

MOVEMENT
TO WORK

Youth Action Forum #3

February 2023



THE CHALLENGE

How to better engage and recruit ‘young people’ onto work experience and job placements.



Over the last six months, Movement to Work has gathered insights and data from young people, employers and researchers which highlights some of the key issues standing in their respective ways of achieving sustainable engagement within the labour market.

Young people tell us they want to hear from employers via social media (but not via ads!), would like less corporate communication, appreciate simple content and adore QR codes that take them to youth-proofed platforms. In their own words, they find LinkedIn, emails and some websites “intimidating”.

Employers tell us that reach, dropout and systems pose difficulty to them matching candidates to an abundance of vacancies.

Researchers* show us that 73% of young people use parents or guardians as their source of career advice or job hunting, whilst in comparison only **1.9%** of young people use Job Centres when job seeking. Research also recommends programmes to connect with Youth Hubs, create “long, thin engagement”, offer an option to return – in cases of drop out or wishing to pause due to personal circumstances – and drive decision making through data.

So, once again, we brought business leaders and partners together to discuss and ideate on this subject. We would like to thank those who took part, including representatives from **IBM, M&S, Salesforce, Diageo and London Youth**, and have anonymised feedback in order to create a truly safe space for authentic discussion and debate.

*by research we are referring to the [Youth Employment UK Youth Census of 2022](#) and research conducted by Dr R Wilde and her team at [University College London on the impact of covid19 on economic activity in the youth population](#).

THE YOUTH ACTION FORUM PRINCIPLES

Peer-to-Peer

Respectful and open sharing of challenges and opportunities related to youth employment

Action-oriented

Helping more young people access quality work experiences by solving the problems employers are facing and maximising collective success

No formal presentations

Short stimuli will be sent ahead of each session

No formal speakers

The speakers and content will be shaped by those in attendance

Intimate and meaningful

No more than 5-10 individual attendees, ideally representing diverse business sectors

Invitation only

Sign up / Registration process - first come, first served

DISCUSSION POINTS

The session predominantly consisted of an open discussion for attendees to share their experiences and to ask questions.

A number of observations and key comments came from that discussion.

“Young people need money now, they cannot afford to spend 8-10 weeks on a programme with no guaranteed role at the end.”

THE CONTEXT

More often than not, young people contribute to their household's income and so unpaid opportunities are not addressing their needs.

Hybrid working presents its own barriers to work and participating in work experience virtually can also preset challenges – young people may be sharing a room with others for example, lack stable wifi or technology to log in to calls.

To be able to reach people who face financial obstacles to work, we need to ground opportunities in their reality.

“Young people’s social skills, including their confidence, has taken a massive hit during the pandemic.”

THE CONTEXT

That current recruitment practices do not appreciate challenges particular to younger generations: “Young people are scared to pick up the phone.”

People need to engage with other people, not corporate email addresses, LinkedIn or other impersonal access points. Instead, drop-in sessions and insight days are more likely to leave a meaningful impression and create a space for young people to feel comfortable to engage.

Other key feedback is LinkedIn can be a scary place and too formal.

“You cannot be pluck [your ideal programme participant] from thin air.”

THE CONTEXT

It was felt by some, and noticed by others, that organisations can have very specific requests, requirements or “targets” for their social mobility programmes which do not in fact represent the communities in which they operate, or the needs of individuals at heart.

For example, one organisation looked for NEET young people of colour, who had at least 80 UCAS points, who would have to wait several months for the programme to start (to coincide with wider organisational programmes).

This example in particular highlighted too many barriers to entry and perhaps shone light on when motivations of an organisation cross contaminate Diversity and Inclusion with Social Mobility, or trying to be ‘all things to all people’ with one fixed provision.

“Diversity targets and creating a feeling of inclusion go hand in hand- if you want to recruit a more diverse workforce, they need to feel valued, heard and represented.”

THE CONTEXT

One organisation had a goal of increasing the ethnic diversity of their new apprenticeship cohorts. In trying to understand the barriers that people from ethnic minority backgrounds face to gaining employment, this organisation first reached out to people in their workplace, to hear their views about the organisation and application cycle.

This organisation also shared their company's data focused approach: they conducted research of census data and spoke to local people in their communities to identify areas with greater diversity. They then reflected on their opportunities and tailored their advertising and recruitment to target locations that were showing up in the official data as more diverse.

“Diversity and inclusion do go together: we need to include the perspectives of those communities that we are trying to recruit in the recruitment strategy, to ensure that we are broadening the viewpoints and understanding within our organisation.”

“Tap into the communities you already have in your organisation.”

THE CONTEXT

Seeing and engaging with young people who are already in a company or organisation helps ‘bridge the divide’.

One organisation testified to using their current apprentices as ‘micro influencers’ with great success.

Informal sessions, hosted in advance of fuller insight days boosted levels of participation from young people within another organisation.

Having an insight day hosted by young people, who have recently been through the recruitment cycle or participated in the insight day/WEX themselves, provides young people with tangible, up to date knowledge, as well a more informal and trusted channel of communication.

Another organisation commented that Regional Programme Leads that get the most uptake in attendance are the ones who meet young people where they are, with informal chats ahead of any formalised sessions.

Hosting these meetings face to face, to prepare participants on what to expect from the recruitment cycle or programme, will lead to a higher retention rate, especially from ethnic minority backgrounds who have been noted as more likely to drop out during traditional recruitment processes.

Here are some more key points our employers made...

Engage with young people before starting a programme

Run introductory sessions beforehand. Enable young people to meet their peers and programme leads. Meet young people where they are i.e. go to youth clubs, youth hubs.

Using social channels

Social media – Tik Tok particularly – and more casual communication. They love QR codes! Use a variety of channels.

To achieve cut through, content needs to catch the eye and be engaging, so companies need to be aware if being too ‘corporate’.

One employer used their local store's Facebook page to reach out to young people. It was branded with their partners logo's and the post attracted 2K likes.

While some employers are concerned about social content not adhering to their corporate brand guidelines, channels such as Get My First Job can be used to trial new outreach content and evaluate success.

Be aware of the barriers young people face today

MONEY – young people often need to contribute to household costs. They cannot afford to engage on long programmes or wait for start dates months ahead.

SOCIAL SKILLS – confidence is low following the pandemic.

HYBRID WORKING – is now normal but young people are not always set up for hybrid, working often room sharing, with no appropriate space on a consistent basis.

Data focused approach

Research census data and speak to local communities to identify diverse areas. Reflect on opportunities, present to target communities and ensure that you are visible, advertising and recruiting amongst the audience you want.

Engage key influencers

Provide accessible information for parents and guardians, on the internet or via community events. Be present in and target virtual spaces that parents are present in.

Referral channels

Encourage referrals from Job Coaches – youth participation can be high. Engage with DWP Youth hubs.

Let young people lead

Deliver insight days hosted by people who have been through the recruitment / work experience cycle to encourage engagement.

Advertise the benefits

Advertise the benefits of working aligned to what young people want – i.e. a positive working culture – and consider using MtW's talent platform which is free to use to promote opportunities!

Be aware of misleading information

It was raised that there is a lot of misinformation out there, including illegitimate job adverts. The increase in misinformation can reduce confidence in other, legitimate opportunities advertised.

Here are some more key points our employers made...

Realistic targets

Make diversity and representation targets meaningful and ground targets in reality.

Balance

Determine the sweet spot between reaching young people, without bombarding and overwhelming them with information.

Maximise peer support

Mentors make all the difference – young people feel like they have trusted people they can go to for support and guidance. Consider introducing a buddy network.

Corporate accounts - do you people follow?

If young people do not follow corporate accounts or channels, we need to consider how content reaches them.

Expectations

Young people's expectations are changing quickly in the 'post covid' climate, so we need to reconsider the structure of and delivery of programmes. For example is virtual delivery truly working? Young people often like face to face interaction. For some organisations the way forward is hybrid working. But as noted within "Today's Workplace" – do we truly understand what suits our young people?

Reaching young people where they are

Companies that are committed to 'youth proofing' their outreach advertise doing so via a user friendly careers page, showcase their opportunities via industry wide events or social media pages and present in spaces that young people often go.

Today's workplace

Young people tell us that a workplace is more than just a place to 'do' work. It can be an escape, can be their only interaction with others and it can be somewhere that helps them feel connected to the culture of a company. We therefore need to better understand the barriers which are deterring young people from hybrid working.

For example, not all young people have equal availability to technology, despite being the most digitally connected generation. Invest digital equipment and wifi/data for participants with restrictions e.g. provide laptops and ensure appropriate data availability.

Let's be honest

We need to hold honest conversations about what deters young people from applying for various roles. What switches them off?

Drop out rates

We need to look at drop out rates throughout the application process, including higher rates amongst females and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Why is this? We need to better understand the issue in order to address the challenges.

Next Steps



NEXT STEPS

01

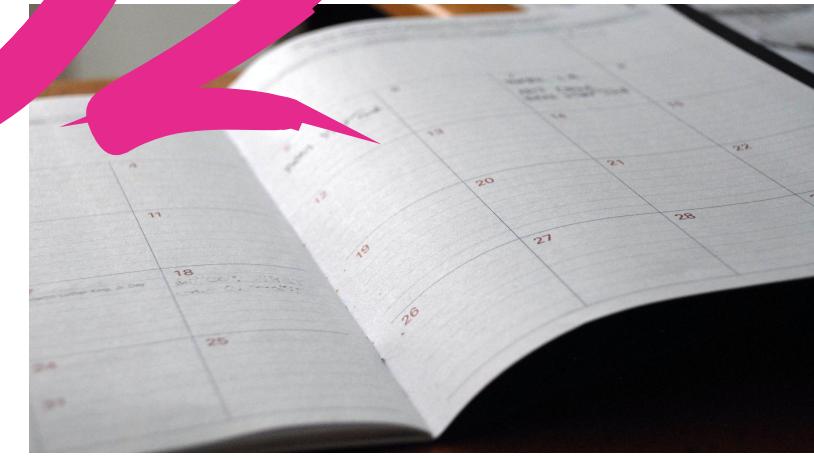


Refresher of our aims; what have we achieved so far?

The Youth Action Forum discusses some of the challenges and barriers businesses are facing with regards to running employability programmes and more importantly, potential solutions to help ensure we continue to offer quality work opportunities for young people.

So far we have focused on challenges impacting business delivery of work experience programmes and how we can help the emerging mental health emergency affecting young people today.

02



Save the date for the next Youth Action Forum

The next Youth Action Forum will be held on Friday 19th May 2023 at 10.00-11.30am.

Please give an indication of attendance by responding to the calendar invitation, when this drops into your inbox.

03



The topic we'll cover at the next Forum

Our next topic will be **perceptions**, discussing how we believe young people perceive work experience, and how employers currently perceive young people.

We look forward to discussing this with you in May!

Thank you and see you next time!

