

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

The research has found that:

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

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

EMPLOYERS

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

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

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

POLICY-MAKERS

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

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

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

THE CIPD

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

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