

Everyone should be in a dignified position where they are able to work with the opportunity to improve their skills and be able to meet modern demands. Unfortunately, this is not the experience of many young and older people entering the job market. The lifelines which were once there to help people have since been turned against them and create barriers for those trying to work their way out of poverty by finding decent work.

When I was signing onto unemployment benefits, I met a whole range of people my age who had doors closed on them. There were many employers who just had no interest in employing anyone who didn't currently have a job, including young people. We were so worried about losing what we had that the prospect of education or self-improvement was not something we had time to consider.

After years of struggling to find work, I am now a university student studying graphic design in the hope I will someday be employed. I have stayed in touch with people who were in the same position as me. For a lot of them, not much has changed, even five or ten years on. Still on benefits, still struggling. More needs to be done to allow us to shape our lives for the better.

The education system has not been preparing young people for the job market. In my experience, schools are more focussed on encouraging students to go to university, sometimes making it seem as if that is the only route into employment, but going to university is no guarantee of a job and doesn't necessarily provide young people with the skills they need for the outside world. Often graduates are competing for the same minimum wage jobs as those who have not gone to university, which leads to a sense of unfulfillment for many.

Young people should be trying to figure out their place in a fast-changing job market where technology is replacing a lot of in-work tasks. Yet in the current system, the job centre is more focussed on making claimants apply for as many jobs as possible and less interested in supporting young people to take meaningful steps towards building a fulfilling career path.

Furthermore the world we live in is turning faster than most of us can keep up with the advances in technology we are seeing. A lot of the economy is moving online, and as positions become dependent on the internet, it is vital that everyone, especially young people, have full access to technology and the internet so they can find their place in this new fast-changing economy.

Free universal basic internet is already working in Estonia, and should be considered by governments in the UK to bridge the digital divide and give people in this country the opportunity to develop and participate fully in society regardless of income.

Now could also be the time to reinvent existing social security and create a new system to allow people to work on themselves without being held back by financial insecurity. Providing everyone with a basic income could be one way to tackle this. Universal basic income would filter the flow of wealth back to those currently in the most precarious positions, giving people the respite needed in order to plan out their futures and make practical steps towards them without the fear of sinking.

And when it comes to preparing young people for the future, let's not limit the creativity of students by having an education system obsessed with statistics. For this to work schools, colleges and other institutions would need to receive a greater share of direct funding so they can adapt to their students' needs without being wholly dependent on grants and tick box exercises. The out-of-hours work teachers do needs to be accounted for as many are not being paid enough for the effort they put in.

If we are to function as a decent society, young people in Britain need to be supported to reach their full potential. We can break poverty's grip and give young people the space and opportunities needed to have a worthwhile future by reforming our education system, introducing free public broadband and trialling universal basic income.