

JUNE 2024 | ISSUE 02

# Cultivating Curiosity

Opening Eyes To The World Of Work

## What's inside?

### Optimising your talent pipeline

How to attract and retain new talent with your work experience offering

### Going digital

Exploring the future of hybrid work experience strategies

### Lauren Mistry

Deputy CEO

"Experience is a difference maker"



# Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of our quarterly Champion and Change magazine, where we bring together early careers insight, best practice guidance and news for organisations across the UK.

We started this quarter by launching our Good Youth Employment Benchmark, a first of its kind digital tool that allows employers to measure and monitor their practices, with practical next step solutions. It will be open for Members to complete until 29th August.

The announcement of the General Election has seen many organisations across the sector set their priorities for the next government to take forward. At Youth Employment UK, we have been keen to ensure the voices of our Members and young people, and our expertise are feeding into the decisions and policies being put forward. You can read more about our approach to this throughout the issue.

Cultivating curiosity is important. We know from the 2023 Youth Voice Census data set that young people are not just having less work experience in the traditional sense, but they are also getting less access to extra curricular experiences that help them build their skills and explore the world around them. This lack of opportunity to connect with others and to experience work means young people feel less confident than ever that they will be

successful when applying for jobs.

With the highest rates of economic inactivity in young people and youth unemployment the worst we have seen since the pandemic, we have to do more to show young people the realities and possibilities in our workplaces.

We have heard from employers that work experience is getting tougher to provide, with more home working and a squeeze on employer resources. We will walk through best practice including practical ways of offering work experience, how virtual work experience can benefit you, and how to provide accessible opportunities for those with additional needs.

Introducing young people to experiences of your workplace doesn't just open their eyes to what is possible, it also opens doors for them by building their CV, skills and confidence. Experience is a difference maker. As you read through this issue, think about the small steps you can take to drive more experiences for young people where you are based and beyond.



**Lauren Mistry**  
Deputy CEO



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# WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

This last 3 months has seen a lot of activity and achievements for the team here at Youth Employment UK. A very special event this quarter saw our CEO & Founder Laura-Jane Rawlings receive her MBE for services to young people from the Prince of Wales.

We've launched the Good Youth Employment Benchmark, a digital tool 2 years in the making, that empowers employers to monitor and measure their youth employment efforts.

The Benchmark is open

exclusively for our Members to complete before 29th August - don't miss your chance to participate.

The Youth Voice Census survey has launched and closed this quarter. We've seen a record breaking number of responses from young people, and we'll be working over the next few months to bring you the data from the Youth Voice Census 2024 report, launching in September this year.

In May, our Deputy CEO, Lauren Mistry, joined Career Connect in the House of Lords to explore the evidence base of the

vital role careers advice plays in young people's futures, bringing our Youth Voice Census and Good Youth Employment Benchmark data to this important discussion.

We also supported the National Skills Academy for Food and Drink at their bi-annual apprenticeship strategy meeting. Like many, the food and drink sector is working hard to solve their workforce planning issues. Topics covered were sharing their concerns on their ageing workforce and their struggle to engage young people into the workplace.

## Events and Conferences

Our CEO, Laura-Jane Rawlings, spoke on the main stage at Amplify, the Apprenticeship Branding Conference. She shared her expertise in the panel discussion exploring what a good apprenticeship provision looks like.



In May, we joined the Open University at their hybrid Elevate Equity event. Lauren Mistry talked about the skills mismatch and expectation gap between employers and young people, and the important steps we can take to close them.



## Attracting, Recruiting & Retaining Apprentices

We've been leading webinars for our Members, most recently on apprentices. Our June event brought together the best of our insight to delve deeper into what practical steps employers can take to engage and keep more apprentices in work.



### Youth Voice Census 2024

Over 5,000 young people completed the Youth Voice Census survey this year! A big thank you to everyone who shared it with their networks.



### Rupal's Breakfast Briefings

Following the 2024 General Election announcements, we've held 'Chatham House' sessions to share what we know and explore the questions and priorities of our Members.



### Youth Employment Week

It's almost here! Our team has been busy preparing for this 5 day event.

We'll be celebrating all things youth employment, getting young people to explore careers, boost skills and build confidence.

We'll also be connecting young people with opportunities across the UK from youth friendly employers and highlighting our Members' vacancies through our interactive opportunity finder.

Go to the Youth Employment Week page to download your toolkit and free educational resources to get involved.

## COMING UP

### Dates for your diary

- **Youth Employment Week**
  - 15th - 19th July 2024
- **Good Youth Employment Benchmark closes**
  - 29th August 2024
- **Youth Voice Census report launch**
  - September 2024



# THE GOOD YOUTH EMPLOYMENT BENCHMARK IS OPEN

This digital tool allows employers to measure and monitor their current youth employment practice.

You'll be able to access the information, advice and guidance you need to grow the quality of your early talent interactions and programmes across these three areas:

## EXPLORE

The activities you can do as an employer to engage and invest in young people at the start of their career, which is more important now than ever.

## EXPERIENCE

The meaningful workplace experiences you provide to support young people with skills building and professional development.

## EMPLOYMENT

Your early careers and how you develop and monitor your early careers employment opportunities to recruit and retain young talent.

## Why complete the Benchmark?

1

It's a guided space that will help you review and reflect on your organisations current practice.

2

You'll access a wide range of tailored content and resources that will support your strategic priorities.

3

It'll support you to build on youth employment best practice.

4

You'll support the wider evidence base of good youth employment practice, feeding into systems of change.

The Good Youth Employment Benchmark will open annually to take a view of the activities employers have completed in the 12 months prior, and what their plans might be for the year ahead.

It is currently open from **June - August 2024**. Become a Member now to join this year's cohort of employers completing the Benchmark.

## Access to the Benchmark is available through Youth Employment UK Membership

We're the expert voice on youth employment.

We're here to assist you in supporting the next generation as they enter the workforce.

With Membership, you'll get:

- ✓ Access to the Benchmark tool
- ✓ Extensive catalogue of resources
- ✓ Exclusive Member events
- ✓ Members only newsletters
- ✓ Entry into our Good Youth Employment Awards



**Become a Member.**  
**Complete the Benchmark.**

Become a Member with us:  
[www.youthemployment.org.uk/good-youth-employment-membership/](http://www.youthemployment.org.uk/good-youth-employment-membership/)

Alternatively, contact:  
[members@youthemployment.org.uk](mailto:members@youthemployment.org.uk)



# POLICY NEWS

**Latest reports, government developments, and policy news that impact the youth employment landscape.**

## Youth Employment UK Responds To General Election Announcement

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced the next general election will take place on 4th July 2024.

We are about to see a period of crucial campaigning which will undeniably influence the position of many voters, including young people, many of whom will be voting for the first time.

We will be pressing home the issues we want to see high on the parties respective agendas.

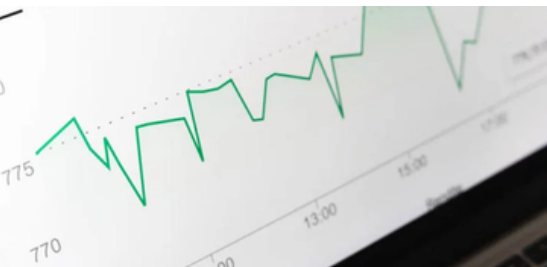
Prioritising young people and quality work is front and center to our ask. Politicians need to listen to young people and their individual experiences, and challenges need to be understood before we can really build a country and systems that work for all young people, everywhere.

We want to see a government that:

1. Truly puts young people at the forefront of youth employment policy, listening to, amplifying and acting with and for young people.
2. Create an education and skills system that unites curriculum, vocational training, enrichment and careers policy to prepare all young people for their next steps.
3. Deliver a Young Person's Guarantee that ensures a long term strategy to tackle youth unemployment and ensure no young person is left behind.
4. Recognise the Good Youth Employment Standards and drive the creation of quality opportunities for all.

**Read more about our asks of the next UK government.**





## The Good Youth Employment Benchmark Can Unleash Opportunities For Young People

Recent ONS data has given us interesting insight into the current youth employment landscape, and it's clear that employers can have an important impact on the numbers we see.

Too often we hear employers talking about skills gaps and how young people don't have the right skills and behaviours for work. However, these skills are impossible to acquire without early experiences of work with employers, either through a range of school/college based experiences such as career talks, taster days and work experience or through access to early career roles which recognise the importance of building in that learning.

**Discover what recent ONS data tells us and how the newly released Benchmark tool can support employers to change these numbers.**

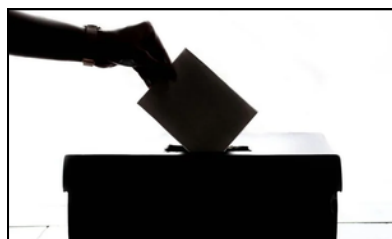
## Why Employers Need To Understand The Impact Of Growing Economic Inactivity Among Young People

The latest labour market overviews show a rise in the number of people economically inactive (not looking for or not available to work).

One of the biggest causes is the number of young people with an identified mental

health disorder. In the 2023 Youth Voice Census, we heard clearly that mental health challenges were holding young people back from active labour market participation.

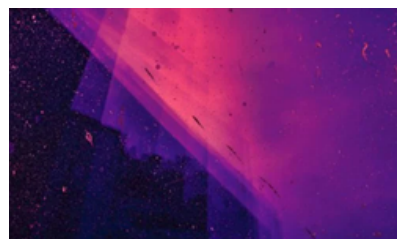
**Find out what this means for employers.**



### What Have The Parties Pledged To Tackle Youth Unemployment?

There are now over one million 16 to 24 year olds not in employment or full-time education.

Find out what the labour market data tells us about education and work, and what the parties have pledged to do in their manifestos.



### Why The Rapid Rise In School Suspensions Will Have A Detrimental Impact On Youth Employment

A recent surge in school suspensions could have serious implications for youth employment. How does missing school affect future opportunities? We delved into the root causes of the troubling statistics.

### What's Important For Young People In The General Election?

In our 2024 Youth Voice Census, we asked young people about their concerns for the country and their local area.

Watch the webinar to explore early insight into this data, including whether they are likely to vote, and what concerns them.

# What Does Experience

Work experience gives young people the chance to see a real professional workplace while exploring employability skills and careers.

There are many variations of work experience for employers to provide, not just the traditional 2 week placement we think of. While these are definitely greatly valued, different types of activities and intensity allow for different experiences.

These activities will suit varying purposes for both participant and employer, whether that's providing career insight, learning about the workplace, or developing transferable or practical skills.

They can provide an entry point into industries, help young people decide what they enjoy, or provide students with the necessary intensive experience they need to build their career and gain the knowledge they need to progress.

## 01 VIRTUAL WORK EXPERIENCE

Virtual work experience can come in the form of digital training materials, such as video content, live sessions, virtual tours or activities. These online resources aren't restrained by location and open up more opportunities.

## 02 TASTER DAYS

Similar to workplace visits, taster days are a popular way of providing first-hand experience and the work that participants might be involved in if they pursue a certain career, including the pathways on offer.

## 05 SHORT WORK EXPERIENCE

Short 1-2 week placements are commonly used in partnership with schools to provide the required experience, allowing them to explore job roles and build skills.

## 06 T LEVEL PLACEMENTS

T Levels, the new vocational courses (equivalent to 3 A Levels), require a 45 day placement with an employer to offer a longer, more structured experience for students.

# Good Work Look Like?

Good employers understand that young people benefit from a range of work experience opportunities throughout education and beyond.

It can take a variety of forms, and be delivered:

- online
- at employer sites
- as a hybrid model
- with a school/college
- through a provider
- with a specialist partner
- directly with young people.

Work experience should be seen as a strategic part of building your future workforce pipeline. You can link this activity into your early recruitment cycles - use your [Membership dashboard](#) to browse topics related to work experience to find out how.

With the [Good Youth Employment Benchmark](#), you can measure and monitor your work experience activities, including how you design them, how you recruit participants, and the impact you have on young talent.

## 03 JOB SHADOWING

Job shadowing specifically involves allowing participants to observe employees in their roles and in a work environment to get an insight into particular business functions/sectors.

## 04 WORKPLACE VISITS

Workplace visits usually allow a group of participants to visit an organisation, including activities, workshops with employees, Q&As and a tour of the site and business activities.

## 07 LONGER PLACEMENTS (E.G. INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS)

Longer placements usually last 6 months to 1 year, allowing for more intensive, hands-on experiences and involvement in company activities through practical tasks and projects.

## 08 VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is usually conducted as one off or consistent days where young people are able to assist the company with its activities to build experience or contribute to the community.

# TALENT PIPELINES: Ensuring return on investment from work experience



We know from the Youth Voice Census report data that work experience is a greatly valued opportunity for young people looking at careers. Still, many employers are missing the opportunity to further support young people and utilise this engagement to boost their recruitment activity. Here are the important things you need to consider to make the most of work experience and get the best return on your investment.

## Work preparation and early engagement

The 2023 Youth Voice Census data showed us that while young people want great work experience, there are still barriers in place that are turning them away from the opportunity. A common experience we saw amongst young people was a lack of preparation, with only 52.3% of those with access to work experience undertaking the opportunity.

When asked why, many cited a lack of support and preparation in school to find local opportunities or not yet feeling ready to do work experience.

So what can employers do to remedy this?

Providing the opportunity for work experience in your local area is one step, but what really matters is actively engaging with young people and building relationships.

With lingering anxiety from the impact of the pandemic on their lives, which young people have felt has largely gone on unsupported, helping them know what's available and what is expected of them will be a helpful tool.

Through engaging with young people directly, they can explore why work experience is valuable

to do, how it will impact them, how you will support them, and what will be expected of them while undertaking it. Does your organisation provide an information pack or resources for participants? A pre-preparation resource that they can access and explore, with the ability to ask questions, will help to relieve anxiety around entering a professional environment for those who have not been prepared to behave and respond in the way they are already expected to in the workplace.

A key activity for getting the word out about your opportunities is to build relationships *early* in education by creating partnerships with local schools and groups.

Young people have stated in the 2023 Youth Voice Census that they want more opportunities to speak to local employers about careers while in education. Building partnerships with schools will allow you to support your local community and get young people excited about your careers through positive experiences and activities.

- [Working With Schools: 10 Tips For Employers](#)
- [How Can Employers Run Activities And Workplace Encounters In Schools?](#)

## How to make it meaningful

Once you've set up a work experience programme and engaged with young people locally, how are you ensuring your opportunities are meaningful for young participants?

Here are some essential components of a good work experience programme:

- 1. Set measurable learning outcomes:** what will they learn, what skills will they take away, and how will this learning influence their future career prospects? Clear learning outcomes serve as guiding principles that will inform every other decision you make as you design your work experience programme.
- 2. Increase exposure:** to ensure young people are getting the most out of their time, make sure they have opportunities to develop different skills while engaging in real work activity and meet colleagues in a range of departments and roles.
- 3. Mentoring:** young participants should have a mentor/line manager who understands what their role will be during their placement, and who will be there to answer their questions. You should also aim to match them with a similarly aged buddy who can support them.
- 4. Measure your impact and keep in touch:** review the placement at the end, get feedback, and have conversations about careers, roles and qualifications. Find ways to keep in touch and open up careers e.g. support with a mock interview, fast-track them to interview for an entry level position.

### Related reading:

[Best Practice Guidelines For Work Experience](#)

[Measuring The Impact Of Your Work Experience Opportunities](#)

[Developing A Work Experience Programme](#)

It's important to be aware that young people have different backgrounds and experiences. While work experience is commonly unpaid, there may be some costs for employers related to social mobility and inclusion, such as covering the costs of travel or food, for those of which this would be a barrier.

## Integrating work experience into your recruitment

Linking your work experience into your recruitment is a cost effective way of bringing young talent into the organisation - you're creating a talent pipeline.

The young people that you bring into the organisation through placements are likely interested in the industry/sector, know what to expect in your workplace, have had an induction, and have spent time building a relationship with you.

Work experience shouldn't stop at the end of the placement. Where you can, continue your engagement through employment opportunities and increase your retention of young talent. Allowing the opportunity to apply for vacancies such as apprenticeships, entry level positions, and graduate schemes will allow you to bring invested young people into your organisation.

If you're engaging with young people who will not yet be able to apply, adding them to a mailing list with their consent to receive updates or providing a link to your early careers hub and live vacancies means you won't drop off their radar following the completion of their placement.

# Member Spotlight: Greencore

In May 2024, some of our team had the pleasure of visiting one of our valued Members, Greencore, at their state of the art facility in Northampton.

We had a brilliant day meeting members of their team, hearing about the ongoing development of their staff, meeting and speaking with young people from their organisation, and seeing the factory in action.



**Greencore is a leading manufacturer of convenience foods, supplying a wide range of chilled, frozen and ambient foods to some of the most successful retail and food service customers in the UK.**

The Northampton site employs over 2,700 people. Our team had an excellent time touring the site, connecting with the amazing young people in the organisation, and even trying our hand at making sandwiches.

It was inspiring to hear first hand about the range of opportunities available and to see their commitment to supporting and developing young people.



“It’s really important that we spend time with our Members to understand their challenges now and in the future, and to see what is working for them and where we can provide our support, from offering insight and resources to helping with recruitment or working on the long game of changing youth employment policy at a national level.

I learnt a lot from our Greencore visit, and it is insight we have brought back to the office to consider how we can use our expertise to help move some big systemwide challenges. But I also witnessed an incredible commitment as an employer to creating quality, inclusive pathways for young people and a culture in which they can thrive.

Thanks to all those involved in our visit!”

**Laura-Jane Rawlings, MBE, CEO of Youth Employment UK**



“It’s an absolute priority for us to have an inclusive culture at Greencore, and we recognise the important role that we play in providing meaningful career opportunities for everyone at Greencore, including young people who may be starting out on their career journeys.”

**Natalie Rogers, Greencore Director of Talent, Development and Inclusion**

Greencore are aspiring to increase the number of young people in the organisation. Some of the ways they are focusing their efforts are:

- Encouraging colleagues to complete the Youth Voice Census and attend careers fairs/events.
- Working with Youth Employment UK, and supporting organisations like IGD with virtual careers events.
- Expanding routes into Greencore: there are currently 5 early careers pathways and those involved will develop into a growing alumni community who Greencore will continue to support and develop as they expand their careers.
- Develop young colleagues through external mentoring, external reverse mentoring, and internal coaching opportunities on offer.
- Recognise the contributions of young people in the organisation through internal/external award programmes, and getting involved in the delivery of such events to provide a platform and exposure for young people.
- Exploring ways to engage with schools and colleges on a broader work experience framework whilst already delivering lots of activities locally at Greencore sites.
- Running a dedicated age catalyst group where colleagues representing their peers meet regularly to explore how the working environment can be enhanced for all colleagues, including young people.

**A big thank you to the Greencore team for a fantastic day!**

# 5 Reasons To Boost Your Early Careers Strategy With Virtual Work Experience

## Engage With And Attract Local Young Talent

Reach out by offering something of value. It creates a “way in” and allows you to build relationships. Promote it using social media and contact schools and colleges to let them know your virtual work experience is available.

# 1

# 2

## Position Your Organisation As An Employer Of Choice

Tell young people why they should want to work for you. What do you offer? Show off your USP to make sure they think about you when job searching.

## Create A Talent Pipeline

# 3

Some employers offer guaranteed interviews. Others keep in touch and invite individuals to apply. However you choose to do it, it's a great way to find talented young people who are interested in your organisation.

## Make Work Experience More Accessible

# 4

In-person work experience can be inaccessible to many young people. Virtual work experience enables these young people to access opportunities that they may not otherwise have had and increases the diversity of your talent pool.

# 5

## Get The Most Out Of Your Budget

Work experience can be expensive, resource-intensive, and time-consuming to run. Virtual work experience enables your budget to go further. You only need to create the materials once, and young people can watch or use them in their own time



# CREATE YOUR VIRTUAL WORK EXPERIENCE OFFERING

More and more organisations are now offering virtual work experience alongside in-person placements.

Why wouldn't you, when you can:

- ✓ Access a wider talent pool
- ✓ Boost brand awareness
- ✓ Be more cost-effective
- ✓ Be flexible and accessible



## TALK TO OUR TEAM

It can be challenging to know where to start.

We've helped many employers and organisations to create their virtual work experience offerings.

Take a look around by clicking on the links below:

- [Haven](#)
- [Surrey County Council](#)
- [McDonald's](#)
- [Buckinghamshire Council](#)
- [Local Government Association](#)

We can help you create yours to bring the best youth talent into your organisation.

Contact us to learn more about how we can support you with your virtual work experience offering.

Email us at [members@youthemployment.org.uk](mailto:members@youthemployment.org.uk)

or complete the [enquiry form](#)

**[GET IN TOUCH](#)**

# INSIGHT WITH INSIDERS

We spoke to **Eden**, a Youth Employment UK Youth Ambassador, about the impact work experience has on young people.

## What do you think are the benefits of work experience?

1. “ Young people are able to develop skills such as their confidence, problem solving, communication and teamwork. ”
2. “ It gives them valuable experience which employers and universities would be looking for in an interview. ”
3. “ It helps young people decide if a career is or isn’t for them as they get to take part in some hands-on experience and actually see what the profession is like instead of just doing a lot of research about it. It can provide more clarity for them. ”

## What was good about the work experience you've done (if any) and how did it benefit you?

“ I didn’t do work experience when I was at school due to the pandemic and a lot of employers not being willing to take on people still at school. I did, however, get some work experience last year for a two week internship with a publishing company.

This was a really great experience as it gave me the opportunity to shadow members of the publishing team. It was online which made it quite accessible for me and although I was worried that I wouldn’t have the same experience, I really enjoyed myself.

I got the opportunity to present to senior members of the team and worked with other young people who lived in different parts of the country to create a book and pitch the idea to the marketing team. I also really enjoyed the supportive team. They were always there to answer any questions and the boarding process was pretty straightforward which really helped me to feel more at ease. ”

## Have you faced any barriers that meant you could not find or undertake work experience?

“ I know that a lot of my friends had barriers to getting work experience during their DofE because they were too young or a lot of employers didn’t work with schools because they didn’t think the young people would be hard-working or reliable.

Aside from the pandemic, I think a barrier to me getting more experience now is just due to my health condition. Sometimes employers aren’t the most accommodating for disabilities but it’s not always the case. ”

## How could you have had better support to access work experience?

“ I think that young people should have a mentor or a senior member of staff to shadow. It can be nerve racking and quite overwhelming when you first start a job or get work experience so making sure that you have a clear point of contact for any concerns or queries is really helpful.

There should be more opportunities for young people to get experience and skills, especially for those who have health conditions or disabilities. ”

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Listening to the voices of young people is essential, especially when making decisions that affect them. Use these resources to develop your own youth voice strategy:

- [Youth Voice Forums: How To Make Them Work For You](#)
- [10 Tips To Create A Youth Voice Panel](#)

# Creating Work Experience Placements For Those With Additional Needs

**In crafting good work experience programmes, it's vital to centre diversity and inclusion at every stage of the process. Here's our top strategies...**

## 1. Understand Needs

Not everyone has the same goals or support needs. You need a collaborative approach involving prospective participants, caregivers, support workers and relevant stakeholders. Set clear objectives and expectations from the beginning.



## 2. Create An Accessible Work Environment

Consider wheelchair ramps, accessible bathrooms, assistive technology and sensory-friendly spaces, but remember that physical barriers are not the whole picture. Ask each individual about their reasonable adjustment requirements.

## 3. Create Flexible Placement Structures

Offer as much flexibility as possible in your placement structure to be more accessible to a broader range of participants. Options include part-time hours, job-sharing arrangements, remote/hybrid working, flextime and customised schedules.

## 4. Provide Comprehensive Support And Training

Good onboarding and comprehensive training help those with additional needs feel more welcome and included in the workplace.



Offer a range of ways for participants to engage with training materials (e.g. some may find videos easier than text-heavy documents).

Your managers and employees should be educated on issues such as disability inclusion, accessibility best practices, and effective communication strategies in order to support work experience participants effectively.

## 5. Facilitate Mentorship And Peer Support

Intergrate a formal mentoring scheme and peer support networks into your placement programme to provide support, encouragement, and social connections within the workplace.

The full article is available to our Members here:

**[Creating Work Experience Placements For Those With Additional Needs](#)**

Join our Membership to gain access to our extensive bank of resources on Youth Employment topics including outreach, recruitment, retention and more.

**[Find out more about our Membership.](#)**

For more information on specialist employment support, visit **[BASE](#)** (the British Association for Supported Employment).

# CONNECT WITH US

Contact us for marketing & PR enquiries



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Champion  
Change &

Your expert youth employment magazine