers join the mass of people hunting for a job, it will hit one million.

While the overall jobless rate is 7.9 per cent, for 16- to 24s it's 20.7 per cent.

According to the respected Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), 198,000 young people have been out of work for more than 12 months – 27 per cent of all jobless 18- to 24-year-olds.

And the figures will only get worse. Writing for the Sunday Mirror today Danny Blanchflower, the economics professor who predicted the recession, says youth unemployment will hit a million this year. Think-tank Demos expects it to reach 1.2 million within five years.

At the same time employment initiatives are being scrapped and in parts of the country 33 people are chasing every job vacancy.

Students and school leavers are sending out hundreds of CVs only to be told: "No vacancies." And after years of studying hard for their future they are finding they do not have one. Their careers are blighted before they even start.

If that 935,000 never get a job, the total social cost over their lifetime is estimated at a horrifying £35 billion in benefits, healthcare, crime and lost tax revenues.

In a powerful call for action Labour leader Ed Miliband said: "It is a national scandal that there are almost one million young people unemployed."

"At a time when they should be working hard to set themselves up for the future their chances for a good start in life are being wrecked."

"This Conservative-led government is betraying a generation of young people and leaving them on the scrapheap of unemployment, just as the Tories did in the past. Labour would keep the tax on bankers' bonuses and invest that money in creating jobs for young people. We need to put the economy back on track and put hope

back into the lives of thousands of young people across Britain."

And the figure of 935,000 omits those on training schemes or not claiming benefits.

Nearly half of school-leavers now go on to do degrees. The half that do not, if unemployed long-term, are more likely to suffer ill-health, commit crime and get trapped in a cycle of unemployment.

In one of the worst hit areas, Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales, youth unemployment has hit a shocking 34 per cent.

Yet the Coalition is scrapping Labour initiatives like the Educational Maintenance Allowance, which helps youngsters train, and the Future Jobs Fund, which helps long-term jobless back into work.

Martina Milburn, chief executive of youth charity The Prince's Trust, said: "If we fail to help them into work it will have a devastating impact. It is a mental health hazard and can be as stressful as family breakdown."

Ex-teacher Fred Turak, who has helped 720 youngsters into work since founding Targeting A Generation two years ago, said: "There is a toxic cocktail – a lack of opportunity coupled with a failure of the school system."

"An increasing number of disaffected and disillusioned young people are being sucked into drugs, violence, gang crime and anti-social behaviour."

Nick Pearce, director of the IPPR, added: "We need urgent action to open up education and job opportunities for young people... more college places, subsidised work placements and the guarantee of a job at the minimum wage for those who have been out of work for a year."



● GRADUATE Claire Fear, 19 (above) applied for more than 80 jobs before taking to the streets of her home town in Bridgewater, Somerset, with a billboard begging: "Please give me a job!" Her persistence was rewarded when she was offered a role as a disabled carer. "People think young people on Jobseeker's Allowance are just scroungers but I was desperate to work and applied for any job," she said.

PICTURE: NIEL ANDERSON

## Cam's response? A measly twenty quid a year

ON his visit to the UK this week President Obama failed to endorse the Government's policy of slashing and burning the British economy.

Then the OECD economic forum, which Chancellor George Osborne claims supports his policies, lowered its growth forecast for the UK. Slasher hasn't had a good week.

This is especially bad news for 16 to 24-year-olds who have been hardest hit by the recession.

Today nearly one million under-25s are unemployed. Worse still, about 225,000 have been unemployed for more than a year, 80,000 more than two years ago. The evidence is that long spells of unemployment when



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you are young create permanent scars which hamper you for life, lowering wages and raising the chances of unemployment and ill health.

Even when young people are not unemployed, the research evidence suggests that because they have entered the world of work in a recession, their lifetime earnings are lowered. These harmful effects tend to fall disproportionately hard on the least educated.

Joblessness among young people is set to worsen with the scrapping

of the highly effective Educational Maintenance Allowance – which enabled children from the poorest families to stay on at school and college – and the Future Jobs Fund, which was set up by the previous Labour government and helped the young unemployed back to work.

The overall headline number is likely to hit the million mark before the year is out. Evidence from surveys conducted by the Prince's Trust suggests many youngsters who are neither in education, employment or

training – NEETS – have low levels of morale, are miserable and have an over-riding sense of hopelessness. This isn't good for our society.

Another worry is that the number of young people in jobs has fallen by 240,000 over the past two years.

My research suggests that young people who do have jobs are likely to be working part-time, but would prefer a full-time job. The job is also likely to be temporary because they could not find a permanent job.

What is the Government doing about it? Not a lot is the answer. David Cameron this week came out with more spin promising to tackle the "very severe problem" of youth

unemployment. He cynically announced a feeble extra £20 a year for three years for each unemployed young person, which simply shows he doesn't care about our kids.

Shadow Employment Minister Stephen Timms called the response inadequate pointing out that the amount being spent was less than the Department of Work and Pensions spent annually on telephones and postage. All spin and no substance as usual from this government.

The danger is that we will end up with a lost generation of youngsters and this government doesn't seem to care. It's time to make your voices heard that this is unacceptable.