

One in a Million presentation

Slide

2 Youth unemployment has been hitting our headlines for a couple of years now. But who's doing all the talking and about what? Politicians, economists, the media and Human Resources experts are all talking about statistics, but the voice of young people has been conspicuous by its absence.

We set out to discover not how many, how long, how often or even why, but *what* is unemployment like for young people? What is the human experience?

3 We ended up taking a three part journey – discovering young people's stories, telling those stories and changing the stories.

4 The story was this:

- **Employability:** Young people are aware of the need to maximise their employability, they've identified ways of doing that and they're trying hard to do those things.
- **Employers:** Young people are applying for lots of jobs unsuccessfully and don't know why. They receive little feedback on applications and on interviews. Also, recruitment methods don't always showcase young people at their best.
- **Policy and priorities:** Young people recognised a big contributor to the current problem is a lack of jobs. However, they feel unimportant to and unsupported by the government. They see the government as out of touch with them.
- **Support:** Young people consistently talked about the need for financial, practical and emotional support from informal and voluntary sources rather than statutory services.
- **Personal impact:** Despite their own best efforts to maximise employability, despite the support they do manage to secure, young people are horribly affected by what they experience. They consistently reported feeling stigmatised, desperate, hopeless, rejected and powerless.

5 Young people said that we (UK churches) could help by:

- **Creating more jobs:** The UK church is quite a major employer. It would be great to see young people featuring as a major - and representative - part of that workforce.
- **Developing employability:** One of young people's frequent comments was how much more helpful voluntarily run services were than statutory projects. The church is full of skills and expertise as well as informal networks that might lead to young people finding jobs in all kinds of fields.
- **Supporting well-being:** Walking with young people through this time of immense struggle and heartache and countering the stigmatising messages they hear.
- **Applying political pressure and challenging stereotyping:** Asking politicians to keep the issue high on their agendas and making the horrific impact on young people known.
- **Theological/missional response:** Recognising the horrific personal and spiritual impact of unemployment and understanding that it is essential that we make a missional response.

- 6 In response to these last 2 points, we set out to raise awareness by telling young people's stories.
- Photo campaign at festivals and conferences
 - Presented the report to representatives of all denominations at Churches Together England
 - Distributed the report to Church of England General Synod members and asked them to debate the issue and vote on a motion (see slide 7)
- 7 Synod motion
- “That this Synod, mindful of the corrosive effect of unemployment on young people, their future prospects and social integration, and recognising that economic policy solutions alone cannot tackle the problems without strong networks and initiatives in the community at large:
- a) encourages parishes and church groups to listen to the voices of unemployed young people, both locally and through reports such as CUF/FYT's "I am one in a Million";
 - b) commends and encourages the multiplication of church and community initiatives which can provide training and other support to assist young people into work and help them manage the experience of unemployment without despair”
- 8 We wrote and distributed a resource pack for churches to help them to engage with the theological mandate for Christians respond (<http://www.fyt.org.uk/content/product/pdf-downloads/one-million-resource-pack-churches-and-community-groups>).
- 9 When it came to helping to promote job creation and increase support for young people, in both developing their employability and in maintaining their hope and well-being, we wanted to help churches to find responses which were local, achievable, practical, relevant and effective.
- 10 We sought out existing initiatives and projects in a number of regions, then held regional workshops which included:
- An opening address to set the scene
 - 3 or 4 short presentations about different local projects
 - A choice of workshops/Q&A sessions hosted by each project
 - A second round of presentations and workshops
- This enabled each participant to hear 6-8 project presentations and attend more in-depth workshops about 2 projects.
- 11 The workshops have created a context in which to:
- Showcase and share good practice
 - Inspire new ideas
 - Projects of different sizes

- Projects with different goals
- Share expertise
- Make local connections – both for leaders of existing projects and for interested participants

Some of the outcomes have been:

- 1) After attending a workshop, one participant went to his local Job Centre and said that he would like to help support young people. He is now working with the staff there to develop and Job Centre chaplaincy.
- 2) A member of the research team has developed a relationship with mobile phone company O2. They are working with him to develop and ipad application for youth workers to use with young people to help them to effectively search for work.
- 3) Young people who have attended workshop sessions have spoken of how encouraged they have been to hear that someone has heard their story, is telling the story far and wide and is trying to bring about change.

12 We called the campaign “One in a Million” for two reasons. Firstly, just before the research report (<http://www.fyt.org.uk/content/product/cuf/one-million>) was published, England reached the point where just over one million young people were unemployed and the name reflected young people’s comments that they felt lost – just one person in the midst of one million. Secondly, however, the name seeks to reflect our view that young people need and deserve to hear how precious they are. There is a British phrase we use when we want to praise or thank someone, or to say that we think they are remarkable – “You’re one in a million!”

There are many ways to respond, from setting up social enterprises to challenging stereotypes. It doesn’t matter which we choose, but we must all choose one. Each and every one of us can and should be standing with unemployed young people and showing each person – you are one in a million.