

# Futureproof your workforce

## Evidence-based solutions for hiring young talent: Employer briefing

Youth Futures Foundation has an exciting opportunity for innovative employers to partner with us to trial what works in recruiting and retaining young people.

### **Young people are crucial to long-term business sustainability:**

- By 2030, nearly 1 in 2 UK workers will be aged 50 or over.<sup>1</sup>
- More than half (57%) of the UK's most experienced frontline workers will reach retirement within the next 5 years.<sup>2</sup>
- 78% of managers lack confidence in their company's ability to prepare for future skills gaps.<sup>3</sup>

### **Yet many young people struggle to access employment opportunities:**

- 1 in 8 young people in the UK are not in education, employment or training (NEET).<sup>4</sup>
- 62% of young people feel it's harder to get a job now than ten years ago.<sup>5</sup>
- Young people from certain marginalised backgrounds face more challenges than their peers to securing and thriving in good work.

## **Without greater youth recruitment, the UK risks labour shortages and productivity decline.**

We know that many employers are already trying to improve how they recruit and retain young people – but too often, good intentions aren't supported by robust evidence. Our Employer Trials programme is designed to change that.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Proportion of over 50s in work set to hit record high of 47 by 2030, Legal and General.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [UK workforce crisis looms as mass retirement threatens £28 billion productivity loss, Onrec.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [ibid.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [One in eight young people across the UK not in work or education, Youth Futures Foundation.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [ibid.](#)

## The opportunity: an overview

We are offering 14 employers the chance to co-design and test bespoke practical solutions to your recruitment and retention challenges, evaluated through a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) – the gold standard of impact evaluation. The trial will generate actionable insights that benefit your business, young people, and the wider economy.

This is about solving real business problems – improving retention, boosting diversity and innovation – while contributing to lasting change for young people.

## Benefits for participating employers

- Free, expert-led review of your current recruitment and retention practices.
- Tailored intervention design to tackle your workforce challenges.
- Independent evaluation using gold-standard research methods.
- Stronger employer brand as an inclusion-focused, evidence-based innovator.
- Demonstrable commitment to social value.

## What interventions could we trial together?

The kinds of interventions we might seek to test include:

- Sharing questions with candidates ahead of interview.
- Introducing anonymised recruitment processes.
- Replacing assessment centres with aptitude tests.
- Removing the collection of criminal record data from the application stage.
- Training line managers to support diverse teams.

You may already have some of these in place, and others you may not be interested in introducing. We will work with you to design a bespoke intervention that seeks to address your specific recruitment challenges.

## Next steps

Let's have a conversation. Contact [katy.neep@youthfuturesfoundation.org](mailto:katy.neep@youthfuturesfoundation.org) to set up an initial call where we can answer any questions you have and start to explore our potential to create better futures together.

## About Youth Futures Foundation

Youth Futures Foundation is the national What Works Centre for youth employment, with a specific focus on marginalised young people. Our work has two overarching objectives to bring about system change for marginalised young people:

1. To find and generate high-quality evidence to better understand England's youth unemployment and inactivity challenge, and most importantly to learn what solutions work to address this.
2. To put evidence into action with policymakers and employers who have the means to make direct impactful change within the system for young people

## Frequently asked questions

### 1. What sort of employers is Youth Futures looking to partner with?

We're keen to partner with employers across all sectors who:

- Recruit in large volumes. Ideally at least 10,000 employees, although this isn't a hard and fast rule.
- Have buy-in from senior leadership.
- Have time to commit. Typically, our partners appoint a project manager to work closely with us.
- Are willing for learning from the trial to be shared publicly.

### 2. What is a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT)?

A RCT is the gold standard for testing what works. Commonly used in medical research – think of a drug trial where patients are randomly selected to receive a drug or a placebo. To minimise bias, neither the patients nor the researchers know which group is which until the analysis has been conducted. This allows the researchers to understand the causal impact of the drug on the medical condition it is designed to treat.

In our context, we use RCTs to evaluate the effectiveness of an employment intervention. Different parts of your organisation (e.g. branches, teams, or regions) are randomly assigned either to adopt the new approach (the 'drug') or to continue with business as usual (the 'placebo'). This helps us rigorously measure what difference the new approach makes.

### **3. We wouldn't want to discriminate based on age in our employment practices.**

The intervention we trial with you will not discriminate based on age, or any other characteristic. To assess the impact of the intervention on young people specifically, the independent evaluator will cut the analysis by age range, allowing us to draw out the results for those aged 16-24. The interventions we trial will focus on roles that are generally most relevant to young people, such as entry-level roles, apprenticeships, or graduate schemes.

### **4. We already do the things suggested as possible interventions, is there any point in us partnering with you?**

Yes. We believe that every employer has room to grow in this space and will design a bespoke intervention that will address the specific challenges you face.

### **5. What if the trial shows that the intervention doesn't work?**

It is possible that analysis of the data from the intervention could reveal that it was not effective. This is still valuable information – understanding what doesn't work helps us to narrow down what does.

### **6. What if we already have our recruitment plans for the coming year in place?**

This is a long-term programme of work, with funding committed through to at least 2028. It will take us time to come up with the right idea together, so we can start lining things up for your next recruitment period. We could also explore the possibility of evaluating any interventions you've already planned.