

EMPLOYERS' GUIDE

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COMMITTED TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT
HOW TO RECRUIT YOUNG PEOPLE

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Welsh Government

A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

Removing barriers for young people during the recruitment process is the best way to ensure that they have the easiest possible transition into the world of work. It also helps employers like you to fill your vacancies quickly and with the best possible candidates. If your vacancies don't speak to young people in the right way, they will self-select out of the running before they have even applied. But if you can attract and engage young people in the right way, you'll be well on your way to building a dynamic and vibrant team.

Young people are currently facing many challenges when leaving education and moving into work. That's why the [Good Youth Employment Charter](#) was developed to help employers better understand what good youth employment looks like. Youth Employment UK provides membership support to those organisations who sign up to the charter, helping them to actively reflect on their practices and the support and opportunities they are offering to young people.

The Five Principles of Good Youth Employment are:

1

Creating
opportunity

2

Recognising
talent

3

Fair
employment

4

Developing
people

5

Youth
voice

The Covid-19 pandemic has adjusted the ways we work, and not necessarily for the better. It has caused an exacerbated a number of challenges, and young people whose education was interrupted by the lockdowns are often the hardest hit.

Even so, many employers are still not making all the adjustments required to counter these effects and provide valuable, fair, and accessible opportunities for young people. That's why we have put together this guide to help employers like you.

But why should you care about recruiting young people into your business, and how can you do it well? Read on to find out!

THE BENEFITS OF RECRUITING YOUNG PEOPLE INTO YOUR ORGANISATION

When you recruit young people into your business, you benefit just as much as they do.

Today's young people are ambitious, talented, and willing to work. They have ideas, they have a vision, and they have something to say. However, they often find it difficult to access the opportunities they need to get started in their careers, with marginalised young people particularly adversely affected.

According to the [Youth Voice Census 2022](#), the biggest youth survey in the UK, young people with protected characteristics¹, as well as carers and care leavers, were 15% less likely to be confident that there are quality jobs available to them.

When organisations actively recruit them and create opportunities for them, young people find that their confidence soars, their skills develop, and they are able to get their career started on the right foot.



Organisations benefit tremendously too. Young employees are often enthusiastic and highly motivated, and bring a fresh perspective and new ideas into your organisation.

Despite the stereotype that they are “job hoppers”, young people also value security and stability at work. In other words, if you recruit, develop, and train young employees well, they will reward you in return with loyalty and hard work.

¹Age, sex, race (including skin colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marital or civil partnership status, and disability are the protected characteristics under UK law.

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS CAN YOUR BUSINESS MAKE TO RECRUIT YOUNG PEOPLE?

There are plenty of ways your business can change up its practices and procedures to recruit more young people. Just a few you might want to think about are:

Consider your job advert messaging

Consider your recruitment process

Consider your role requirements

Ensure young people understand each step

Consider where you can promote vacancies



SO HOW DOES THIS LOOK IN PRACTICE?

Let's break it down one step at a time and consider *how* you can make these changes to bring more young people into your organisation.

1. CONSIDER YOUR JOB ADVERT MESSAGING

The job ad is the first touchpoint in the journey to a young person coming to work for you. This means that, if you do not get the job ad right, they will self-select out immediately and you will have fallen at the first hurdle. It can be tempting to rush a job ad out when a vacancy needs filling, but taking your time and getting it right will pay far higher dividends in the long run.

Are you using clear language? Are you using jargon that could be confusing? Make sure young people understand what you require for the role straight away with simple, clear, and reassuring language.

The [BITC toolkit](#) can help you make sure your job descriptions and adverts are comprehensive and use inclusive language.

Put the young person's journey and development first, as opposed to the expectations and requirements you have of them. Remember: you want them to see themselves reflected in your job ad and person specification.

Next, consider whether you have made it really clear exactly what the role is. Anyone applying for a job wants to know exactly what the role will require – include examples of daily tasks and responsibilities in the job description to help the young person put themselves in the picture.

Key details such as working hours, salary, and working locations are also vital. If you offer employee benefits such as medical insurance, free parking, subsidised lunches, pay rises with development, staff networks, or the ability to work from home or flex their schedule, add those in, too!

WHAT YOUR BUSINESS COULD DO

Get really clear about exactly what a role is and what its responsibilities will be before you advertise it

Use plain language with no acronyms, corporate jargon, or complex words

Use inclusive language (for example, say "the post holder will..." rather than "he or she will...")

Avoid buzzwords which can be read as either unnecessarily gendered or culturally insensitive (think "rock star", "guru", "ninja", etc.)

Focus on what your organisation and the role can do for a young person as well as what you would expect from them

Include information on salary, benefits, working location, working hours, and development opportunities. In other words, sell the job!



THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

The job-hunting process can sometimes feel very one-sided, particularly in today's challenging landscape. Applicants may feel that they have to "sell" their skills and experience to an employer, with little idea what they will be getting in return (and few rights when it comes to what to expect). This creates an incredibly stressful and unbalanced situation.

Instead, try to think of the recruitment process as a two-way conversation. You and your prospective employee are *both* trying to find out whether you are right for one another. A young person does not want to be in the wrong job any more than you want the wrong employee to hold the post.

In other words, remember that you need to sell the job to the employee. They will probably apply for numerous jobs. They may even get multiple offers and then have to choose. Why should they work for you specifically? What makes your offer competitive and your business a great place for a young person to work?

Get some feedback on your job ads before you publish them if you can. Ask your current employees, particularly your young employees, if the ad is appealing and whether they



would apply. Put yourself in the applicant's shoes too. Does the job ad have all the information you would need? If you were just starting out all over again, would this job appeal to you?

Remember, we all have unconscious biases too. If you are seeking to particularly appeal to young people who are disadvantaged or marginalised (young people of colour, carers or care leavers, or the LGBTQ+ community, for example), then seek feedback from people who are part of those groups before you publish your job ads. You could be unintentionally alienating them with your language choices.

2. CONSIDER YOUR ROLE REQUIREMENTS

One of the biggest mistakes employers make when hiring is in failing to differentiate between "nice to have" attributes and those that are truly essential. This can put young people off from applying, especially if they do not have much experience.

Some roles, of course, will require specific qualification levels and experience. However, take the time to carefully consider which attributes and types of experience are really essential.

Remember that for the young people you want to attract, this could be their first job. They could have experienced barriers that have affected their academic performance or **faced considerable disadvantages**. Many young people also faced setbacks in education and experience due to the pandemic's restrictions.

Roles will differ, but adjustments can be made. Consider what you really need from applicants, especially for entry level roles. Is it essential that they have 10 GCSEs or the equivalent, or is a can-do attitude and willingness to learn



more important? Do they really need prior experience, or can they build it on the job? Can you be flexible with working hours if they need that extra support?

WHAT YOUR BUSINESS COULD DO

Create every job ad from scratch instead of relying on a template

Remove unnecessary jargon that could alienate young people

Remove any requirements that are not truly necessary

Be very clear about which attributes are essential and which are "nice to have"

If you welcome applications from those who have no experience or have experienced disadvantages, say so clearly!

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

Job ads with overly stringent requirements disproportionately affect women. Studies have shown they are far less likely than men to apply for a job if they meet only some of the listed criteria.

They are also likely to harm minority and disadvantaged young people, whose confidence may be lower than those from more privileged backgrounds. Therefore, carefully considering your job requirements is an issue of equity and inclusion.

Different stakeholders in your organisation may have different ideas about the requirements for a job. Discuss them with everyone involved in plenty of time.

You may encounter some pushback but, if you are determined to recruit young people, explain to those stakeholders why you are constructing your job ad in this way. It is important to get their buy-in early on in the process.

3. CONSIDER WHERE YOU PROMOTE VACANCIES

If you want to reach young people, you need to go where they are. You could have crafted the best ad in the world but, if you don't post it in the right places, the young people you want to attract will never even see it.

Think about where you share your job adverts so that you can ensure they are placed directly in front of young people. In the digital age, young people are unlikely to see a job ad in the physical newspaper or on a noticeboard in your premises.

Instead, promote opportunities online through popular websites such as Indeed and the Government's [Find a Job](#) site. LinkedIn and social media channels are important too, as well as the "Work With Us" page on your website.

You can also approach youth organisations such as [Youth Employment UK](#), who will promote your opportunities for you. [Jobcentre Plus](#) is another great place to start—they match candidates' interests and abilities to the best suited roles for them.

Where to share your job ads to reach young people

Jobs boards such as
Indeed and Monster

The Government's
Find a Job site

LinkedIn

Youth Employment UK

Jobcentre Plus

Social media channels
such as Twitter, Instagram,
Facebook, and TikTok

Through a recruitment
agency specialising in
youth employment

Your own
company website

The careers services at local schools,
colleges, or universities

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

It's always a good idea to post your job ad in several places to reach as many candidates as possible. Finding the best channels can take some practice, so make a note of which ones work well and which ones aren't so successful. This will enable you to make smarter decisions in the future.

Check out what other companies like yours are doing to attract young talent. They might have additional ideas you hadn't thought of for places to advertise their job vacancies.

Don't forget about paid advertising too. Investing in some well-targeted social media or Google pay-per-click (PPC) advertising could be a great way to get your ad in front of the right young people at the right time.



4. CONSIDER YOUR RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Once you have attracted young people to apply for a job with your company, the next step is to create an inclusive and easy-to-navigate recruitment process. The wrong assessment, interview, or hiring practices can turn young people away from your organisation even if they were previously enthusiastic. Again, this can disproportionately affect students who are part of marginalised groups.

The [Youth Voice Census 2022](#) revealed that the career guidance young people get in school is not fully preparing them for the world of work. This means that they are not confident in their ability to write CVs and cover letters or to succeed in interviews.

So how can you make your recruitment process as accessible as possible?

Do you require a CV from applicants? If previous experience isn't necessary for the role, a skills-based CV allows those who have had limited experience the opportunity to show they still have potential. Does there need to be an in-person interview? Could you offer phone screenings or even Zoom interviews as an option instead?

As a note on this: some people find online meetings and interviews more stressful and exhausting, especially if they are required to be on camera. The point is to offer a choice, not to default to online-only in the assumption that it is more inclusive. It is also important to let your applicants know that they will not be penalised one way or the other for choosing online or in-person interviews.

You should also consider where there are other ways you can find the right people. Open days allow you to meet young people on an informal basis and get to know them, as well as giving you the opportunity to show off your business and team. This allows them to envision themselves working there. Informal meetings take some stress of a formal job interview away, and allow those who are interested to confidently engage with you.

Work experience opportunities, particularly for those with no experience at all, are a great way to bring new people into a business. Short term placements allow young people to build their experience and work related skills, and allow you to review how they perform in a business environment. You can then offer ongoing roles at the end of placements as appropriate.

WHAT YOUR BUSINESS COULD DO

Consider offering phone or Zoom interviews as well as in-person interviews

Use work experience and internships as recruitment tools

Encourage skills-based CVs as well as experience-based CVs

Invite interested young people in for informal getting-to-know-you meetings

Explain the process and the next steps clearly at every stage

Ask yourself whether your recruitment process is too complex or laborious. If so, simplify!

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

It's important to strike a balance here. Recruitment is an art, and cutting corners can be a big mistake and lead to lost time, money, and productivity later on. The key here is to pare back your recruitment process to its essential elements and then simplify those to be accessible to the young people you are hoping to attract, while still doing your due diligence to ensure suitability for the role.

It can take a little time and investment to reconfigure your recruitment processes. You may need to invest in technology, improve your skills in areas such as online interviewing, rewrite (or produce) application documents, and provide additional training to the staff who are involved in hiring. The sooner you make a start on this process, the sooner you will be equipped to start recruiting some brilliant young talent to your team.

5. ENSURE YOUNG PEOPLE UNDERSTAND EACH STEP

Do you remember how you felt when you were applying for your first job? Chances are you felt at least a little nervous and probably daunted by the whole process. Perhaps there were aspects you did not fully understand or questions you were not sure how to ask. Perhaps you felt put off or intimidated by corporate jargon and lengthy interview processes.

All of this, and more, is how the young people you are trying to recruit may be feeling. That is why one of the best things you can do to improve your recruitment process for young people is to make it as easy as possible to understand every step.

Therefore, make your recruitment process clear and easy to understand. At every touchpoint, state what the next step will be: an introductory phone call, a follow-up email, a task to complete, or an interview. Add details such as when you expect to hold interviews, whether any trial job tasks will be required as part of the assessment, and your

ideal start dates for the role so that candidates can judge whether the job is right for them. Keep them updated as things progress, too. When should they expect to hear from you?

A note on rejections: you should always let a candidate know if they have been unsuccessful in securing an interview or landing the job. It is unfair and unprofessional to "ghost" a candidate, even though this is sadly now the norm. Offer them constructive feedback on their application or interview so that they know how to succeed with future opportunities.

If you have created resources to support young people in their job applications, or know of some great sources elsewhere, direct your candidates to them.

If you require your applicants to submit a CV or attend an interview, provide CV and interview advice to help them to feel confident and prepared.

Not all young people know where to find the help they need and this can set them back, so providing the information or signposting them to it is tremendously valuable.

WHAT YOUR BUSINESS COULD DO

Create short video guides to each stage of your application process

Give clear written instructions using simple language and no jargon

Make yourself or a member of your team available to answer any questions about the recruitment process

Signpost young people to useful resources available elsewhere online

Create checklists (e.g. a checklist for what should be covered in a CV or cover letter)

Write an FAQ page for your careers website that covers common early-careers questions

Always give young people the opportunity to ask you any questions during each interaction

Always try to answer the 5 Ws when giving information or instructions: **WHAT** will happen, **WHEN** and **WHERE** will it happen, **WHO** will be involved, and **WHY** does it matter?

When a young person applies or interviews but is unsuccessful, offer them specific and constructive feedback so they can do better next time.

THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND

One common mistake businesses make when engaging with prospective employees—particularly young people – is to assume a level of knowledge that does not exist. Do not assume that young people automatically understand what specific terms mean or what is expected of them when you ask them for a CV, cover letter, or work sample. This can alienate anyone who doesn't understand what you mean, which is the exact opposite of the effect you want to create.

It is almost always better to provide more information than less. If a young person already knows some of the information you're providing (for example, they already know how to write a great CV because they had a CV writing lesson at school), they can easily skip over that part and find the information they do need.

However, it is also important not to patronise young people. Providing plenty of information and using accessible language is not the same as talking down to them. It is important to get the tone of your communications right, and we recommend consulting with young people and taking their feedback.

It can take some trial and error to get this right, so get started early. After your next round of hiring, you might consider soliciting feedback from your applicants and interviewees on your materials and application process. Why not create a short anonymous survey and enter everyone who completes it into a prize draw? Any feedback you can get will help you improve your materials and processes and do even better next time.

RESOURCES USED IN THIS ARTICLE

- [Recruiting Young People Facing Disadvantage](#)
CIPD/Youth Futures Foundation
- [The Good Youth Employment Charter](#)
Youth Employment UK
- [Opening Doors Toolkit For Employers](#)
BITC
- [Jobcentre Plus help for recruiters](#)
UK Gov
- [2022 Youth Voice Census Report](#)
Youth Employment UK

CONTACT

Contact us to speak with an adviser about how your business can support young people into work.

Call Business Wales on **03000 6 03000** or visit **[Recruitment Support | Business Wales Skills Gateway \(gov.wales\)](#)** for further information, free advice and support.

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