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Councillor Mrs K Cutts
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12 January 2012

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Cutts'.

Thank you for your letter of 21 December 2011 bringing the motion passed by Nottinghamshire County Council regarding youth unemployment to my attention.

As you are aware, the Government is supporting young people into work by investing in flexible, personalised employment support, apprenticeships, work experience and training. This includes; priority access to the Work Programme for young people aged between 18 and 24 years after nine months of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), and additional support for 16 and 17-year-old claiming JSA has also been available from October 2011. This includes access to Work Experience and Work Clubs which gives them the opportunity to sample potential career route-ways and recognise where they need further study, (through education or a job with training or an apprenticeship) to move into their chosen career.

The Department's new flexible delivery model enables Jobcentre Plus District Managers to deliver local labour-market solutions. In Nottinghamshire, there is a strong focus on collaborative working with key partners, for example through offering jobseekers work-experience placements with local employers. This approach is allowing the harnessing of all available resources to meet the challenge of getting as many people into work as possible.

On 25 November 2011, we announced plans to introduce a new Youth Contract in 2012 which includes a range of additional help for unemployed young people. The Youth Contract builds on the support already available

through Jobcentre Plus and the Work Programme and is worth almost £1 billion over the next three years. At the core of the Youth Contract is:

- 160,000 wage incentives worth £2,275 each, for employers who recruit an 18-24 year-old from the Work Programme;
- an extra 250,000 Work Experience or Sector-Based Work Academy places over the next three years, ensuring that there is an offer of a Work Experience place for every 18 to 24 year-old who wants one, before they enter the Work Programme;
- at least 20,000 extra incentive payments worth £1500 each for employers to take on young people as apprentices; and
- extra support through Jobcentre Plus for all 18-24 year olds, consisting of weekly, rather than fortnightly signing, extra advisor time to provide more back to work support and a careers interview from the National Careers Service.

Alongside this, in August 2011 the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills announced that colleges and providers in England would be given further flexibility for the academic year 2011-12 to offer fully-funded training to people on a wider range of benefits as long as the training was linked to getting the individual back into work.

The job market does remain competitive for everyone in these difficult economic times. The national minimum wage, tax credits, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and help with NHS costs should mean people will have a higher income in work than those on benefits. Ultimately, those in work in the long term are better off than on benefits as training, promotion and career opportunities can enable many workers to attain a better standard of living for themselves and their families.

I hope this is helpful.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris Grayling', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP
Minister for Employment