

Young people and employment

Our UK Survey



REED IN PARTNERSHIP



Reed in Partnership is a national provider of public services, drawing on over 50 years of the Reed family of businesses' recruitment experience.

Starting with one office delivering employment support in Hackney, we have grown our business to deliver a range of services - from youth services and employment support, to healthy lifestyle help and skills development.

Since 1998 we have helped over 150,000 people move into sustainable employment. We work in partnership with our customers to identify and overcome the barriers they face to entering the labour market. We know that for young people who have never had a job one of the hardest things is for them to believe that they really can get into work.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2008/09 the United Kingdom experienced its deepest recession since the Second World War. Over the course of the last parliament the UK economy has continued to recover but research has found that young people are more scarred than older workers from the recession.¹

While overall unemployment in the UK is among the lowest in Europe, the UK government faces the challenge of tackling the longstanding problem of youth unemployment.

The latest figures show that young people in the UK are more than twice as likely to be unemployed than people of other ages.

While the UK has German levels of overall unemployment, the UK's youth unemployment rate is almost twice that of Germany's.

This report is based on a survey of over 2,000 young people and builds on work carried out in our last youth survey in 2010. It sets out to better understand the nature of the employment barriers facing young people and provides recommendations to help young people move into work.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Reed in Partnership has surveyed **2,336** young people aged between **16-25** using Reed.co.uk, the largest job site in the UK.

Wellbeing

- **86%** of young people across the UK said that being out of work had affected their wellbeing, with over half saying it had made them more stressed.

Barriers to employment

- The primary barrier to employment is a lack of experience, with **63%** of young people citing it as a factor.
- The next main barriers are too much competition in the labour market (**51%**) and a lack of suitable opportunities (**29%**).
- While **58%** of 21-25 year olds without any qualifications are 'very optimistic' about finding work in the next three months, only **29%** of graduates are.
- Half of young people at university said they were not offered any work experience and **48%** said their university wasn't helpful in connecting them to employers.
- The proportion of young people citing lack of confidence as a barrier to finding work has increased from **20%** in 2010 to **27%**.

Part time work while at school

- Young people who had a part time job while at school are **67%** more likely to be in employment now and twice as likely to have found their job within one month of searching than those who did not.

Job satisfaction

- Compared to young people as a whole, those with degrees are more likely to dislike their job and feel it doesn't make good use of their qualifications.

Careers advice

- Fewer than one in four young people rated their careers advice as 'excellent' or 'good'.
- **63%** said there was not enough information about the range of career options and **56%** said no one discussed vocational training options with them.
- While **48%** of young men said that no one discussed vocational training options or apprenticeships with them, this increases to **61%** for young women.

Understanding employers

- While previous research has shown that **96%** of employers would choose mindset over skill set when recruiting, **60%** of young people placed skills ahead of mindset.

SECTION 1:

The Current Situation

The UK's labour market has continued to recover from the 2008/09 recession, however youth unemployment has been a consistent concern for the public and policy makers.

The UK's unemployment rate for 18-24 year olds is more than twice as high as the overall unemployment rate.^{2,3}

The youth unemployment rate has been consistently higher than that for older age groups. Since comparable records began it has ranged from **11.6%** at its lowest point during March-May 2001 to its highest point of **22.5%** in late 2011.⁴

The UK is now facing the largest gap in more than 20 years between youth unemployment rates and those for the rest of the population. An analysis by the House of Commons library earlier this year found that young people are faring comparatively worse than at any point since 1992.⁵

While the UK's overall unemployment rate is only slightly higher than Germany, the UK's youth unemployment rate is almost twice as high.⁶



² <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/october-2015/table-unem01-sa.xls>

³ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/subnational-labour/regional-labour-market-statistics/october-2015/rft-lm-table-hi11-scotland-october-2015.xls>

⁴ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/september-2015/statistical-bulletin.html#tab-12--Young-people-in-the-labour-market>

⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/feb/22/youth-unemployment-jobless-figure>

⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7012746/3-30092015-AP-EN.pdf/9adc381a-dbab-4e56-acde-eeeab6420971>

SECTION 2:

Our Findings

The profile of young people surveyed

We surveyed 2,336 young people registered on Reed.co.uk, the UK's most popular job site.

Most of our responses came from 21-25 year olds (**65%**), with **23%** aged 18-20 and **11%** aged 16-17.

There was a roughly equal mix of highest qualifications held, with **32%** having a degree/HND, **35%** having A levels (or equivalent) and **29%** having GCSEs (or equivalent). Only **4%** of respondents had no qualifications.

According to the data from the 2011 census, **13.6%** of 16-24 year olds across the UK have a degree, **25.9%** have A-levels and **44.1%** have GCSEs as their highest qualification. **10.5%** have no qualifications.⁷

Our survey of young people has a greater proportion of graduates than the country as a whole and a lower level of young people with no qualifications.

39% of young people in our survey are in full time employment, **24%** are in part time work, and **38%** were unemployed. Considering specifically the 21-25 age group, almost half (**48%**) are in full time employment, **19%** in part time employment and a third (**33%**) are unemployed.

Almost three quarters (**74%**) of young people surveyed have been in paid employment at some time, rising to **85%** for the 21-25 age group.

Of those looking for work, almost one in four (**24%**) have been searching for over a year. One in ten have been looking for a job for more than two years. While this highlights that a significant proportion of young people are out of work for a prolonged period, it is worth noting that almost half (**47%**) have been looking for work for less than three months.

Despite the problems facing them in the labour market, **79%** of young people are optimistic about finding a job within the next three months. This is considerably higher than the **65%** recorded in our 2010 survey, which correlates with the improved economic picture over the last five years.

⁷ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census-analysis/local-area-analysis-of-qualifications-across-england-and-wales/rpt---local-area-analysis-of-qualifications-across-england-and-wales.html>

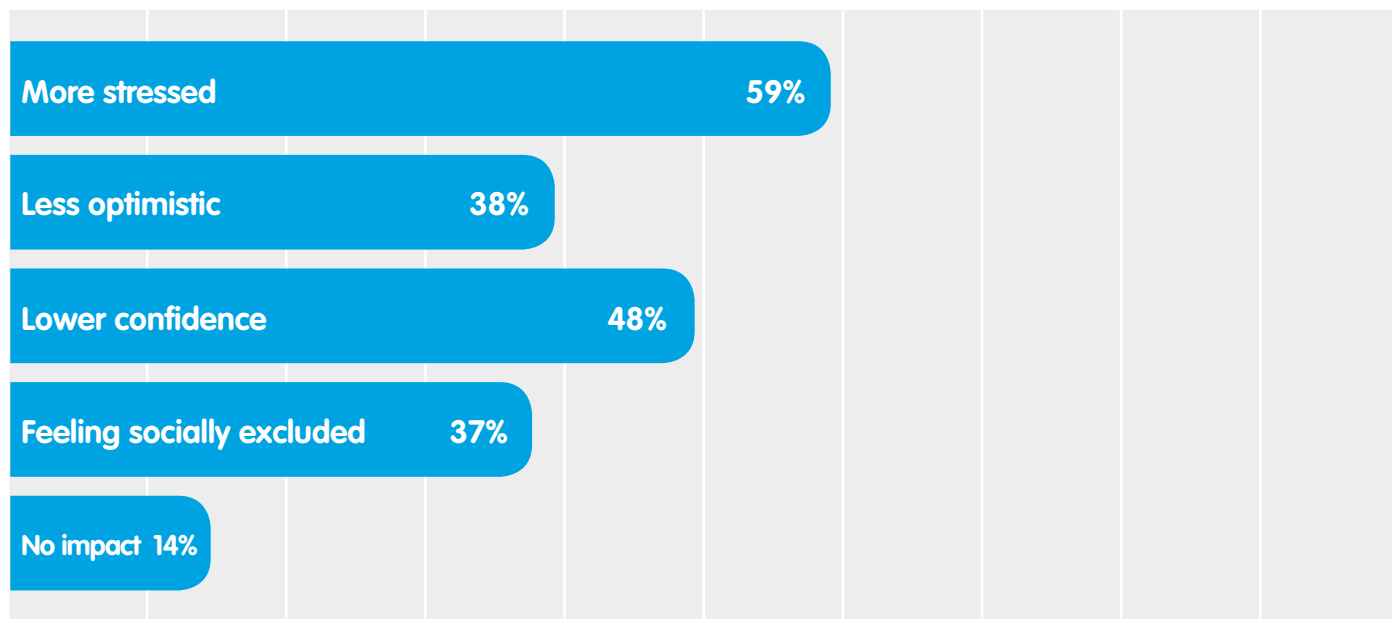
2.1 Impact of youth unemployment on wellbeing

In our survey 86% of young people said being out of work had affected their wellbeing.

Over half (59%) of respondents said that being unemployed had made them more stressed, while almost half (48%) said it had lowered their confidence.

Reed in Partnership's Employment Advisers report that low confidence among young people is a significant barrier to them securing work. They state it is often linked to other factors, such as a lack of skills or experience, which leads the individual to lack self-belief and determination. It often translates itself as low motivation, which in turn makes it more difficult to impress at interviews.

Young people's view of the impact of unemployment on their wellbeing



These results support findings recently released by youth charity The Prince's Trust.⁸ Their January 2015 report found that nearly six out of ten unemployed young people said anxiety stopped them from sleeping well and over half said feeling anxious stopped them asking for help.

When our survey results are broken down by gender, young women are more likely to say they feel the pressure of unemployment than young men. Women are more likely than men to say they feel stressed by being out of work (61% vs 54%) and more likely to report lower confidence (51% vs 43%).

However, there have been several studies highlighting that men are less likely than women to report emotional and mental difficulties.⁹ Therefore the situation is likely to be more complex than these figures suggest and may well indicate that young women are more willing to be open to seeking help and advice than men.

Section 2.3 of this report considers the barriers young people face finding work and shows that an increasing number of people cite a lack of confidence as an issue preventing them from gaining employment.

⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/14/more-than-half-unemployed-young-people-anxious-about-life-report>

⁹ https://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf/untold_problems.pdf

2.2 Finding a job

For a majority of young jobseekers, looking for a job is now primarily an online activity.

As when our last survey of young people was carried out in 2010, job websites such as Reed.co.uk are the most popular job search method, with four out of five young people using them. The method with the largest increase in usage since 2010 was using a company's own website, with three-quarters of young people now turning to them when looking for jobs.

In contrast to the growing popularity of online sources, the proportion relying on newspapers and magazines, a 'traditional' source of job adverts, is declining. Only one in ten use magazines and just over a third (35%) use newspapers to look for jobs. Additionally, many young people told us they used social media, such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook, to track vacancies.

Visiting Jobcentre Plus has also been considered a traditional method of looking for employment, however our research shows that since 2010 there has also been a stark reduction in reliance among young jobseekers. Little over a third of young people now say they use the Jobcentre to search for vacancies compared to nearly three-quarters in 2010.

These findings are not surprising and fit the overall growth in online services, particularly among young people. A 16 year old today has grown up with the internet readily accessible, and smartphones and tablets mean online job sources are at their fingertips.

Sources	2010 findings	New findings	Difference
Job websites	86%	82%	-4%
Jobcentre Plus	77%	39%	-38%
Newspapers	70%	35%	-35%
Recruitment agencies	68%	63%	-5%
Company websites	65%	75%	+10%
Magazines	20%	10%	-10%

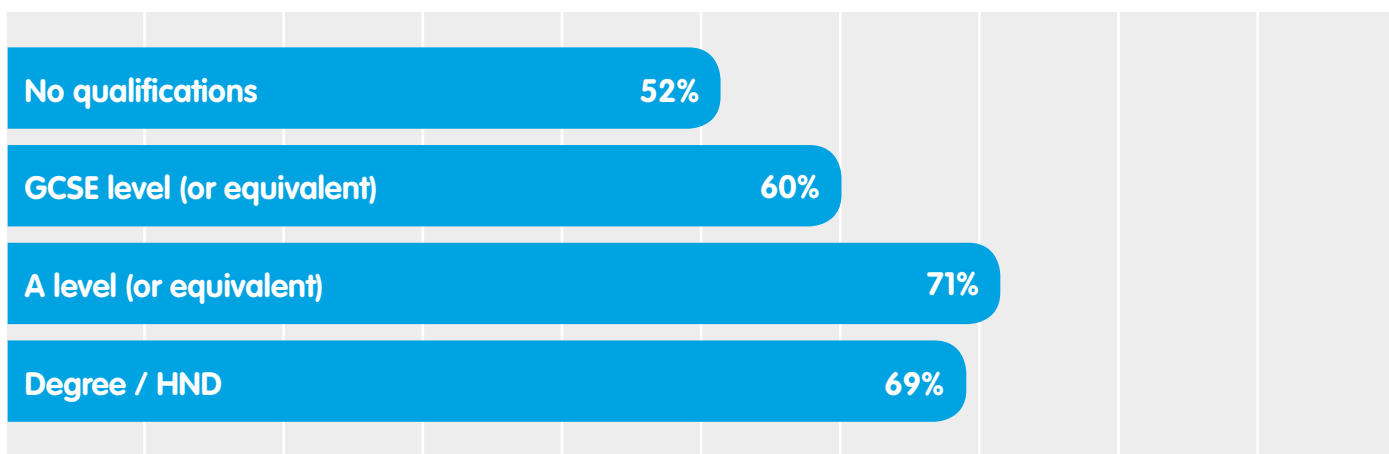
Qualifications matter

The survey indicates that increasing qualifications makes it more likely a young person will be in employment.

When considering the highest qualification obtained by the 21-25 year old age group, 69% of those with a degree and 71% of those with A-levels (or equivalent) are currently in employment. In comparison, 60% of those with GCSEs (or equivalent) and only 52% of young people with no qualifications are in employment.

From our experience, employers often use qualifications not as a metric of a specific skill but as a measure of someone's capacity to learn.

Percentage in employment (21-25 years old)



These findings are consistent with research into graduates in the labour market undertaken by the Office of National Statistics.¹⁰

Looking at all ages, they found that the higher the qualification held, the higher employment rate. They also found that during the 2008/09 recession, non-graduates experienced the sharpest rise in unemployment, indicating that as well as aiding employment, having a degree helps protect young people during an economic downturn.

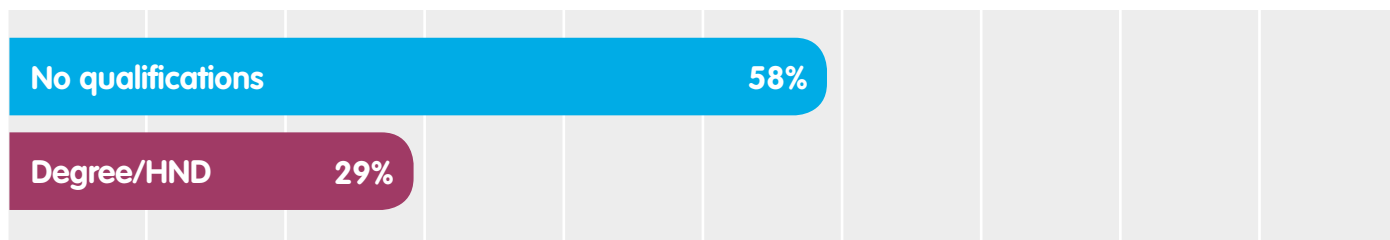
However, our survey shows that when assessing the optimism of unemployed young people about finding a job, those with a degree are less optimistic about finding a job within three months than those with no qualifications.

While 58% of 21-25 year olds without any qualifications are 'very optimistic' about finding work within the next three months, only 29% of those with degrees are.

It is likely that this significantly lower figure is in part related to the type of employment sought. Our Employment Advisers report that graduates often refuse to consider vacancies that they feel don't use their qualifications. Therefore, it is logical that if a young person is more selective about their employment they will be less optimistic about finding a match they deem appropriate.

Views expressed by unemployed young graduates in our survey also indicate that some are disheartened after being led to believe a university degree would provide a sure route into work in their field of study.

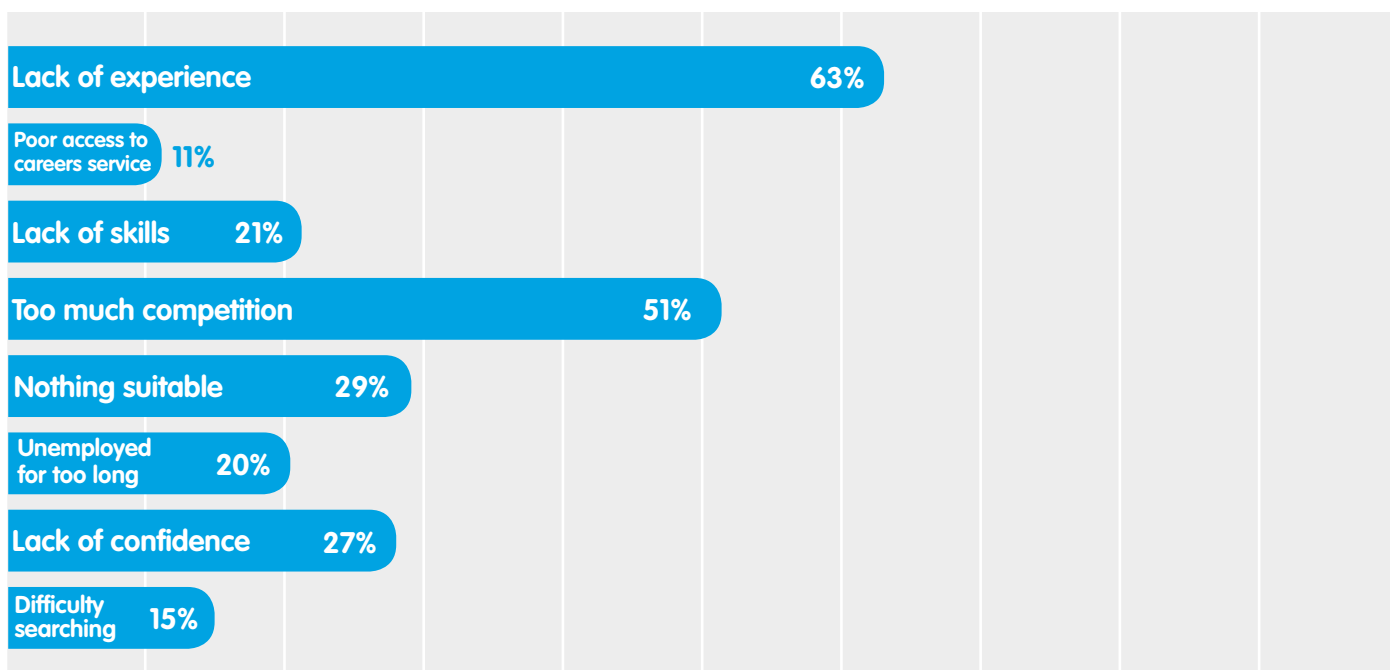
'Very optimistic' about finding a job in next three months (21-25 years old)



2.3 Barriers to employment

Young people cite a broad range of concerns when asked to discuss the barriers they face finding employment. The top three concerns are the same as identified in our 2010 survey: a lack of experience, too much competition in the labour market and a lack of suitable opportunities.

What barriers are preventing you from finding a job?



Barrier	2010 findings	New findings	Difference
Lack of experience	68%	63%	-5%
Poor access to careers advice	6%	11%	+5%
Lack of skills	20%	21%	+1%
Too much competition	61%	51%	-10%
Nothing suitable available	35%	29%	-6%
Unemployed for too long	21%	20%	-1%
Lack of confidence	20%	27%	+7%
Difficult to search for jobs	18%	15%	-3%

As in our 2010 survey, the single biggest reason young people feel is holding them back from employment is a lack of experience (63%).

The frustration raised most frequently by young people is the ‘catch 22’ situation of employers looking for experience without being willing to give young jobseekers a chance to gain it themselves.

Views of young people



The government removed mandatory work experience for 14- to 16-year-old school pupils in England from the curriculum in 2012.¹¹

A survey by Barclays Lifeskills found that nine out of ten young people wanted mandatory work experience to be reinstated in schools.¹²

¹¹ <http://www.icaew.com/en/about-icaew/newsroom/press-releases/2014-press-releases/gcse-results-mandatory-work-experience>

¹² http://www.newsroom.barclays.com/r/2631/nine_in_10_young_people_believe_work_experience_should_be

The British Chambers of Commerce has also called for the reintroduction of compulsory work experience. They consider that work experience in England has been deprioritised and that a “huge majority of business, school and college leaders want ministers to recognise the importance of pre-16 work experience.” John Longworth, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce said that “work experience is crucial to bringing down our stubbornly high youth unemployment rate.”¹³

Given a lack of experience has been identified by both young people and employers as a key barrier to employment, we recommend that the Government reinstates compulsory work experience in schools.

While work experience placements have a vital role to play during school, we recognise the concerns that previously some were low quality or too often conformed to gender stereotypes. It is important that work experience placements are of high quality and encourage young people to explore a sector they are interested in, not conform to ‘stereotypical’ roles for their gender or social background.

Research by the Resolution Foundation found that young people are lagging behind in the job recovery and described the fate of young people in the labour market as “an area of concern”. In particular they highlighted that because older workers are now staying longer in their jobs, there are fewer stepping-stone opportunities for young workers to progress.¹⁴

It is clear from our survey that despite the image often portrayed in the media of young people, there is no unwillingness on their part to learn new skills. On the contrary, there were many calls from young people in our survey for employers to offer training so they could meet the experience requirements.

Just 38% of unemployed young people believe they are ready to enter the labour market. The Government is seeking to address this situation through the Traineeship scheme. It is focused on giving young people the skills and experience employers are looking for, by combining education and training with work experience. They aim to provide young people with work experience and help in three key areas: preparation for work, numeracy and literacy skills.¹⁵

A survey by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills found that the young people’s concerns about lack of experience are well founded, with two-thirds of employers stating that work experience is a critical factor when deciding who to recruit. In comparison, only around half of employers said academic or vocational qualifications are critical.¹⁶

However, the same survey found that 80% of employers do not offer any work experience placements to schools and around 20% say nothing could persuade them to.

The Traineeship scheme therefore works with employers to assist them in providing opportunities for young people to gain this experience. 32% and 31% of employers are dissatisfied with school and college leavers’ basic literacy and numeracy, respectively.¹⁷ Therefore, along with a high quality work experience placement, Traineeships also provide the young person with maths and English lessons.

Traineeships can last from six weeks to six months and at their conclusion the young person should be ‘work ready’, with the experience required to get an apprenticeship or move directly into employment.



Reed NCFE is a joint venture company between Reed in Partnership and the awarding body NCFE. In the past four years, Reed NCFE has worked to support over 78,000 learners enter the workplace.

We have teams embedded in Further Education Colleges who work to help learners prepare for work experience and apprenticeship opportunities. We also support employer engagement activities by identifying and sourcing suitable jobs and apprenticeship opportunities for learners.

Through this activity we help to join up learning environments with employers, ensuring learners have a real understanding of what employers need.

¹³ <http://www.britishchambers.org.uk/press-office/press-releases/businesspeople-and-education-leaders-make-under-16-work-experience-a-national-priority.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/A-steady-job.pdf>

¹⁵ <http://traineeships.apprenticeships.org.uk/parents/what-are-traineeships.aspx>

¹⁶ <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9799bdf0-b151-11e4-a830-00144feab7de.html#axzz3nPFQjaMa>

¹⁷ CBI/Pearson Employer Skills Survey 2013

Apprenticeships

Through the National Apprenticeship Service the Government aims to highlight the benefit of apprenticeships to employers and link apprentices to vacancies.

However, research by the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) identified a number of concerns about current apprenticeship programmes.¹⁸

They found that since 2010 42% of starting apprentices have been over the age of 25, rather than young people finding their way into work.

67% of apprentices at level 2 or 3 were already employed by the company providing the apprenticeship, rather than new recruits.

The IPPR recommends the creation of 'local apprenticeship hubs' to form a single point of contact for apprenticeships and draw on the experience of Jobcentre Plus, the National Apprenticeship Service, the Skills Funding Agency, Local Enterprise Partnerships and trade unions. We agree with this approach and, given the findings of this report, we would recommend the inclusion of the further and higher education sector as well as local schools. We would also suggest the hub incorporates organisations dealing with more disadvantaged young people, such as youth groups.

An October 2015 report by Ofsted warned that the growth in the number of apprenticeships over the last eight years has "diluted their quality". They say that low-level apprenticeships are particularly common in service sectors, like retail and care, and are concerned that they are too often used to accredit existing low-level skills rather than provide new training. While surveying apprentices for their report, Ofsted inspectors said that some learners were not even aware that they were on an apprenticeship programme.¹⁹

Views of young people

"Employers aren't allowing young people the opportunities they need to develop. It's having a massive effect on all of our futures. We need more training programmes."

"Employers should be willing to train people who have little experience instead of always telling us there were more experienced people applying."

As well as increased relevant training, young people also called for support to be more tailored to their needs. For example, assisting someone to obtain a driving licence could open up a host of career opportunities.

The barrier to work cited second most frequently by young people was the level of competition in the labour market. While it was also the second biggest issue in 2010, its prevalence has decreased by 10%, indicating that perhaps young people believe some of the acute labour market pressures faced in the immediate aftermath of the recession have diminished.

¹⁸ <http://www.ippr.org/publications/learner-drivers-local-authorities-and-apprenticeships>

¹⁹ <http://feweek.co.uk/2015/10/18/ofsted-to-criticise-apprenticeships-for-accrediting-existing-low-level-skills-like-making-coffee-and-cleaning-floors/>

Likewise, while a lack of suitable opportunities in the job market was the third most cited barrier in both this and our 2010 surveys, this year it has reduced by 6%, indicating that more jobs are becoming available.

Both of these points indicate that there are more opportunities in the labour market now than in 2010, providing that young people are given the advice and tools they need to take advantage of them. This view is supported by the increased numbers of jobs advertised on Reed.co.uk: while during the 2008/09 recession there were approximately 95,000 jobs advertised at any given time, there are currently over 250,000 live vacancies.

However, over a quarter (27%) of young people said a lack of confidence was preventing them finding work. This is 7% higher than in 2010, which is a disturbing trend as it indicates that an increasing number of young people do not feel in a position to take advantage of improvements in employment levels. This report presents a series of recommendations to help ensure that no young person is left behind as the economy improves, regardless of background.

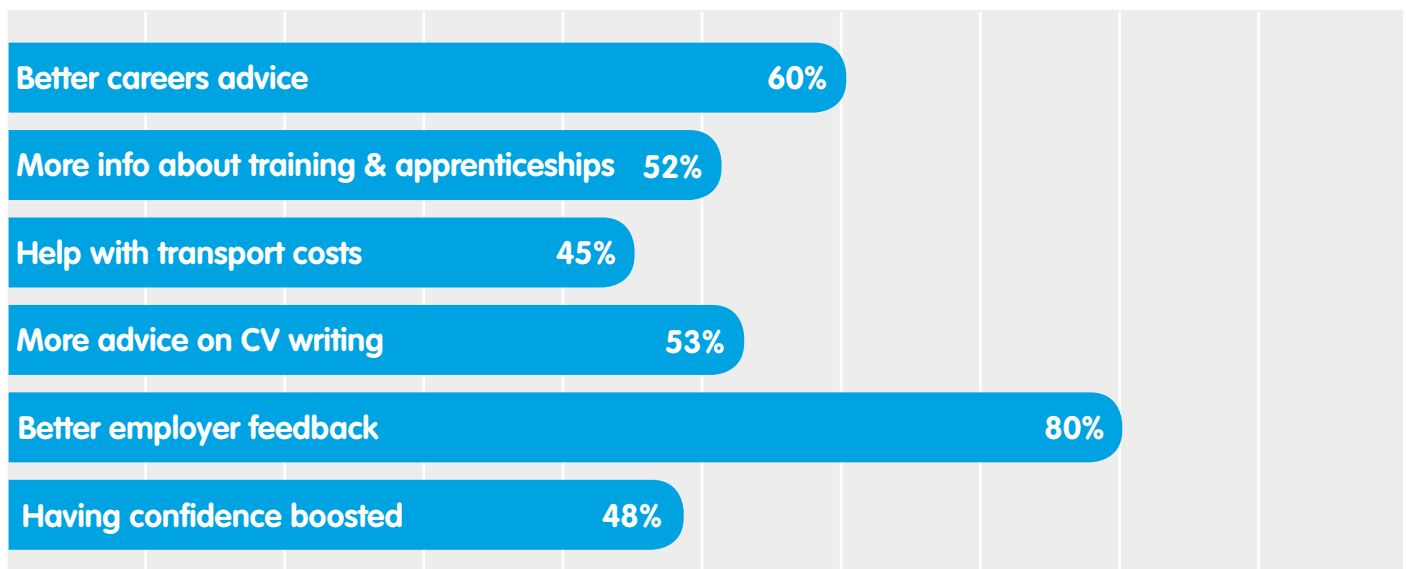
While multiple factors will be responsible for this loss of confidence by young people, our Employment Advisers link it to the next two most often cited barriers: a lack of skills and poor access to careers advice.

More than one in five (21%) young people say a lack of appropriate skills is holding them back, approximately the same as in our 2010 survey.

It is concerning that the proportion of young people citing poor careers advice as a barrier to employment has almost doubled from 6% in 2010 to 11% in this survey.

Further analysis of young peoples' attitudes to careers advice is provided in section 2.6 of this report.

What would help you find a job?



When young people were asked what would help them find a job, four in five (80%) said they needed better feedback from employers after applications.

Three in five (60%) young people sought better careers advice, with more than half (53%) of young people saying they needed more advice on writing a CV.

Views of young people

"Better feedback would be key as it would enable one to improve if one did something wrong."

"It would be nice just to hear back at times. I'm currently looking for another job and half the time I never get a rejection email let alone feedback."

"Employers should get back to applicants even when they are unsuccessful to explain why, and how they could improve their application. I received no feedback from any job that I was unsuccessful in applying for."

More than half (52%) of young people said that more information about training and apprenticeships would make it easier to find a job. This corresponds with results discussed later in this report concerning the need to improve the information provided to young people about alternative career options to university.

Almost two-thirds of respondents (62%) said they worried about travel costs to attend interviews and assistance with travel costs was cited as helpful by 45% of young people. Reed in Partnership seeks to mitigate these concerns amongst our job seekers by providing a discretionary fund for travel, to ensure no one is prevented from accessing opportunities because of travel costs.



National Citizen Service

Reed in Partnership delivers the National Citizen Service (NCS) in the East and South West of England. NCS is a voluntary personal and social development programme that builds young people's confidence by giving them the opportunity to develop vital new skills.

As discussed in this report, 63% of young people identify a lack of experience as the main barrier to finding work

- the single biggest cause of concern among that age group in our survey. NCS helps young people overcome this by providing them with a platform to work with local employers and charities. Throughout the programme they are encouraged to develop their teamwork, leadership and communication skills through a range of tasks.

During the outdoor activity phase, young people must work together to overcome a series of outward bounds challenges by acting outside their comfort zones to achieve a common goal.

Young people also design and implement their own social action project. As well as gaining experience within the voluntary sector, they learn the ropes of project management, including planning, problem solving and communication with key stakeholders.

Many young people begin NCS as shy individuals but complete the programme as self-assured young adults.

University: preparing young people for work?

When young graduates were asked how helpful their university was in preparing them for work, half said they weren't offered any work experience.

Given a lack of experience is identified by young people as their primary barrier to finding work, these results indicate that many universities are failing to prepare young people for employment.

Additionally, almost half (48%) said their university wasn't helpful in connecting them to employers and 39% said it wasn't helpful in writing a CV.

This correlates with Reed in Partnership's experience of delivering services, where our Employment Advisers work with many graduates who have completed their degrees without undertaking any work experience during university. They often then find it difficult to find jobs in their chosen sector.

Our Advisers say that many graduates leave university with unrealistic job goals and often are reluctant to take work that does not make use of their qualifications. They cite a concern about "what their friends and family would think" if they take a non-graduate job, even to build up experience post-university.

2.4 After school jobs pay dividends

A 2015 report by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills looked at young people's attitudes to combining a part time job with their school studies.²⁰

It showed that many young people felt they were unable to combine work and study because they feared not doing well academically as a result. Over half (55%) of those who had decided not to have a job while at school said it was so they could focus on their work.

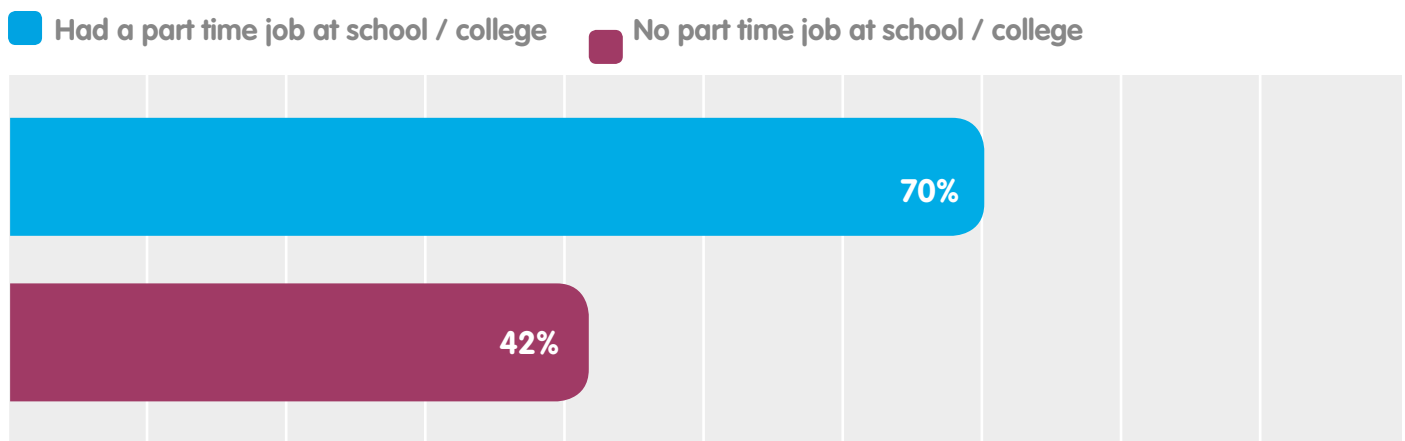
However, contrary to the view that a part time job while at school could lead to young people not doing well, our survey indicates it has a positive role in future employment.

In our survey 56% of respondents said they had a part time job while at school or college. The most common role was working in a shop (44%) followed by working in a bar or restaurant (29%).

Over half (52%) of those with a part time job at school or college worked between 7 and 15 hours per week and almost a third (31%) worked 16 or more hours.

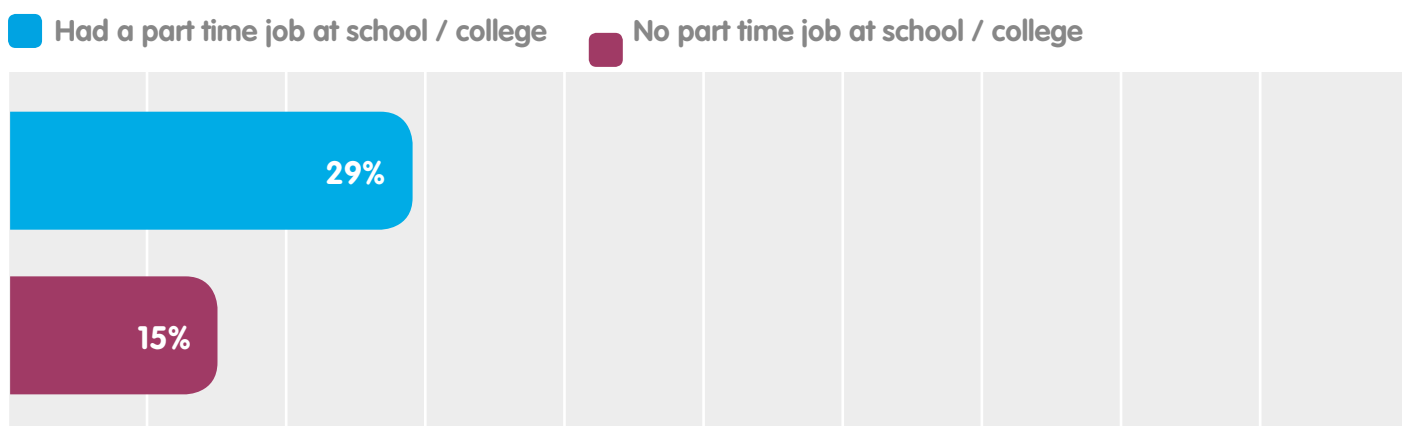
Young people who had a part time job at school were 67% more likely to be in employment now (70% vs 42%).

% in employment



In addition, those who had a part time job at school/college are almost twice as likely to find a job within one month of searching (29% vs 15%).

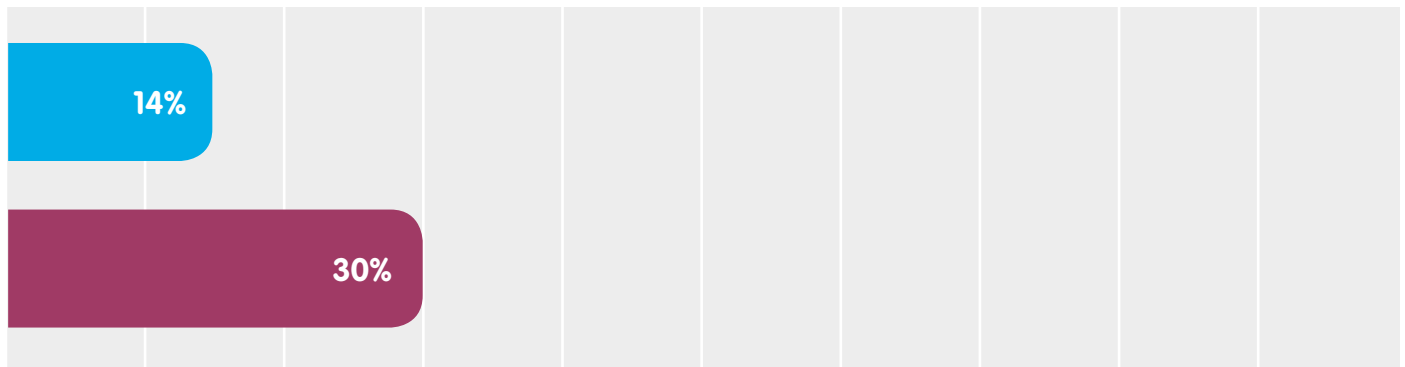
% finding a job within one month



In contrast, those without a part time job at school/college are more than twice as likely to be out of work for over a year (14% vs 30%)

% out of work for over one year

■ Had a part time job at school / college ■ No part time job at school / college



Given the long-term benefits of a part time job while at school or college, attention should be paid to changing the attitudes of young people, parents and teachers. Schools and colleges could become more proactive and help facilitate such work, for example, by providing job boards.

2.5 Lack of job satisfaction

Research by the Chartered Institute of Personal Development (CIPD) in August 2015 found that in the UK 58.8% of graduates are doing non-graduate jobs.²¹

Their report, “Over-qualification and skills mismatch in the graduate labour market”, highlighted that increasingly graduates were working in roles that did not traditionally require a degree.

They explain: “The UK has witnessed one of the highest rates of higher education expansion across Europe over recent decades, but has not seen an increase in high-skill jobs matching that expansion.”

The report goes on to state that there has been “significant occupational filtering down as graduates enter the sorts of jobs once done by their non-graduate mothers and fathers.”

They also point out that the government estimates that 45% of university graduates will not earn enough to repay their student loans.

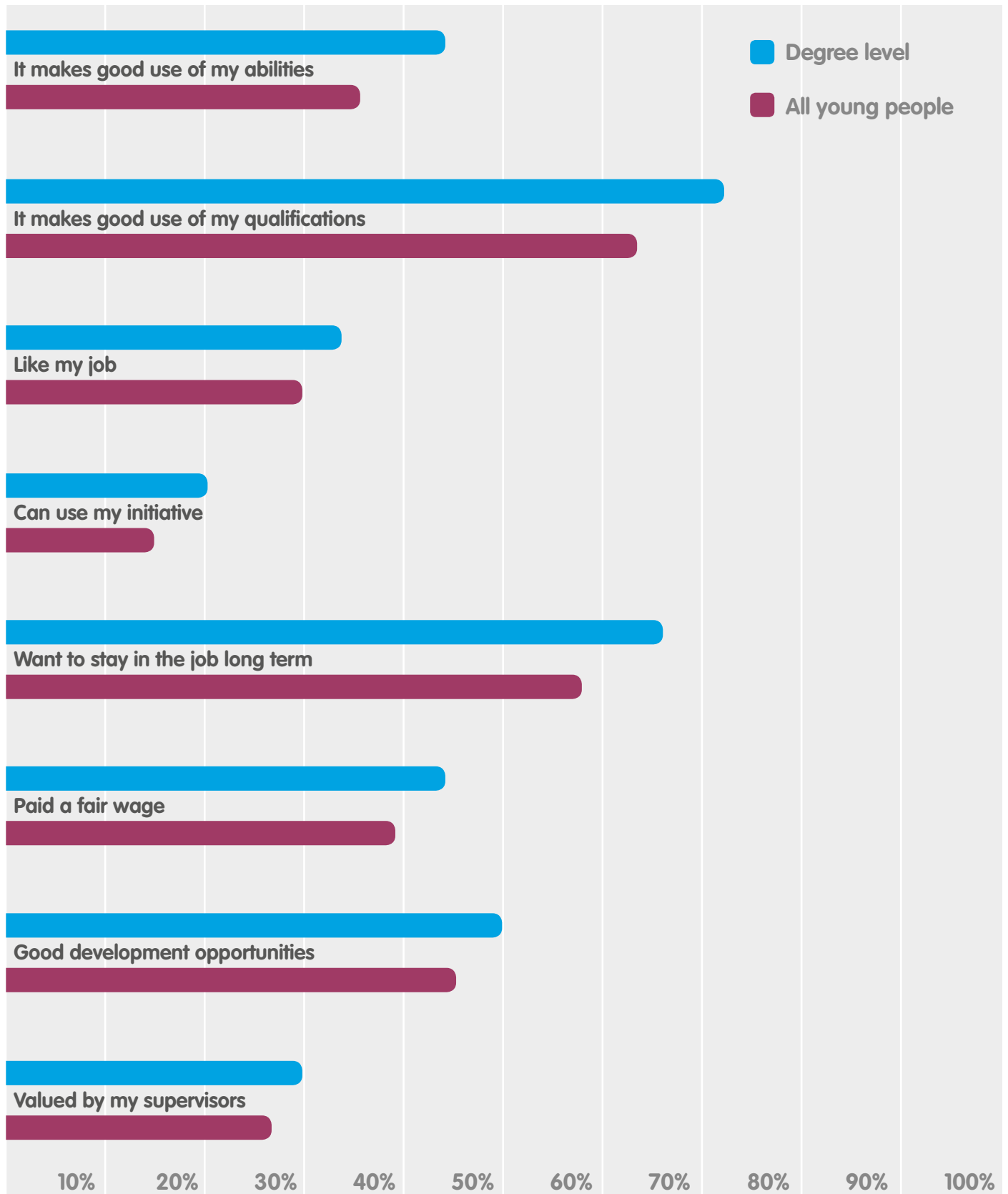
Our survey supports the conclusion that graduates are frustrated by jobs they don’t feel are making use of their qualifications.

Compared to young people as a whole, our research shows that young people with degrees are more likely to:

- **Dislike their job**
- **Feel their job doesn’t make use of their qualifications**
- **Feel their job doesn’t make good use of their abilities**
- **Want to leave their job**
- **Consider they are not being paid a fair wage**
- **Feel less valued by their supervisors**

²¹ <http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/over-qualification-and-skills-mismatch-graduate-labour-market.pdf>

Percentage of young people who disagree with these statements about their jobs



Among all young people, 63% of respondents consider that their job does not make use of their qualifications. Among young people with degrees, this rises to 72%.

58% of all young people do not want to stay in their job long term, rising to 66% for those with degrees.

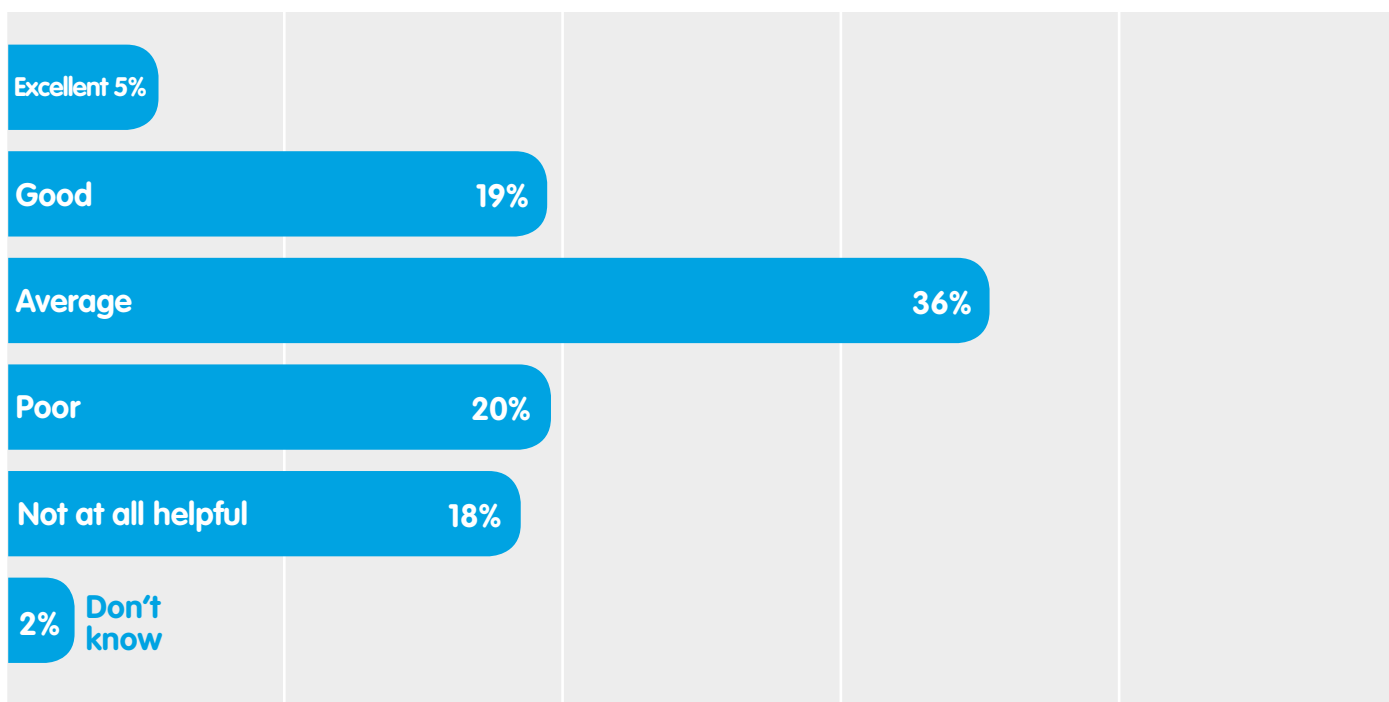
2.6 Failings of careers advice

Views of careers advice

With graduates more likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs and to be working in jobs that don't make use of their qualifications than other young people, it highlights the importance of providing young people with good quality advice about a range of careers.

However, fewer than one in four young people in our survey (24%) rated the careers advice they received in school, college or university as 'good' or 'excellent'. A greater proportion, more than one in three (38%), rated the advice they received as 'not at all helpful' or 'poor'.

How would you rate the careers advice you have received?



Our Employment Advisers report that poor careers advice in schools and colleges means many young people they deal with simply aren't aware of the career options available to them. By the time they reach our Advisers on employment support programmes, many young people have never had a discussion about routes into their desired sector.

Separate research by ComRes for the University and College Union found that the amount of information people receive is greatly affected by the education institution they attend and social grade.²²

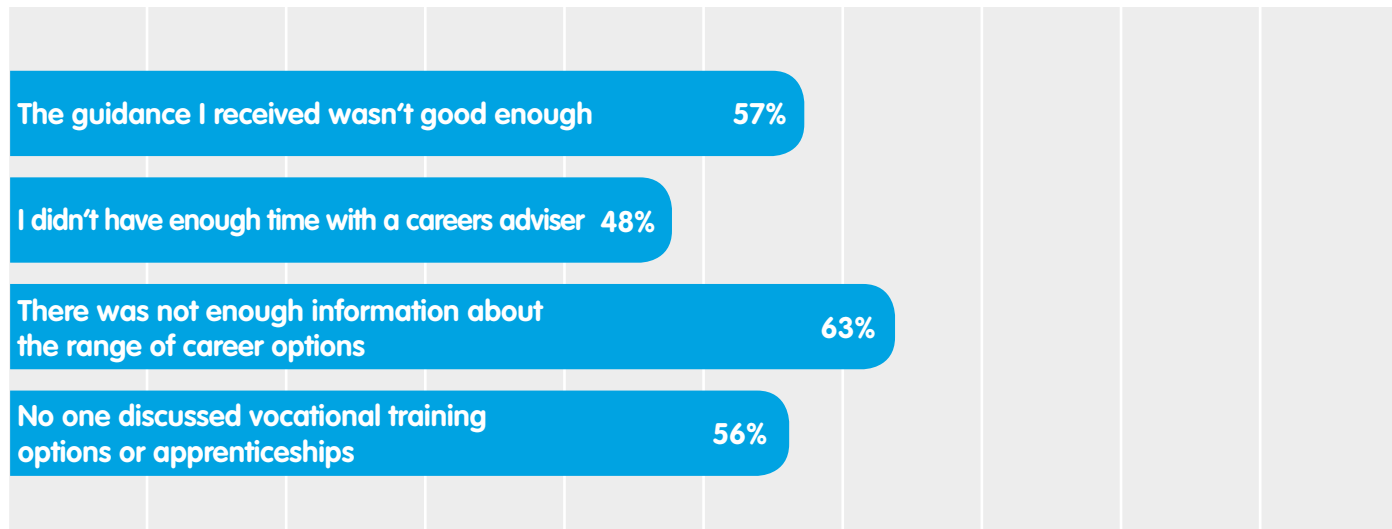
Those who receive no advice or guidance are most likely to attend state schools. ComRes also found that one in six (17%) of those from social grades DE said they had not received any advice, compared to fewer than one in ten (9%) of those from social grade AB.

²² http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/f/7/ucu_comres_youngpeoplesperceptionsaboutpost18_dec14.pdf

Reasons for poor advice

When we asked young people who rated their careers advice as 'poor' or 'not at all helpful' why they held this view, many told us that the advice they received was too narrowly focused on directing them towards university and little information was provided about apprenticeships or other training.

Why did you find your careers advice poor/ not at all helpful?



Views of young people

"They only have information about popular general jobs, such as bar work, beauty and construction."

"I was rushed through the process and meetings and didn't get the chance to talk properly and discuss options."

It is clear from our research that a majority of those who are unhappy with their careers advice feel that the guidance they received was not good enough (57%) and that there is not enough information about the range of careers options (63%).

Of those who said their careers advice was 'not at all helpful' or 'poor', over half (56%) said no one discussed vocational training options with them.

This finding was no surprise to our Employment Advisers, who report that many young people reach them with a basic misunderstanding of non-academic routes into work.

We believe that careers advice should start in the first year of secondary school and that vocational training should be given parity with the 'A-level Route'.

Views of young people

"If you weren't planning on going to university there was no advice."

"School and Sixth Form just encouraged me to go to university and didn't help me think beyond that."

"School was very focused on sending everyone to university & provided little information for those who did not want to go to uni."

"I had 15 minutes with a woman then she gave me handouts, I was also told if I don't go to a Russell Group university I will fail in life."

"They only really focused on students going to university and not on ones who were not."

"The only thing they cared about was people going to uni."

Vocational routes and women

A study by ComRes has found that young men tend to source fewer types of advice or guidance than women and therefore may have a narrower view of the options available to them.²³

This view is supported by our findings, which show that more women seek advice on CV writing than men (56% vs 48%) as well as being more likely to say they need better feedback from employers (82% vs 76%).

ComRes found that young men (46%) are more likely than their female counterparts (36%) to say they will start an apprenticeship when they leave school.

However, our survey indicates that this could be in part due to a lack of information being provided to women rather than simply a male preference for apprenticeships.

While 48% of young men said that no one discussed vocational training options or apprenticeships, this increases to 61% for young women. This is a stark gap and suggests that young women are not being served as well as young men by schools when it comes to preparing them for vocational training.

Therefore, as well as providing young people with more information about vocational routes, particular focus should be given to reducing this disparity between men and women.

Recent policy changes

In September 2012 the government transferred legal responsibility for the provision of careers advice for students aged 14 to 16 from local authorities to schools. This means schools can decide how to deliver the service and there have been concerns that this has led to a decline in quality.

Unison surveyed 700 secondary schools in England in June 2014 and found that 83% were no longer employing a careers adviser, instead using support staff to deliver careers advice.²⁴

A recent report by Ofsted examined how the new careers advice arrangement was working and found that three quarters of schools were not implementing their duty to provide impartial careers advice effectively. It also found that schools were not working well enough with employers to provide students with direct experience of the world of work to help broaden their minds about employment opportunities in their area. Similar to our survey, Ofsted also highlighted that vocational training and apprenticeships are rarely promoted effectively. Instead, the 'A-level route' was still viewed by most as the "gold standard".²⁵



²³ http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/f/7/ucu_comres_youngpeoplesperceptionsaboutpost18_dec14.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2014/08/TowebThe-Careers-Service-The-Governments-Elephant-in-the-Room-UNISON-Briefing-August-20142.pdf>

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/careers-guidance-in-schools-not-working-well-enough>

A recent parliamentary report concluded that “careers advice in schools continues to be inadequate for most young people.” It said as a result many young people are not aware of apprenticeship opportunities.²⁶

Similarly, research last year by the Chartered Management Institute found that only 40% of young people had received careers advice they felt was useful.²⁷

With careers advice now the responsibility of schools rather than local authorities, the Connexions service has continued to be dismantled and there has been an inevitable reduction in non-school careers advice. We share the concerns outlined in the Barnardos August 2013 report that this risks alienating some young people who either don't attend school because they are on workplace training or who are poorly engaged in school.²⁸

The evidence indicates there is currently a postcode lottery of careers advice.²⁹ We believe there should be more prescriptive procedures and effective enforcement of minimum service standards for careers advice to end this postcode lottery.

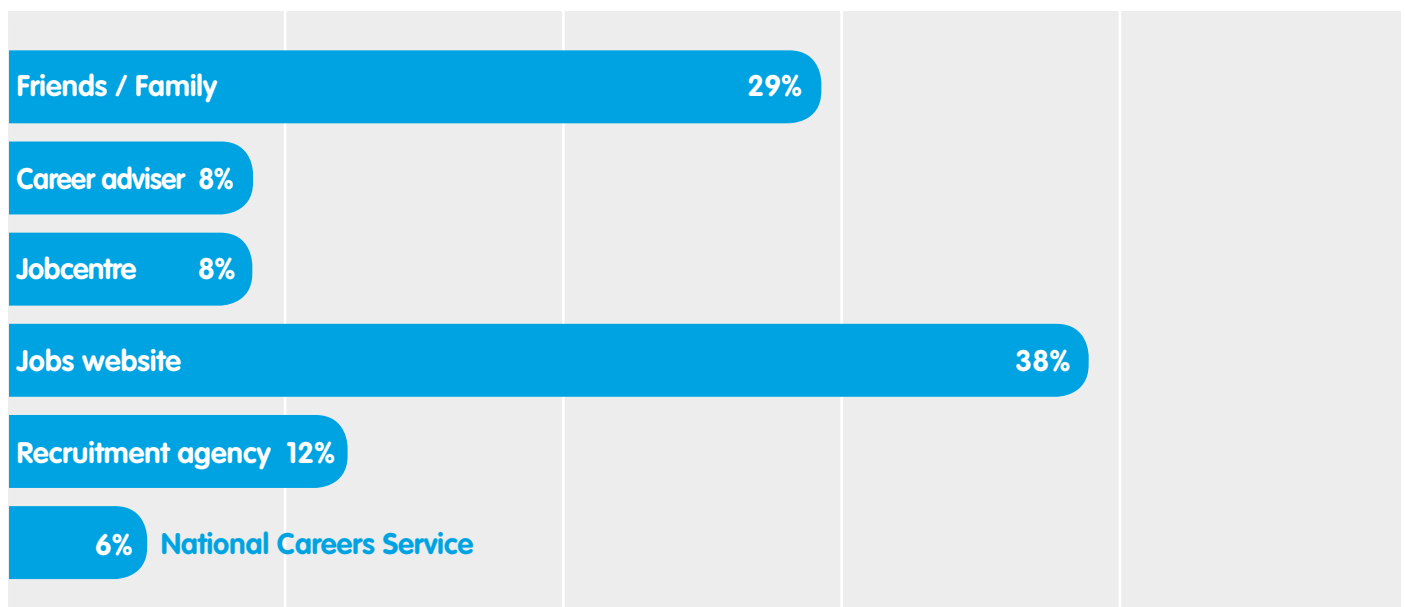
The Association of Colleges has expressed concern that schools are not best placed to deliver impartial careers advice because they have a motivation to retain students for their own sixth form.³⁰

The Government has attempted to bridge the gap with the National Careers Service, which offers support to young people only online or by telephone. However, when we asked young people in our survey which service was most helpful in finding a job, the National Careers Service ranked the lowest of six options with just 6% choosing it.

Our research found that 29% of young people said that advice from friends and family was the single most useful aspect of finding employment. In contrast, just 8% of young people said that school/college careers advice was the most useful service.

This means that young people with existing family connections and networks are likely to find it easier to obtain work, perpetuating the advantage given to higher social groups. This suggests that ‘who you know’ is still very much prevalent. It also means that many young people are at risk of receiving incorrect or out of date advice from non-specialists, such as their parents and friends.

When looking for work, which was the most useful?



The Government also supports the Plotr website, which provides online careers advice specifically aimed at young people. While online and telephone careers advice are important resources to support the journey into further education, training or work, we do not believe it is a substitute for face-to-face advice. There is a real risk therefore that the very young people who need the most help - i.e. those disengaged from school - will find it most difficult to access careers advice. We believe the Government should consider how useful face-to-face careers advice can be provided to all young people, with a particular focus on reaching young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

²⁶ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmeduc/597/597.pdf>

²⁷ <http://www.politics.co.uk/opinion-formers/chartered-management-institute/article/less-than-half-of-14-24-year-olds-receive-useful-careers-adv>

²⁸ http://www.barnardos.org.uk/helping_the_in_betweeners.pdf

²⁹ <http://www.theguardian.com/careers/careers-advice-young-people-postcode-lottery>

³⁰ <https://www.aoc.co.uk/system/files/Why%20Careers%20Guidance%20Guaranteed%20is%20crucial.pdf>

2.7 Employer engagement

Improving mindset

Research by James Reed, Chairman of the Reed Group, and Paul Stoltz, a leading expert on strengthening human resilience, has highlighted the importance of mindset in a successful career.³¹

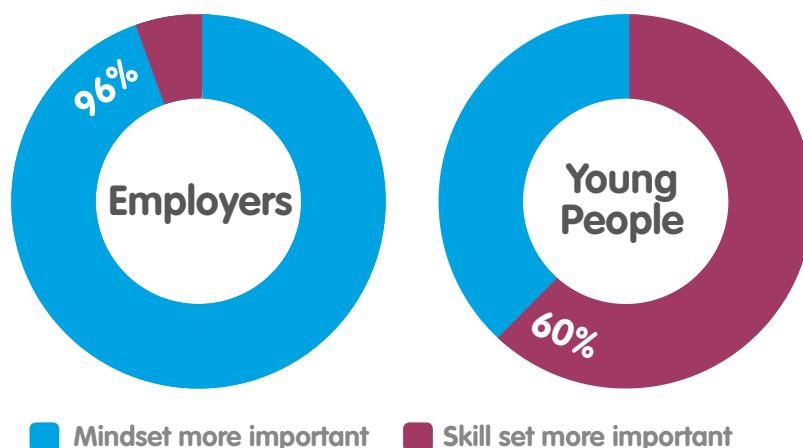
The Oxford English Dictionary defines mindset as a 'habitual way of thinking'. Reed and Stoltz describe mindset as the internal lens through which people see and navigate life. It influences how someone sees the world and everything they do in their lives.

Reed and Stoltz asked thousands of top employers which they would rather: someone with the desired mindset who lacks the complete skill set for the job, or someone with the complete skill set who lacks the desired mindset.

A total of 96% of employers chose mindset over skill set as the key element in those they seek and retain.

Our survey asked young people across the UK what they thought employers valued more in their employees: skills or mindset.

60% of young people placed skills ahead of mindset, highlighting a chasm between what young people consider important and what employers are looking for.



These findings are not surprising to many of our Employment Advisers, who report frequently dealing with young people with limited understanding of the key attributes employers are seeking.

Many of our Advisers told us that the wrong mindset is the biggest barrier to people finding work, because they lack the drive, resilience and determination to succeed in today's job market. Improving mindset is the first - and most challenging - step to employment. They say that graduates often have the hardest mindset to change, as they leave university with unrealistic job goals.

While qualifications are important, we are concerned that they have become a proxy for skills in the minds of many young people and those formulating education policy.

It is clear from findings discussed earlier in this report that qualifications play a vital role on the journey to work by opening doors and proving a capacity to learn. However, from the point of interview onwards employers are more interested in the mindset of the interviewee, which is demonstrated through soft skills such as communication and presentation ability.

Similar to our findings about the overriding importance of mindset to employers, the CBI considers a positive attitude to work as the "vital underpin that enables young people to approach the world of work with enthusiasm and a desire to learn and develop". The CBI states that employers recognise their responsibility to train young people for specific roles, but expect young people to already have employability skills such as leadership, teamwork and communication skills.³²

**"My greatest challenge has been to change the mindset of people. Mindsets play strange tricks on us. We see things the way our minds have instructed our eyes to see."
- Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Prize winner**

The mismatch between what employers are looking for and what young people think they are looking for is a consequence of both the failure of the careers system in schools and a lack of involvement of business. As reported in a study by Impetus, the structure of career services today “has led to a situation where young people, and those who support them, rarely have direct contact with a representative range of employers.”³³

We believe that the careers advice offered by schools, colleges and universities needs to do more to focus on the attributes employers tell us they are seeking. This means helping young people to develop the right mindset and building their confidence to present their case well. It will also require greater input from employers and a focused effort should be made to increase their involvement in the education system.



Levelling the playing field

Government policy has, rightly, focused on ensuring children from disadvantaged and working class families increase educational attainment through college and university. This is important to remove a barrier to progression, however in itself it is not enough.

Employers expect young people to be work ready at the point of interview and therefore we believe the development of the soft skills essential to employability should be considered of equal importance to qualifications.

In today's competitive job market, children of middle class and professional families have an advantage as they will have grown up benefiting from their parental networks. At the age of five someone from a middle class background will have 12 months' more advanced vocabulary than someone from a working class background and therefore it is no surprise that years later they are often more confident communicators in an interview setting.³⁴

A study by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission concluded that elite firms are “systematically excluding bright working-class applicants” from their workforce. The report went on to state that “elite firms define ‘talent’ according to a number of factors such as drive, resilience, strong communication skills and above all confidence and ‘polish’, which participants in the research acknowledge can be mapped to middle-class status and socialisation.”³⁵

In a separate study, the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission also reported that “not only do privately educated children achieve well in examinations and on this basis go on to have highly successful careers, but private school education also bestows a ‘little extra something’”. By ‘extra something’ they mean soft skills, such as communication and familiarity with social settings. The report stated that while these have little to do with productivity, they are ‘signals’ to a potential employer.³⁶

Of course, business needs to do more to recognise a broader range of backgrounds, but the education system is currently letting down young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We believe levelling the playing field means more than solely seeking parity of qualifications, although that is vital. Our schools need to provide young people with the complete range of soft skills and help them to develop the right mindset to compete in the jobs market.

This will require greater employer engagement within state schools, so that all children - not just those who benefit from access to parental professional networks - are familiar with the business environment, confident in dealing with employers and know what they are looking for during recruitment.

This increased engagement could include helping design classes, schools visits or mentoring from those in their chosen field, so we ensure that every young person has a role model to aspire to.

³³ http://www.impetus-pef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014_09-Ready-for-Work.pdf

³⁴ <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2010/feb/15/poor-children-behind-sutton-trust>

³⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/434791/A_qualitative_evaluation_of_non-educational_barriers_to_the_elite_professions.pdf

³⁶ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/447575/Downward_mobility_opportunity_hoarding_and_the_glass_floor.pdf

SECTION 3:

Further Work And Recommendations

Further research

This report has discussed young people's attitudes to the labour market and sought to identify the key barriers they face when entering employment.

One of main issues highlighted in this report was the failings of careers advice, with concerns raised about the lack of information about career options and vocational routes. With schools in England now responsible for their own careers advice, further research should be carried out into which school has the best model of delivery. A comparison between the systems in Scotland and England would also be valuable, as well as consideration of best practice elsewhere in the world.

With a lack of work experience identified by young people as their biggest barrier to employment, further research should be carried out with employers to identify what could encourage those who do not offer work experience placements in schools to do so. A comparison of the impact of work experience between Scotland and England would also be useful to measure the benefit of a compulsory system.

Our evidence shows the positive benefits of part time work while at school on future employment prospects. Therefore we believe further work should be carried out to explore how part time work can be facilitated to build links with employers.

Similarly, ahead of the Government's commissioning for its Work Programme replacement - which helps long term unemployed people back into work - research should be carried out with employers to identify what action could be taken to encourage their participation.

Further work could also be carried out to analyse why the proportion of young people stating that lack of confidence is a barrier to employment has increased since 2010, despite the improving labour market.

If you would like more information about this report, or Reed in Partnership, please contact Andrew Mackenzie on 0207 708 6063 or andrew.mackenzie@reed.co.uk

Recommendations

Based on the findings of our survey and our experience helping young job seekers into work, we make the following recommendations to address the issues raised in this report.

Reducing barriers to employment

- Given a lack of experience has been identified by both young people and employers as a key barrier to employment, we recommend that the Government reinstates compulsory work experience in the schools.
- Work experience placements should be of high quality and seek to break gender stereotypes.
- Build on the Government's strategy for apprenticeships and traineeships by creating 'local apprenticeship hubs' to draw on the experience of agencies and provide a 'one stop shop' for both employers and young people. Particular focus should be given to engagement with young people from disadvantaged groups.

Improving careers advice

- Careers advice should begin in the first year of secondary school.
- Careers advice is currently too often focused on A-level and university routes. Schools need to provide young people with more information about non-university routes such as vocational training and apprenticeships, with particular focus on the disparity between men and women.
- The postcode lottery of careers advice must end. There should be more prescriptive procedures and effective enforcement of minimum service standards for careers advice within schools.
- We believe the Government should consider how useful face-to-face careers advice can be provided to all young people, with a particular focus on reaching young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- In preparation for the world of work, students should spend more time on interview practice and CV writing.

After school work

- There needs to be a change in attitudes to part time work while at school or college. Parents, teachers and young people themselves should recognise the advantages of a part time job while at school and college.
- Schools and colleges should consider helping facilitate part time employment, for example, by providing job boards and applicants use of their facilities.

Levelling the playing field

- Schools, colleges and universities need to improve engagement with employers to give students a better understanding of what employers are looking for during recruitment. This could include employers helping to design classes, school visits or mentoring.
- Increased focus by schools should be given to improving young people's soft skills and developing the mindset to succeed in the business environment.

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