



GOOD YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SYMPOSIUM

2024



3RD
DECEMBER

The annual Good Youth Employment
Symposium & Awards



Headline Sponsor



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Meet Today's Exhibitors



Executive Summary

Dear Attendees,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this year's Good Youth Employment Symposium & Awards. Today marks a significant gathering of passionate individuals and organisations dedicated to advancing youth employment across the UK. We will explore what makes work good for young people and how we can remove barriers for those who often struggle the most in our communities.

As we reflect on the opportunities and challenges ahead, we recognise the pivotal role the new Labour government will play in shaping the future of youth employment. Their commitment to re-imagining the welfare system and bringing skills and education closer together as part of their Breaking Barriers to Opportunity mission aligns with our ambitions for young people. However, we must also remain vigilant about the potential challenges posed by some of the policy changes, especially against a backdrop of rising youth unemployment.



2024 has been a remarkable year

for Youth Employment UK. We have grown in all aspects of our operation, but most importantly in our impact and reach. From the biggest Youth Voice Census ever to the landmark research and insights we are building through the Good Youth Employment Benchmark, we continue to bring youth and employer voices together, providing the key insights needed for real change. Our achievements are a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team, partners, and supporters.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our incredible team, whose unwavering commitment drives our mission forward. To our sponsors and partners, your generous support and belief in our vision make all of this possible. Together, we are driving towards a brighter future for young people in the UK.

Thank you for being here today and for your continued support. Let us make the most of this symposium, sharing knowledge, fostering connections, and inspiring action.

Warm regards,

LJ Rawlings MBE DL
CEO of Youth Employment UK



Thank you to

Meet our Headline Sponsor

Occupational Awards Limited (OAL) is a leading end-point assessment and awarding organisation, committed to elevating workforce skills and standards across diverse industries.

Valued by employers, training providers, and apprentices, OAL delivers adaptable and responsive solutions tailored to the specific needs of each sector.

Our stringent quality assurance processes, combined with a dedication to innovation and exceptional customer support, establish OAL as a trusted ally in professional development and End-Point Assessment.



By choosing OAL, you align with an organisation that champions transparency, expertise, and industry relevance, ensuring that every apprentice is valued, every EPA is fair and consistent and that our qualifications reflect and develop the competencies essential for today's evolving workforce.



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About Gateway Qualifications

Gateway Qualifications is dedicated to supporting providers and changing futures by helping create a fundable curriculum tailored to meet learners' and employers' needs.

We believe in enabling our centres to provide flexible, empowering learning experiences that fit into their learners' lives, allowing each individual to thrive.

Our range of qualifications and End-point Assessments are used across the country to create flexible pathways to further learning, apprenticeships and employment.

Plus, we offer new End-point Assessment services, updated Access to HE Diplomas, market-leading digital literacy qualifications, and support for ESOL learners and those at risk of becoming NEET.

About VTCT Skills

VTCT Skills is a market-leading specialist vocational and technical Awarding Organisation.

We offer a comprehensive range of qualifications, assessments and services in 17 sectors, including Hairdressing, Beauty, Logistics and Early Years.

Working closely with employers and training providers, our ranges are backed by industry and trusted around the world.

With over 3,000 training locations, we help over 120,000 learners achieve professional skills that transform their lives, every year.

Youth Employment Landscape

About the Session

In November we saw a rise again in youth employment data. Young people are over three times more likely to be unemployed than any other age group. This is a stubborn and difficult problem to solve.

In this session we will hear from sector experts who will bring their insight and latest research to the forefront of this discussion.

Who are the young people most affected, why should we care and what do we need to do about it?

Meet the experts



Jan Richardson-Wilde FIEP
CEO of Occupational Awards Limited



Jan has been CEO of Occupational Awards Limited since 2019. She is also a Director of Improve Skills Limited and Governor and Vice-Chair of an FE College. She has over 35 years' experience in the education sector in strategic and operational management of training programmes with colleges, private training providers, local authorities the voluntary sector and not for profit organisations.

Jan has previously been a board member of the Learning and Skills Council, chair of the North Yorkshire Training Provider network and Vice-Chair of Yorkshire Coast College and a Governor of the Grimsby Institute for Further and Higher Education.

She has extensive experience of education policy, apprenticeships, qualification and curriculum development, along with change management and business improvement.



**youth
futures**
FOUNDATION

Andrea Barry

Principal Economist at Youth Futures Foundation

Andrea is an enthusiastic economist, leading YFF analysis and economics projects. Before this, Andrea was a Senior Analyst at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. She has finished a PhD in Economics at the University of York.




**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

Mahfia Watkinson

**Policy Manager (Insight) at the
WMCA**

Passionate about education and skills, Mahfia leads the Employment, Skills, Health and Communities Directorate's insights work, to inform its strategic commissions and policy design. They specialise in post-16 educational policy, regulation, and academic quality, with substantial experience from FE, HE and Government.

They are currently working on delivering the West Midlands Mayor's flagship Youth Plan – with an ambition to ensure the West Midlands is the region that gives young people the best possible start in working life.



 **base**
british association for
supported employment

Laura Davis

**CEO of the British Association
for Supported Employment**

Laura Davis has been working to improve the employment outcomes for individuals who are excluded from the workforce for over 20 years.

Passionate in the belief that employment should be for all, Laura has been the CEO of the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) and Inclusive Trading CIC since May 2022.

Laura has been closely working with the Department for Work and Pensions on the new Connect to Work program and BASE is one of the partners leading on the Department for Education's Internships Work Program.

Good Youth Employment Benchmark 2024

What is the Benchmark?

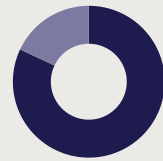
Youth Employment UK's first of its kind digital tool that supports employers to:

- **Benchmark:** Monitor and measure Explore, Experience and Employment activities.
- **Bridge the Practice Gap:** Provide employers with insights and next steps to improve their practices.
- **Build the Evidence Base:** Explore the who, where, what, and how of youth employment activities.

Supported by:



Employers involved in 2024: 34



18% SMEs
82% Large Organisations

Sectors include: Retail, Food, Public Sector and Charities.

On average:

- **25%** of activities are delivered across the whole of the UK
- **1 in 5** activities are in London, North West and South East
- **Under 10%** of activities are delivered in the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber.

Key Findings

Creating evidence and evaluation:

Employers need support for robust design, evaluation and impact measurement.

Measuring and connecting all programmes to ensure there is a coherent pathway for young people from exploring employment, having work placements and gaining paid employment.

Connecting networks:

Employers use mediators and networks to engage young people, focusing on ages 13-19.

Many lack targeted approaches to reach those young people who have protected characteristics or come from disadvantaged backgrounds and consequently struggle to support NEETs.

Committing to good work:

Investment in employment is yielding results, with improved programme quality this year.

Employers are providing inclusive recruitment, pre-employment support, and sufficient training opportunities for young workers.

Activities that give young people the chance to explore different careers and industries through a range of activities including taster days, assemblies, and careers fairs. This involves working with schools, colleges, youth organisations and young people directly to open up the world of work.

Supporting over 40,000+ young people with explore activities.

- **40%** of activities are delivered in a hybrid model.
- **27%** offered all over the UK.
- **56%** offered all year round.

Employers are utilising intermediaries to reach young people.

Utilising schools, colleges and third party providers to support building connections and the logistics of supporting careers events allows for greater reach.

However, feedback and data collection is harder to collate. Mediators allow for overall targeting, but do not always support the increased need to monitor, measure and evaluate to enhance the programme.

- **81%** of activities are delivered through a school, college or provider
- **70%** of activities intentionally engage underrepresented groups
- **Over half (56%)** of activities are being monitored for quality and impact
- **20%** of employers 'sometimes' saw an increase in target audience participation

Involving young people in delivery stages would support more relatable explore activities.

Whilst workforce needs and skills planning should support programme learning outcomes, their delivery should include the voice, feedback and experiences the young people that are being targeted.

- **29%** of employers used feedback from young people to inform the design of programmes
- **7%** of activities consistently include young people or young employees in the delivery
- **4%** of activities involved planning sessions with young people
- **13%** gather feedback post-programme to assess its impact

EXPERIENCE

A range of work experience opportunities, such as work shadowing and short work experience placements. They must take place on employer sites and support young people to develop skills and their understanding of the world of work.

**3,000+ placements
in the last 12
months**

- **25%** of activities are offered all over the UK
- **21%** in the South East, 19% in London, 18% in the North West, 15% in the West Midlands and 13% in the East Midlands.

Pre and on-programme support for work experience programmes is driving engagement and confidence.

Work experience can be a significant transition for many young people.

Employers who completed the Benchmark are increasingly mindful of the need to provide structured guidance and mentorship throughout the process.

Support provided includes pre-placement briefings, where young people are given clear expectations, and on-the-job mentoring to help them integrate into the workplace and build confidence during the placements.

- **70%** of work experience activities off an induction session or an induction pack.
- **53%** of programmes offer a buddy or mentor.

Post work experience support could be improved to drive better outcomes for all.

There can be a cliff edge at the end of work experience placements.

Most employers do not utilise systems to continue to engage with or build a pipeline from young people who engage in work experience programmes.

- **8%** of employers offer the opportunity to engage with their organisation at the end of their work experience.
- **8%** provide a reference for a young person who has undertaken a work placement.

Employment and training pathways for young people that meet the highest standard of youth-friendly employment, including training and development plans, support, and fair opportunities.

**18,000+ opportunities
in the last 12
months**

- **35%** provide the chance to join networks
- **22%** have young staff meetings/events
- **13%** have a youth staff network
- **13%** have a youth board

Employers are invested in providing clear development opportunities.

Most employers offer structured professional development opportunities, with emphasis on young employees, typically including personalised development plans tailored to individual roles.

Some employers are increasingly mindful of the diverse needs of their workforce, offering additional learning support for individuals with additional needs.

Employers are fostering continuous development by encouraging growth reflection during regular mentoring sessions, 1-2-1 meetings, and formal appraisals. This approach ensures that employees have clear pathways for skill acquisition aligned with their current responsibilities and long-term aspirations within the organisation.

- **66%** of employers always offer young staff a training and development plan, and a further **10%** do it sometimes.
- **74%** of employment roles are designed to ensure that they are inclusive of all young people, including those with special educational needs or disabilities.

Ongoing engagement and feedback activities could be improved.

Despite the benefits of amplifying youth perspectives, youth voice activities are largely underutilised in many organisations.

to share their views and influence programme development.

Employers could take more proactive steps to create platforms for youth engagement that empowers staff

Encouraging youth voice enhances employee experience and helps ensure that programmes are responsive and relevant to the needs of younger workers.

Explore Session

The work employers do to inspire, engage and raise aspirations of young people while they're still in education or before they enter the workforce falls within our Explore category.

'Explore' is a key pillar of the support we provide our Members and the focus of this expert panel.

We know that having multiple encounters with employers can reduce a young person's chance of becoming NEET, and we also know the scarring effect that becoming NEET has on their future prospects. Crucially though, they must be good encounters.

How can organisations make sure that their Explore activities are giving the best return on investment for everyone?

In this interactive session, we'll discuss industry best practices that you can apply to your early careers strategy to engage and invest in young people at the very start of their career journey.

This includes:

- Supporting school events
- Taking part in careers talks
- Attending careers fairs
- Job preparation workshops



What young people are saying

The Youth Voice Census 2024 Results told us that confidence continues to decline for young people in education.

The majority of careers exploration opportunities are down for young people in secondary school.

40% had an employer visit their school.

23% had careers talks with employers.

36% of young people in secondary school think they understand the skills employers are looking for.

Communication, Team work and Problem solving are rated by young people as the most important for work.

Meet the experts



THE CAREERS &
ENTERPRISE
COMPANY

Erica Chamberlain

Head of Strategic Business Partnerships at the CEC

Erica works for the national body for careers education, The Careers & Enterprise Company. Leading on their work with employers, sectors, and business bodies, ensuring employers can work effectively with the education sector to address organisational, sectoral, local, and national skills needs. Erica led the development of The Employer Standards for Careers Education, a framework and free self-assessment that supports employers to improve the impact of their careers outreach.

Erica joined the company from Citi, where she worked in the Community Development team focused on maximizing employee volunteering and giving. Prior to this Erica was a Director for an East London charity, focused on social mobility and community wellbeing.

Erica is the Vice Chair of Governors for the Oaks Primary School in Ipswich.



BICSc
THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF CLEANING SCIENCE

Kelsey Hargreaves

Technical Manager at the British Institute of Cleaning Science

Kelsey, in addition to her role at BICSc, is a Youth Ambassador for Youth Employment UK.

She has experience in the cleaning industry over a range of challenging frontline positions within the NHS during the COVID pandemic.

She brings extensive experience in site inspections, project management, and overcoming the issues faced in operational cleaning service and particularly training models.



Kitan

Youth Ambassador

Kitan will share their experience of exploring careers.

EXPLORE

Experience Session

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. We know from the 2024 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.

In this session, we will give expert insight into the meaningful workplace experiences you can provide to support young peoples professional development.

Learn best practices on how to design, plan and run your experience programmes, which can include:

- Work placements
- Internships
- Job shadowing
- In-person and virtual work experience
- Taster days

What young people are saying

The Youth Voice Census 2024 Results told us that young people find Experience opportunities to be important for their professional development.

36% of young people had access to work experience in secondary school.

Of those offered work experience, only **58%** felt ready to undertake it.

87% of work experience opportunities were available in person.

74% of young people agree that work experience helps to build useful skills.

71% agree it helps you build experience that is useful to help you get a job.

Meet the experts



Sareena Bains
CEO of Movement to Work

Movement to Work, is a UK charity committed to tackling youth unemployment by helping employers deliver high-quality opportunities for young people who are not in education, employment or training and facing barriers to work.

Sareena joined Movement to Work on secondment from Accenture, where she consulted leading financial institutions on post-M&A integration, regulatory change, and digital transformation.

A strong advocate for equality, she has held numerous DE&I roles, spearheading initiatives to level the playing field and build workforces that better represent the diversity of our society. Sareena is passionate about equipping young people with the skills they need to thrive in the jobs of the future.



Dean Giles
Head of Learning and Development at Haven

Dean is the Head of Learning and Development at Haven, where along with his team is dedicated to shaping the future of the organisation by cultivating top talent and creating a culture of continuous growth.

Dean leads on creating best in class programmes designed to attract, nurture, and develop emerging leaders. He is passionate about identifying high-potential individuals and providing them with the tools, programmes, and opportunities to thrive. By integrating cutting-edge learning strategies with a focus on career progression, he ensures that both individuals and Haven are equipped to succeed in an ever-evolving business landscape.



Rylie
Youth Ambassador

Rylie will share their work experience journey.

Employment Session

Employment is all about early careers and the work your organisation can do to attract, recruit and retain young talent.

This year's Youth Voice Census shows us that young people's connections to work are decreasing and discrimination and division are rising. Those looking for work told us that it is harder to find and access quality opportunities. Along with this growing trend, we are still seeing inequality in opportunities for certain groups of young people.

Opening up quality opportunities that are supportive and inclusive to young people is key when delivering your employment activities.

This interactive session covers youth employment best practices on how to attract, recruit and retain young people into your organisation. Our expert panel will provide insight into how you can deploy your employment activities to drive diversity and include youth voice in your recruitment strategies.

Early careers opportunities include:

- Apprenticeships
- Internships
- Entry level roles
- Graduate schemes
- Supported employment

What young people are saying

The Youth Voice Census 2024 results told us that young people are struggling to find quality opportunities in their area, however those in work find their working environment supportive.

10% of young people think that they will be able to access quality work where they live.

31% of young people think employers are supportive of hiring them.

83% of young people in work agree that their working environment is supportive.

70% of young people in work would rate their employer as youth friendly.

Meet the experts



Ola Kolade

Director of Employment & Skills at Business in the Community

Ola Kolade is the Director of Employment and Skills at Business in the Community, the UK's largest and most influential responsible business network.

He is also a Trustee of Oasis UK, a leading charity providing education, housing, health, justice, youth and family support.



Ciara

Youth Ambassador

Ciara will share their experience of employment.



Greencore

Hayley White

Early Careers and Skills Manager at Greencore

Hayley White has over 8 years of experience of Early Careers and apprenticeship programmes, dedicated to supporting others to progress through a programme of workplace learning and development to build skills for the future.

She is a huge advocate of apprenticeships for all, having been part of multiple trailblazer groups, as well as completing learning through apprenticeships to support own personal learning goals.

Good Youth Employment Awards 2024

We're so proud to present our Good Youth Employment Awards, celebrating the organisations that have been leading the way in championing young talent and providing quality opportunities to young people.

The Award winners are determined by their submissions in the **Good Youth Employment Benchmark**, which showcases their activities this past year.

Corporate of the Year

The Corporate of the Year is awarded to the large employer that has made great strides in developing and innovating their youth employment practices and activities.

This organisation follows the Good Youth Employment Standards and sets the stage for how large employers can recruit and engage with young talent.



SME of the Year



The SME of the Year is all about the small and medium-sized enterprise that has done the most with their resources.

Despite having less resources at their disposal, this employer has followed the Good Youth Employment Standards to provide excellent support to young people in all stages of their professional development.

Explore Award

The Explore Award is given to the organisation that has showcased an outstanding commitment to engaging with young people at the start of their career journey.

They have shown that they are leading the way with their school outreach, building young people's work readiness.



Experience Award



The Experience Award is given to the organisation that has shown an innovative approach to how they offer Experience opportunities to young people.

Providing meaningful workplace experiences to develop young people's employability skills.

Employment Award

The Employment award is presented based on the level of quality early careers opportunities that an organisation is committed to.

This employer has an award-winning recruitment strategy and provides training and development to their young talent so that they can confidently move forward in their career journey.



Youth Voice Census 2024 Results

The Youth Voice Census has always been a space for young people across the UK to share their experiences.

It provides us with the most comprehensive view of what it is like to be a young person in the UK, including what is working for them and the challenges and issues they face.



Key Findings

1 **Anxiety, safety, discrimination and the cost of living** are the biggest issues for young people.

2 **Readiness for next steps has dropped:** young people are less confident in their future choices.

3 **Opening up opportunities** for careers education, enrichment and extracurricular activities for all

4 Accessing **Quality work** is becoming more difficult for young people.

Read the Report

Download the full 2024 Youth Voice Census report to read the in-depth analysis of **5,000+ young voices** and what they think about their life, education and work.

Download the key findings for a top-level overview and gain insight into issues affecting young people across the UK.

SCAN THE QR CODE



Your notes

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