

Youth voice listening project; Young people & Employment opportunities

About the session

This project was designed for The HALN Anchor youth partnership to have conversations with young people from Southend around current employment options for young people, their awareness of what support is available and how this could be improved. The Anchor youth partnership hopes to use this information to improve the offer currently available and therefore the voices of the young people are vital to this process.

The session was made up of questions that the Anchor youth partnership would like young people's input on, and designed into a youth group session plan for the Southend YMCA youth workers to run themselves with their young people. This is an important element to receive honest feedback, to help the young people feel relaxed in their own environment, with their own youth leaders, on a normal group night.

Southend YMCA received a donation for taking part (donation based on estimated costs of staff time/ venue costs and refreshments). We are proud that all our youth voices projects have an element of reinvesting back into the voluntary groups that take part to recognise the great work that these groups do.

Questions that formed the basis of our youth session & research findings

- What support is currently available for young people to find out about careers and job opportunities?
- Has the support that is offered, helped you to make informed choices? How or why?
- What support do you think should be available in every school/college around employment options?
- Who do you think should provide this help?
- What are the challenges for young people in general when looking for work?
- Do you have an idea of the career or type of job you would like to do?
- Have you ever thought about a job in the NHS? Why/Why not?
- What do young people know about the employment options available? Which opportunities interest you the most?
- Do you feel confident in skills that are important to employers?
- What are the most important qualities that you look for in a prospective employer? Why?

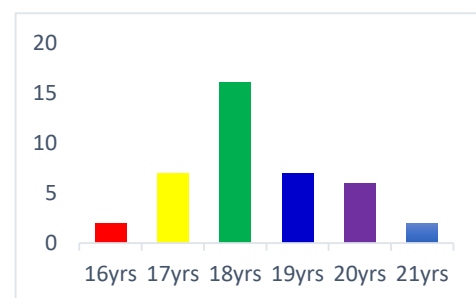
Our findings from the listening;

Who took part in the project?



40 young people
between the ages of 16 and 21 from
Southend YMCA & Southend College

What were the ages of the young people that took part?



What support is currently available for young people to find out about careers and job opportunities?

Top answers in order of popularity

- 1.) Work experience ('some, but not much opportunity')
- 2.) Careers Advisors ('we think there are these?')

Other answers; Volunteering/ apprenticeships, Job centre, Shop windows, Leaflets, Careers fair, Google, Newspaper, Social media - Instagram, Facebook & Indeed.com

What is noticeable from the answers that the young people gave, is that the young people weren't really sure about the support that was available to them at all.

When we asked them-

'Has the support that is offered, helped you to make informed choices?'

The majority of young people said

'NO'

Support available seemed to vary in different educational establishments-

- A third of the young people said that they were offered work experience at college and this had helped them get a taster of the job.
- A couple of the young people had received advice from careers advisers about grades needed for specific courses they were interested in, and had been to careers days at school, but the majority had not. The young people that took part in careers days said that they didn't feel these had been sufficient in helping them make an informed choice about a future career.
- A third of the young people who took part were not aware what grades they needed to get a secure place at college, or even the various types of courses on offer.

The majority of young people said that they did not know what their next steps would be when they left school and that, rather than being given specific support, they were simply provided with sources of information.

What employment support do young people think should be available in every school/college?

Top answers in order of popularity

- 1.) Designated careers advisers/ support
- 2.) Work experience
- 3.) Practice interview sessions
- 4.) Visits from employers and training providers
- 5.) Online careers advice
- 6.) More apprenticeships
- 7.) Careers fairs

Key comments from the youth leaders running the sessions:

'The top thing in our group was the need for designated careers advisers & well-being support to help YP to have the mind-set to be work ready. They need help to deal with anxiety & become confident to attend an interview in the first place. This may also include speaking in the interview and learning to use public transport to get to the interview.'

'Please remember that some young people may even need financial support to help with travel costs to an interview and with buying interview clothes or work related expenses'



Who do young people think should provide this support?

All the young people that took part said that employment support should be offered in schools & colleges and that it is the schools responsibility to make sure that this happens

Key comments from young people



'Careers advisors should be included in the core school staff team. They should work with young people from year 9 to help them consider which options to pursue for their chosen career path'

'Colleges & universities should go in to schools to present their courses & expectations around grades'

'Local employers should send employees in to schools and colleges to speak about their job & how they got into it'

'Job centres should have specific workers for 16-18 yr olds that attend schools & inform young people what support they can offer'

What are the challenges for young people when looking for work?

- 1.) Lack of work experience
- 2.) Mental health issues
- 3.) Not having the right skills
- 4.) Lack of transport
- 5.) Lack of jobs in the local area
- 6.) Discrimination
- 7.) Drug or alcohol issues
- 8.) Criminal record
- 9.) Disability
- 10.) Losing benefits

'Lack of work experience' & 'Mental health issues' were almost tied in the amount of votes they received from young people

Key comments from young people



'Having access to more work experience and volunteering is key to getting secure employment for young people'

'We lack skills that employers look for, and this is a real barrier to getting a job'

'Work experience would be key to helping reduce barriers when we are looking for work, but it doesn't seem to happen anymore'

'We can only look for jobs within walking distance because we can't afford weekly bus tickets on minimum wage'

'If employers see your date of birth then they can immediately think you are inexperienced & discriminate against you. They might also do this if you have a disability'

'Most jobs young people can get in Southend are seasonal, so we don't have job security'

Do young people know what occupation they would like to have?



78% of young people said that they did have an idea of the career or type of job they would like to do

(22% were unsure what they would like to do and blamed a lack of aspiration & motivation)

What professions are young people aspiring for? (In order of popularity)

- 1.) Teacher/ Work with children
- 2.) Hair & beauty
- 3.) Footballer
- 4.) Social care
- 5.) Brick layer
- 6.) Artist

Other jobs mentioned that received singular votes; Plumber, Police officer, Hospitality, Security, Engineering, Start my own business

Would young people consider a job in the NHS?



70% said that they would not want to work in the NHS

(Of the 30% that said yes, it was mainly because someone close to them already works in the NHS)

One of the great aspects of the listening projects is the ability to discuss questions with young people in more detail. None of the young people had looked at the NHS job website before, but said that they would now they know about it.

One young person even applied for the Halo Southend programme during the session!

What puts young people off working in the NHS?



45% 'The hours are too long and the staff are overworked'



41% 'There isn't enough pay for NHS jobs'



7% 'I don't like blood!'



7% 'I don't have a caring nature towards strangers'

Did young people know about the employment options mentioned?

Young people knew about almost all of the employment options mentioned, but only a couple had heard about 'Entry level jobs' or 'Jobs for graduates'

Which opportunities interest you the most?

- 1.) Apprenticeships
- 2.) Work placements
- 3.) Traineeships
- 4.) Starting your own business
- 5.) Entry level jobs & Jobs for graduates

'Apprenticeships' was almost twice as popular as the next top answer

One of the youth groups that took part discovered that although all their young people had heard of apprenticeships; none of them had visited the apprenticeships website

Do young people feel confident in the following skills that are important to employers?

- Communication
- Team Work
- Problem Solving
- Self-Belief (resilience, confidence, motivation)
- Digital Skills
- Creativity
- Literacy Skills
- Life Skills
- Numeracy Skills
- Self- Management
- Other



Young people said that they felt pretty confident in all the skills listed, however...

Every young person said they feel **most** confident in 'communication skills'

Every young person said they feel **least** confident in 'Numeracy skills'

Young people felt MOST confident in-

- 1.) Communication
- 2.) Team Work
- 3.) Problem solving & Digital skills

Young people felt LEAST confident in-

- 1.) Numeracy skills
- 2.) Self-Management
- 3.) Creativity & Self-belief

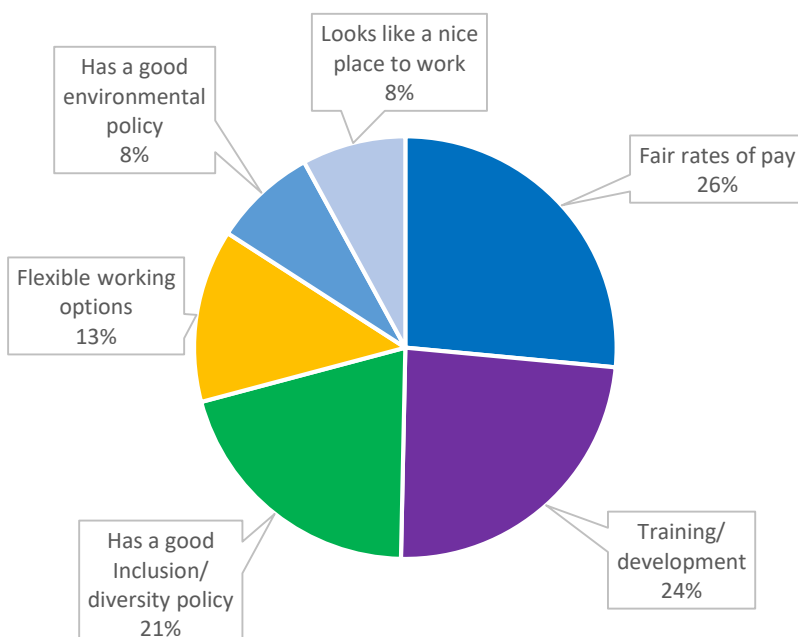
Key comments from young people

'More options need to be available for young people that have had no education - many of the apprenticeships require higher grades (especially in Maths and English). If you have been in care, then you might not have taken exams as you could have had between 10 - 20 different homes / schools'

'There needs to be more entry level apprenticeships and training schemes. Accredited work experience / volunteering opportunities would be good too'



What are the most important qualities that young people look for in a prospective employer?



Most important qualities young people look for in a prospective employer

- 1.) Fair rate of pay
- 2.) Training/ development
- 3.) Has a good inclusion/diversity policy
- 4.) Flexible working options
- 5.) Has a good environmental policy
- 6.) Looks like a nice place to work

Young people didn't mention; Offers career progression, Is a large employer

Having a fair rate of pay is the number one issue for young people.

Young people feel that they will get paid less for doing the same job as someone older and that is unfair

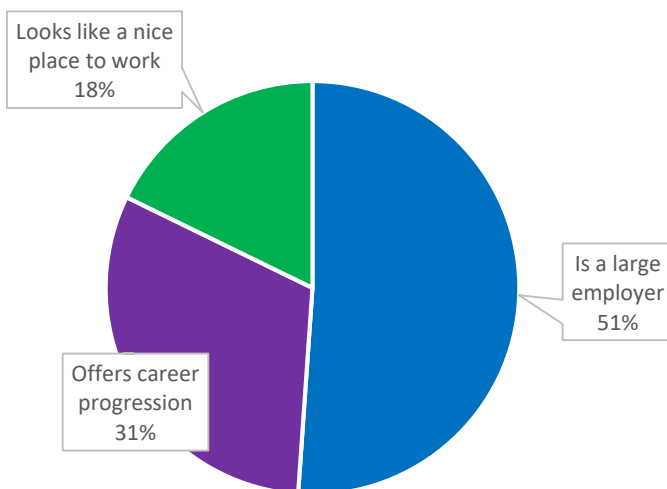
The second most important aspect that young people look for in an employer is that they would like to progress in the organisation

Key comments from young people



'Pay is so important as the cost of living is going up!'
'Older people get paid more for doing the same job. It's not fair on us'
'Training opportunities are important so we can progress in the organisation'

What are the LEAST important qualities that young people look for in a prospective employer?



Least important qualities young people look for in a prospective employer

- 1.) Is a large employer
- 2.) Offers career progression
- 3.) Looks like a nice place to work

Not mentioned; Fair rate of pay, Training & development opportunities, has a good inclusion & diversity policy, flexible working options, has a good environmental policy

Key comments from young people

'We don't have time to worry about an environment policy as bills need paying!'
'We don't want to be swayed by places that just look nice, as looks can be deceiving!!'
'Working for a large employer doesn't interest us as it may be overwhelming'
'Large employers might overlook young people'



Summary

40 young people took part in this listening project from Southend, and it is quite an accurate representation of how young people in general would respond to questions around career support.

Young people have witnessed how hard NHS staff have worked during covid, have seen the NHS requests for more pay through strikes and witnessed through stories, and how staff put patients' needs often before their own.

The NHS is seen as a worthy and selfless career path. The young people's reluctance to see themselves working in the NHS reflect the harder realities of the work (long hours and low pay).

Young people generally don't seem to know what career support is available through the NHS and feel that the NHS should be a part of school career days and work experience.

A brief discussion with the young people left them more informed and also willing to visit the NHS website for further details- one young person even applied there and then to the Southend Halo scheme.

This also underlines the fundamental finding of the report - that the majority of young people felt that the support that is offered did not help them to make informed choices about their career.

It is vital that more opportunities are created for young people to access support; both within and outside of the education system, and with opportunities not restricted by educational grades.

The young people had not really heard of traineeships, but all felt that work experience was an extremely valuable option for getting a taste of work life and valuable skills in the workplace.

Work experience is sadly something that very few young people are offered at the moment, but they feel that if they all got the chance to take part in work experience (or other volunteering opportunities) it would help reduce barriers to employment, provide young people with a valuable reference and give them some transferable skills to help secure employment in the future.

Support in general for young people to get them career ready, could be improved. Although young people felt confident with their communication, team work, problem solving and digital skills, they also said that they could use extra help with skills around numeracy, self-management, creativity and self-belief.

These views are noted also from one of the youth leaders from the YMCA in Southend who said that 'most of the YP at the YMCA have experienced trauma, and mental health is a recurring issue whenever we undertake any listening exercises. Many young people that we see now, experience anxiety and are scared to try new challenges or venture into unknown territory or areas. There are also young people in care who have had many homes and little to no education who also need support'. These views, plus the gaps in skills highlighted by the young people, could be brilliant areas for the NHS to develop their links with schools and to step up to offer further support that is desperately needed.

We can conclude from these findings that it is vital to invest in young people and their career progression. Extra support is needed both in and out of educational settings to help young people transition into employment.

There is a real desire for more work experience and volunteering opportunities for young people to help them gain work skills. There is a need for organisations to invest in young people's career development, and offer them a fair rate of pay because the rising cost of living will affect young people more than we realise. Many contribute towards bills at home or have expenses of their own. Young people have also told us that they are more likely to stay in an organisation if they are valued and offered training and can see clear career progression.

A big thank you to Southend YMCA for taking part in this project and to the HALN Anchor youth partnership for taking the time to invest in the views of young people to further their work. I hope this report is helpful and that the views shared can be of assistance in improving the career support for young people.

- Rachel Brett (ECVYS CEO)