

SEPTEMBER 2024 | ISSUE 03

Driving Diversity

Cultivating Diversity To Build Bright Futures

What's inside?

Good Youth Employment Benchmark pilot

Explore the findings from employers measuring their youth employment practices in the pilot report.

Youth Voice Census 2024

Discover what young people have to say about life, work and education.

Laura-Jane Rawlings CEO & Founder

"We ensure youth voices feed into the decisions and policies being put forward."



Welcome

Welcome to the third 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. This edition is all about Employment, and how we can drive greater diversity across the workforce.

The insights and expertise shared on driving diversity could not come at a more important time. This year's Youth Voice Census, which launched earlier this month, shows us that young people's connections to work are decreasing and discrimination and division is rising. From the 5,000+ stories we heard from young people across the UK, we have been able to create the most comprehensive view of what it's like to be a young person in 2024. As we shine a light on the opportunities and challenges they face, we want to work with you to use this expert insight to create positive change in whatever way you can.

Change is not happening fast enough for our young people, with many missing out on crucial support during key milestones in their life. It's entirely possible for us to transform the systems that affect them, but it will take us all coming together with young people at the forefront of our minds to make a clear difference.

The best place to start is with our Good Youth Employment Benchmark. Exclusive to Youth Employment UK Members, it is a first of its kind digital tool, measuring and monitoring youth employment practice. Explore the insight we gained from the latest Good Youth Employment Benchmark cohort, and find out how you can take part and be nationally recognised for your work.

This year, the census data shows us how young people feel discriminated against and they have clearly stated that they want accessible opportunities. In this edition, we will take a look at some of the ways we can all make the workplace a more diverse, inclusive and accessible space for young people. As you read through this issue, think about how you can help the next generations into work, from supported employment, to essential opportunities, to quality mentoring.



**Laura-Jane
Rawlings MBE**
CEO & Founder



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WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

This past quarter saw our 2nd annual Youth Employment Week event, connecting young people with opportunities and raising awareness of the importance of creating careers for young people.

During this event, we had a social media reach of over 340,000, over 57,000 page views, and 500+ downloads of our event resources.



You can now [access our report](#) to read about the impact Youth Employment Week 2024 had.

Our Deputy CEO, Lauren Mistry, joined Robert Peston and Steph McGovern on The Rest Is Money podcast. With joblessness amongst young people the highest it's been for a decade, she shared insights from our annual Youth Voice Census report findings. You can [listen to episode 89](#) to hear more on how young people feel about their next steps, availability of opportunities, and the services open to them.



Our CEO, Laura-Jane Rawlings MBE DL, joined the Diversity in Apprenticeships Podcast from Springfield Training. She spoke on the panel which discussed the opportunities to increase diversity in apprenticeships and widening participation, some of the challenges to this, and the impact of having apprentices from different backgrounds within your business. [You can listen to the full episode here.](#)

We were delighted to introduce Clare Boden-Hatton to Youth Employment UK's board. With over 20 years of experience leading change in employment and skills delivery, Clare brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to our organisation.

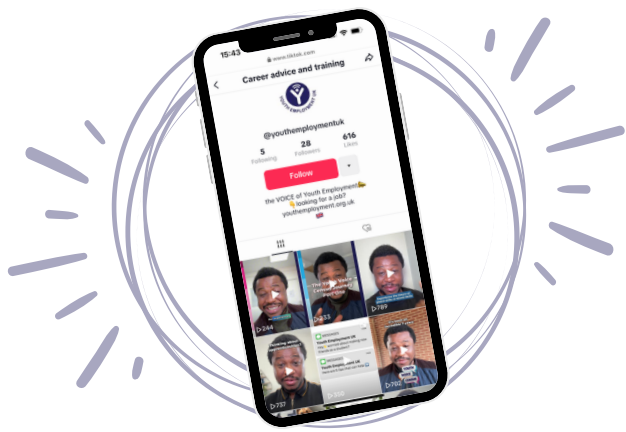
Youth Voice Census 2024 Launch

We launched our Youth Voice Census report in London on 18th September 2024.

Laura-Jane Rawlings said: "I am so grateful to our sponsors and supporters and to the room filled of people wanting to be part of the change. But my final thanks is to the young people who shared their stories and the phenomenal hardworking and committed team of Youth Employment UK who made this report possible."

Find out more about the report on the next page.





We're live on TikTok!

We've launched on TikTok so that we can share careers information and our resources with even more young people across the UK. [Explore our TikTok here.](#)



Since closing the Youth Voice Census survey at the end of June, our team has been analysing the data to create our Youth Voice Census 2024 report.

A record-breaking 5000+ young people shared their thoughts on life, work, and study this year, allowing us to review the current youth employment landscape and share what it is that they most need. In addition to this, we held multiple focus groups with young people across the country to gain further insight, which you can read about in the report.

[You can now read the key findings](#), [download the full report](#), and [watch a recording of our online launch](#).

The Safeguarding Series

Our team has been developing expert content and resources about safeguarding during engagement activities, work experience and employment.

Our series currently includes:

- [Safeguarding Young People: Information For Employers](#)
- [Q&A with NSPCC \(Webinar\)](#)
- [Q&A with NYA \(Webinar\)](#)
- [Work Experience: A Guide to Policies, Procedures and Safeguarding](#)

These articles, webinars and resources are [exclusive to Members](#) of Youth Employment UK.



COMING UP

The Good Youth Employment Symposium & Awards | 3rd December 2024

Join us for our end of year conference in Birmingham. We will hear from a number of expert speakers, as well as present our Good Youth Employment Awards.

Contact info@youthemployment.org.uk for more information

The last 12 years of insight and intelligence that we have from young people, employers and policy makers have supported the creation of the Benchmark. It takes measuring and monitoring to the next level, allowing employers to capture their youth employment activities in one place.

This is an evolution of our previous work, but the core principles remain

that young people, particularly those from marginalised groups, are really central to what we've built.

We developed this tool with the support of our Members during the Benchmark pilot. 4 key things stood out across employers of all sizes, who run a range of engagement and training opportunities, and work across different sectors.

1

Only 15% of employers had any youth employment strategy at all.

The excitement and appetite for doing more was there from all employers: they were all doing something to engage the next generations. All had begun a journey and they were starting to see the benefit of it too. What they needed and wanted most, however, were clear, time-bound strategies. We know that creating good quality opportunities requires time, investment and staff capacity, especially in the early stages. Without this, the employers often found it felt impossible to be anything other than reactive and it could often lead to duplication, frustration or missed opportunities. A well defined youth employment strategy is crucial; it is why the Good Youth Employment Benchmark exists.

2

There is growing confidence in school engagement, but support needed for reaching NEET young people.

Employers were most commonly utilising mediators and establishing networks such as schools, careers hubs, and activity providers to connect with young people. They tended to engage with young people aged 13 to 19, and were becoming more confident about engaging with schools and those traditional networks. Employers found it much more difficult to reach and understand how they could effectively target NEET young people. Once you step outside of being able to contact a school to reach young people, you are then relying on many kinds of small targeted groups to expand your reach. Employers are really keen to have help and support to be able to do that.

3

Barriers to providing quality in-person work experience opportunities.

All employers valued hybrid models, particularly around work experience. They have been able to support young people virtually, but they were finding it increasingly challenging to understand how they could provide good quality work experience and connections with young people for their future talent pipeline. Our post-pandemic world, where access to staff and resources are different, has changed this. Whilst around half of employers participating offered work experience, it was typically for between 1 and 49 young people throughout the whole year. It tended to be between a 1 and 3-day experience too. Employers are really keen to understand how they could benefit from participating in bigger schemes and reduce anxiety for young people too.

4

Employers are really keen to build youth voice into their practices.

Most of the pilot organisations really understood the work and support Youth Employment UK had been able to provide around encouraging youth voice. Over half the organisations were seeking feedback from young people across all of their activities, from school engagement to employment.

They were ready to incorporate youth participation, but needed help and support to enhance the evaluation. They wanted to improve how things could be measured and monitored to demonstrate ROI across their business, enabling for robust evaluation and impact measurement of specific strategies. Overall, we found a real keenness to do more and to understand more.

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

The Good Youth Employment Benchmark opens again in January 2025.

Be a part of the next cohort enhancing their youth employment practices by becoming a Member today.

Become a member with us:

www.youthemployment.org.uk/good-youth-employment-membership/

Alternatively, contact:

members@youthemployment.org.uk



POLICY NEWS

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

Youth Voice Census 2024: Anxiety, Discrimination, and Economic Pressures Impacting Young People's Futures

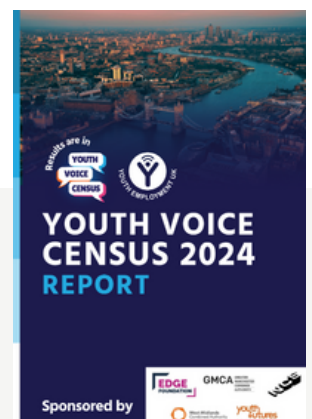
Key findings from the 2024 Youth Voice Census report show:

- **Anxiety is at an all time high.** The is a fear of falling behind in skills and opportunities exacerbates the mental health crisis.
- **Discrimination and harassment is rising.** Alarming raite of bullying and harassment persist, with discrimination being a top concern for the country.
- **Economic worries dominate,** with financial pressures significantly impacting decisions about education, training and employment.
- **There are fewer opportunities for enrichment,** contributing to a sense of isolation.
- **Confidence in employment has dropped,** with only 26% of young people in education confident about their skills and employment prospects.

Following these key findings, Youth Employment UK recommends these actions:

1. Expand Access to Youth Provision
2. Improve Support Systems
3. Build Hyper-Local Young Person's Guarantee
4. Encourage Employer Engagement

[Read the key findings and recommendations, and download the full report here.](#)





Tackling Youth Unemployment Must Be A Priority For The New Government

King Charles III officially opened Parliament under the new Labour government in July, sharing plans to introduce a range of Bills that support young people in the UK. These included:

- Raising educational standards and promoting children's wellbeing.
- Creating a functioning skills system with Skills England.
- Reforming the apprenticeship levy into a 'Growth and Skills Levy' to give employers more funding flexibility.

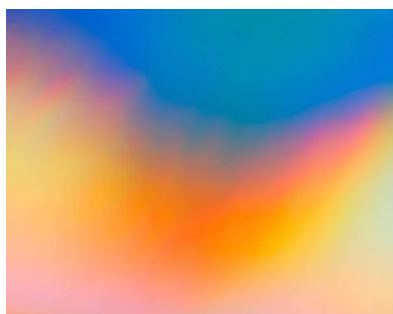
Labour has also committed to a Young Person's Guarantee, something the Youth Employment Group has previously called for.

We have long called for a commitment to collaborative working from educators, employers, health professionals and policy makers. It is urgently required if we are to make steps forward in reversing the rising unemployment trend.

Young Person's Guarantee: Youth Employment Group

As part of our work with the Youth Employment Group, we shared an in-depth look at the Youth Employment Guarantee and what needs to happen to ensure that every young person has

access to meaningful opportunities. [Read more about the NEET challenge, the data behind it, and the Government's plans for increasing opportunities.](#)



A commitment to a genuine living wage is a positive move for our young people

The Government has announced their commitment to a genuine living wage as part of their plan to Make Work Pay. For the first time, the Low Pay Commission (LPC) will factor the cost of living when deciding the Minimum Wage and Living Wage rates. Find out more about what this means [here](#).

Why is the record-breaking 2024 General Election important for representation and our young people?

The new parliament has come closer than ever before to reflecting the diversity of the electorate. When addressing the House of Commons, Starmer said he was 'proud' of the part Labour has played in improving the diversity of Parliament.

Retaining Young Talent



Many employers state that they can effectively recruit young people into their business, but retaining them is a problem area. Here are some top strategies that can help you increase retention of your employees.

Job carving

When recruiting, try working with your potential employees to create a job that suits their strengths. This recruitment strategy is useful for creating accessible opportunities that allow employees to reach their full potential. This gives you the opportunity to create roles for people who may otherwise face barriers to employment such as disability, health issues or a need for flexible working.

Co-Design Good Recruitment Processes with Young People

Retention starts with your recruitment. Want to know the best way to recruit and onboard young people so they feel supported and ready to work? Go straight to the source! Instead of making assumptions about them and their needs, gather their feedback and incorporate into it your practices. Get feedback at every stage, and don't be afraid to try things out.

Perfect your onboarding

Ensuring the first days and weeks of an employee's journey with you are as positive as they can be is key. The 5 essential things to consider are:

- Start the process before they join - communicate with them by email or phone, provide all the information they are likely to need for their first day and make yourself available for any questions.
- Ensure an organised and friendly welcome on their first day.
- Make sure their workspace and equipment are ready to go.
- Communicate expectations clearly. Set out performance metrics, rules and policies, and let them know what they can expect from you too! Ensure they are clear on their rights, how they can expect to be treated, and where they can go for help if they encounter any problems.
- Assign a buddy or mentor who can help them settle in and show them the ropes.

Ensure young talent have a buddy or mentor

Create a structured mentoring scheme to align your goals. Train your managers to be supportive mentors, and build these key skills in your team:

- Empathy
- Active listening
- Communication
- Passion for self development and growth
- Ability to build rapport and trust

To nurture good mentors within your organisation, you'll need to ensure they:

1. Get to know their mentee, and their challenges, motivators, and ambitions.
2. Set expectations of both the mentor and mentee.
3. Learn how to give effective critical feedback (and receive it). Mentoring will be a journey for the mentor and their mentee.
4. Lead by example by displaying the qualities their mentee should look to build.
5. Encourage independent thinking and using initiative.

Offer opportunities for advancement

Invest in your staff and show them you're committed to helping them grow. Good training and development plans are essential - use 1-2-1s/reviews to have clear

communication about their goals, set realistic outcomes and assess their ongoing development.

Encourage staff to voice their ambitions, and offer them the chance to further their development with free/paid courses, workshops, internal training, or even apprenticeships for a chance to gain professional qualifications.

Encourage work-life balance

Encouraging a healthy work-life balance is especially helpful for young employees who may not have much experience of work. It can be hard to 'switch off', so encourage frequent breaks and only working their contracted hours. Don't forget to role model good behaviour!

Further reading

- The Benefits of Job Carving
- How to Co-Design Good Recruitment and Onboarding Processes with Young People
- How to Encourage Employee Feedback
- Retaining a Young Workforce with Better Onboarding
- How to be a Good Mentor at Work
- Running Successful Personal Reviews/1-2-1s for Young People

Member Spotlight:

Severn Trent is a water and wastewater services provider to over 8 million customers in the Midlands.



We spoke to Jade Pearson, New Talent Lead, for insight into their apprenticeship programmes.

Why does Severn Trent offer apprenticeships as an early careers programme?

“We deliver an essential service to our communities and we’re really passionate about going beyond this service too - we want to have a positive impact on our customers and communities. We heavily invest in local employment opportunities through meaningful jobs and early careers.

It's in the DNA of who we are at Severn Trent and it's integral to our skills needs.

We offer a range of entry programmes into our organisation and apprenticeships are a major part of our offering. They are a great way for us to develop the future skills we need, particularly the core technical skills. We also value the diverse, fresh ideas, perspectives and innovation that having apprentices (and especially young people) delivers.”

What does your outreach and recruitment for apprenticeships look like?

“When we recruit we use social media campaigns and advertise our roles using third party partners and websites to get them in front of as many job seekers as possible.

We've got a defined outreach and attraction strategy and as part of that we've built great partnerships with local schools

and colleges. We love to visit the schools and deliver career talks, and it's great when students can see somebody like them.

We use the 'see it to believe it' model by taking our apprentices to share their story.

They act as relatable and inspiring role models who are close in age and may have similar lived experience, and they show local young people how their apprenticeship has added value to their career and life.”



What support do you provide to young people during the recruitment process?

“We encourage candidates to share any reasonable adjustments that they need. If they indicate this during the process, then they'll get a phone call from our team to talk through what this looks like for them so we can flex around what they need. We also run application webinars and open events at our site where people can come to have a chat and ask us questions. Candidates who make it to our final stage, which is face to face at an assessment centre, will get a personalised call to talk through what will happen there, to answer any questions, and to again check if they need any reasonable adjustments.”

What does the induction process look like for apprentices?

“For us, it starts before induction. We run pre-joiner events in the weeks before they join us. We have a lot of people that join straight out of school so we invite their parents/guardians along to meet us and get the confidence that their child is going to be well supported.

These events are also a really nice opportunity for the apprentices to start building their network and relationships across their cohort so that day one on the job doesn't feel so scary.

After these events, they'll then have a week-long induction with us.

This year, we're trying a different approach by bringing our apprentices and graduates together in their business functions. We aim to bring graduates and apprentices closer together, and enable stronger networking and relationships across the two cohorts.

It's important to us that there is equity between our graduates and apprentices and they feel equally valued and supported in their programmes.”

What support do they get on the apprenticeship programme?

“A great line manager and the support and coaching they provide is essential for our apprentices. Having a mentor who can help with the everyday scenarios our apprentices will navigate is crucial too. That's why we invest in line manager and mentor training for managing apprentices, which includes safeguarding and prevent training.

We check in with them on a one to one level and we host informal drop in sessions to connect with them and discuss how things are going in a group setting.



The investment in our induction process created an environment where our apprentices are quite comfortable with approaching our team with any concerns.”

What do their progression opportunities look like?

“We really value apprentices in our organisation, so everyone will start on a permanent contract. Our intention for every apprentice is that they will stay at Severn Trent post-apprenticeship and use the programme to train for their specific role.

Around 6 months before they complete their apprenticeship, we'll start to have those conversations with them about what their role looks like off scheme.”



To find out more about Severn Trent's apprenticeship strategy and how they support their apprentices, [click here](#) and read [the full case study](#).

Supporting Line Managers To Talk About Mental Health

EMPOWERING MANAGERS TO CHAMPION MENTAL HEALTH

The 2024 Youth Voice Census findings show how mental ill health has disrupted work, with young people explaining they would require further support to manage their mental health to be able to work. Here are our top tips to support your line managers when talking about mental health with staff.

Create a culture that normalises talking about mental health

Mental health challenges are often stigmatised, which makes it a difficult topic to discuss. It's vital to create an organisational culture that supports good mental health at every level. This includes talking openly about mental health, providing helpful resources, and promoting self-care.

Provide expert training

Make use of mental health professionals and organisations to provide expert-led mental health training for your managers.



Provide mental health resources

This could include an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), private medical insurance that covers therapy, subscriptions to online therapy services, wellbeing and self-care workshops, and written or video resources. These resources give managers an array of tools to help them support their staff in times of mental health difficulties, and places they can signpost people to for additional assistance.

Empower managers to know their limits

It's vital that managers have access to other resources and sources of support to which they can signpost employees. It's also important for them to set personal boundaries and resist taking on employees' mental health struggles as their own or as their responsibility to solve.



Ensure that managers also have access to mental health support

It's vital to ensure your managers have access to mental health support too. Provide them with resources and check in regularly to see if they need additional support. This will help to enable them to stay happy, and healthy, and contribute towards a positive mental health culture across your entire organisation.

[Continue reading here.](#)



Want to read more about mental health?

As a Member, you'll unlock an extensive range of best practice resources.

Support tomorrow's workforce with us

Join our membership community and help drive meaningful change in youth employment.

WHAT YOU GET AS A MEMBER

-  Access to the Good Youth Employment Benchmark
-  Exclusive best practice resources and events
-  Recognition of your commitment with the Members-only badge
-  Members-only newsletter
-  Entry into our Good Youth Employment Awards

WHY WORK WITH US?

We are ideally placed to understand the complex employment landscape and to support employers, young people, and policy makers as we drive for full youth employment.

Membership with us is being part of a system that supports and champions good youth employment practices.



Start your membership journey



Complete the form



Meet our team



Unlock your membership

Join Here



WHY IS BASE PROVIDING A DIFFERENT TYPE OF SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYERS WHO WANT TO BE DISABILITY CONFIDENT?

Laura Davis, Chief Executive of BASE (British Association of Supported Employment) writes about how supported employment can change employment for young people and UK businesses. BASE is the national voice for providers of specialist employment support.



Employers today face challenges in both hiring and retaining employees who can help them meet their business needs. According to the ONS figures from September 2024, there's 875,000 unfilled job vacancies in the UK and yet there are 1.8 million people who are currently not economically active due to health and disability. Embedding inclusive recruitment practices is no longer a nice tick alongside corporate social responsibility for UK Businesses but an imperative for business to continue to thrive.

Why aren't more UK Businesses recruiting inclusively?

As part of the Disability Confident Leaders Group and through BASE's work with DWP Strategic Partnership Team, I know that Employers want to recruit from a more diverse workforce but the barrier to actively doing this is always the same: how to get started! They feel that including disabled and neurodivergent young people in their workforce will be an enormous undertaking and that the recruitment process will be complex and difficult. There is also a lack of understanding amongst Employers of the barriers to employment that exist for this section of the population and myths that disabled and neurodivergent people will take more time off or be less productive, when in fact the evidence demonstrates the opposite is true.

How is BASE helping UK Business to recruit disabled and neurodivergent young people?

Utilising a model called Supported Employment, BASE and its members provide practical support on a micro and macro scale to Employers and their potential workforce. This support can range from supporting employers through the Disability Confident Scheme, to move from intent to action, to helping organisations review the entire lifecycle of their employees through a disability lens, ensuring this is inclusive of all disabled and neurodivergent people.

[Click here to find out more about what BASE does and how they can help your organisation with supported employment.](#)

Discrimination and work: breaking down the barriers faced by ethnically minoritised young people

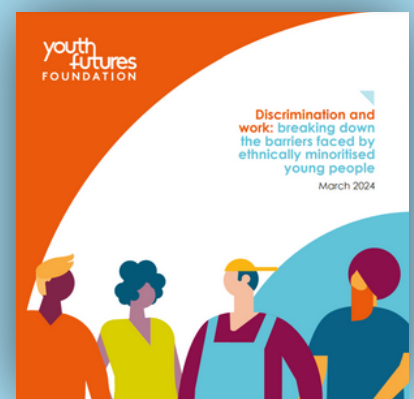
With almost over a quarter of the UK's population below 25 from an ethnic minority background, this report reveals the stark impact discrimination is having on Britain's current and future workforce – and why the need for action is critical.

Key survey findings:

- 1** Discrimination remains a significant barrier for young people getting into and getting on at work, with concerns about discrimination due to ethnicity particularly common among Black respondents.
- 2** Although a high proportion of young people experienced workplace discrimination, the overwhelming majority didn't report it as they didn't think it would make a difference.
- 3** Discrimination has a personal impact on young people, eroding their self confidence – with the issue being especially acute for women.
- 4** Young people have clear thoughts on what employers and policy makers can do to support them: a quarter of young people think that guaranteed work experience is one of the most important interventions to help them into good employment.

To find out more about Youth Futures Foundation's evidence on what works in supporting marginalised young people into employment and to access resources for employers, [click here](#).

This report reflects the view of 3,250 ethnically minoritised young people aged 18-25 in England; the largest known survey on experiences of discrimination among ethnically minoritised young people to date.



BAN THE BOX

Employers often ask candidates about criminal convictions at the initial stage of a job application. When this happens, people with convictions are excluded from roles for which they may be qualified and capable of doing. By Banning the Box, organisations can access a more diverse talent pool, save on recruitment costs, and gain reputational benefit.

Ola Kolade, Employment and Skills Director at Business in the Community, said:

"Ban the Box is part of Business in the Community's Opening Doors campaign, working with companies across the UK to open their doors to more diverse talent. To date, over 230 employers have banned the box, including organisations such as BNP Paribas, Wates, Capita, and Sodexo, helping to make more than 1.2 million jobs more accessible to people with criminal convictions."

[Sign up to Business in the Community's \(BITC\) Ban the Box campaign](#) to give people with criminal convictions a fair chance to compete for jobs.



The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network

INSIGHT WITH INSIDERS

We spoke to our Youth Ambassadors, young people across the UK volunteering with us, to see what made them feel supported when entering the workplace as a young person.

I had an induction day and a member of the team assigned to me who I could talk to, like a mentor. This really helped as I knew she was available if I needed to ask a question. They also asked me if I needed any reasonable adjustments and, as I have ADHD, it helped me feel at ease about talking about this.

- Eniola

Having a formal, structured induction where there was a dedicated member of the team to welcome new recruits definitely helped. I felt more informed and knew what to expect.

- Ciara

When I started my apprenticeship, they got all of us together for a training day and introduced us. We got paired with a second year apprentice as part of a buddy scheme, so I met my buddy in the morning and they were there when we met the rest of the team. It broke the ice as it can be awkward as a young person going in for the first time!

- Rylie

When I start work, I know it will help if the employer shows attention to me coming in as a new person, recognising that I'm in a new environment. It would make me feel comfortable knowing there was someone there that I can talk to, and help me feel more settled coming into that new environment.

- Kitan

I think what helped me with my first week as a youth advisor was the induction process. There were a lot of other young people starting so it gave me the opportunity to meet them, and I felt really equipped and ready for the role.

- Eden

Creating a Mentoring Scheme



In a mentoring scheme, a younger or less experienced employee is paired with a more experienced or knowledgeable person who can support, guide, and aid them in their personal and professional development.

Find out how your organisation can help new young employees adjust to the workplace through mentoring schemes.



1

Establish clear objectives

What are you hoping to achieve? Begin with a needs assessment, asking your young employees what they hope to gain from a mentoring relationship. Next, ensure that the mentoring scheme's objectives align with broader organisational goals.

2

Design a framework for the programme

Using your aims, create a blueprint for your mentoring scheme. Define the duration, frequency of meetings, expectations, training and resources mentors are required to have, and your evaluation process.

3

Select and pair your participants

It is worth spending some time to get this right as success heavily relies on this. Organisations match people based on skills, job roles, or career trajectories, or through 'meet and greet sessions' that allow mentors/mentees to get to know each other.



Read the full article [here](#)

This article is exclusive to our Members only. To continue reading and unlock more best practice resources, [join our Membership today.](#)

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