

Edinburgh MP calls for action on youth unemployment

✘ Mark Lazarowicz, MP for Edinburgh North and Leith, has joined with Gordon Brown in calling for action by the UK Government to tackle the worrying rise in youth unemployment so as to ensure that young people don't leave school or university only to find themselves out of work and disillusioned.

The latest unemployment statistics for December 2010 saw a 3% rise in the number unemployed in Edinburgh North and Leith as against November with over half of the increase coming in the 18-24 age group. This reflected the trend for Scotland and the rest of the UK even though unemployment fell in Scotland overall.

Gordon Brown gave a lecture last night in London where he argued for radical Government action to address the rise in youth unemployment and defuse what he called a generational time-bomb.

Mark said:-“The Government has said that people should not be able to choose to rely on benefits rather than work if they are fit to do so but the other side of the coin is that there are many young people especially who desperately want to work but can't find a job in the current economic climate.

“Gordon Brown's call couldn't be more timely. His Government made tackling youth unemployment a priority by setting up the Future Jobs Fund and I was really disappointed when the new Coalition decided to axe it.

“This will mean that from March there will be no programme specifically aimed at young people a time when youth unemployment is at a record high.”

The Future Jobs Fund offered a guarantee of a job, training or work experience for young people between the ages of 18 and 24 who had been unemployed for 6 months or more. The last Government also provided extra funding for Jobcentre Plus to enable local jobcentres to offer additional support.

The Conservative-Lib Dem Coalition Government has also abolished the previous Government's New Deal programme to help the long-term unemployed back into work. After Mark and other MPs pointed to a gap in provision before the Coalition's replacement Work Programme began operation, it decided to extend the New Deal to cover it.

However, there will apparently be no replacement for the Future Jobs Fund despite the fact that the number of those unemployed under 25 rose by 32,000 to 951,000 in the three months to November, giving an unemployment rate of 20.3%, which is the highest level since comparable records began in 1992.