

Youth Futures Foundation Strategy 2021





47%
of people put
on furlough are
aged 16–24

Introducing Youth Futures Foundation

We are an independent, not-for-profit organisation established in December 2019 to improve employment outcomes for young people from marginalised backgrounds. The foundation launched with an initial endowment of £90 million from the Reclaim Fund.

The youth unemployment crisis

When Youth Futures Foundation launched, youth unemployment was already too high, particularly for young people facing disadvantage or discrimination. Following the pandemic, the challenges have grown even greater, with a significant risk that a generation's future will be blighted by the scarring effects of long-term unemployment.

In October–December 2020, 14.4% of 16–24-year-olds were unemployed, compared with 11.3% the year before. **Recent ONS statistics** show under-25s make up almost two thirds of the total fall in employment during the pandemic, with those from ethnic minority backgrounds disproportionately affected.

The fall in employment is four times higher for young Black people and nearly three times higher for young Asian people. Young people typically work in occupations that have been impacted most by the pandemic, such as hospitality and retail. Of people put on furlough, 47% are aged 16–24.

Young people from marginalised backgrounds are undoubtedly the worst affected. Bleak predictions for the employment prospects of our most vulnerable young people make our work more urgent and vital than ever.

Our vision

A society where all young people have equitable access to good quality jobs.

This includes:

- Equal employment outcomes for young people who face discrimination or disadvantage
- A reduced number of young people outside the labour market or in insecure work
- Improved progression pathways for young people

Our mission

To narrow the employment gap by identifying what works and why, investing in evidence generation and innovation, and igniting a movement for change.

Our values

- **We are bold:** We want to disrupt the status quo and transform the youth employment system
- **We are always learning:** We are evidence-driven, we innovate and we aren't afraid to fail
- **We are inclusive:** We embrace, celebrate and champion diversity in all its forms. It's core to who we are
- **We are collaborative:** We build partnerships and share power to grow collective impact
- **We are determined:** We are relentless in our pursuit of a better future for all young people



14.4%
of 16-24 year-olds
were unemployed in
October-December
2020

Our approach

We prioritise young people from marginalised backgrounds

The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the jobs market for the under-25s. We want all young people to be supported through this crisis and have fair access to good quality jobs. However, **we will focus our efforts on young people who face discrimination or disadvantage in the labour market.**

Discrimination comes in many forms, from racism and sexism to homophobia and ableism. Disadvantages are often multiple, and can include poverty, exclusion from school, homelessness, mental health problems and experience of the care system.

Youth Futures Foundation was set up with a particular focus on data emerging from the Race Disparity Audit in 2017. While our organisational scope is broader than this focus, addressing the employment disparities that prevail for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds is a key lens through which we achieve our mission.



We focus on what works

Everything we do is guided by robust evidence of what works to support young people from marginalised backgrounds into good jobs. **We learn from the projects we fund and scale up that learning to drive genuine, long-lasting systemic change.** As a member of the national What Works Network, part of the Evaluation Task Force led by Treasury and Cabinet Office, we work to the principle that good decision-making should be informed by the best quality evidence.

All the evaluations we commission will take a mixed methods approach. We will start with understanding the theory of change – drawing up an idea of how interventions and programmes are meant to work. This might involve analysing processes and looking at participant journeys through the programme. Where we can, we will test through controlled trials and impact studies to show if programmes are effective. Where we have robust knowledge of what works, we can then scale up good practice.

We put young people at the heart of our work

We believe that young people must play a critical role in influencing how we think and act. **Youth participation is woven into every aspect of our work,** shaping our strategy, our communications, our investments, our partnerships and how we gather and share evidence.

To support these efforts, we have set up our Future Voices Group: 13 diverse young people who will act as ambassadors to our strategy and work. Based on the principle of 'nothing about us, without us', the group, which range in age from 16–24 years, have been recruited from across England to reflect the diversity and breadth of young people's experiences as they move into work. Young people also sit on our Board, on our Grants Committee, play an advisory role on our Evaluation Panel and are part of our staff team.

We build coalitions and partnerships

Given the complexity of the challenge, **our default will also be to collaborate with others to drive lasting change.** Beyond the organisations we fund, we will work with a range of groups and organisations from a variety of sectors. The development of our strategic partnerships will be transparent, evidence-led and linked to key areas of focus. We will also use our position to convene and connect networks of organisations, with the aim of sharing learning, collective problem solving, and identifying opportunities for innovation.

We take a trust-based approach to grant-making

Our investment programme is designed to find, fund, support and evaluate promising practice. **We have adopted five key principles that underpin our trust-based approach to grant-making:** simplifying and minimising the application process; being open, transparent and honest about who we fund and why; providing unrestricted multi-year funding; listening and acting on feedback to our approach; and providing practical support alongside funding, with the aim of helping to build leadership and capacity. We will continuously refine and improve our processes and systems to embed our trust-based principles.



Strategic framework

Our 2021–2024 priorities

Our impact (by 2030)

Our theory of change


Identify
and share
'what works'
and why.


Invest
in evidence
generation &
innovation.


Ignite
new ideas to
change behaviour
& practice.

1
Changing the system:
We work with others to address systemic youth employment barriers.

2
Creating opportunities:
Support employers to recruit and retain young people from marginalised backgrounds.

3
Building capacity:
Equip practitioners to train and support young people to be ready for work.

1
Reduce the employment gap between young people due to ethnicity, disability, family income or the region they live in.

2
Narrow the pay gap between certain ethnic minority groups and their white peers.

3
Reduce the % of young people from marginalised backgrounds in **insecure work**.

4
Increase the % of young people moving out of **low-paid work**.

Our mission

To narrow the employment gap for young people from marginalised backgrounds.

Our vision

A society where all young people have equitable access to good quality jobs.

Our strategic priorities

We are an ambitious organisation that wants to tackle the root causes of youth unemployment for young people from marginalised backgrounds. To do that, we will focus on three priorities over the next three years:

- 1 Changing the youth employment system** by working in partnership with organisations, policy makers and young people to address structural and systemic barriers
- 2 Creating opportunities with employers** to recruit and retain more young people from marginalised backgrounds
- 3 Building capacity with practitioners** to support and train more young people from marginalised backgrounds to be ready for work.



Priority 1: Changing the youth unemployment system

The youth unemployment ecosystem is fragmented and involves many different types of organisations, from local and national government to public and private sector, as well as not-for-profit organisations. To address key barriers within this system and bring about far-reaching, long-lasting transformation, we will unite a range of stakeholders to champion what works, shape policy and campaign for change.

Identifying evidence and opportunities to improve the youth employment ecosystem

We will map the youth employment ecosystem, document young people's journeys and experiences, and create a body of evidence that supports future systems change. Having gathered an understanding of opportunities and successful initiatives, we will engage with stakeholders locally and nationally to understand where there is potential for collaboration. By co-chairing and co-ordinating the Youth Employment Group, a cross-sector coalition of over 200 organisations committed to tackling youth unemployment, we will further gather support and drive change.

Investing in interventions that address barriers within the system

We will launch a Systems Change Innovation Fund that will invest in new ideas to tackle systemic barriers to employment for young people

from marginalised backgrounds. This will include place-based pilots that facilitate collaboration at a local level, target gaps in evidence and test new ways of working.

Igniting changes to culture and behaviour through collaboration and policy influencing

We will engage with policymakers from across the political spectrum, acting as a critical friend to enable evidence-based decision-making. We will also build relationships with infrastructure organisations to empower them to spread good practice through their networks. Our Future Voices Group will amplify young people's views and play a key role in shaping our strategy and communications. We will reach out to facilitate learning communities and share evidence of what works.

Priority 2: Creating more opportunities with employers

Employers have a critical role to play in tackling the youth employment crisis. We will work closely with them to create the kind of opportunities that will help recruit and retain young people from marginalised backgrounds. Currently there are pockets of best practice scattered across the country. We will support employers by identifying what works, evaluating the most promising approaches, and sharing that knowledge with a wide range of organisations.

Identify effective employer recruitment and retention practice

We will carry out primary research to understand how employers are currently recruiting and retaining young people, and what kind of evidence they need. We will also investigate the youth labour market to identify the sectors and areas that offer new employment opportunities for young people. The result will be a body of evidence plus tools and resources to support effective employer practice.

Invest in evaluating, scaling and replicating promising employer practice

We are launching a new Employer Practice Programme that will test and evaluate ideas and approaches that show potential. To do this, we will engage with key employers in high-potential sectors to target gaps in evidence or provision.

This programme will enable us to test pilot interventions that, if successful, we can work with others to scale-up and replicate more widely.

Ignite collaboration between employers to test and learn

We will generate a spirit of support and collaboration by setting up new employer networks. This will include an Employer Advisory Board, that will play a key role in shaping Youth Futures Foundation's strategy and activity. We will also co-chair and co-ordinate a wider network of employers who are dedicated to sharing and utilising practical evidence and resources.



Identify effective practitioner-led interventions

We will work with practitioners to understand what kind of evidence they need to support young people into work. We will highlight examples of excellent practice, identify gaps in evidence or provision, and create a body of tools and resources that will support practitioners in their work.



Invest in evaluating and scaling promising practitioner practice

We will reopen our Development and Impact Fund, which is our principal route to identify and test what works in supporting young people into employment. This will target topics and areas where there are gaps in evidence or provision and will have a particular focus on supporting practitioner organisations that are led by ethnic minorities.



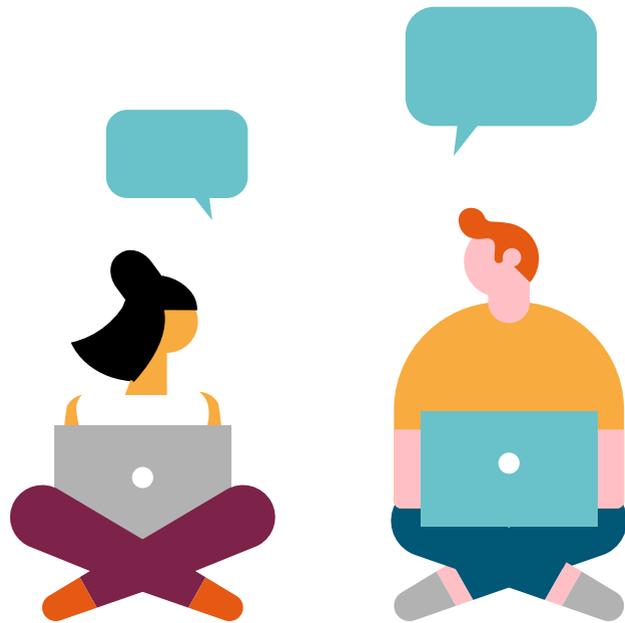
Ignite shifts in culture and practice through practitioner networks

We will build our networks with practitioners to share what works and ignite a movement for change. We will set up a new Practitioner Advisory Board to shape our strategy and activity and will continue to draw on our leadership role in the Youth Employment Group. To inspire changes in practice, we will share tools and resources for practitioners through our communication channels.



Priority 3: Building capacity with practitioners

Frontline charities and social enterprises have a long-standing role in supporting young people from marginalised backgrounds into employment. We are equipping practitioners with additional evidence and skills to help them in this vital work. We are identifying best practice, investing in promising interventions, and sparking a shift in culture and practice.



Working together

If you would like to work with Youth Futures Foundation to transform employment outcomes for young people from marginalised backgrounds, please get in touch with us:

E: partnerships@youthfuturesfoundation.org
www.youthfuturesfoundation.org



Get in touch:

www.youthfuturesfoundation.org

 **@YF_Foundation**

 **company/youthfuturesfoundation**

**youth
futures**
FOUNDATION