



Research report  
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in association with



# **EMPLOYERS ARE FROM MARS, YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FROM VENUS: ADDRESSING THE YOUNG PEOPLE/ JOBS MISMATCH**

*Today's young people, tomorrow's workforce*



## **Today's young people, tomorrow's workforce**

This report is part of the CIPD's Learning to Work initiative, which is an action-focused programme led by the CIPD to tackle the problem of youth unemployment. The overall aim is to achieve a shift in employer engagement with young people, so that they are encouraged both to help young people prepare for the workplace and to make the labour market itself more youth-friendly, by offering a wider range of access routes into organisations and adapting recruitment methods.

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# METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is based on evidence collected through:

- around 30 employer case studies across all sectors and sizes in England and Scotland, carried out in February and March 2013
- two focus groups with Steps Ahead mentors (HR professionals) and mentees (young jobseekers) in Leicester and Northampton carried out in February 2013
- one focus group with the Prince's Trust Young Ambassadors, carried out in March 2013
- one focus group with students at the Regent's University, London, carried out in March 2013
- an employer focus group organised by the British Chambers of Commerce in Birmingham in February 2013
- a mini-survey with Jobcentre Plus advisers carried out in March 2013
- preliminary findings of the CIPD *Resourcing and Talent Planning* survey 2013 (forthcoming) to be published in partnership with Hays.

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This publication is part of the CIPD's Learning to Work programme and was written by Katerina Rüdiger, Skills Policy Adviser, CIPD.

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# FOREWORD

We live in extraordinary times. Youth unemployment is still at a record high, with too many young people struggling to find their first job. At the same time, employers often find it difficult to get the skills they need. This mismatch needs to be addressed. Our research highlights ways in which we can bridge the divide between young people and employers. On the one hand employers need to adapt their recruitment practices to more successfully engage with young people, while on the other, young people need to increase their employability skills and understanding about what is expected from them during the recruitment process.

As the professional body for those at the forefront of decision-making around workforce investment, talent development and recruitment, I feel the CIPD has a substantial contribution to make in developing best practice in this area.

We have made the business case for employer investment in young people in previous outputs of our CIPD Learning to Work programme, which aims to get employers involved in tackling youth unemployment. This piece of research builds on this work, by producing advice on how businesses can translate their intentions into actions and bring more young people into their organisations. Many of the organisations we feature in this report do so already. They do so because it is the right thing to do but also because it makes business sense. If we want to be ready for the future, we need to re-examine our approach to workforce investment and start building our talent pipelines now.

**Peter Cheese**

Chief Executive

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Employers are from Mars, Young People are from Venus: Addressing the young people/jobs mismatch* draws on a range of sources, including employer case studies, focus groups with young jobseekers, a mini-survey of Jobcentre Plus advisers and interviews with career advisers and training providers. The aim of the research was to explore the mismatch between employers and young people at the recruitment stage and make recommendations for how to overcome any divides.

The research has found that:

- There is a real mismatch between employers' expectations of young people during the recruitment process and young people's understanding of what is expected of them, particularly when it comes to presentation and preparation.
- Employers find it difficult to assess young people with limited work experience and young people find it difficult to 'market' themselves to employers.
- Young people value more open recruitment channels, such as social media, above more traditional means of recruitment such as corporate websites and online job boards.
- The limited number of access routes into work available for young people is still a concern. This is particularly the case in highly skilled sectors, such as professional services. However, evidence from our case studies indicates that more employers are developing, or planning to develop, more diverse access routes such as school-leavers' programmes and apprenticeships.
- Most employers don't specifically target young people with their recruitment practices, although some have started to change the ways in which they recruit young people to get the best out of young candidates.
- Job search and the recruitment process are a frustrating and demotivating experience for most young people. Many young people lack the knowledge about job opportunities, how to apply for jobs, how to write a good CV and a good application.
- Too many young people have a scattergun approach to applying for jobs rather than researching where they want to work. This results in a high volume of applications that need to be processed by the employer and can be demotivating for young people when they are unsuccessful.
- Confidence is an issue for many young people and many find interview situations particularly stressful as they have no prior experience of the workplace and they often don't know how to talk about their skills or how to 'market' themselves to a potential employer.
- Recruitment processes are lengthy and not very transparent, often involving up to five stages; young people lack an insight of the process and what is expected from them during the different stages.
- There is a lack of support for young people during the transition from education to work, which is preceded by poor advice and guidance at school.

- Employer feedback is crucial for young people, yet this is something employers struggle to provide, especially during the first stage of the process due to the volume of applications.

To address the mismatches outlined above, the report makes a number of recommendations for employers and policy-makers. The CIPD has also committed to further action on this issue, explained in more detail below.

## EMPLOYERS

Drawing on the experience of other employers and young people, the report makes eight key recommendations specifically aimed at employers:

- Make the business case for recruiting young people to line managers and colleagues. Highlight the benefits, such as the need to build talent pipelines, the skills and motivation of young people, the importance of workplace diversity, the enhancement of the employer brand and the cost-effectiveness of developing your own staff.
- Adapt your expectations of young people so that you are realistic about how work-ready they will be when they first arrive. Young people don't always know how to behave in the recruitment process but managers should be encouraged to look beyond first impressions, such as the way people are dressed, and give young people a chance.
- Think about the roles and access routes for young people into your organisation. As well as obvious options such as graduate schemes, think about whether other routes such as apprenticeship schemes or school-leaver programmes could work for your business.
- Take action to attract from a wider pool of young people. Where and how you advertise opportunities is important. Young people can be sceptical of 'corporate' communications and are more likely to respond to humorous and innovative content. You can also broaden your outreach by promoting opportunities via a range of methods, such as social media, attending recruitment fairs, engaging with schools and advertising via Jobcentre Plus, as well as traditional methods such as local newspapers and websites.
- Ensure your selection processes are youth-friendly and transparent. There are a number of basic things you can do to ensure you get the best calibre of young people applying for opportunities:
  - Provide the closing date and contact details for the advertised position.
  - Be open about the recruitment process, what the stages are and the expectations during those stages.
  - Develop simple, easy-to-use application forms.
  - Be clear about the selection criteria and review it for each new job – is experience or a degree really essential?

- Conduct interviews that get the best out of young candidates. It can be a very intimidating process for young people and the more information they are provided with in advance, such as how to dress and who they will be meeting, the better. You can also put them at ease by beginning with an informal chat and giving them a tour of the office. The type of interview is also important; competency-based interviews are generally not suitable for young people as they don't have the previous work experience to draw on, whereas strength-based exercises allow you to see their potential to learn.
- Provide feedback where possible. By giving open, honest and constructive feedback you can directly influence young people's behaviour in the recruitment process and help ensure their success in the future. It might not be possible to provide individualised feedback at every stage, but simple things such as an automated email to acknowledge an application and a list of 'common reasons' why an application might not have been shortlisted can be really useful. We recommend that you do take the time to provide one-to-one feedback for candidates that made it to interview or assessment centre stage, but keep this positive by not focusing on where they went wrong but explaining why the role might not be right for them. Also consider whether you might be able to refer the young person on to other opportunities via your supply chain.

## POLICY-MAKERS

As well as employers, policy-makers also have a role to play in improving the prospects of young people:

- There is a need for greater support for young people during the transition phase between education and employment. Most young people do not know where to turn when they try to enter the labour market, and we recommend that the Government commits to provide a dedicated support service for young jobseekers.
- Careers advice and guidance and work preparation should be a part of the national curriculum and schools need to be assessed in how well they are doing in this area to incentivise them to put more efforts into this. We asked young people what they would do if they were Education Minister, to make improvements in this area, and this is what they said:

- Don't rely on teachers but get external experts, including employers, into schools to talk about these issues.
- Pay attention to those areas where greater advice is needed; address the patchiness of the current advice.
- Career advice and guidance needs to be embedded into the education system as part of the curriculum.
- There needs to be more information on what choices are available for those leaving school, in particular apprenticeships and other alternatives to university.
- More support should be given to encourage employer contact and work experience opportunities.

## THE CIPD

In order to help reduce the gap between employers and young people, the CIPD is committed to:

- Produce guidance on recruitment aimed at young people.
- Work with employer bodies to develop an established set of recommendations for those involved in recruitment.
- Develop guidance for employers on youth employment and how to manage young people effectively.
- Launch a project with the Education and Employers Taskforce (EET) to bring CIPD members into schools to provide pupils with advice on CV writing, interview techniques and job search.
- Expand our volunteer initiative 'Steps Ahead mentoring' which matches young jobseekers with CIPD members.
- Work with the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) to help increase the matching of young people and apprenticeship opportunities.

# INTRODUCTION

## DO EMPLOYERS NEED TO ADAPT THEIR RECRUITMENT PRACTICES?

*'Our young employees are extremely important to us. What I'd say to other employers is that if you have a problem with your recruitment of young people, you need to find out what this is and remove the obstacles'* (Jennifer Lee, HR Director, Jurys Inn).

Good recruitment practices should be fit for purpose for all candidates. So we could question why employers would need to adapt their recruitment practices to make them more 'youth-friendly'. After all, positive age discrimination is against the law. Furthermore, if recruitment practices haven't been targeting young people in the past, why should this change now?

Indeed, some organisations are uncomfortable with targeting specific groups via their recruitment processes, and perhaps rightly so. The supermarket chain Asda, for example, say they haven't adapted their recruitment processes to suit young people's needs and are not considering this: *'We believe in fair, consistent and inclusive processes for all, which addresses young people within this,'* argues Claire Fuller, Resourcing Manager at Asda. This is a very valid point, in particular as some of the issues we've encountered in our research are purely to do with good recruitment practices (or the lack thereof) more generally. Similarly, another organisation told us they don't believe employers should change their recruitment practices to suit young people, stating that recruitment should be equitable and all candidates should be treated the same: *'We should be able to expect the same from all candidates who interview. There shouldn't be any exceptions for young people'* says their HR Manager

In an ideal world we'd like organisations to practise inclusive, good recruitment that considers the different needs of candidates, which would include young people, older workers, BME and other minorities. However, while this is a longer-term goal and beyond the parameters of this specific research project, we think that in the short term, young people are a specific segment of the market that needs looking at, for the following reasons:

- Youth unemployment is still disproportionately high, with a young person being 3.5 times more likely to be unemployed than an adult, with negative consequences for the individuals, society and organisations that risk not being able to access the skills in the future. Nearly half of the employers we surveyed in the CIPD's *Learning to Work* survey (CIPD 2012b) agreed that young people are disadvantaged in today's labour market.
- In the past employers used to be more pragmatic about issues around 'work-readiness' and be more used to bringing in young people, so that unconscious bias didn't exist. Furthermore, the labour market offered more entry-level positions for young people that were used as access

routes into organisations. So both employer behaviour and the labour market structure have changed to negatively impact on youth employment.

- The labour market is getting much, much more complex, so if employers don't actively go out and promote their sectors and industries and the occupations within them, they risk not being able to get the skills they need for the future. Some employers already report difficulties in filling their vacancies, and if we don't improve the matching of labour market demand and supply, this risk is set to increase.
- Rapid changes in technology mean that the current generation of young people is actually different from the previous. This offers many opportunities to employers to capitalise on the digital skills young people possess. However, it also means that young people see and perceive information very differently and that employers need to review their communication with young people. Social media in particular offers a largely untapped tool with which to increase employer engagement with young people.

Interestingly, when we asked Jobcentre Plus advisers whether employers should adapt their recruitment processes to engage with young people, an overwhelming majority said yes (75%).<sup>1</sup>

## IS RECRUITMENT 'YOUTH-FRIENDLY'?

*'We are not thinking about young people when we are recruiting. Smaller companies are just not targeting their recruitment strategies. We advertise on our website but how many young people would actually know about this and go to our website?'* (Employer focus group, BCC, Birmingham)

There are a number of reasons why young people struggle with labour market entry:

- a general employer bias against young people (in particular amongst those employers who don't recruit young people)
- preference to recruit workers who are more experienced, and immediately productive, favouring a 'finished product' rather than a workforce investment, 'growing your own' approach
- a structural shift towards more high-skilled jobs and fewer entry-level positions, especially in industries which employ a high number of young people
- a lack of knowledge among young people about occupations, career pathways and the breadth of opportunities available
- a decrease in work experience leading to a perception of reduced 'work-readiness' amongst young people (see CIPD 2012a, 2012b for more details).

We have already explored many of these issues in earlier publications of our CIPD Learning to Work programme (see for example *the Business Case for Employer Investment in*

<sup>1</sup> CIPD mini-survey carried out with JCP advisers, 91 responses, March 2013



*Young People* (CIPD 2012)); and they have also been well documented and researched by organisations such as the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) and the Education and Employers Taskforce (EET).

Despite the research available looking at young people and labour market difficulties, we actually know very little about existing recruitment practices and processes in connection to young people. We don't know how recruitment practices impact on young people and we don't know whether employers are adapting, or are considering adapting, their recruitment practices to help them attract a greater and more diverse number of young people. Research carried out 15 years ago found that *'many employers, even those who ultimately recruit young people, make no special effort to recruit young people,'* suggesting that when they do hire young people this is merely an incidental outcome of their recruitment activity (Hasluck 1998). We wanted to know whether this is still the case and, if so, what impact this is having on youth employment. We also wanted to know if there are employers that have adapted or are adapting their recruitment practices, how and why they're doing so, and with what level of success.

A review of the literature found that there is a limited amount of information which specifically addresses the recruitment and selection of young people. However, the information available suggests that the majority of employers are not adapting existing or are not pursuing new practices specifically designed to make their recruitment more 'youth-friendly'. In our forthcoming CIPD *Resourcing and Talent Planning* survey 2013, to be published in partnership with Hays, we asked employers whether they had adapted their recruitment processes to make them more accessible to young people. A majority (64%) said they did not, with only just under a quarter saying they did adapt their recruitment processes.

### **BRIDGING THE EMPLOYER–YOUNG PEOPLE GAP**

*'Young people require an interviewer who "gets them" and is able to draw out their skills. Line managers need guidance on how to do that. It's a challenge to remember that young people have little or no first-hand experience of a workplace. We need to allow for this.'* (Alan MacKinnon, Director, Talent Acquisition EMEA, IHS Consulting)

More specifically in the context of youth unemployment, there are three reasons why we think it is important to have a closer look at recruitment practices and explore the role they play in inhibiting or encouraging youth labour market entry:

- First, we know that many employers genuinely want to employ more young people, but that something occurs during the recruitment process that means that this intention does not translate into actual hiring outcomes. We wanted to unpack this issue and find out exactly what is going on.
- Second, through our work with young jobseekers who take part in our CIPD mentoring initiative (Steps Ahead Mentoring), we've received personal accounts of how it feels being locked out of the labour market. We wanted to highlight some of the underlying issues and how we can help young people to overcome these.
- Third, employer expectations are something young people struggle with, so we wanted to examine these expectations more closely to establish whether both young people and employers can make some changes in their behaviour to help address the existing mismatch.

### **FROM CHALLENGES TO SOLUTIONS**

This report aims to present a full picture of current recruitment practices and young people, through the eyes of both employers and young people. The intention is to explore the extent of the mismatch between job opportunities and young people and how this can be addressed. To do so we will:

- briefly revisit young people's situation in the labour market, including employer expectations of young people and young people's expectations of work (section 1)
- look at how employers go about recruiting young people and at employers' views on young people during the recruitment process (section 2)
- illustrate young people's experiences of looking for work, their views on current recruitment methods and what disadvantages them in the labour market (section 3)
- look at the role social media can play in the recruitment of young people (section 4)
- draw out some recommendations on how we can better match young people and jobs through the evidence collected and share best practice (section 5).

# 1 YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE LABOUR MARKET

## SUMMARY

- Young people are disadvantaged in today's labour market, with employers preferring to recruit more experienced workers. Line managers have been identified as a particular barrier in taking on young people.
- Many employers don't recruit young people because they worry about the level of investment they need to provide.
- There are substantial differences across sectors and sizes when it comes to how many young people organisations recruit and what roles they offer.
- There is an untapped potential for job opportunities for young people, especially in the high-growth, high-skilled occupations.
- Both employers and young people have unrealistic expectations about what they can offer each other.

Young people are amongst the most disadvantaged groups in the labour market. As a result many young people struggle with the transition from education to work and find it difficult to gain a foothold in the labour market: our research shows that one in four employers did not recruit a single young person aged 16–24 in the last year (CIPD 2012c). Furthermore, around one in ten organisations even noted a decline in the number of young people they took on in 2012 (CIPD 2012a).

## YOUNG PEOPLE: AN INVESTMENT 'RISK' FOR EMPLOYERS

Generally, employers prefer to recruit more experienced candidates over young people, as they are looking for someone who can 'hit the ground running', that is, is immediately operational and productive. Young people lack the experience of the workplace and the job-specific skills that employers ask for and as such constitute a 'risk', as employers worry about the level of training and support they need to provide (see CIPD 2012c).

Overall, employers' recruitment and selection processes reflect an aversion to 'risk', and this can result in an 'unconscious bias' which disadvantages young people. This is particularly the case in times of recession, but this behaviour is also symptomatic of a lack of a strategic and long-term approach to skills needs and workforce investment (CIPD 2012c). Often this behaviour can also be linked to an inability to assess the skills, talent and commitment of a candidate who has no previous experience and therefore struggles to demonstrate their 'employability', something we will look at in more detail later in this report.

Karina Rook is the HR director at Canterbury College and in her experience employers don't recruit young people for two reasons: first, because they perceive young people as difficult, and second, because managers don't know how to engage with young people, even if they do want to recruit them. Canterbury College both trains and employs apprentices, and so Karina has experienced the recruitment process from both a provider as well as an employer's view.

## EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS

Another issue is employer expectations. A majority of employers in our *Learning to Work* survey (CIPD 2012b) have told us that young people lack an insight into the working world. This is definitely the case, as we will see a bit later in this report; however, there is also some indication that employer expectations are often unrealistic when it comes to young people.

Eloise Grant from the Pertemps People Development Group (PPDG), which works with Jobcentre Plus to get young people into employment, confirms that employers often have unrealistic expectations when it comes to young people: *'Employers often don't have any patience; they want to have the final product, ready to work.'* Dominic Gill, Apprenticeships Manager at Microsoft, which works with four training providers to deliver large-scale apprenticeships programmes to 32,000 Microsoft partners across the UK, also explains that some employers are sometimes too picky, waiting for the perfect candidate rather than recruiting someone who has the required skills and attitude and who they can train up to do the job.

As we will see later in this report, employers are often disappointed with young people during the recruitment process, in particular when it comes to preparation and presentation in the application and interview stage.

## LINE MANAGERS AS A BARRIER TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Line managers often play a central role in the recruitment process. Indeed over half (56%) of the respondents to a recent survey of recruitment trends by XpertHR reported that responsibility for recruiting new staff in their organisation lies principally with line managers (Suff 2012a). But while line managers are key decision-makers when it comes to hiring young people, they often need the most convincing in terms of choosing to take on a young person instead of a more experienced worker.

Our review of the literature in this area has found a significant gap in the evidence around the quality of advice given to line managers involved in the recruitment and selection process; for example, what they need to consider when interviewing a young person, examples of best practices and other ways to tailor recruitment processes. Looking at current training trends for line managers in recruitment and selection, the statistics show that a lot more needs to be done in this area: at the moment fewer than one in ten (5%) organisations provide training or development for those involved in recruiting (Suff 2012a). This also came out very strongly in our employer case studies, as we will see in more detail in this report later on; those employers that successfully engaged with young people provided substantial support and guidance to their line managers.

## WHERE DO AND DON'T YOUNG PEOPLE WORK?

Although employers can rightly be described as 'gate-keepers' controlling access to jobs, deciding who gains employment and who doesn't as a result of their selection criteria (Hasluck 1998), this does not accurately reflect the full picture. There is also a macroeconomic, structural reason why young people find labour market entry more difficult. Increased globalisation and technological change mean that many of the entry-level positions – including office assistants, administrative or sales assistants and customer service executives – have now disappeared (see CIPD April 2012d). The structure of the economy is changing, with fewer sales and elementary roles as well as mid-skill occupations, and a greater number of positions in high-skill, managerial and professional occupations (UKCES 2013). Post-recession we have also seen an increase in part-time, temporary and self-employed work (CIPD 2012).

There are therefore significant differences across sectors in terms of the opportunities for young people. Professional services businesses, particularly in the banking sector, have now moved many of their entry-level jobs abroad and are choosing to focus their UK operations on the more high-skilled, professional, high value-added occupations. Standard Chartered, for example, a global business operating in 71 countries, does not recruit many young people in the UK. Instead their CEO is passionate about encouraging volunteering with young people as an important part of the organisation's CSR strategy and under their 'Here for Good' banner. But Standard Chartered have actually only 10–12 graduates in the UK, compared with 600 globally. *'The small number of entry-level positions in the UK is due to the way in which our business is structured,'* explains Vanessa Paul, Talent and Acquisition Specialist at Standard Chartered. Vanessa looks after the organisation's graduate programmes for the UK, US and Brazil but also leads Standard Chartered involvement with a number of youth charities in the UK and their work experience and internship programmes.

This is something that has come out strongly in our employer interviews: companies operating in the professional services and financial space often don't actually recruit vast numbers of young people, but are committed to helping young people through their CSR activity. This often takes the form of offering work experience placements and working with schools and local youth charities, as well as running skills academies and other employability initiatives. This seems to imply an understanding about the important role employers play in school-to-work transition, but at the same time the business case for a shift in recruitment activity towards workers without extensive experience has yet to be fully integrated into internal hiring processes. Or if the business case is understood, perhaps organisations are still struggling to see *how* they could restructure their job opportunities to offer more access routes to young people. Indeed, this is confirmed by survey data collected by the UKCES: financial services and the health sector stand out as being two of the most likely to recruit 19–24-year-olds, but the least likely to recruit 16–18-year-olds. High-skilled sectors, such as professional services, are least likely to recruit young people and if they do so there is a strong bias towards graduates (UKCES 2013). However, there are some exceptions, such as RBS's Early Careers Programme, which the bank has developed to achieve a strategic approach towards recruiting young people, or Barclays' new apprenticeships and school-leavers' schemes.

### TOO YOUNG TO WORK HERE?

*'At the moment we only recruit a small number of young people – all of them university graduates – into business analyst positions. This is because our business is highly specialised and needs experienced professionals.'* **Alan MacKinnon, IHS Consulting**

*'Our industry rarely employs very young people; we think they are not professional enough, but that's not true.'* **Marc Anderson-Boyd, Managing Director, Taylor Nash-Recruitment**

*'In the health sector we have a particular issue with perceptions of where young people can and can't work. It's a myth that 16–18-year-olds can't work in patient care and something we are actively trying to challenge.'* **Liz Eddy, Head of Skills, NHS Employers**

## RECRUITMENT AGENCIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Employers are not the only 'gate-keepers' controlling access to jobs; recruitment agencies also have a key role to play. Most employers see recruitment agencies as a very effective recruitment channel, especially when filling vacancies at short notice. By the very nature of the service they provide, recruitment agencies are promoting candidates that 'can do the job' - rather than prioritising young jobseekers over all others. However, the recruitment industry has obviously recognised youth employment as an important issue, even if some may not yet be aware of the significant role they can play in tackling this in their conversations with clients. *'Recruitment agencies are at the front line of the labour market and thus have in-depth knowledge about job vacancies and skills shortages issues. We are working with our members to highlight the role they can play in driving good recruitment and tackling youth unemployment.'* **Kate Shoemith, Head of Policy and Public Affairs at the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC)**

To do this, the confederation has for example developed a Youth Employment Charter:  
[www.rec.uk.com/about-recruitment/externalrelations/youthemploymentcharter](http://www.rec.uk.com/about-recruitment/externalrelations/youthemploymentcharter)

The sectors that are more likely to take on a young person are the hospitality and retail sectors: *'Young people are an essential part of the hospitality sector; they are our "lifeline". Hospitality offers young people good progression opportunities and a clear, structured career path,'* says Liz McGivern, VP of HR, Red Carnation Hotels, explaining that this is helped by the fact that many of their senior managers started out in entry-level roles and worked their way up, which she argues helps them *'understand the challenges young people face'*. This is confirmed by Jennifer Lee, HR director at Jurys Inn, who describes the various activities Jurys Inn carries out to engage with young people, saying: *'our young employees are important to us.'*

But it is not just the sector that matters when it comes to youth employment; there is also an issue around the size of the organisation, with larger companies being more likely to recruit young people than smaller (UKCES 2013).

### WHICH ROLES DO THEY WORK IN?

In a recent poll of CIPD members, over 50% of HR professionals reported that they thought they did not have enough routes for young people into their organisation (such as apprenticeship schemes, graduate schemes, school-leavers programmes, work experience schemes).<sup>2</sup> This belief is confirmed by our *Learning to Work* survey (CIPD 2012b), where employers stated they needed to offer more routes into work for non-graduates. Overall, the most prevalent way to bring young people into organisations is graduate schemes, although many employers are now either thinking of offering, or starting to offer, apprenticeships and places on school-leaver programmes.

Again, there are differences across sectors and size in terms of which organisations are offering what type of access route. According to data collected by the UKCES, about half of all large employers are offering apprenticeships compared with only 5% or 4% for the smaller employers (UKCES 2013). Similarly, the same differences across sectors are noted again: education, health and social work, and construction are the most likely to offer apprenticeships, with financial services the least likely (only 4%). Some organisations, such as the National Grid, have been offering apprenticeships for a long time (in the

case of the National Grid, 19 years) and those organisations that usually recruit a large number of young people, such as Whitbread, tend to offer a large number of apprenticeships too (Whitbread have a target of 500 apprenticeships this year).

### WHAT ARE YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS OF WORK?

Young people have different expectations of work, which may contribute to the perceived disconnect between young people and employers: young people are mobile and more likely to want a job that offers them some sort of meaning and a better work-life balance. Because of the pressure young jobseekers are under to find a job, this is sometimes an issue:

*'With the young jobseeker I've mentored I found that his parents were nagging him a lot about finding a job so he can start earning money, but he doesn't want to just have a job, he wants to start a career in an area that is relevant to his skills and interests,'* explains Sandra, CIPD member and Steps Ahead mentor, Northampton.

However, sometimes the opposite is true too, with young people taking a rather short-sighted approach to the career opportunities available. For example, some young people don't take up apprenticeship opportunities even if those are with big employers and could potentially lead to a promising career in that organisation, just because they don't want to make that short-term investment of lower wages and prefer to take a job that pays them more money immediately. *'It's frustrating,'* explains one official working on the National Apprenticeships online vacancy matching system, which offers hundreds of opportunities to young people but yet has up to 800 unmatched vacancies per week; *'we can see the great career opportunities an apprenticeship with, for example, Coca-Cola can offer, but some young people would turn this down because they are fixated on the low pay to start with. Instead they'd rather get a job without any progression that pays better.'*

There is also an issue with unrealistic expectations when it comes to job prospects. Although we found no evidence of the common perception that 'all young people these days want to be

<sup>2</sup> A response rate of 70 CIPD members, CIPD survey March 2013.

on the X Factor', the charity Education and Employers Taskforce recently carried out an important study that shows that there is a misalignment between career aspirations of young people and labour market demand. The research, with young people between the ages of 13 and 18, found that their ambitions relating to where they want to work were extremely limited and did not match current job opportunities and areas of future jobs growth. Furthermore, their ambitions were very narrow, with a majority of young people saying they wanted to work in just three of the twenty-five occupational categories. This, the study states, has serious implications for school-to-work transitions:

*'If young people are pursuing unrealistic ambitions as teenagers (and only one in ten of those young people interested in careers in culture, media and sports are likely ultimately to be successful), risks are high that they will pursue educational journeys which may ultimately lead them to struggle to find relevant work after leaving school, college or university'* (Mann et al 2013, p9).

As a result some employers struggle to attract young people, while others are overwhelmed with applications and need to manage expectations: *'Our challenge is to show that the industry isn't so glamorous. We need to manage expectations of our applicants,'* says Catherine Schleiben, Head of Recruitment, ITV.

HR professionals taking part in our Steps Ahead mentoring programme also reported that young people sometimes expect that if they have a degree they will find a job easily: *'With some of the people I mentor I found that their expectations didn't match the reality. They thought, I've got a degree, I'm going to get a job easily. But this is not how it works anymore in the real world, is it?'* (Lisa, CIPD member and Steps Ahead mentor, Leicester).

Furthermore, young people also tend to move from job to job more frequently than their older counterparts and so are more flexible and more easily persuaded to move between organisations. Given that young people are, by definition, starting out on their careers, they are keen to access advice and gain experience. That is why employers who use social media to offer advice and guidance to young people and as a way of attracting them to the organisation in general are more successful in recruiting younger applicants than others.

## REFLECTION POINTS

- How can we support employers and line managers in particular to look beyond a candidate's experience at their ability, skills and motivation?
- How can we support employers to design and run more access routes for young people, such as apprenticeships, in high-skill, high-growth sectors?
- How can we help young people to have an informed, realistic understanding about where career opportunities are?

# 2 HOW EMPLOYERS RECRUIT YOUNG PEOPLE

## SUMMARY

- Most employers use a mixture of channels to advertise their opportunities, but informal methods are very popular.
- Employers de-select young people according to their qualifications and grades but emphasise the value of soft skills, motivation, attitude and behaviour in their selection criteria.
- Interviews are a popular selection method, yet they are problematic for assessing young people with no previous experience.
- Assessment centres that assess a candidate's ability are potentially more 'youth-friendly' but they require more employer investment.
- Employers' views on young people going through the recruitment process are fairly negative, with preparation, presentation, confidence and the ability to 'sell' themselves being an issue.

## WHERE AND HOW EMPLOYERS ADVERTISE VACANCIES

Most employers generally use a number of formal and informal channels to advertise their job opportunities.

Formal mechanisms include: the organisation's website, Jobcentre Plus, recruitment agencies, adverts in the local and national press, social media and online job boards.

Informal recruitment methods include: recommendations from existing employees (referral schemes), word of mouth, vacancy boards, intranet and internal newsletter and using databases of former employees.

The CIPD *Resourcing and Talent Planning* annual survey report 2012, published in partnership with Hays, found that the most effective methods to attract applicants were reported to be the organisation's own corporate website and recruitment agencies (CIPD 2012a). However, the most relied-upon methods of recruiting were found by the UKCES to be word of mouth and referrals (UKCES 2013).

Unsurprisingly, there are also important differences when it comes to organisations' size as to where they advertise. Small businesses tend to favour recruiting via word of mouth as it offers an effective cost-saving strategy. In addition, organisations employing ten or fewer people are more likely to use an informal and unstructured approach to recruitment, due to their lack of a designated individual or specific HR function to oversee the recruitment and selection process (Bartram et al 1995).

We have asked employers in our interviews how they advertise their opportunities to young people. Most reported to use at least one, or a combination, of the following:

- corporate website
- online job boards
- local paper
- radio adverts

- the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)
- school visits and university career fairs
- suppliers
- intranet
- Jobcentre Plus
- youth charities (the Prince's Trust, Springboard, and so on)
- trade publications
- graduate websites
- non-graduate websites (notgoingtouniversity.com)
- recruitment agencies
- referrals
- social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and so on).

Again, the most popular way of advertising job and other opportunities was by far the organisation's own website, followed by online job boards, the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), Jobcentre Plus, graduate websites as well as social media. The online matching service of the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) is particularly popular amongst employers that offer apprenticeships. Indeed, in particular, big brand employers such as Boots and Siemens said the matching service worked very well for them: *'We have only once used other external routes; we don't need to, as we have a strong brand name; this is why the NAS website works well,'* says Martin Hottass, Manager, Skills and Learning Governance at Siemens. But also smaller companies such as WR Refrigeration used the NAS website to access young people in their local labour market.

More traditional means, such as local press and the evening paper, is something some employers said they use more to recruit young people onto their schemes as they found that parents would find adverts in the local paper and pass them on to their children. Capgemini says this has helped them to access a more diverse pool of talent. Boots explained they run features in the local paper during specific times of the year, for example when exam results come out.

When it comes to advertising job opportunities with Jobcentre Plus (JCP), the employers we talked to had mixed views: some had a very good relationship – this is, for example, the case of Jurys Inn – others do not use the Jobcentre other than for very specific programmes; and then there are those that are not happy with the relationship. We asked Jobcentre Plus advisers in our mini-survey how they would describe their relationship with employers and they were relatively positive, with 56% of respondents saying either good or very good and only one out of ten describing their relationship as poor or very poor.<sup>3</sup> But clearly there is room for improvement, when we asked JCP advisers how they thought their relationship with employers could be improved, they said they would like to see greater employer interest and commitment to working with JCP and more time to engage with employers.

In terms of how employers advertise to young people, many recognised that this is still an issue: *'a lot of employers don't write their job adverts in a way that is appealing to young people'* (for example the wording they use and the colours) as someone said in our employer focus group in Birmingham. This is also something that officials working on the National Apprenticeship Service online vacancy service have reported as a bit of an issue, especially when it comes to targeting very young candidates, that is, 16–18, employers seem to struggle with the 'youth appeal' of their adverts.

## HOW EMPLOYERS SELECT CANDIDATES

*'I've worked with a big supermarket chain, doing mock interviews. But you know, they claim they want to attract young people but they have a five-stage vetting process just for a store assistant. After that there is an eight-week pre-employment training. They put so many hurdles in place'* (Eloise Grant, PPDG, Birmingham).

Most organisations we've talked to have a selection procedure with up to five stages to recruit young people. The first stage is usually either a CV with a cover letter or some sort of an online questionnaire or form, followed by a test or a phone interview and then assessment centres and/or one-to-one interviews.

## APPLICATIONS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Our literature review also showed that the most common method of application requested by employers is an electronic application form, offered by three out of four employers (Suff 2012a). Sending a CV or letter of application are two further application methods favoured by employers (Suff 2012a). Once employers have received an application, the first screening is based on a number of judgements. Immediate rejection can be a result of: missing information, failure to meet essential criteria, lack of experience or poor presentation. In our interviews we found the most important selection criteria for the majority of employers to be young people's grades. Most linked their first screening criteria to a minimum standard in qualifications, so UCAS points, GCSE in Maths and English (above C), A-levels (above C).

Crucially, when we asked employers what they are looking for in particular, they talked about recruiting for attitude and values and looking for the 'right fit'. As Marcus Lee at Santander emphasised, recruiting according to their values is very important now: *'we need people committed to a high level of integrity'*, saying they look for candidates with great service skills, and an inquisitive nature and the right values. Both M&S and Jurys Inn run a 'behaviour-based' recruitment process with the aim to identify motivation, commitment and passion, rather than technical skill and educational attainment and previous work experience. Developing the recruitment in line with their values has also helped Jurys Inn to better engage with their younger candidates, as Jennifer Lee explains: *'It makes it easier for young people, if we use a different language. We now have a conversation about our values rather than their qualifications.'*

This is a contradiction that we have also encountered in our review of the literature: employers asking for 'soft skills' but de-selecting young people on their hard skills. What is apparent then is that employers value personality, attitude or personal experience more highly than vocational or academic qualifications, which rarely lead to de-selection, but only once an individual finds themselves at the interview stage.

There is also a difference between the skills and attributes sought by employers depending on the size of the organisation, with SMEs placing greater emphasis on previous work experience than larger employers and larger employers placing more emphasis on qualifications (UKCES 2010). Above all, the literature suggests that achieving the 'right fit' when hiring a new employee is the central concern for employers large and small, and in the majority of sectors (Tunstall et al 2012).

We can question whether these early selection procedures based on grades are always the best way to select candidates; however, most employers report that due to the volume of applications they receive, they need to use some sort of selection criteria and using grades and qualifications seems fairer than other mechanisms: *'We do sift by academic grades because this is the only way we can deal fairly with the volume of applications. We get 3,000 applications for 250 jobs, so we need to de-select somehow and we are very clear about what our criteria are,'* explains Martin Hottass, Manager, Skills and Learning Governance at Siemens.

Some employers also ask candidates to complete an online test before they can submit an application; this is for instance the case at M&S, where potential applicants sit an interactive 'job preview' test, intended to give them a frank and realistic look at what a job at M&S (particularly in-store) is really like. The test is multiple-choice and online. Once the test is completed, the individual is presented with their result – either 'yes – please go on and apply' or a 'perhaps you should consider reapplying sometime in the future' message. The idea is that candidates who are unlikely to pass through the process successfully are filtered out, which prevents time-wastage on both the employer and the candidate's parts. Those who complete this stage are asked to complete an application form and upload a CV.

<sup>3</sup> Five questions about recruitment and young people with 91 responses.

## INTERVIEWING YOUNG PEOPLE

*'The biggest challenge is what questions do you ask young people? I think we all need educating on that. I have worked in recruitment for 20 years but I still struggle.'* **Phillipa Hart, Hart Recruitment**

*'Interviewing young people with virtually the same educational background and little life experience is difficult. This is why we make our interviewing interactive and more practical.'* **Martin Hottass, Manager, Skills and Learning Governance at Siemens**

*'It's difficult with young people; often they don't have the confidence so they don't come across that well in an interview setting.'* **Marcus Lee, HR Director, Santander**

### INTERVIEWS

Interviews are the most widely used of all selection methods (Suff 2010b), although as we will see below, assessment centres are becoming very popular, especially when it comes to recruiting very young people. Interviews are probably the one stage in the recruitment process that is most likely to disadvantage young people, although this depends very much on how the interview is conducted. Traditionally, many employers favoured a competency-based approach where the candidate is asked to demonstrate their ability to carry out the task required by the job based on previous experience. Previous work experience is something which most young people don't have and also find difficult to gain, as we will see further below in this report. A survey carried out by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) found that only 7% of participants were 'quite confident' that school-leavers were prepared for the world of work; while 48% were said to be 'not at all confident' (Federation of Small Businesses 2012).

Most employers have told us that the interview stage is where young candidates often fall down. A number one complaint is that they haven't researched the company, that they don't show enough interest – for example, say that they are not sure they want a career in IT when interviewing for an IT company or that they can't explain why they want the job and how their skills and experiences relate to the job profile.

Some of the employers we spoke to have therefore changed their interview techniques from a competency-based approach to an approach based on ability or strength. Matt Stripe, Group HR Director at Nestlé UK and Ireland, believes this method offers a 'much fairer way' to test candidates '*who have great potential and talent but no experience to lean on in traditional interview scenarios*' (Stripe 2013). We will see below how Nestlé has changed its approach to recruiting young people and how this has helped the organisation to get the right people and fill their vacancies.

### ASSESSMENT CENTRES

Contrary to the traditional interview setting, assessment centres tend to select candidates according to their ability, including the ability to interact with others. Assessment centres are an increasingly popular way to select young candidates; according to a graduate recruitment and selection survey, over half of the employers reported using assessment centres (Suff 2010b). This is confirmed by our research with employers, where a majority

of the people we spoke to use this method. Generally speaking, the larger the company, the more likely it is that they will use assessment centres (see Leeds Metropolitan University Student Hub, online workbook 2013). Typically, between 6 and 20 candidates are invited to each session, with approximately 12 in each selection group, and the assessment is usually carried out over the course of a day. Assessment centres usually take place after the first round of interviews but before final selection – however, they can also be used as an initial selection process (see the Prospects website, Prospects.ac.uk 2013).

A report by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) recently suggested that assessment centres provide a particularly good way of assessing soft skills as they are intended to effectively replicate the tasks and demands of the job for which the candidate is applying (Newton et al 2005). Assessment centres aim to measure a number of different dimensions of a candidate's ability (Leeds Metropolitan University Student Hub online workbook 2013), including intelligence and problem-solving, social skills, management skills and personal characteristics.

Assessment centres require a lot of employer investment, but the employers we spoke to confirm the DWP's research, saying that assessment centres help them to select the right candidate and – particularly when it comes to young people – they allow them to judge abilities instead of experience. This is for instance the case for Veolia, who recruit all their apprentices through assessment centres and find this a very successful way of bringing in young people. Candidates participate in group work and their behaviours and capabilities are observed. Boots, who also run assessment centres to recruit apprentices, ask them to do three different exercises; their centre is very interactive and includes stall visits and group interviews. '*Our assessors come from different areas around the business, including HR, commercial and supply chain,*' explains Donna Browne. '*We prepare briefings for the assessors as to how to get the most out of your young candidates.*' Similarly, Siemens run assessment centres that include role-play and other group activities.

### FEEDBACK

Providing unsuccessful candidates with constructive, or in some cases any, feedback is something all employers struggle with – and not just with regards to employing young people. An experiment conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) which addressed the issue of candidate feedback concluded that



## EMPLOYER FEEDBACK TO APPLICATIONS AND VOLUME

**Asda** receive over 1 million applications per year for around 28,000 jobs. Candidates received regular updates on the status of their application and those who go through to the assessment centre and interview stage can ask for specific feedback on their strengths and weaknesses.

**ITV** also has a very high volume of applicants, which means they find it difficult to provide meaningful, tailored feedback. Candidates who are interviewed over the phone receive follow-up feedback. Those who attend assessment centres are invited to speak to a person about how they did.

**Nestlé** provides feedback to all candidates via an automated response saying an application has not been successful. If candidates took part in the assessment centre they will receive personal feedback around why they were unsuccessful.

**National Grid** received 10,000 applications for 70 apprenticeship places last year. The organisation thus struggles with feedback but does provide in-depth feedback to those who have been unsuccessful at assessment centre – they are offered 30–40 minutes with their assessor.

'no feedback is the norm'. The study found that the majority (seven out of ten) of the strong fictitious applications they sent to employers received no response of any kind. In those instances where employers did provide feedback, it was mainly delivered by email rather than phone (Tunstall et al 2012). Aside from this study by the JRF, there is very little information available about the amount, format and content of feedback supplied to candidates in the recruitment and selection process.

Almost all of the employers we spoke to recognise this as an issue. The main problem with providing feedback is the volume (and sometimes often also the quality and relevance) of applications most employers receive, especially in the first stage of the selection process. *'We cannot respond to every candidate who applies, but we provide feedback later in the process when we have smaller numbers,'* says Anouska Ramsay at Capgemini. *'We are keenly aware of the importance of feedback, not only in the application process but beyond. This is why we are holding a session with our apprentices to see how well they have been communicated and engaged with.'*

### EMPLOYERS' VIEWS OF YOUNG PEOPLE DURING THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

We asked employers what they see, in their recruitment activity, as the main challenges young people face. This included things they thought young people could improve on to enhance their employability, but also what, from their point of view, disadvantages young people in the labour market.

The key issues emerging are a lack of understanding amongst young people about employer expectations and how to market themselves, but also more specific issues around poor preparation, communication and presentation and a lack of knowledge as to why they want to work there and a lack of confidence.

More specifically, employers mentioned to us the following issues:

- young people unable to 'sell themselves' positively and in an employer-appropriate way
- often not reading or understanding eligibility criteria for the job
- difficulties in scheduling phone interviews with candidates – not turning up, or unable to speak during the day

- lack of confidence
- general understanding of expectations – punctuality, what to wear, how to present themselves, interaction
- disappointed about difficulties young people encounter in offering real-life examples of their skills to show suitability for role
- young people's expectations: some expect to 'just walk into their dream job'
- poor written communication, for example emails written in text-speak, not enough time spent on application forms
- young people seeming 'blasé' or not interested/motivated in an interview
- young people find it difficult to translate educational/ personal experience into workplace scenarios without assistance/encouragement
- young people struggle with the recruitment process in general; what's expected of them – for example presentations, describing why you want the job, talking through CV
- often unable to 'see the next step' – they seem to take things at face value and aren't able to see the bigger picture
- answers on application form are formulaic; they don't show any originality
- candidates don't know how to make themselves stand out
- lack of clarity around what they're applying for
- little knowledge of basic work behaviour and etiquette
- they can be intimidated by a corporate environment
- poor knowledge of organisations they apply for; they don't research the company
- young people find it difficult to demonstrate their skills and experience when asked in an interview situation
- young people unable to 'sell' themselves on their CV – very descriptive; not necessarily best demonstration of what was gained from each experience
- unable to answer why they want the job and what they want to do
- not able to think beyond the immediate opportunity to their career pathways and futures.

## REFLECTION POINTS

- How can employers better promote their opportunities to young people?
- How can recruitment processes and selection criteria be adapted to be more youth-friendly?
- How can we get the most out of young candidates at the interview stage?
- How can we up-skill young people with regards to employer expectations during the recruitment process?

# 3 YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF LOOKING FOR WORK AND RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

## SUMMARY

- Young people's experience of the jobs search process is often a frustrating and demotivating experience, with perceived lack of support.
- Young people struggle with where to look for jobs, how to apply and how to 'market' themselves to potential employers.
- Lack of constructive employer feedback is a key issue, affecting young people's confidence and chances to improve.
- Young people struggle with accessing work experience and lack of networks and contacts that would allow them to find out about opportunities.
- Careers advice and guidance at schools is not sufficiently informing young people about career pathways and job opportunities, with negative consequences for the education-to-work transition, especially for those from more disadvantaged backgrounds.
- There is an issue of young people not accessing guidance when they can as they don't seem as important before they enter the labour market.
- Recruitment processes are unclear to young people and so are employer expectations during selection stages.

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF LOOKING FOR WORK

Overall, looking for work is, unsurprisingly, for most young people a fairly frustrating and sometimes demotivating experience. The young jobseekers we asked in our focus groups about their experience of job search said that it made them 'feel down' and 'not very confident'. Job search from their experience is characterised by:

- endless forms to complete
- no response to applications they had made
- no feedback from employers
- no support from anyone
- employers constantly asking for 'experience'
- boredom
- low morale
- competition from more experienced workers.

Many also felt 'let down' and 'short-changed' by the education system. This was for instance the case for one of the young Young Ambassadors from the Prince's Trust, who had a degree in international politics: *'I went to university and got a degree, I'm 27k in debt now, but I don't have a job. To be honest, I feel let down by the lack of support.'*

Others also explained to us how they lost confidence and how this has affected their career:

*'I've got a degree in design and technology. I want to work in web design and graphic design. But after graduating I just couldn't find a job in the sector, so I lost my confidence and*

*I eventually gave up. For the past three years I worked in a warehouse, the manual labour was tough but at least I had a job'* (Vijay, Steps Ahead mentee, Northampton).

Looking for work seems like a full-time job in itself for many young people:

*'I spend all my time looking for work. I get up in the morning and start my job search. There are so many repetitive forms to fill in, they take a long time'* (Matt, Steps Ahead mentee, Leicester).

Above all, though, young people have told us about the lack of support available for them. They often feel that once they have left the education system, there is nowhere they feel they can turn to for advice and guidance. In one case, one of the young jobseekers – who was not eligible for Jobseekers Allowance as he had personal savings from working abroad – only went to JCP to get some career advice. He felt that this was the only place he could turn to for help:

*'JCP advisers were surprised to see me as I'm not eligible for Jobseekers Allowance. I told them that I had come to get advice for my job search; there is nowhere else where I can go'* (Matt, young jobseeker and Steps Ahead mentee, Leicester).

To get a more rounded picture, we also asked our mentors from the CIPD Steps Ahead programme – which matches HR professionals with young jobseekers – what they thought about their mentees' experience of accessing the labour market. They told us the key challenges young people face in their transition from education into work are about the basics:

**Table 1: The mentors' view: issues that young people struggle with**

Job search	Applications	Employer expectations	Confidence and motivation
pressure from parents to find a job	no knowledge about how to read adverts, interpret job descriptions and people specifications	no knowledge about what to expect during an interview and how to excel	lack in confidence
lack of knowledge about what it is they want to do for a career	lack of knowledge of writing a good CV and application form	no understanding about how to sell themselves through their CV and at interview stage	pressure of debt and worries about the future
a tunnel vision/closed view about jobs and careers, for example not knowing about the variety of occupations available	no understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, and how to apply those to the job search	lack of awareness about the importance of presentation and dressing the part at the interview stage	self-esteem and morale issues, for example they don't feel worthy of employment
no advice and guidance about career pathways and job opportunities	no understanding of how to 'market' their skills and experiences	lack of awareness about how important it is to research your prospective employer	frustrated with the gap between the jobs available and their qualifications to achieve their desired job
lack of potential employer contacts and networks	a scatter-gun approach instead of tailored application	not knowing what is expected of them during the different recruitment stages	a vicious circle of being pressured to apply for any jobs via JCP, but even lower confidence if they don't get them
not knowing about support services available or not using them, such as career advisers and careers fairs at university	no understanding of how they can make their application stand out	no understanding about how competitive the process is	lack of support

- how to look for a job
- how to apply for a vacancy
- how to perform during the interview stage.

Furthermore, our mentors told us that young people don't understand what employers expect from them during the different stages, especially when it comes to issues such as presentation and attitude. More specifically, they also told us that they saw young people struggling with some of the issues in Table 1.

Finally, we also asked Jobcentre Plus advisers about the three main challenges they saw young people facing in the recruitment process. They identified these as:

- presenting themselves to potential employers
- interviewing skills
- searching for jobs effectively.

They also told us that only 5% of young people they saw reported their experience of the recruitment process as good, with a majority reporting that young people's experience was either poor or very poor.<sup>4</sup>

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S UNDERSTANDING OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Part of the reason why young people struggle so much in their job search has also to do with their lack of knowledge about

the opportunities that are available. We have already mentioned at the beginning of this report the research findings around young people's limited ambitions when it comes to where they want to work. How the lack of understanding about career pathways, job opportunities available and different sectors and occupations can negatively affect young people's education-to-work transition came out very strongly in our focus groups:

*'The biggest problem I've seen is that they don't have the faintest idea about what they want to do. They haven't got a clue about the different opportunities out there, and even if they did, nobody has told them what they need to do to get there; there isn't an understanding about career pathways'* (CIPD member and Steps Ahead volunteer mentor, Leicester).

This then often leads to young people not thinking strategically about their education choices or even exploring their options:

*'My mentee had studied philosophy at university. I asked him why and he said because he thought he could pass it. But he had no idea what he wanted to do. His parents just wanted him to get a job; there was no understanding about the skills he had gained independently of the subject matter. I had to drag this out of him'* (Lisa, CIPD member and volunteer Steps Ahead mentor, Northampton).

We've asked young people about the careers advice and guidance they received at school (see box opposite). The advice they received was often non-existent and at best patchy. We also asked mentors

<sup>4</sup> Mini-survey of JCP advisers, 91 responses, carried out March 2013.

about what they thought about what their mentees knew about the options available and got similar feedback:

*'With all of my mentees I found that when they had received advice it was very limited and unsupportive of the young person's ambitions; they seemed unwilling to explore what young people wished to do'* (Chris, CIPD member and volunteer mentor for Steps Ahead, Leicester).

With career advice and guidance in schools being limited, most young people get their career insights from their family and/or friends:

*'I don't remember getting any advice from anyone. The only advice I got was from my father'* (Gulcin, Steps Ahead mentee, Leicester).

This is a problem because it limits young people in terms of understanding about their options. This is particularly an issue for children from a lower income background, as Neil Morrison, HR director at Random House, with a particular passion for this agenda, explains: *'We need a better understanding about the opportunities that are available – middle-class children are better off when it comes to information, advice and guidance through their parents, but what about the rest? What about those whose relatives aren't engineers, publishers or doctors?'*

Though sometimes, young people are not accessing the support available to them when they can; perhaps this is because they don't know how important this is until they find themselves in the labour market. One of our mentors from Steps Ahead explained that her mentee, a young jobseeker in Northampton, had never heard of recruitment fairs that were held by his university. She said she found it 'alarming' that young people aren't aware of help and support that is available during and after graduating:

*'I've asked my mentee about the career guidance at his university. He said he'd never heard of any. The first thing I did at the beginning of our mentoring relationship was send him*

*off to a careers fair in Northampton. I think it's also alarming that they don't know about careers websites during their time at university'* (Sandra, CIPD member and volunteer mentor for Steps Ahead, Northampton).

There is definitely more support at universities, but it comes back to the question of who is accessing the support. For example, at Regent's University, the Careers and Business Relations Department sees making students aware of employers' expectations as a crucial part of their work – as well as providing students with access to careers advisers and coaches. The university regularly hosts workshops where businesses are invited to speak to students about what skills, experience and attitudes they're looking for in young applicants. The university also provides tutorials aimed specifically at improving students' overall employability, as well as sessions designed to boost young people's ability to secure employment upon leaving the university – for example, LinkedIn and job search workshops.

*'It's an important part of our job to prepare students for what business expects from young recruits entering the workforce. Which is why we try to foster early engagement between employers and students from the very start of their educational journey,'* explains Matthias Feist, Head of Department, Careers and Business Relations, Regent's University.

What young people have told us though is that often they are not aware of how much this matters until it is too late. For example, one of our young jobseekers comments, *'When I was studying I spent all my time thinking about my degree and my dissertation. I wish I had known then how important it is to prepare myself for the labour market and get clued up about job search; if I'd known what I know now I would have spent more time on that.'*

Another issue that was raised is that in some cases the young person knows what it is they want to do but doesn't know what they need to do to get there – again highlighting the absence

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE OF CAREERS ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

*'We did have a careers adviser at school but only for the naughty kids. If you had done something wrong then you had to see the careers adviser.'* **Rose, Young Ambassador, Prince's Trust**

*'Yes, I remember we got some advice at school. They showed us a video about the workplace, about working in an office.'* **Vijay, Steps Ahead mentee, Northampton**

*'I don't remember getting any advice in school. Nor do I remember any employers coming in to talk to us about jobs.'* **Bennett, Young Ambassador, the Prince's Trust**

*'No, I didn't get any advice on what to do, but I always loved gadgets, so I knew I wanted to do something with technology, which is why I studied IT. I'm still looking for work though.'* **Keith, Young Ambassador, Prince's Trust**

*'Careers advice in my school was shocking. They decided I should do hair dressing. I was told there wasn't much else I could do. I eventually went to university though and there was some support there.'* **Abby, Steps Ahead mentee and media graduate**

*'A Connexions career adviser came into school in year 10 – found advice helpful.'* **Steps Ahead mentee**

of solid information about career pathways at school. Nick, one of the Young Ambassadors we spoke to in our focus group with the Prince's Trust, said he always knew that he preferred manual labour and that he wanted to become a trades person, but it's just upon entering the labour market that he discovered that he needed a specific card to be a certified construction worker.

What we also found is that most young people had received no information on alternatives to university education and that the choice on leaving school was university or work. This has been confirmed by our recent research amongst employees in their role and also as parents, that only 15% said they had received information about apprenticeships.

The work of the Education and Employers Taskforce has well documented and illustrated the benefits of employer contact at school (see their research on NEETs and employer contact demonstrating that those with more employer contact at school are less likely to become NEET later on). Yet, most of the young people we spoke to had not experienced any employer contact at school. This is also confirmed by the research that shows that only 15% of young adults recalled three or more employer contacts through their schools or colleges (Mann 2012).

This further contributes to their lack of awareness around the opportunities available, especially as the labour market becomes more complex. This is something that Phillipa Hart, who runs her own recruitment agency (Hart Recruitment), has seen as negatively impacting on youth employment:

*'We have unfilled vacancies and opportunities for young people, like apprenticeships. This should be in the news! Instead all we ever hear about is how there are not opportunities for young people. It's depressing.'*

Phillipa says she also often redirects young people looking for jobs to training providers, an avenue most young people, according to her, don't know about.

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO JOBS

Most of the young people we talked to told us that they think their lack of previous experience is their biggest barrier to accessing employment. They feel that they are locked into a vicious circle where employers are asking for experience but wouldn't help them to get this. This is not only the case with

our young jobseekers, but also other groups of young people more generally. The group of students studying business studies at Regent's University, who we ran a focus group with, also worried that they would not be employable without experience relating to what they want to do. While most young people understand the value of relevant work experience, they often don't know how to get it.

How important work experience is to labour market access is confirmed by research carried out by the UKCES, which found that a lack of work experience is the number one reason for employers to turn down a young person (UKCES 2013). This is a particular problem today as there is a decline in young people having part-time jobs while in education (UKCES 2013). This means that while more employers are asking for work experience, fewer young people are actually acquiring this, leading to a mismatch in the labour market.

As a result, young people find it even harder to compete with older and more experienced workers: our literature review also found that previous work experience can play an important role in getting shortlisted for interviews (Newton et al 2005). As seen above, in terms of the selection procedure, a young person's application is often subject to a first-stage formal screening process, consisting of scoring against 'set criteria', including work history (Tunstall et al 2012, p20). Many young applicants might find themselves filtered out due to a lack of previous experience. The victims of this 'experience trap' face the additional problem that their lack of work experience also means a lack of references to support their applications and act as 'an illustration of their employability' (Atkinson and Williamson 2003, quoted in Newton et al 2005).

Another issue that young people and mentors have raised with us is their lack of networks and connections and how this makes it often seem impossible to access the labour market. When we talked to business students at Regent's University, the majority there also believed that it's still 'who you know' which determines your overall success at finding a job. As one participant said, *'you will always have an advantage if you have the right connections.'* Young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are obviously more disadvantaged by the importance of connections.

Limited and unequal access to jobs is particularly the problem in some industries, such as media or publishing:

### CATCH 22: THE NO EXPERIENCE, NO JOB CYCLE

*'Most of the jobs that are advertised require some previous experience; there don't seem to be any jobs for people like us, without any work experience.'* **Vijay, CIPD Steps Ahead mentee, Northampton**

*'I'm now trying to get some work experience, as all the job descriptions I see want you to have experience. I'm not picky as to where and what – I just want to put something on my CV.'* **Gulcin, CIPD Steps Ahead mentee, Leicester**

*'I think degrees need a more practical element to them, something that gives you work experience. I can see that my friends who did sandwich studies did better at getting a job.'* **Rose, Prince's Trust Young Ambassador**

*'I'm looking for jobs in the media sector, but it is really difficult, even with having done work experience in this area. Only about 20% of the jobs are advertised, the jobs that you see are only the tip of the iceberg; it's all about contacts and inside knowledge, which I don't have yet'* (Abi, Steps Ahead mentee, Leicester).

Word-of-mouth recruitment is an issue connected to that, as young people often don't tend to have the necessary work contacts to be included in this. And yet this route is a recruitment practice that is used by more and more employers. Capgemini, for example, say that their most popular route for apprenticeship recruitment has been through the Employee Referral Scheme, with 80% of all apprenticeships being sourced that way. However, the company is aware of the potential shortcomings of this way of recruiting young people: *'Opportunities can miss certain audiences and the diversity of applicants is not so wide,'* explains Anouska Ramsay, Head of Talent, Capgemini.

This is confirmed by research carried out by the UKCES that shows that word-of-mouth recruitment is now the number one way to recruit:

*'Young non-graduates are particularly dependent on informal connections with employers, through friends or family, to secure employment. Most young people haven't had time to build these social networks or don't have the right contacts to start off with, which puts them at a disadvantage in today's labour market'* (UKCES 2013).

In smaller organisations, recruitment is often done via networks and family:

*'When I joined the organisation there was no HR function. Recruitment was largely done via networks and family. It's been a bit of a struggle to convince managers not to recruit via this method, which seemed to be the easiest option for them,'* says Sam Newman, Head of HR, WR Refrigeration.

Studies show that when vacancies are communicated by informal mechanisms there is a tendency for that vacancy to only reach similar people to those already in employment (Canny 2004, quoted in Newton et al 2005, p48) thus acting as a barrier to diversity and cutting off entire pools of talent. For young people, therefore, employers' reliance on these networks to recruit means they are often not exposed to opportunities if and when they arise. Although statistics show that for some young people, informal recruitment works, a study by the JRF shows that for 'weaker' candidates who do not have access to these particular networks, the Internet is the most successful method of finding work, not word of mouth (Tunstall et al 2012).

## **YOUNG PEOPLE'S APPROACH TO JOB SEARCH AND APPLYING FOR JOBS**

As our mentors explained, many young people find themselves under huge pressure to find a job, which does not help their approach to job search, as one Steps Ahead mentor explains: *'This impacts on their mental attitude; they panic and tell themselves that they can't find a job. They spend so much time*

*applying for jobs that there isn't really enough time to gather information about careers.'*

Parents, Jobcentre Plus advisers and young people often push themselves to apply for as many jobs as possible (they need to apply for at least six jobs a week to qualify for Jobseekers Allowance). As a result, young people often have a scatter-gun approach to applying for jobs, which results in many applications that aren't tailored to the specific job advertised. As we've seen above, this leads to employers receiving hundreds if not thousands of applications that may not be relevant to their vacancies, but this is also a problem for the young person, as it further contributes to denting their confidence:

*'As a result of this not very effective approach to applying for jobs, the young person lives in a world of constant knock-backs, with devastating effects for their confidence and morale,'* explains Ian, CIPD member and volunteer Steps Ahead mentor, Leicester.

Our mentors have worked with young jobseekers to explain to them the benefits of a more tailored approach:

*'What I've explained to my mentee is that there is no point in applying for "any old job", even if that is what his parents or the Jobcentre want. I know that as an employer you can't afford to waste the time to recruit someone who doesn't want to do the job. So you don't'* (Sandra, CIPD member and volunteer Steps Ahead mentor, Leicester).

Another issue related to this is that young people are often not systematic in their approach. So while most young people feel like they spend all their time looking for work, they often don't use their time very effectively, explains Ian, a Steps Ahead mentor: *'I've noticed with my mentees that they spend a lot of time thinking about their job search, but they don't have a structure; everything is done quite randomly and without a process, which means that the job search seems very overwhelming.'*

In terms of where to look for jobs, this is also something young people are struggling with – because they generally tend not to know where they want to work and they don't usually look directly at an organisation's website, although this is where most employers advertise their opportunities, as seen above.

Most young people use online job boards and websites such as Monster and Reed, as well as graduate job websites such as Milkround. Some said they use industry-specific/specialist job sites and all said they have used the newly launched government website 'Universal Job Match' as this is where the Jobcentre Plus told them to look for jobs. All young people have expressed very strong views on the new Universal Job Match, although none of them were positive views, for example: *'it's not user-friendly and is unhelpful'* and *'it's the same jobs advertised for months'*. They also included more specific comments, such as: the jobs that are advertised on the website don't have employer contact details, so a candidate can only send a 'generic' request via the online system. The system also doesn't allow you to amend or tailor your CV/covering letter when applying, which contradicts the advice jobseekers are given.

A number of young people also tried to approach their job search by registering with recruitment agencies, but generally didn't have good experiences. They commented that the agencies would offer them jobs that had nothing to do with what they wanted to do (mainly call centre jobs) or arranged meetings with them just to fulfil a certain quota.

When it comes to applying for jobs, the application forms are mostly a mystery to young people. Young people don't really know what to include in the form and how to use examples of school and university experience to demonstrate their skills to employers. This is similar when it comes to writing their CV, which has come up as one of the top issues. Most mentors said they were shocked at how 'confused' the young person's CV was and how it didn't make the most of their qualifications, experiences and skills.

## **YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES AND UNDERSTANDING OF SELECTION PROCESSES**

Recruitment processes are not clear for many young people. This often starts with who to contact:

*'Everything is the same: there are no names on the advert, nobody I can write to. If there was a name that would give more meaning to my application letter. Now I don't even know if somebody will read my letter, it's all so anonymous'* (Preeti, young jobseeker and Steps Ahead mentee, Leicester).

In general, they say they have very limited information about the processes and different expectations at the different selection stages. Many don't understand how competitive the process is and what employers' expectations are (no background research, and so on). Most young people don't even know that there are different stages:

*'It would be good to have more information about the process – if somebody would tell me about the different stages and how it works, what they are looking for in each stage. Now it's just like throwing something into a black hole; you don't know what happens afterwards and you don't know where you went wrong'* (Rose, Young Ambassador, the Prince's Trust).

They also say that for them it is important to have a closing date, but that many of the jobs they apply to don't have that. This is

also an issue, as research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that many young people are unaware of the competitive nature of the jobs market and underestimate the importance of applying for vacancies quickly (Tunstall et al 2012).

Face-to-face interviews are something which is also particularly challenging, even for those young people who thought they knew how to write a CV and a covering letter, which was the case of the students at Regent's University we spoke to: the majority didn't know what would be expected of them at an interview, how to prepare for it, what format it would take.

Most young people find it very difficult to 'sell' themselves in an interview situation; they struggle with confidence issues and the formality of the interview situation, especially if they haven't been in an office before, as is the case with many young people.

*'I don't feel fully myself if I am in a suit and a tie. It does not help my confidence'* (Keith, Young Ambassador, the Prince's Trust).

They told us that it intimidates them to sit across from someone at a desk or a table and that they would prefer a more active, informal setting.

A key issue that both the young jobseekers and their mentors raised is the lack of constructive feedback provided by employers. For young people this is the number one issue they mentioned when we asked about their experience of the job search. They told us how getting feedback would help them with their morale but also to understand where they are going wrong. They overwhelmingly told us that 'employers aren't giving any helpful tips or personal advice on applications'. Our mentors concluded that this not only means that employers aren't helping young people to improve, but it could also be harmful to the employer brand: *'if an employer doesn't reply to applications, nobody wants to work there.'*



## THE IMPACT OF (NO) EMPLOYER FEEDBACK

*'I haven't had any feedback from my applications at all. Sometimes I've received an automated reply saying "your application has been received", that's all.'* **Steps Ahead mentee, Leicester**

*'Employers don't give feedback, so everyone becomes despondent. Most young people get a message saying you didn't get to the next stage with no explanation, no feedback, so they wonder "what did I do wrong?" It is very disheartening.'*

**Eloise Grant, PPDG**

*'When I did get replies back they said that other candidates had more experience or better profiles, I found that very depressing, because how was I going to get that experience?'* **Gulcin, Steps Ahead mentee, Leicester**

*'My current mentee had been applying for different jobs but kept getting rejected. No feedback was provided and most of the systems used were automated and very complicated. I tried to find a contact to help him but couldn't.'* **Sandra, CIPD member and volunteer Steps Ahead mentor, Northampton**

*'I applied for a vacancy with a big public sector employer a few months ago, and I am still waiting to hear back. I really think if there was one thing that employers could do to change their recruitment practices it is to provide feedback. I've spent time applying for a job; it's a question of respect.'* **Vijay, Steps Ahead mentee, Northampton**

## REFLECTION POINTS

- How can we provide more support to young people in the transition phase from education to work?
- How can we help young people to better understand employer expectations?
- How can we increase young people's understanding about job opportunities and career pathways?
- How can we get more young people to access work experience?
- How can employers make their recruitment processes more transparent and youth-friendly?
- How can we build young people's confidence, in particular in the interview stage?
- How can employers provide more, and more constructive, feedback?

# 4 SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

## SUMMARY

- Young people are very comfortable with using all types of social media, both for leisure and work purposes. Employers should therefore try to use social media in their recruitment strategy, as this will be a good way of reaching young people. However, organisations need to be mindful not to disadvantage other groups.
- Young people are also very aware of online presence, which includes the online presence of a company or a brand. It is therefore worth thinking about how to present overall brand image and organisational culture to young people, via social media. This will increase the chances of attracting young people to the organisation and subsequently applying for jobs.
- Although LinkedIn is the leading professional social media site, young people prefer to communicate on Facebook, including for work purposes, and many have not got a LinkedIn profile. Employers should therefore think about including Facebook in their recruitment strategy – for example, creating Facebook fan pages that then link to a company careers site.
- Social media has many advantages, including developing brand awareness, saving money on recruitment and allowing the employer to target recruitment efforts. However, there are also some issues and potential problems, notably around screening and treating all candidates fairly.

## RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

There can be substantial advantages to using social media for recruitment purposes, particularly when recruiting young people, who are on the whole very comfortable with these websites and tools and use them as part of their daily life. But organisations need to be mindful that it can disadvantage other groups, such as older workers.

As Jennifer Lee, HR director at Jurys Inn, says: *'We have started to use Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn a lot for our recruitment. It is new to us as a business but it's inevitable, the technology evolves and we as a business need to evolve with it.'* She explains that Jurys Inn already have a substantial online programme they use for e-learning which is hugely popular with their employees, but that *'recruitment and selection have been a bit slow to catch up, but clearly it's the future.'*

This is the case for many organisations who've started to realise the potential opportunities an increased social media presence, especially with regards to attracting and recruiting young people, can bring. Out of the around 30 organisational case studies we carried out as part of the research more than half used at least one form of social media to attract young people, and many are planning to develop more. Santander, for example, are hoping to develop a recruitment 'app' that will allow them to specifically target young people.

The overall use of social media sites for recruitment is becoming increasingly widespread. A 2008 survey for the US Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that 34% of organisations used social networking sites to recruit or contact potential applicants, and 19% said that they planned to do so in the future.

Within this context of increasing use of social media for recruitment and high engagement levels of young people with technology and social media in particular, it makes sense for employers to include it when recruiting young people.

Joos (2008) found that using social media as part of an organisation's recruitment strategy is reported to be particularly effective for recruiting certain categories of individuals, such as graduates, skilled workers, managers and executives. He confirms that these groups tend to be comparatively computer-literate and use technology routinely in their daily lives, both for work and personal purposes. He found that the use of social media to recruit so-called 'millennials'<sup>6</sup> is extremely effective. Furthermore, Davison et al (2011) note that young individuals appear to be less concerned about privacy than previous generations and so will be more accepting of the use of these types of sites for recruitment purposes. Yeaton (2008) warns: *'The characteristics of Gen Y require an adjustment in focus and perspective...innovative recruiting techniques are needed to engage this latest cultural shift.'*

Searle (2006) notes that social media is now beginning to replace more traditional recruitment methods for attracting young people, such as the graduate website Milkround.com and recruitment fairs and talks. Wright (Nigel Wright Recruitment 2011) also notes that hiring managers and recruiters are finding that they need to be more proactive in their approach to recruitment, by engaging with potential candidates across a wide range of social networking platforms. *'Essentially, companies and recruiters need to be where their candidates are in order to engage them in the recruitment process.'*

Young people are reported to be increasingly using social media websites in order to build an online career presence

<sup>6</sup> Broadly taken to include those with birth dates from the late 1970s/early 1980s to the late 1990s.

and search for jobs. A survey carried out by Potentialpark in 2011 of over 31,000 graduates, students and early career professionals worldwide found that almost 100% of survey participants in Europe would like to interact with employers online. The preference was for LinkedIn (48%), with Facebook scoring 25%.

However, the survey found some reservations among young people about using Facebook for job applications, with 56% of participants stating that Facebook was not the right place to interact with employers, and 48% saying that they were uncomfortable with sharing private information. Nevertheless, it also found that relatively few young people had a LinkedIn profile. This is reinforced by a study carried out by Florenthal and Dykhouse (2012), who note that two-thirds of students currently engaged in study had not initiated building their professional profile on LinkedIn, or do not fully utilise their LinkedIn account.

*'Most professionals use virtual networks such as LinkedIn to find jobs, but young people don't know about it'* (Vanessa Paul, Talent and Acquisition Specialist, Standard Chartered).

Employers are realising that Facebook is where young people tend to spend their online time, rather than more professional sites such as LinkedIn. Organisations are therefore creating Facebook fan pages that aim to attract young people with their content, as a way of reaching 'passive' jobseekers or students who are not yet actively searching the jobs market.

## THE ADVANTAGES OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA AS A RECRUITMENT TOOL

There are real advantages to using social media as part of an organisational recruitment strategy. These centre mainly on reducing costs, reaching a wider pool of potential applicants, and also on being able to target recruitment more effectively.

Probably the most prominent advantage to using social media as a component of recruitment strategy is cost reduction. Organisations that use websites such as LinkedIn to search for specialist functions can save a lot of money on recruitment

agency fees. Further, using Facebook is a relatively quick and easy way of attracting large numbers of potential applicants, particularly among young people, where the informal nature of the communication lends itself well to this function.

Social media tools allow employers to target their recruitment drive at specific groups of potential candidates. In the case of young people, postings on Facebook are particularly effective, as Facebook is probably the most widely used social media tool amongst young people. Use of hashtags on Twitter can also help to direct notices to specific online communities.

Young people are also extremely familiar with the video-sharing website YouTube and some employers are using this to good effect in order to give potential applicants a real idea of the culture of a workplace using videos of workers and managers. In the case of young people, this type of approach is likely to be particularly effective, as young people are more likely to be influenced by factors such as organisational culture and finding an organisation that allows them to combine work and their overall lifestyle in the way that they want.

In addition, social media allows employers to target a passive audience – those who are not actively seeking a new job, but may become interested once they know more about the organisation, or who may know someone who is looking for a job. The ability to forward links and to 'retweet' messages means that information has a significant reach via social media.

Reverse targeting can also be a benefit of social media. If organisations can give a clear picture of their organisation and of specific jobs through social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, this may deter those individuals from applying who realise that this is not the right organisation or job for them.

## RISKS AND COSTS OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR RECRUITMENT

Alongside the advantages of using social media, as set out above, organisations need to think about some of the potential issues that could arise from its use. These are set out below.

### RANDOM HOUSE GROUP: AN ONLINE COMMUNITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE INTERESTED IN PUBLISHING

Random House Group advertises all its work experience placements on a Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/randomhouseworkexperience](http://www.facebook.com/randomhouseworkexperience) This is to ensure a fair and open access to the placements, as the company receives a very high number of applications. Through this interactive Facebook page Random House have also created an online community of young people interested in entering the publishing industry, who exchange advice and feedback about their placement with prospective candidates: *'Young people tend to give feedback about their placement as well as our recruitment process on the Facebook page, it is all very open,'* explains Neil Morrison, HR director at Random House, although he admits that their approach is probably different from other companies because of the culture of their industry: *'it is very informal and creative.'* Random House then choose a random number of applications. They strongly encourage young applicants to persevere and try again if they haven't been selected the first time round: *'Some people apply three or four times or even more and then they will get a placement. I always tell them, if you don't succeed at the first try, apply again but make sure that every application is as polished as the first,'* says Neil. Their open and interactive approach could potentially lead to problems, but so far, he says they haven't had any issues with inappropriate posts, although this may also be the case because they attract a specific socio-economic group.

## ACCURACY OF INFORMATION

Young people tend to be very knowledgeable about social media sites and weave their use seamlessly into their lives, as seen above. Although there is an overall lack of research on the accuracy of the information provided on social networking sites such as Facebook, it is possible that individuals could devise a separate site for 'professional' purposes, meaning that an employer accessing this site has no means of checking the accuracy of this information. Davison et al (2011) note that 'an individual who creates a webpage may be trying to impress friends, family, potential mates, and/or employers, and the type of distortion or "faking" may differ depending on the intended viewer. For example, individuals may "fake good" if they think their parents or employers will see the webpage.'

## TIME RESOURCES

Although using social media tools can offer a wide range of advantages, there are costs, mainly linked to the upkeep of websites and Twitter feeds. This will particularly be the case if applicants are encouraged to post queries through these sites. Organisations need to ensure that queries are answered relatively promptly and that site content is updated on a regular basis, otherwise potential applicants will lose interest in the site and be put off applying for a job in the organisation altogether. This is especially pertinent for young people, who expect fast responses and ever-changing content that is up to date and interesting. For employers, therefore, a dedicated resource needs to be allocated to the upkeep of social media sites and to monitor the traffic on the site in order to find out what is effective. Many employers either have a digital strategy manager, whose job it is to keep these sites up to date, or share out the responsibility among staff.

Employers should bear in mind, however, that traffic on these sites can be unpredictable in terms of volumes, and so some kind of strategy on placing a limit on the time devoted to these sites is advisable. For example, organisations could make it clear that queries will be answered within a certain timeframe, but not immediately.

## SCREENING APPLICANTS – IS IT ETHICAL?

In addition to attracting applicants, social networking tools can be used in the screening process, as they offer the possibility for employers to gain extra knowledge about candidates. In the case of young people in particular, Facebook pages contain a great deal of information about individuals' private lives and lifestyles in general. This potential blurring of work and private lives can potentially cause problems.

Some employers acknowledge that they do access extra information about employees by looking at their online profiles. Broughton et al (2010) cite a US survey which found that the most common reasons for rejecting candidates were based on lifestyle

rather than employment: 53% of HR managers responding to the survey cited online postings that included 'provocative or inappropriate' photographs as a reason to turn down a candidate.

More recently, in 2012, the US website CareerBuilder.com (Grasz 2012) explored the issue of screening in more detail by conducting a survey of 2,300 recruiting managers. It found that 37% of respondents had looked at candidates' online profiles. Of those who did not do this, 15% said that their organisation did not allow it, but 11% said that although they were not currently doing this, they planned to begin doing so. Of those employers who access online profiles, around a third said that they had found material that had made them decide not to recruit that individual. This includes inappropriate photos or information, or information that showed that qualifications had been falsified. Nevertheless, one-third of these managers also reported that the information that they had accessed had made them more likely to hire an individual.

There is at present no legislation or specific legal guidance on this issue. While some employers admit to checking out candidates online, it is rare for an organisation to do this in a systematic way. Some organisations state that they do not do this on a matter of principle, for reasons to do with fair treatment of all applicants (applicants cannot be considered equally if the employer knows more about some than others). Further, although as yet untested in the courts, there may be difficulties associated with knowing too much about an individual. For example, a situation could arise in which an employer knows the political or religious beliefs of an individual after having accessed their online profile during selection. If the individual is recruited, and a situation subsequently arises in which the employer wishes to dismiss the employee on competency grounds, the employee could then argue that the employer is discriminating against them on the basis of their religious or political beliefs. It is very difficult to 'unknow' something once it is known and therefore the easiest way is for the employer not to access this information at all. At the least, if an employer is going to access the online profiles of candidates, it is good practice to let the candidates know beforehand and to do this for all candidates.

## LIMITING THE APPLICANT POOL

Although social media can extend the reach of recruitment, employers relying heavily on social media tools for recruitment should bear in mind that these tools, used on their own, are most likely to attract certain types of individuals such as people under 40 and those who are comfortable with this technology. There is therefore a risk that the recruitment process becomes unfair by excluding too many applicants who do not fit into these categories. Accordingly, none of the case study organisations in research carried out recently for Acas (Broughton et al 2013, forthcoming) used social media tools in isolation for recruitment purposes, for fear of not casting the net wide enough when making recruitment decisions.

## REFLECTION POINTS

- How can employers better integrate social media in their recruitment strategy?
- How can employers use popular social media sites such as Facebook to attract young people?
- How can we help more young people to develop a professional profile, for example via LinkedIn?
- How ethical is it to screen potential candidates?

# 5 ADDRESSING THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND JOBS MISMATCH

**TABLE 2: Employers and young people mismatches**

Employers	Young people
Struggle to engage with young people, perceive them as difficult and a 'risk'	Don't know about job opportunities available and what it is they want to do
Are unsure how they can bring a young person into their organisation	Don't know how to apply for jobs and how to 'market' themselves to employers
Have high expectations and are regularly disappointed by young people during the recruitment process	Don't know how to talk about their skills, how important preparation and presentation is and are intimidated by interview situations
Don't know how to assess someone with no work experience	Struggle with accessing work experience and hence lack insight into the working world

## TO WHAT EXTENT ARE YOUNG PEOPLE AND EMPLOYERS FROM 'DIFFERENT PLANETS'?

With the title of the report we have tried to attract attention to the gulf that exists between young people and employers. In our research we have found clear evidence for this, with a considerable number of issues (some of them similar) on both sides (Table 2).

But what we have also seen in our best practice examples is that it often does not take a lot to bring employers and young people together, and once some of the obstacles are removed, this relationship works very well. Through the work of HR professionals who act as our volunteer mentors, we also know that quite often it's the small things that make a big difference: for example, teaching a young person to research the company they want to work for or by having an appropriately presented and well-structured CV. We've seen first-hand how a little advice can go a long way and help bridge that seemingly huge gap between what employers expect and what young people know. There is also a lot employers can do that can significantly contribute to the success of young people going through their recruitment process: for example, looking beyond the seemingly 'inappropriate' outfit to identify an enthusiasm and willingness to learn, reaching out to young people to talk about the opportunities available at their organisations and not ask probing questions about past experience. Further below we will share some examples of what employers have done to make their recruitment practices 'youth friendly' and how successful this has been.

That employers are generally satisfied with young people, once they have given them a chance, is also confirmed by our research with employers that have recruited young people: an overwhelming majority (91%) is very or fairly satisfied with their young recruits (CIPD 2012b).

This has also come out of our employer interviews: Microsoft, for example, work with 32,000 partners and four training providers across the UK to deliver apprenticeships in the IT sector and the majority of their apprentices are very young, 16–18-year-olds. Their experiences prove the concern about what young people can deliver in the workplace wrong: *'We have lots of case studies of our 16–18-year-olds that show the contrary, returns to our investment are very quick, after six months our apprentices are a valued member of the team that help increase productivity and performance.'*

This is also an experience Anouska Ramsay, Head of Talent at Capgemini, has had: *'I'd tell other employers to be prepared to be surprised at the level of energy and interest young people bring to your business. It's significantly higher than you might expect.'*

Similarly, Thames Water, which has started to offer apprenticeships in electrical engineering, were so impressed with the high quality of applicants that they offered more places than originally planned: *'We took a higher intake than planned because of the high quality of applicants, so what we did is create more roles,'* she explains.

## GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE MORE INFORMED ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES AND HOW TO ACCESS THEM

As we have seen above, there are a number of issues young people struggle with. As part of the follow-up to this research we will produce some guidance for young people, giving them practical tips and advice about recruitment and job search and how they can ensure that they position themselves in the best possible way to access jobs. In this section we will – rather than looking at what young people need to do – look at what can be done to help young people to improve their

employability skills, work experience and knowledge about the opportunities that are available.

Clearly, better advice and guidance while in education is a crucial part of the solution. Further below we look at what policy-makers need to do to support this. However, many employers have told us they are keen to get more involved with schools and this is also confirmed by our quantitative research in this area: seven out of ten employers believe they should be more engaged with the education system (CIPD 2012b).

We've seen above how crucial employer involvement in schools is in terms of fostering an understanding amongst young people about job opportunities available and how this leads to reducing the risk of young people becoming NEET. However, in addition to that, a ground-breaking new study by Anthony Mann and Christian Percy shows there is also a wage premium associated with young people having employer contact at school: the study shows that each employer contact on a scale of 0 to 4+ relates on average to a wage premium of 4.5%, or £900, so that a young adult recalling four or more contacts could be expected to earn £3,600 more than a peer who remembered no such activities (Mann and Percy 2013). The authors of the study explain that these benefits of employer contact are due to teenagers having access to reliable, usable information about the jobs market and where they might best fit into it:

*'As well as potentially developing skills and networks of relevance to later employment, young people are gaining access to hugely useful insights into the breadth of the labour*

*market and entry routes into different professions. And employer contacts are of such great impact because teenage understanding of the labour market is generally very poor. By gaining better access to information about the labour market, young people are better placed to understand the opportunities which best match their interests, enthusiasms and abilities,'* explains Anthony Mann, Research Director at the Education and Employers Taskforce and one of the authors of the study.

The CIPD therefore strongly supports initiatives such as the Inspiring the Future initiative [www.inspiringthefuture.org](http://www.inspiringthefuture.org), a simple, straightforward system that matches employers from all sectors and levels with local state schools.

However, this research also shows that more needs to be done to not just inform young people about the opportunities that are out there but also to prepare them to apply for those: young people need to know more about recruitment processes, how to write good CVs and applications and how to market themselves to potential employers in order to be able to compete in the labour market and make a successful transition from education to employment.

Jo Ward, Head of Resourcing and Talent, Nestlé, also thinks employers have to take some responsibility and get involved when it comes to young people not knowing much about the recruitment process and how competitive it is: *'Young people don't know how competitive the recruitment process is. They don't know that they need to stand out from the crowd in order to get the job. We need to go into schools and tell them*

## OUTREACH TO ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AT SCHOOL: APEX HOTELS

Apex Hotels uses a range of approaches to engage with young people while they are at school and college in order to highlight the career opportunities within the business and encourage applications.

The Edinburgh-based hotel chain takes part in regular initiatives to promote a more positive image of the catering and hospitality industry and connect with local young people in the community. For example, it works closely with Springboard Scotland, a non-profit organisation which develops and supports school pupils, job-seekers and those wishing to advance their careers in hospitality, leisure and tourism.

Apex, which has hotels in Edinburgh, Dundee and London, recently partnered with Springboard to hold a jobs' fair for third, fourth and fifth year students and their parents to highlight the wide range of different jobs and career paths within the business. Robert Allan, Apex's HR director, says:

*'We wanted to get across that, yes, the hotel industry does involve making beds and serving food but potential careers in the hotel industry are actually very diverse, for example sales, marketing, finance, HR and revenue. About 80–90 of our 730 staff work in these support functions.*

*'We want to paint a picture of what developing a career at Apex looks like. This means making sure young people understand that they if they are prepared to invest their time in an entry-level role, there are progression opportunities. For example, you might start out as a banqueting waiter but there is a clear progression route to becoming a banqueting manager or general manager if you develop the right skills and have the right attitude.'*

At another outreach event, Apex Hotels partnered with Gleneagles Hotel to create a pop-up hotel at Gleneagles in a day-long career taster event to give young people insights into the reality of hotel work. Pupils could see chefs in action making omelettes, or watch hotel spa staff giving treatments. The HR team also held HR workshops during the day talking about what employers expect, how to improve CVs and the importance of doing some research on prospective employers when making applications or preparing for interview.

Allan said that the hotel had also held workshops where a member of the HR team talked to young people about recruitment and selection to help them understand the process and ensure they are better prepared for an interview

*how it works, we need to explain to them that if we get 500 applications, the application form with the coffee stain or the doodling in the margin gets immediately filtered out.'*

As we've seen above, many young people don't think about the skills they have in a way their potential employer would, which can further disadvantage them. This is something which many employers have also mentioned to us. Marcus Lee gives the example of someone who has participated in Race for Life and been involved in associated fundraising activities: *'This requires lots of organisational skills and commitment. But they would not think about talking about this in their interview,'* he explains. He believes that young people are not being told to think about this in that way: *'We need to get them to think smarter and wider about their skills and experiences. Again, to use the Race for Life example, they shouldn't think about the event in itself, but about the skills they've used for this. This is what young people need help with; they should be told that in schools.'*

This is why the CIPD will be working with the Education and Employers Taskforce to develop an initiative that gets our members, HR professionals, into schools to do exactly that – run CV workshops and other advice sessions on job search and employer expectations during the recruitment process. We hope this will make a real difference in addressing the young people-jobs mismatch, not just by providing work preparation to young people but also by changing perceptions amongst HR professionals, thus addressing some of the issues around employer expectations and engagement with young people.

This is building on the CIPD's successful mentoring programme for young jobseekers (Steps Ahead mentoring, see box), where HR professionals are matched with young jobseekers to give face-to-face advice and guidance about CV-writing, job

search and interview techniques. The young jobseekers on our programme have told us how their mentors have supported them in their job search activities, built their confidence and helped them be more targeted in their approach:

*'My mentor helped me to shift my focus. Instead of applying for any job that I could find, he asked me to research potential companies I'd like to work for. He broke the process down for me and slowed down my applications. It's less daunting now and I am more targeted in my approach,'* says Matt, Steps Ahead mentee, Leicester.

Mentoring, through our work but also more generally, is something that we have seen as a very successful tool to address the gap between young people and the labour market:

*'You need somebody who listens but is at the same time hard on you and pushes you forward,'* says Rose, a Prince's Trust Young Ambassador.

This can also take the form of peer-to-peer mentoring. Indeed, many employers have realised that there are substantial benefits of getting their young employees involved in their recruitment of young candidates. At Siemens, young candidates are welcomed and accompanied to the interview by young apprentices and Jurys Inn does peer and group interviews with young candidates. Microsoft runs a peer mentoring scheme with their interns, who talk to other young people about the sector and the workplace more generally (see box).

As we have seen above, a lack of work experience has been identified as one of the key barriers to youth employment. We therefore need to get more employers to offer work experience to young people. A majority of employers that offer work

## THE CIPD'S STEPS AHEAD MENTORING PROGRAMME

Steps Ahead Mentoring is a mentoring project that matches HR professionals with young jobseekers aged 18 to 24. The project offers young people, most of whom have never worked before, up to six one-to-one mentoring sessions to help them improve their employability, boost their confidence and find work.

The project is entirely not-for-profit, in line with the CIPD's charitable purpose, and it is delivered exclusively by volunteers (most of whom are CIPD members, as well as some non-members upon recommendation). The CIPD works in collaboration with local Jobcentre Plus offices, which refer the young jobseekers to the scheme. Attendance is not mandatory and young jobseekers register themselves with the programme if they think it can help them in their job search.

The objective is to bring these young jobseekers closer to the labour market and improve their employability skills through individual face-to-face mentoring. Over the course of the project, mentees receive advice and guidance on job search, CV-writing and interview techniques. Mentors also help young people to identify their career prospects and build confidence. Steps Ahead mentors come from a variety of backgrounds, but most of them have been on the front line of recruitment and are well placed to help young jobseekers to increase their chances to access the labour market.

Since Steps Ahead Mentoring was launched in August 2011, it has helped 300 young people into employment and now has over 1,000 volunteer mentors. The project is currently operating in partnership with more than 300 Jobcentre Plus offices across central England, the north-east of England and the north-west of England. It aims to be operating throughout the UK by 2014.

*'Our mentoring programme provides an individual with one-to-one support on CV-writing and interview skills. Our mentors are all working in recruitment or related positions so they are ideally placed to give a young person a real insight into what they need to do to get a job,'* explains Kelly Duncan, Volunteering Manager at the CIPD, who runs the initiative. *'But often, it's also just about listening to someone and building their confidence. Our mentors help the young person to find out what their strengths and weaknesses are and what they'd like to do in their working life.'*

## MICROSOFT'S 'PEER-TO-PEER' MENTORING SCHEME

Microsoft believes that peer-to-peer mentoring is the best way to get messages across while at the same time building the skills and the confidence of those involved in the mentoring. Microsoft recruits around 100 interns per year, via Milkround as part of their degree. They take on various projects and one of these is Microsoft's 'Get on' programme, which helps young people into employment. This involves interns giving presentations to other young people at community centres, schools and Jobcentre Plus. Interns also run half-day events, where they bring in young people to show them what it is like to work in an office and give them some insights into the industry.

Harsha Ghadavi, who is leading this initiative at Microsoft, explains: *'I used to do this myself but it works much better when young people talk to young people. It is so much more powerful. Young people can help to inspire other young people.'*

## THE PRINCE'S TRUST TEAM PROGRAMME

The Prince's Trust runs many schemes to help young people access the labour market and one of these is their 'Team' programme: a 12-week personal development course for 16–25-year-olds, offering work experience, qualifications, practical skills, community projects and a residential week.

Through building their confidence and motivation, Team members are encouraged to think about their futures; this includes preparing a post-programme development plan.

Young people join a team of up to 15 participants. A team typically comprises around 12 unemployed people and one or two employed people sponsored by their employers.

During the 12-week programme, Team members:

- spend a week away at a residential activity centre
- undertake a project based in their local community
- complete a work placement
- participate in a team challenge, involving caring for others
- stage a team presentation, during which they recount their experiences.

experience to young people use this as an extended interview and offer the young person paid employment afterwards (52%, CIPD 2012b). This is why work experience is so useful; it allows young people to demonstrate their abilities to future employers: *'You need to allow young people to experience a situation where they can display their skills. We have a work placement programme called "Inspire". But it is really important to have a good placement; we have a "Placement Charter" which sets out what we commit to and what they need to achieve and highlights the two-way nature of the placement. You need to put some time and effort into these schemes as many young people will come back to work for you once they've graduated if you do this well,'* says Jennifer Lee, HR director at the hotel chain Jurys Inn.

That work experience placements are of high quality is important, which is why the CIPD has produced a guide for employers on how to run and set up high-quality work experience placements (CIPD 2012f).

We strongly recommend employers to participate in programmes such as the Business in the Community's Work Inspiration programme (see box), which gets employers to offer work experience placements to 14–19-year-olds. Many of the employers we spoke to already participate in the scheme, but we need more employers to follow suit.

## THE BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY'S (BITC) WORK INSPIRATION PROGRAMME

[www.workinspiration.com](http://www.workinspiration.com)

Work Inspiration is a national employer-led campaign that targets 14–19-year-olds in full-time education to make their first experience of the world of work more meaningful and inspiring. It delivers the tools to support businesses to build their talent pipeline through work experience – making the world of work more accessible to young people and improving social mobility by promoting quality work placements.



## ADAPTING RECRUITMENT PRACTICES: THE EMPLOYERS' VIEW

According to the preliminary data from the CIPD's *Resourcing and Talent Planning* survey 2013, 24% of the respondents have adapted their recruitment practices to make them more youth-friendly. We also asked them how they have adapted their practices and here two main routes emerge: some organisations have invested in an outreach strategy by participating in career fairs, and making themselves more visible to potential candidates via online and social media channels. The other way to boost the volume of young recruits is through introducing routes for on-the-job training, including in-house training opportunities, and more formal apprenticeship schemes. Some companies have gone as far as ring-fencing apprenticeship positions and securing permanent jobs for young people at the end of their apprenticeship, suggesting that this is a way for the industry to capture talent and invest in its development. One respondent said:

*'We are introducing a situational judgement test instead of having a minimum qualification framework. We are also reviewing our competencies to make them more accessible as younger applicants tend to struggle with competency-based applications.'*

One of the best examples of why it makes sense to adapt your recruitment practices when recruiting young people and how this can be done successfully is Nestlé. Nestlé, as Jo Ward, Head of Talent and Resourcing at Nestlé, explains, were experiencing difficulties with filling their graduate vacancies. Instead of just complaining about the quality of applicants, the company decided to look at their own practices and what they could do better to get the most out of candidates during the application stage. It turned out that their competency-based interview techniques didn't help to get the best out of their young candidates, who had little or no previous work experience. So they decided to change this:

*'We realised that our competency-based interviews were not producing the results we were hoping for. Young candidates were unable to demonstrate their confidence and answer the questions*

*without referring back to stock answers. So we switched to a strength-based interview technique, which we developed and tested with our current graduates. Instead of a previous experience, candidates are asked a quick succession of about 18 questions about what they would do in a work-based situation. The results have been impressive and we have considerably improved our conversion rates. We now typically offer five out of six young candidates a job,'* says Jo Ward, explaining that this process benefits both the employer and the young people, who have reported a better understanding about their strengths and weaknesses as a result. *'It is in the best interest of organisations to help young people to be the best they can,'* says Jo Ward, and clearly, their newly improved conversion rates and high-calibre young employees prove Jo right.

But Nestlé is not the only company that has taken innovative steps to address some of these issues. Below we will share some examples of employers who have adapted one or more stages of their recruitment process to better engage with young people and remove some of the obstacles to labour market entry. As Karina Rook, HR Director at Canterbury College, puts it: *'Employers can't complain about young people if they aren't willing to take a role in their improvement and development.'*

## HOW CAN EMPLOYERS ADAPT THEIR RECRUITMENT PRACTICES?

### CONVINCE LINE MANAGERS AND COLLEAGUES OF THE BENEFITS AND MAKE THE BUSINESS CASE

*'Employers should give young people a chance to demonstrate their skills and their positive attitude, even if they don't have the required work experience. You can mould them in the way you want, they are not polluted from their previous workplace,'* says Bennet, a Prince's Trust Young Ambassador.

A number of organisations have now actively committed to a strategy aimed at increasing their intake of young people, aware of the need to build their future talent pipeline. Ageing

## ADAPTING RECRUITMENT METHODS TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE: THE EMPLOYERS' VIEW

*'We most definitely need to adapt our recruitment practices to better engage with young people. You shouldn't use a one-size-fits all model for both younger and more experienced workers,'* says Dominic Gill, Apprenticeships Manager at Microsoft. He also thinks that employers need to be more realistic in their expectations: *'Some employers look for the perfect end product, which does not exist. They will see lots and lots of young people to find the exact right person. But what they should do instead, if the young person has the required skills and attitude, they should work with that, invest in and develop the young person, instead of waiting for the finished article.'* This may also include some reviewing of the requirements needed for the job, he explains: *'We need to be more sure about what the actual attributes are that we are looking for in a young person and change the way we recruit accordingly.'* He advises employers to not see young people as *'just another hire'* and instead of waiting for the perfect end product – which, according to him, *'doesn't exist'* – try to be a bit inventive, something that, in his experience, definitely pays off.

*'Very young people have nothing to say, they all have the same CV, so you need to have a recruitment strategy that is different from your normal approach to recruitment,'* explains Marc-Anderson Boyd, Managing Director at Taylor-Nash. *'To get the best out of a young candidate you need to build their confidence first, especially as the whole recruitment process can be very intimidating for a young person.'*

workforces and the need for new, often digital skills have been driving these developments. For example, the energy company National Grid recently prioritised young people following a large-scale workforce planning exercise and concerns around their ageing workforce.

This experience is also shared by Samantha Newman, Head of HR at WR Refrigeration, who says their CEO is absolutely committed for the organisation to increase their engagement with young people: *'We used to be an old company, with very little "new blood"; we had very few young people joining the business and an ageing workforce as a result. This is why we've now launched our apprenticeships programme with the aim to make sure that 5% of the workforce is made up of apprentices.'*

But even those organisations that traditionally have always had a closer connection with the youth labour market, such as the hospitality sector, say they could do more to support young people's transition from education to work. For Whitbread, for example, the desire to bring young people into the business has always constituted an important and substantial aspect of their recruitment activity; however, as Liz White, WISE Programme Projects Manager at Whitbread, explains, the business sees their work with young people as a 'bit of a journey': *'We see our engagement with young people as evolutionary; yes, we are doing a lot already, but we can also do a lot better. We are a big organisation and we want to make a real difference to young people's employment outcomes while also getting the talent we need for our business to grow.'* Whitbread has therefore pledged to offer 50% of their new openings to young people not in employment, education and training (NEETs).

Despite the challenges and issues outlined above, more and more employers realise that they need to step up their engagement with young people, and while this is not (yet) reflected in recruitment, there is definitely a latent demand and untapped potential: a majority (74%) of employers think there is a business case for employing young people, citing the need to build their talent pipeline, young people's skills and motivation, workforce diversity, employer brand and cost-effectiveness as their key reasons. Furthermore, almost three-quarters of employers believe they have a role to play in tackling youth unemployment (CIPD 2012c).

A majority of employers questioned in a recent CIPD poll said that they would appreciate more advice on how to bring young people into their organisation and more support on how to

engage with schools and colleges.<sup>7</sup> So there is definitely employer appetite to engage more with young people, which must be harnessed and supported. Some of this support needs to be directed at line managers, which have often been identified as a barrier to youth employment.

The majority of the employers we spoke to said that the crucial first step was to convince line managers and colleagues of the benefits of bringing in young people as well as making the business case for this to senior staff. This also included producing some advice and guidance for line managers on how to engage with young people.

*'When recruiting, it is difficult not to look at those people who have more experience and instead make the case for taking someone younger who needs more upfront investment,'* says Laura Taylor, Resourcing Manager at Thames Water. Laura goes on to explain that with their graduate programme and newly launched apprenticeships programme in particular, the organisation has made a conscious commitment to take on this 'risk' and fully commit to the investment. But she also explains that it takes substantial work behind the scenes to make this happen; for example, their resourcing specialists regularly talk to line managers across the business, asking them what support they may need and explaining to them the benefits of taking on a 'fresh pair of eyes', compared with recruiting a more experienced worker.

This is confirmed by Neil Morrison, HR Director at Random House: *'You need to have a conversation with the line manager, explaining to them that we need to access a wider talent pool and how this is going to help them in achieving their business objectives.'*

As we have seen above, another issue is where opportunities are offered across sectors and organisations and highlighting the benefits to recruiting young people to those who don't. The CIPD has previously produced some work on the business case for employer investment in young people, which puts forward the key business benefits as well as shares best practices as to how to get buy-in (see CIPD 2012c) so we won't look at this in much detail in this report, but we recommend employers revisit the business case for employing young people, particularly in high-skilled sectors, where we have seen that employers are still reluctant to bring in young people; yet, as discussed earlier, according to forecasts by the UKCES the UK's future jobs are precisely in those sectors and occupations that don't recruit young people (UKCES 2013). There is therefore a strong

## LINE MANAGERS: KEY DECISION-MAKERS IN THE RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

*'We need to change the mindset of the manager population so they understand why they need to invest in young people and get them to look beyond the first impression.'* **Laura Taylor, Resourcing Manager, Thames Water.**

*'If you want to bring more young people into your organisation, you need to ensure that there is buy-in from the line manager from the outset. They need to know why the organisation needs young people, what to expect, how to handle them and how to identify talent,'* argues **Catherine Schleiben, Head of Recruitment, ITV.**

*'Line managers sometimes allow their expectation of young people to inform the way in which they interview them. This is why it is important to provide some advice and guidance on how they can get the best out of a young candidate,'* explains **Samantha Follington, HR Business Partner from Veolia.**

<sup>7</sup> CIPD 2012b, 57% and 61% respectively.

business case to be made in these sectors on the basis of preventing future skills shortages.

## ADAPTING EXPECTATIONS

We looked earlier at employers' expectations of young people, but it is important to note that many of the employers we spoke to also recognised that some of the expectations they have for young people might be unrealistic and unfair. Helen Alkin, Graduate Recruitment Manager from M&S, for instance, said that many employers are still looking for the young people who have 'the whole package' – so those who are missing certain elements are viewed less favourably and this, she argues, *'is as much a challenge for the employer as it is for the young person. We need to review our selection criteria.'*

Other employers said that they recognised that transitions into work are taking longer than they used to and involve more stages than they used to (for example internships) and that young people need to have more employer support during these stages: *'Somebody needs to give advice to young people, talk to them about how important first impressions are and how competitive the process is'* (Laura Taylor, Resourcing Manager, Thames Water). *'Young people don't know how to behave in the recruitment process, for example they would turn up in jeans, when they need to come in a suit even if the job is informal. So you often don't get to see their best side. We need to also give advice to managers, ask them to look beyond the jeans or whatever it may be that is holding the young person back.'*

Alan MacKinnon, Director of Talent Acquisition EMEA at IHS Consulting, thinks more could be done to give young people a welcoming and positive first experience of the workplace, something which IHS is very keen to do in their recruitment process: *'Young people should be welcomed into organisations to experience first-hand what they're really like. It's so important to make young people's interview experience as positive as possible,'* explaining that this is why they organise open days. He also acknowledges that *'it's a challenge to remember that young people have little or no first-hand experience of a workplace.'* But he says that employers need to take this into account

when recruiting a young person: *'We need to allow for this. It's important to make young people's interview experiences positive. It's very important not to knock their confidence.'*

## ROLES AND ACCESS ROUTES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

*'Avoid the temptation to pick the easiest option in regards to recruitment. Try new ideas and approaches'* (Sam Newman, Head of HR, WR Refrigeration).

Our *Learning to Work* survey (CIPD 2012b) shows that two-thirds of employers think that they need to offer more access routes into organisations for non-graduates. Many of the employers we spoke to during our research were starting to develop more routes, such as apprenticeship schemes and school-leaver programmes. Even if the number of schemes is still quite low, there is definitely a significant change in organisations' approach to bringing in young people, aside from simply offering graduate routes.

Capgemini, for instance, historically a graduate recruiter, has started to roll out apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships, projecting 120 places for higher apprenticeships this year. They have also started to offer sponsored degree routes. Similarly, Boots – again an organisation traditionally only offering graduate schemes – is now beginning to offer apprenticeship schemes across the business, with a total of 28 places in disciplines as diverse as IT, finance, HR and marketing. Likewise, Santander has run a successful apprenticeships pilot with 275 apprentices across its business over the last year. School-leavers' programmes and sponsored degree routes have also grown in popularity, with organisations such as Experian and Nestlé beginning to offer these routes to young people for the first time (see box on school-leavers' programmes).

Then there is also the issue of organisations that offer apprenticeships but only in certain occupations branching out to include more jobs across their business. For example, Michael Brewis, at Aberdeenshire Council, said that the council had a history of recruiting apprenticeships in traditional areas such as joinery, plumbing and ground maintenance but not in other

## HOW CAN YOU DESIGN AND OFFER MORE ROLES INTO YOUR ORGANISATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

*'Our industry rarely employs very young people; we think they are not professional enough, but that's not true. There are now apprenticeships frameworks for so many occupations, we work with four local colleges and employ apprentices in our business from payroll to consultancy.'* **Marc Anderson-Boyd, Managing Director, Taylor Nash.**

*'You need to think carefully about the kind of roles you have to offer. Make sure they are real roles, not roles created for the sake of it. Otherwise you are not giving a realistic experience of work to young people. It's also important to ensure that each role has scope for development and that you give lots of support to the young person,'* says **Marsha Witter, Talent Scheme Manager, ITV.**

*'We have realised that we need to do things differently, in terms of growing our own and bringing in more young people. We've reviewed the roles we offer and whether we can redesign some of those to bring in more young people. As a result we are now hiring 18-year-olds for our commercial functions. We train them for two years across the supply chain in various positions from marketing to HR and we also do sponsored degree routes, where we support 12 people over three years. It's been the easiest business case I've ever made as everyone understood that if the traditional routes are not delivering we need to think about what the business needs,'* explains **Jo Ward, Head of Talent and Resourcing, Nestlé.**

## SCHOOL-LEAVERS' PROGRAMMES AND SPONSORED DEGREE COURSES IN PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES: THE FUTURE NORMAL?

Creating more non-graduate roles into professional and managerial jobs would offer ladders of opportunity to young people and feed the talent pipeline for employers.

Overall, labour market data shows that professional business services organisations are the least likely to bring in young people, in particular non-graduates. However, some organisations have started to realise that this needs to change and that they need to do things differently. Some have therefore stated to offer school-leaver programmes, where young non-graduates are trained in the business, and programmes that combine on-the-job training with sponsored degrees.

For example, **Barclays** is now taking around 75 candidates per year onto their school-leaver programme and planning to increase this to 150 per year, with twice-yearly intakes. Successful candidates join a three-year programme where they begin in customer service roles and can move upwards to leadership positions within branches. At the same time they study for a BA degree (paid for by Barclays), which they receive at the end of year three. Barclays sees their engagement with young people as their contribution to the wider community and this agenda is very much driven by their CEO. But what has started as a CSR initiative is now increasingly making business sense, explains Shaun Meekins, Employability Resourcing Manager at Barclays: *'There is significant young talent out there. We need to have structures and frameworks in place that allow us to mobilise and support that talent.'*

This is echoed by **Experian**. The company found that young people on their school-leavers' programme were actually, on average, better than those on the graduate programme. Two years ago, Experian started a programme aimed at school-leavers where participants work in the business in a full-time role, but also work towards a BA degree in business management and leadership. Their year one cohort is due to graduate this summer. Rob Seacombe, Head of Talent and Resourcing, is leading the company's more proactive and strategic approach to bringing in young people, saying: *'You need to look at your organisation and identify skills gaps and then think about how young people can help you fill those,'* but this requires commitment and investment: *'once you've identified the business challenge young people can help you to address, you need to ensure to invest in any activities. Try to foster connectivity between young people and your brand. De-jargon and help them to see what your organisation can offer them in the future.'*

**Santander** has also developed a school-leavers' programme, called 'Flying Start', which trains A-level students for about four to five years and turns them into qualified bankers with chartered status. Candidates join Business Banking, a significant part of the Santander Corporate, Commercial and Business Banking Division. As well as a mix of face-to-face training and e-learning, they'll have the chance to shadow more experienced colleagues and then put everything they've learned into practice under the supervision of their line manager or mentor.

areas such as IT, payroll or HR. The decision to start recruiting apprentices more widely across the organisation has been filtered down from senior managers to line managers, with the HR team also playing a key role in encouraging line managers to consider using apprenticeships to fill vacancies.

This also requires employers to think more about succession planning and progression routes. Robert Allan, HR Director at Apex Hotels, said the HR team is currently working on succession planning within the business, creating a skills matrix showing what each role looks like and the skills required for progression to the next level. This will help highlight to staff at all levels what they need to do and the skills they need to acquire in order to support their career progression in the business.

### ATTRACT A WIDER POOL OF YOUNG PEOPLE

*'Think carefully about how you communicate with young people. It's not the same as communicating with older workers. You need to be more experimental and innovative'* (Anouska Ramsay, Head of Talent, Capgemini).

As we have seen, it's important where and how employers advertise

their opportunities. Young people are more sceptical about stereotypical 'corporate' communication and more likely to respond to humour or innovative content. Martin Hottass, Manager, Skills and Learning Governance at Siemens, explains how Siemens first fell into the trap of wanting to protect their image as a 'serious' brand and thus did not want to adapt their recruitment material for young people. However, the company then ran some focus groups with young people on their material to test their 'youth appeal' and subsequently changed their language, using colours to attract young people. *'Young people are our customers, so we need to adapt our literature to their needs,'* says Martin Hottass.

Quite a few of the employers we interviewed highlighted the need to do more 'outreach' to promote their opportunities to young people. National Grid, Capgemini, Boots, Asda, M&S and Siemens all said they attended careers fairs, school events, open evenings and parent/teacher events in schools. As Donna Browne, Talent Manager at Boots, explains: *'many young people don't know about the opportunities we offer and they don't look at our website, so we need to do as much as we can to go to them.'* She explains that Boots go to career fairs and into schools to interact with young people directly in order to *'highlight the different options, raise awareness and interact with them'*. Asda

## BITC'S GENERATION TALENT INITIATIVE

**Generation Talent** <http://www.bitc.org.uk/issues/workplace-and-employees/talent-and-skills/generation-talent-initiative>

Generation Talent is a joint initiative between BITC and the Department for Work and Pensions which has been developed to help jobseekers by providing practical help for companies as they promote their vacancies to the unemployed.

Beginning with a pilot, this initiative ensures that all BITC members receive an enhanced level of service from Jobcentre Plus (JCP) through a dedicated account manager who works with them at national or local level depending on their needs. So far it has supported over 100 employers to evaluate their current levels of recruitment from unemployed and assess their recruitment processes to see if they unwittingly disadvantage unemployed people.

started to engage with local schools around three years ago, providing talks, presentations, CV workshops and store visits to increase young people's knowledge of the business and the various opportunities available. They also plan to engage more with parents, who they identify as key influencers.

*'Open days are really important as young people need to be brought into the workplace to see the environment they'll be working in. They need to experience the workplace and meet people. We need to help them foster a familiarity and to understand the very basics'* (Alan MacKinnon, Director for Talent Acquisition EMEA, IHS Consulting).

As seen earlier in this report, there are substantial benefits of employers using more social media in their recruitment strategy as it helps to engage with a wider group of young people.

Finally, employers need to advertise more jobs with Jobcentre Plus and invest more in that relationship. This is why initiatives such as the BITC's 'Generation Talent', which aims to get more employers working with JCP, are important (see box).

## YOUTH-FRIENDLY SELECTION METHODS

**National Grid** has been very conscious to choose motivational questions instead of competency-based questions so as not to exclude young people with no work experience. They are asked about qualifications, hobbies, projects and voluntary experience and then have to do a situational judgement test which is scenario-based and developed with key internal stakeholders and young people working in the business. This is intended to give applicants an insight into what it's like to work for National Grid. This is followed by a motivational telephone discussion (where the word 'interview' is not used) with candidates.

**Boots** runs a presentation day where 60 to 70 candidates are invited into a conference hall. Here apprentices get a quick presentation of each area, what kinds of jobs are involved and current apprentices talk about their experience. This is as much about the young people choosing the organisation as the organisation selecting them, explains Donna Browne: *'they need to have a good feeling about this and choose the right area. Some come in and think they want to do one area but they change their mind when they find out more about it. We give them one week to make up their minds afterwards.'*

**Siemens** runs aptitude tests and situational judgement tests online. These have been designed with young people, current graduates and their managers to make them more 'youth-friendly'. Candidates' maths are tested but in an applied way (for example ingredients you need to bake a cake). The assessment centre includes role-play, presentations and discussion and at the interview stage an emphasis is put on practical skills and enthusiasm. *'We often ask young people to bring something with them that they have made themselves or get them to talk about a little project,'* says Martin Hottass. *'The person who gets the job might be the one who disassembled their mum's washing machine because they want to know about how it works.'*

**Royal Bank of Scotland's** Early Careers initiative is aimed at 16–24-year-olds, offering a wide range of programmes across different disciplines within the organisation. Michael Maddick, Group Head of Early Careers, notes that the bank developed its Early Years programme to ensure there was a strategic approach to recruiting, developing and retaining young talent. As well as internship programmes, including 'Spring Week' (a week-long programme allowing participants to explore a range of career options within RBS and experience the business first-hand) and summer internships, RBS also run graduate programmes and school initiatives such as careers insights events and employability bootcamps. The bank already recruits 3–3,000 young people a year and ensures its application process is designed to be user-friendly for 16–24-year-olds. The entire process is web-based and includes an application form and psychometric testing. Candidates are then invited to attend an assessment centre and, if successful, an interview, which is based on questions designed to be engaging and motivational rather than competency-based. In addition, RBS have two very successful Facebook sites (RBS Early Careers and CareerKickstart) which support the work of Early Careers, offering tips and hints about how to write a CV and information about careers in the industry, and providing updates on current participants undertaking various programmes and news of forthcoming opportunities to get involved in. While the aim of Early Careers is to help spot and develop young talented individuals, it is not the sole aim, says Michael Maddick: *'It's not all about talent. It's about helping all young people improve their employability and develop their career. We want to support all. Not just the best.'*

## YOUTH-FRIENDLY SELECTION PROCESSES

*'Employers need to be clearer on their selection criteria at advert stage to avoid the wrong calibre of candidates applying'* (Lisa, Steps Ahead mentor, Northampton).

*'Having a closing date is really important, then at least you know if you didn't get the job and you don't wait forever. Everyone needs "closure"'* (Rose, Young Ambassador, Prince's Trust).

Our research has shown what employers can do to improve their selection processes. These suggestions have been put forward:

- having a closing date and contact details for the advertised position
- more transparency: information about the overall process, the different stages and the expectations during those stages
- simpler, youth-friendlier application forms
- clarity about selection criteria
- review selection criteria (is experience or a degree really needed?)

But employers also need to think about how they can broaden their talent pool. This is particularly important in relatively closed sectors such as media, journalism, publishing or law:

*'There can be a lot of nepotism in our industry,'* says Neil Morrison, HR Director at Random House. *'But at Random House we've tried to do things differently; we have a completely open work experience scheme where hundreds of young people apply.'* He explains that they can only take a few each time, but make sure that they have a fair selection process: *'we select a sample of*

*random applications.'* But even despite this, he says they are still struggling to attract applicants from a broader socio-economic background. He suspects this is coming back to young people from more diverse backgrounds not knowing about the opportunities that are available and that they are open to everyone, so Random House is working proactively on their outreach to more disadvantaged groups.

Similarly, ITV recently conducted a review of their work experience placements and established that they weren't reaching the right audience. They now offer their work experience placements on a volunteering basis; candidates apply online and they form a talent pool that is offered work experience at any time of the year, when opportunities are available. The intention is to try to create an 'exclusive but inclusive' community, removing the issue of 'it's who you know', which ITV also acknowledges as a big barrier in the industry.

Aberdeenshire Council is also working with organisations such as Working with Families and Opportunities for All to allow it to reach young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Brewis said the council is considering extending its Two Ticks job guarantee for disabled people – which guarantees disabled people an interview if they meet the minimum criteria for the job vacancy – to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

## INTERVIEWS THAT GET THE BEST OUT OF A YOUNG CANDIDATE

*'Give someone a chance – don't judge them by their interview skills but on their ability'* (Keith, Young Ambassador, Prince's Trust).

## HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUNG CANDIDATES: CONFIDENCE-BUILDING INTERVIEW PROCESSES, THE TAYLOR-NASH WAY

Taylor-Nash is part of a group of niche recruitment companies. Their managing director, Marc Anderson-Boyd, is passionate about giving young people a chance, saying *'they are just as good as more experienced workers, we just need to give them a chance.'* The company is now offering apprenticeships across the organisations, from recruitment consultants to payroll. But Marc realised quickly that they needed to adapt their interview process to get the best out of potential candidates, so he devised his own three-stage process that aims to build a young person's confidence before the actual interview takes place:

*'First stage: This isn't really an interview. We invite the young person to come in to talk to us – me and another member of staff. I tell them about the recruitment industry and ask them to have a think about whether they would like to work for us and call me the next day if that's the case. All those who call me back the next day get called back and told: "congratulations, you have passed the first stage of the recruitment process." This makes them feel more confident and they now pass to the second stage.'*

*'Second stage: This is with the same person as they had in their first interview, to ensure some continuity. Now we get them to talk about themselves, about their hobbies, their personal life, what they do at school to see what information they volunteer. Then we take them to the recruitment floor and have a walk around, introducing them to some of the consultants.'*

*'Third stage: This is really the main interview. Now they have enough confidence to answer some questions they would not have been able to answer in the first stage of the process.'*

*'This approach works really well; we have been very successful with our method. For example, one of our apprentices, Hannah, was very shy initially but during our three-stage process she really came out of her shell, she was the captain of the hockey team but would have never told us that when we first met. She wouldn't have done well in the first interview but was great by stage three of the process. Our patience has been rewarded many times, for example we have two apprentices working in payroll now; they are dealing with large sums of money but have both started out very young and shy, like Hannah. It's a real success story that I would recommend other employers to replicate.'*

A classic example of the divide between employers and young people is the interview situation. An employer traditionally would ask a young person what they know about the company and why they want to work there. For the employer this is the most basic question there is; they think this is a good introduction to the interview. This is why employers are hugely disappointed if a young person can't answer these seemingly straightforward questions. And yet, from the young person's point of view, this is the worst possible scenario; it puts them immediately in a stress situation and on the defensive. Especially if they haven't worked anywhere else before they would find it hard to say why they want to work for this specific organisation – they just want a job. The combination of a lack of knowledge about how important researching the organisation is, how competitive the recruitment process is and how to 'sell' themselves to potential employers means that a young person sets themselves up to fail the expectations of the prospective employer.

However, as we will see below, many employers have started to realise that they can't interview a young person the same way as any other, more experienced worker and that it is in their interests to rethink this. *'Employers need to look for behaviours and a capacity to learn and develop, when recruiting young people. We shouldn't focus on their immediate ability to deliver, as is the case when we recruit more experienced workers,'* argues Samantha Follington, HR Business Partner at Veolia. She believes that traditional one-to-one interviews might not be the best environment for young people to showcase their skills, recommending more interactive group sessions and assessment centres, which have worked well for Veolia's apprentices.

Michael Brewis from Aberdeenshire Council also highlights the importance of helping young people prepare for the interview process if they have had no previous experience. Wherever possible he or someone else from HR will sit down with the candidate beforehand to tell them what to expect from the interview to try to put them at ease and provide some informal coaching if they are receptive.

Robert Allen, HR Director at Apex Hotels, says it is important to get managers on board at the interview stage in order to ensure they understand the benefits of recruiting young people. *'We talk a lot to our managers about this. Experience is nice to have but it's not the only important factor. For us attitude is the key. We recruit for attitude and we train for skills. When we interview we are looking for how people react, their body language and soft skills.'*

Our Steps Ahead mentors told us that this was also about good recruitment more generally; they found it frustrating that they tried to teach their young jobseekers about good practice and how to do a good interview and they are then interviewed by someone who doesn't know how to do good interviews, who hasn't got the right skills to recruit people. *'One way to make a young person feel more comfortable is to tell them in advance about the interview and talk them through the process, what questions you will ask,'* says Jo, a Steps Ahead mentor from Leicester.

The young people themselves described their ideal interview situation as more informal; they want it to be less like an interview and more like a chat. Instead of sitting at a desk, they suggest a walk around the building, with the employer showing the workplace, which would make it less intense for the young person.

## PROVIDE FEEDBACK

*'If we don't give feedback to young people they won't apply again. I always say to them: try again, just because you didn't get the job this time it doesn't mean that you won't the next time round. Go and work on your application'* (Neil Morrisson, HR Director, Random House).

As we've seen, not providing feedback is a huge issue, not just for young people, but it is something all applicants struggle with. Most of the employers we spoke to have recognised this and try to do as much as possible, but it is clear that more needs to be done.

*'We need to give negative feedback to young people so they can improve,'* argues Marc Anderson-Boyd. *'This is so important; I always try and take the time to talk to our providers about this. Most of my feedback tends to be around basic manners, for example that young people need to shake hands when they introduce themselves. I once had a young man who continued to talk on the phone to someone when he introduced himself to me, I fed back that this wasn't appropriate and how important the first impression is.'*

Our mentors said this is very important for the young person so they can improve and increase their chances of getting a job the next time round. But they also made an interesting point about the employer brand: if an organisation does not provide feedback, young people won't want to work there and won't apply again. Another example of good practice we've come across is employers referring unsuccessful candidates to organisations in their supply chain to make the best use of their pool of candidates.

When we asked JCP advisers in our poll about what employers can do to engage with young people, providing feedback was the top answer given (67%), well above making recruitment more transparent and advertising more with JCP.

We know it is difficult for employers to provide feedback due to the large volumes of applications they receive, but we recommend employers do as much as they can, and at least:

- acknowledge each application with an automated email
- list 'common reasons' applications have not been shortlisted in an email/letter to candidates; provide links to support – this could be either to our mentoring initiative, the WORKing FOR YOUth initiative, the Prince's Trust or links to other charities
- provide candidates that made it through to the interview/assessment centre stage with personal, tailored feedback – this needs to be honest but positive and constructive.

As a follow-up, we will also work with other employer bodies to develop common recommendations in this area.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND POLICY-MAKERS IN THIS?

*'What young people need isn't just a mock interview when they're about to enter the labour market. What they need are 30 minutes per week lessons of interview technique, advice on where to look for work and how to go about applying for a job'* (Neil Morrison, HR Director, Random House).

This research has been very much about what employers can and should do to improve labour market access for young people. However, the Government and policy-makers of course also have a role to play. We'd like to highlight two key issues that have come out of this work: first, the need for more support for young people during the transitions phase. As we've seen, most young people don't know where to turn when they try to enter the labour market – JCP is clearly not the right government delivery agency to give extensive career advice and guidance to young people. This is why our mentoring initiative, Steps Ahead, is working so well as it fills a gap in the market. However, there is only so much that individual volunteers can do to fill that gap, so a more prominent, dedicated support in this area for young jobseekers is desirable.

Second, and further to the point Neil Morrison makes in the quote above, careers advice and guidance and work preparation need to be a part of the National Curriculum and schools need to

be assessed in how well they are doing in this area to incentivise them to put more effort into this. We've asked our young people what they would do if they were Education Minister to make improvements in this area and here is what they've come up with:

- don't rely on teachers but get external expertise
- pay attention to those areas where it is needed; address the patchiness of the current advice
- get more involved – career advice and guidance needs to be part of the curriculum
- a support agency such as 'Connexions'
- more information on choices, in particular apprenticeships and other alternatives to university
- support employer contact and work experience
- better advice and information on career pathways.

At the CIPD we have highlighted in previous publications the need for high-quality advice, information and guidance in schools that promotes all possible career options. Currently this does not exist. This research shows, again, how vitally important it is that policy-makers take this issue seriously and review their policies in this area with great urgency.



# CONCLUSION

This research shows that there is a clear divide between young people and employers at the recruitment stage. It also shows that while there is a lot of good practice out there already, a lot more needs to be done to address this mismatch and to improve the matching of young people and job opportunities. We've also found a clear business case for employers to make their practices more youth-friendly, as those that have done so have improved their ability to attract talent and get the right skills. Finally, our research demonstrates that young people need more support and guidance, at the point of entry into the labour market and before, around opportunities and how to access them.

We will take this agenda forward in the context of the CIPD's Learning to Work programme, which gets employers involved in tackling youth unemployment. The aim is to drive an increase in employer engagement with young people, so that businesses help prepare young people for work as well as make their organisations more youth-friendly by adapting their recruitment practices.

Over the coming months we will build on this research and aim to tackle some of the issues by:

- producing tailored guidance for both, employers and young people in collaboration with key stakeholders, including the Prince's Trust, other employer bodies such as the BITC and the BCC, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) as well as Unionlearn and Acas
- getting even more CIPD members involved in up-skilling young people about job search and applications, both at school and when looking for work through the expansion of our mentoring initiative, Steps Ahead, and a new project with the Education and Employers Taskforce (EET) that aims to increase the number of high-quality apprenticeships applications by young people
- aiming to work with the National Apprenticeships Service (NAS) to help achieve improvements in the match between the apprenticeships opportunities offered by employers and young people's applications.

To achieve this, we will work with an advisory group of employers, CIPD members and employer bodies, as well as policy-makers and relevant charities.

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## LEARNING TO WORK ADVISORY GROUP

The CIPD’s Learning to Work programme is supported by an advisory group. The members of this group are listed below:

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Ann Pickering, **O2-Telefonica UK**  
Alan MacKinnon, **IHS Consulting**  
Anthony Mann, **Education and Employers Taskforce (EET)**  
Claire Warren, **People Management Magazine**  
David Hodges, **London Chamber of Commerce and Industry**  
David Massey, **UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES)**  
David Pollard, **Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)**  
David Taylor, **Acas**  
Derek Kozel, **Young Chamber**  
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Fred Grindrod, **Unionlearn**  
Gerard O’Donnell, **BiTC**  
Louise Batchelor, **Standard Chartered**  
Jane Daly, **Marks & Spencer**

Jo Ward, **Nestlé**  
John Wastnage, **British Chambers of Commerce (BCC)**  
Kate Bellew, **O2-Telefonica UK**  
Kate Shoesmith, **Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC)**  
Matthias Feist, **Regent’s University**  
Nicola Moore, **London Youth**  
Nikki Wade, **The Prince’s Trust**  
Patrick Newton, **Confederation of British Industry**  
Rowena James, **BSkyB**  
Samantha Follington, **Veolia**  
Richard Marsh, **National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)**  
Tess Lanning, **Office of Ed Miliband**  
Verity O’Keeffe, **EEF**

Please note that the membership of the group is evolving and that this list reflects the composition of the group at the time of publication. For more information about the advisory group and to get involved in the CIPD’s Learning to Work programme, please contact Annie Peate on [a.peate@cipd.co.uk](mailto:a.peate@cipd.co.uk)



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