



***The importance of student engagement: in conversation with Philip Augar***

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June; 9.30 – 10.30am

Committee Room 13, Houses of Parliament, Westminster, SW1A 0AA

The APPG met to discuss the Post-18 Education and Funding Review with invited guest, Philip Augar, chair of the independent panel for the review. The focus of the event was for a dialogue between student representatives, parliamentarians and Philip Augar regarding the review – the process, its aims and priorities.

**Emily Chapman**, Vice-President (Further Education) National Union of Students, spoke about the challenges currently facing students in both further and higher education. She said that NUS welcomed the post-18 review when it was initially announced in February this year and NUS, along with many others in the education sector, had submitted written submissions. Emily went on to outline NUS's recent *Poverty Commission* report which found that sufficient student support, particularly maintenance, is of the biggest concerns for students.

**Philip Augar**, Chair of the Independent Panel for the Post-18 Review, started by giving background to the review and the various stages over the course of the next year. He went on to emphasise that this was not just a funding review, but an assessment of the current system. He noted that there were three main objectives of the review as he saw it. The first, is economic and recognises the importance of having a skilled workforce; the second is social mobility; and the third is fairness – ensuring value for money for the taxpayer and students as well. He noted that he is very keen to hear the views of students and student representatives, and will feed them back to the panel.

**In comments from the floor**, there was much discussion and attendees raised a number of issues. These included:

- The need to ensure that the review is truly tertiary in scope, and that it advances proposals which seek to better integrate higher education and further education.
- How institutions in rural communities are to be supported, given the particular issue of travel costs and access there.
- How to ensure institutions genuinely support regional economic growth.
- How to support participation and access in low participation areas, such as the south west of England.
- There was an extensive discussion on increasing rent costs for students, and it was noted that accommodation costs is an urgent and pressing issue for students. Philip Augar noted this as a priority area, and said this would be looked at by the review team.
- The apprentice wage is far too low and many are struggling with basic costs of travel.
- Issue of hidden course costs across both further and higher education.
- Sharia compliant loans have not yet been introduced - this was noted as an urgent issue for many students.

**For further information, please contact the Secretariat, Ayesha Ahmed, Public Affairs Officer, National Union of Students ([Ayesha.ahmed@nus.org.uk](mailto:Ayesha.ahmed@nus.org.uk)).**