

What works for recruitment and retention?

Employer Briefing: Trialling promising employment interventions

Youth Futures Foundation is the national What Works Centre for youth employment, with a specific focus on marginalised young people. Our vision is a society where all young people can achieve good work. This also means a society where businesses can thrive.

We have an exciting opportunity for innovative, socially aware employers to partner with us. Together, we would trial an employment intervention with the potential to:

- Help you access the talent you need for your future workforce.
- Create better futures for young people across the country.

There are a range of employment and recruitment interventions that businesses can try to help increase workforce diversity. But, of the many possible interventions, we need to understand what works, and we need robust evidence to demonstrate it.

This is where you come in. By acting as a trailblazer and trialling a promising intervention in your workplace, you can help us understand and demonstrate whether it works. Equipped with this evidence, we can drive impactful, nation-wide change, supporting and inspiring other employers to introduce interventions that are evidence-backed to make a meaningful difference.

We'll trial interventions with 14 employers by 2028. Could you be one of them?

About Youth Futures Foundation

In January 2025, 1 in 8 young people in the UK are not in education, employment or training (NEET). And young people from certain marginalised backgrounds face more challenges than their peers to securing and thriving in good work.

To change this, we:

- 1. 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 it.
- 2. Put evidence into action with policymakers and employers** who have the means to make direct impactful change for young people.

Getting young people on a successful path to good work is not only vital for their wellbeing, but key to our country's prosperity. Our 'north star' goal is for the UK to match the best NEET rates in the OECD by 2050, and to remove the gaps in employment outcomes for young people from certain marginalised backgrounds.

If we can achieve this, we can boost the UK's economy by £69bn, and create a better future for the generation of young people born today.

This is not something we will achieve alone. Employers across the country have a key role to play. Our programme of employment intervention trials will generate evidence, showing what employers can do that works to support young people to secure and thrive in good work. We can then turn evidence into action, by driving employers across the country to replicate interventions that work.

What do we mean by 'marginalised young people'?

We define 'young people' as those aged 16-25. We focus on addressing disparities in employment outcomes for those with Black, Pakistani, or Bangladeshi heritage; experience of the care system or the justice system; learning disabilities or autism; or mental health challenges. Half of young people who are out of education, employment, or training for over a year share one or more of these characteristics.

The Opportunity: An overview

To create better futures for young people, businesses, and for the UK as a whole, we are looking to establish 14 partnerships with employers. During the partnership, we will work together to trial a specific employment or recruitment intervention.

If you become one of our trial partners, we will work with you to:

1. **Understand** the specific challenges you face in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce (with particular focus on young people from marginalised backgrounds).
2. **Co-design** an intervention with the potential to solve the challenges you face.
3. **Implement** this intervention.
4. **Test** whether the intervention works, through a Randomised Controlled Trial.
5. **Share** the evidence to inspire widespread change.

Why partner with us?

Our trial partnerships don't just benefit our mission at Youth Futures Foundation. They don't even just benefit young people, or the future of our country.

They benefit your organisation directly:

- You will receive a 'critical friend' **consultancy-style service, for free**. We will work with you to scope bespoke potential solutions to the challenges you face in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, and you don't have to commit to running a trial until after you have received our expert services.
- You will benefit from our robust evidence and expertise on youth employment, tailored to meet your organisational needs and **bring talent to your workforce**.
- You can **enhance your reputation** as an inclusive and innovative employer.

- Partnering with us is a great way to demonstrate a genuine commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and will be hugely valuable if you are tendering for contracts with a **social value** component.

What sort of employers are we looking to partner with?

You could be a great partner for our employment intervention trials if you:

- Recruit/employ a significant number of employees. As a rule of thumb, we look to partner with employers with at least 10,000 employees. But this isn't a hard and fast rule. If you don't meet this threshold, we'd still love to hear from you.
- Are solutions-oriented, open-minded, and up for having honest conversations to overcome the challenges you face.
- Have buy-in from senior leadership who can sign off the intervention we propose.
- Have time to commit. Typically, our partners appoint a project manager to work closely with us.
- Are willing for learnings from the trial to be shared publicly, so we can use the evidence that emerges to drive widespread changes to policy and practice. This is also great for your reputation as an innovative organisation with a meaningful commitment to social value.

What interventions could we trial together?

We'd love to discuss what would be of interest to you. To give you an idea, some interventions we might consider implementing and testing together are:



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

This is by no means an exhaustive list. You might already have some of these in place, and some you might not be interested in introducing. Together we would identify bespoke practice changes with potential to make a difference for your organisation.

The partnership timeline in detail

Our partnership will run in four stages. We will be flexible and work to a timeline that suits you, and do everything we can to minimise burden on your capacity and resources.

Phase one: Scoping

This begins with initial conversations, for you to learn more about the opportunity and what the partnership might involve, and for us to learn a bit about you.

After these initial conversations, we will provide a 'critical friend' consultancy-style service to identify relevant areas for improvement in your business. Here we will need to engage with senior leaders who have decision-making authority in this area and can confirm that your organisation is willing to consider pursuing the interventions we suggest. Then we will produce a trial plan, detailing the suggested intervention and the commitments required from your organisation to implement it.

At the end of Phase One, you will decide whether to proceed. There is no obligation to do so, and if you choose not to progress to Phase Two, you can still benefit from the recommendations and analysis we have provided up to this point.

Phase two: Feasibility study

If you decide to continue beyond the Scoping phase, we will commission an independent evaluator who will assess the feasibility of the proposed trial, to ensure that the ultimate findings are objective and robust.

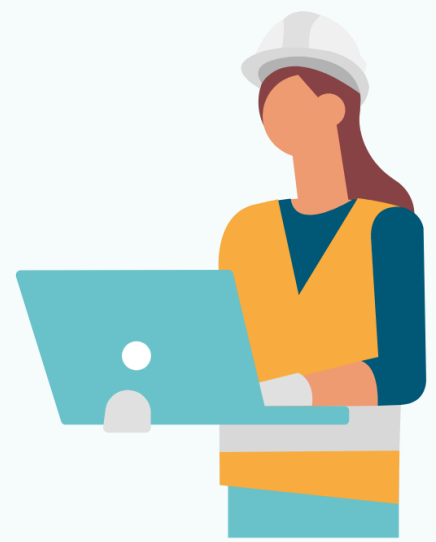
We will continue to work together to develop the intervention we want to test, and the independent evaluator will develop a full Trial Protocol, expanding on the trial plan created in Phase One. Again, the commitment required from your organisation will be explicit within the Trial Protocol. And again, here you will make a decision whether to continue to the trial implementation phase.

Phase three: Trial implementation

Now we launch the trial together. You will implement the intervention over an agreed time period, as set out in the Trial Protocol. There will be light-touch monitoring and support throughout the period to ensure the trial is running as planned.

After the implementation, you will share information with the independent evaluator (within appropriate data-sharing and confidentiality agreements). The independent evaluator will analyse the data you provide, and produce reports and other outputs documenting the findings from the trial.

If you have progressed to this stage, we will be committed to publishing the findings. You will have the opportunity to contribute to the drafting of reports, and to prevent the



disclosure of any commercially sensitive information. Should your organisation no longer wish to be associated with the project at this stage, the findings can be anonymised so that your organisation is not identifiable.

Phase four: Post-trial communications and engagement

Here we publish the reports produced by the independent evaluator, before embarking on a bespoke plan of communications and engagement activity. This phase is focused on sharing the findings from the trial – promoting the evidence on what works, and advocating for other employers to replicate effective interventions.

This phase might include presenting at conferences, events, and webinars, as well as a wider range of stakeholder engagement activity. We would seek to undertake these activities jointly with you to maximise the reach of the evidence. Although there is no obligation for you to participate in this, it is a key opportunity for you to reap the reputational rewards of your commitment to the partnership.

Sounds great, how do we get involved?

We'd love to hear from you. Contact katy.neep@youthfuturesfoundation.org. We can answer any questions you have and explore our potential to create better futures together.

Some frequently asked questions

What is a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT)?

An RCT is a type of high-quality scientific experiment typically used in medical research. Think of your classic drug trial, where patients are randomly selected to receive a drug or a placebo. Randomisation allows researchers to understand the causal impact the drug has on the medical condition it is designed to treat. In this context, we will use an RCT to evaluate the efficacy of an employment / recruitment intervention. Certain units (e.g. regions, branches, offices, teams – depending on how your organisation is structured) will run the new intervention (i.e. the 'drug') and others will continue to follow existing practice (i.e. the 'placebo').

We don't share your focus on young people, and we wouldn't want to discriminate based on age in our recruitment practices.

The intervention we trial with you will not discriminate based on age. 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.

We already do the things suggested as possible interventions / we already do a lot in this space, is there any point in us partnering with you?

We will come up with a bespoke intervention, designed to work for you. With every partner we've worked with so far, with we have identified several possibilities, and we believe every employer has room to grow in this space. It is possible that analysis of the data from the intervention we trial together could reveal that the intervention was not effective. This is still incredibly valuable information – understanding what doesn't work helps us to narrow down what does.

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.

We need more information / we're not able to commit yet.

We're just getting started together! There is no commitment required now. By the time any commitment is required, we will have gone on a significant information gathering and sharing journey together. Additionally, at the end of Phase One and Phase Two there are clear points at which you can withdraw from the partnership, with no obligations.

