

Note on David Miliband dinner talk to the Lunar Society on 2nd May 2013

'We need to be on a war footing' to tackle youth unemployment in this country. So said David Miliband in concluding his talk to a dinner meeting of the Lunar Society on 2nd May 2013. Describing how the problem was a global phenomenon and one whose causes ran deeper than the current financial crisis, David covered the various initiatives recommended by ACEVO's Youth Unemployment Commission that he chaired. He stressed the importance of having a jobs guarantee for all young people who had been unemployed for 6 months or more. No country had solved this issue without such a guarantee.

David compared the ACEVO (Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations) recommendations favourably to the plans of Birmingham's Youth Unemployment Commission. Given it was one of his last talks in Britain before flying off to his new job in New York, David also covered a number of other key issues from his political career to date. However, it was his intelligent passion on the need to tackle youth unemployment that was the most important message for me and, I believe, for Birmingham. Our city has over one in five of young people seeking work claiming job seekers allowance, a higher rate than any of England's core cities, including Liverpool and Newcastle. In some wards, the rate is close to those of Greece, Spain and Egypt. David's message was that changing this had to be a priority for the city.

Another feature of the event that struck me was the attendance of a higher number of young people from the third sector than is usual at Lunar Society events. This included the Community Connect Foundation which is deeply involved in providing employment support and training to young people from some of the most deprived wards in the city. Maintaining and increasing this engagement is a challenge that the Lunar Society urgently needs to address.

Chris Khamis
CSK Strategies Ltd