



EVIDENCE UNWRAPPED

youth
futures
FOUNDATION

Summer Jobs Unwrapped



Overview

Summer employment programmes give young people paid, meaningful work experience during the summer holidays. They are a practical way to develop early-career talent, diversify recruitment pipelines, strengthen community links and boost capacity.

We've brought together the available evidence and insights to help you understand how to design and deliver summer employment programmes that create real value for your organisation and lasting impact for young people.

What are summer employment programmes?

Short, time-limited placements – typically **six to eight weeks** – providing paid, real-world work experience alongside supervision, mentoring and work-readiness training.

Programmes typically include:

- ✓ pre-employment or work-readiness training
- ✓ opportunities to develop communication, teamwork and time-management
- ✓ coaching and mentoring
- ✓ support to explore next steps in education, training or work

Who are summer employment programmes for?

Programmes are typically offered to **16 to 24-year-olds** who are:

- in school or college, or
- preparing to transition into work

Many programmes focus on young people from disadvantaged communities or those at risk of not progressing into further learning.

Access is often shaped by outreach through schools and community organisations. Where places are limited, selection may be through a lottery, simple assessment or eligibility criteria.

Our research focuses on programmes delivered to young people aged 16 to 24 as an intervention to improve employment outcomes.

Who can offer summer employment programmes?

Any UK business, charity, public-sector body or social enterprise can, provided it meets the legal requirements of:

- paying at least the minimum wage
- providing a safe working environment
- complying with working-time rules for young people



Opening doors to opportunity

Summer employment programmes are designed to help young people build confidence, skills and insight into the workplace.

Emerging research* indicates that taking part can:

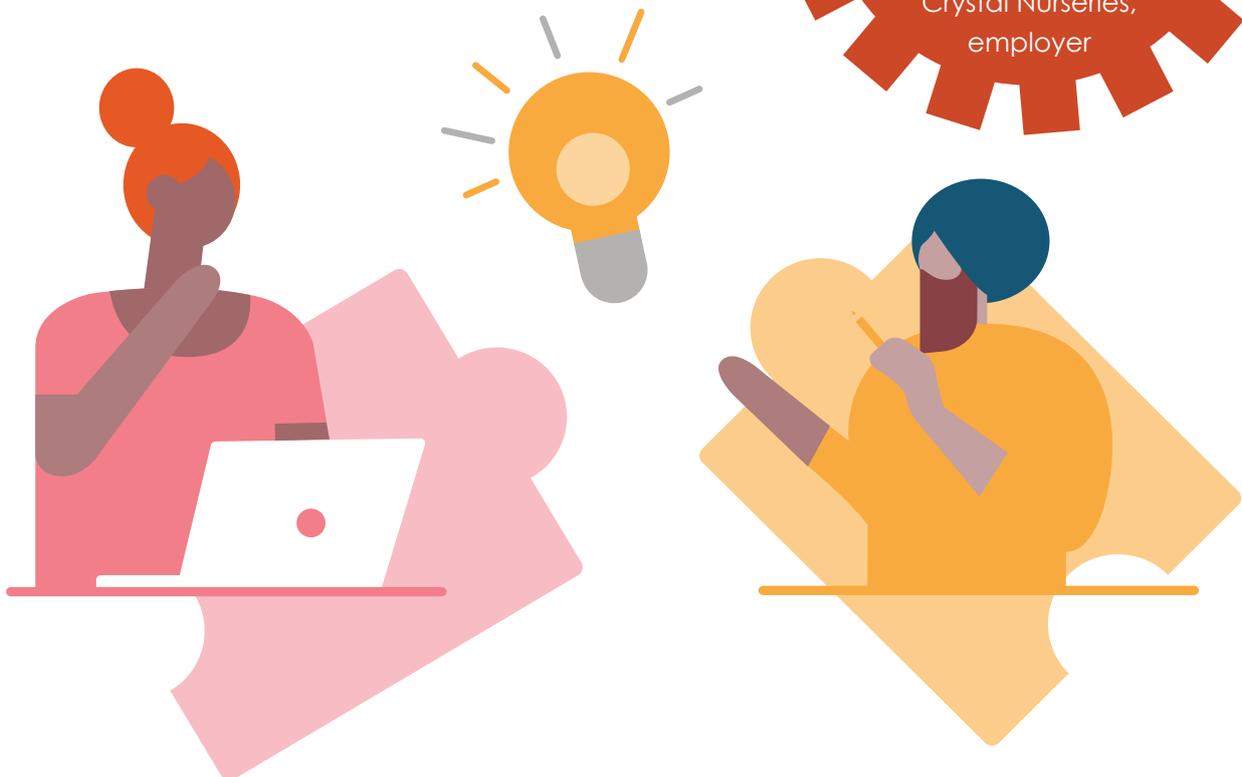
- ✓ improve ongoing engagement with education and training
- ✓ improve job readiness and motivation
- ✓ increase skills like communication, teamwork, responsibility, problem-solving
- ✓ boost confidence and personal development
- ✓ reduce involvement in criminal or antisocial behaviours

In turn, these outcomes may have a knock-on effect on employability in the long term.

For example, the skills and qualifications gained through summer employment programmes can make young people more likely to get a job in the future.

"We've been blown away by one of the young people and have offered her a sessional job while she studies to become a nursery worker."

Crystal Nurseries,
employer



* Due to the very small number of studies available, care should be taken when translating policy and practice to the UK context.

Why should employers invest in summer employment programmes?



Build future talent

Summer placements give employers an early look at motivated young people who can grow with the organisation.



Eight young people have secured part time jobs with placement partners.



Sporting Your Futures, local delivery partner



Strengthen diversity and widen access

Programmes open doors to young people who might not otherwise find your organisation – helping you reach new talent and challenge hidden barriers in recruitment.



Not only have we hired the young people that did the placement with us, this programme showed us that we had to update our recruitment policy and processes, as we now recognise that it wasn't as accessible for young people as it should be, and that is why we didn't get young people applying for our jobs.



Sheffield Videogame Museum, employer



Boost capacity during busy periods

Summer placements bring in young people who can free up your team, take on tasks that need doing, and support smooth operations.

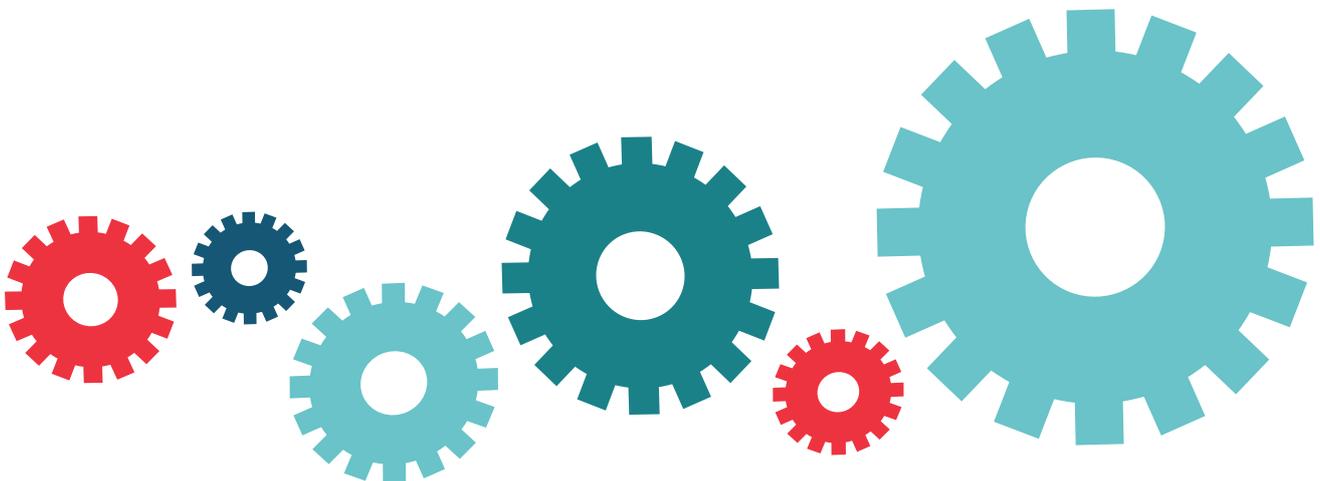


Our staff said they 'felt a weight off their shoulders' by having these young people supporting them. The young people have given them the capacity to complete other tasks they wouldn't otherwise have been able to do. They would love to be involved again next year and think other Oxfam shops would also really benefit from it.



Oxfam, employer

All quotes are from participants in UK Youth's [Summer Job's programme](#).





Develop your people

Managing young people builds mentoring, leadership and communication skills in employees, strengthening your team.

“ I would recommend other employers do this scheme...there has been a positive impact for the people in my team. ”

Crystal Nurseries, employer



Bring fresh insight and new ideas into your organisation

Young people offer perspectives your organisation may be missing, helping challenge assumptions and generate new ideas.

“ There’s been a positive impact on a lot of our employees by having the young people work with us. For us especially, it’s getting the young people’s perspective on how we run. We’re very family orientated and that’s an age gap that we were missing. So they’ve definitely given us a lot of opinions and ideas that we hadn’t considered before. ”

Birmingham Botanical Gardens, employer



Strengthen community impact and reputation

Hosting placements demonstrates your commitment to local opportunity and social value.

“ It’s been a big ask of these young people – and they’ve done brilliantly...Now they have experience, stories and skills they can take forward. That’s success. ”

Catch 22, employer and local delivery partner

“ I think the most rewarding part is seeing the young people grow as they’ve been on the programme...developing some of the skills that employers are looking for. ”

Riverlution, employer

All quotes are from participants in UK Youth's [Summer Job's programme](#).

Turning evidence into effective action

To deliver strong, high-quality, inclusive and impactful summer employment programmes, we have produced **nine evidence-based principles** to follow:

1. Match young people to the right role

Why it matters

Purposeful matching increases engagement and reduces drop-out.

What good practice looks like

- Offer a range of entry-level roles suited to different interests and skills
- Use short conversations or matching tools to understand young people's motivations
- Make placements feel meaningful, achievable and relevant

2. Provide clear supervision and positive relationships

Why it matters

Supportive supervision that is consistent and effective helps young people settle quickly, navigate the workplace and perform well. This improves attendance, performance and progression.

What good practice looks like

- Assign a dedicated supervisor or buddy
- Keep workloads manageable
- Use practical guidance or handbooks to clarify expectations

3. Prepare supervisors and staff

Why it matters

Managers may be new to supporting young people in their first work experience and need help to feel confident and equipped.

What good practice looks like

- Offer short training or briefing sessions before placements begin
- Clarify safeguarding responsibilities
- Share tips for coaching, feedback and pastoral support



4. Offer financial and practical support

Why it matters

Most programmes pay at least the minimum wage, and additional help can remove practical barriers.

What good practice looks like

- Ensure young people are paid fairly
- Provide or signpost travel or meal support
- Communicate clearly with families about payment and expectations

5. Use targeted recruitment approaches

Why it matters

Recruitment processes should not unintentionally exclude the young people who will benefit most.

What good practice looks like

- Work with schools, youth organisations and community groups
- Keep entry requirements simple and accessible
- Use a fair-access or needs-based system

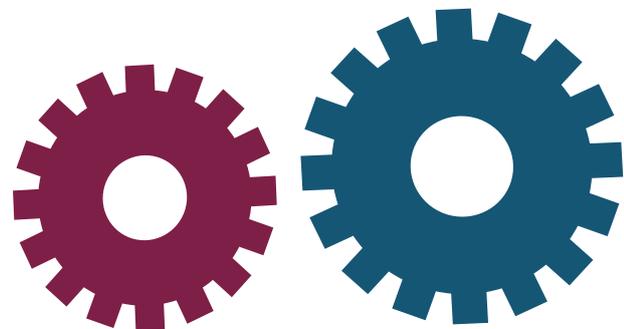
6. Build strong partnerships

Why it matters

Collaboration strengthens programme delivery, helping employers resolve issues quickly and provide consistent pastoral support.

What good practice looks like

- Join local employer networks involved in youth employment
- Partner with schools for referrals and follow-up
- Work with community youth organisations who know young people best



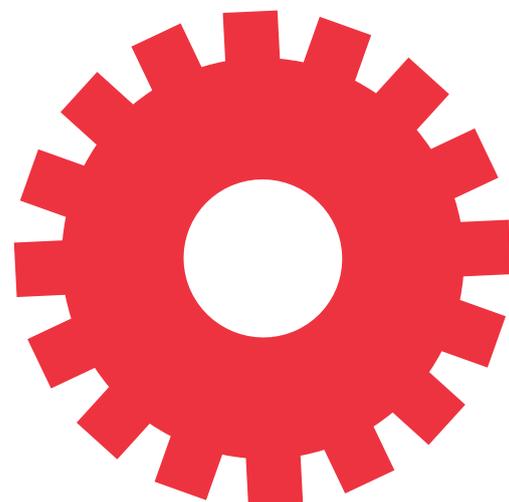
7. Provide a good induction

Why it matters

A clear, welcoming start helps young people build confidence and sets a positive tone for the placement.

What good practice looks like

- Offer a simple induction including a welcome session or workplace tour
- Introduce the team and outline workplace expectations
- Provide pre-work training wherever possible



8. Build skills intentionally

Why it matters

Structured skill development makes placements more meaningful.

What good practice looks like

- Provide opportunities to practise communication, teamwork and problem-solving.
- Offer stretch tasks with clear support.
- Reinforce time management, professionalism and workplace behaviours.

9. Help young people plan their next steps

Why it matters

Young people progress further when they understand their options and feel supported to pursue them.

What good practice looks like

- Discuss future roles or career paths.
- Share information about apprenticeships, training or part-time roles.
- Connect young people to progression routes or follow-on support.

Where possible, offering a permanent or extended role is one of the most impactful ways to support progression, and is often the main aim of the programme for both young people and employers.



Costs and funding

Summer employment programmes involve a range of delivery costs, reflecting the level of structure and wraparound support needed to make placements safe, high quality and meaningful:

- wages for young people
- outreach and recruitment
- manager support
- programme management and quality assurance
- training and safeguarding provided by delivery partners

Although overall programme costs are significant, most of these are covered by funders rather than employers.

How are programmes funded?

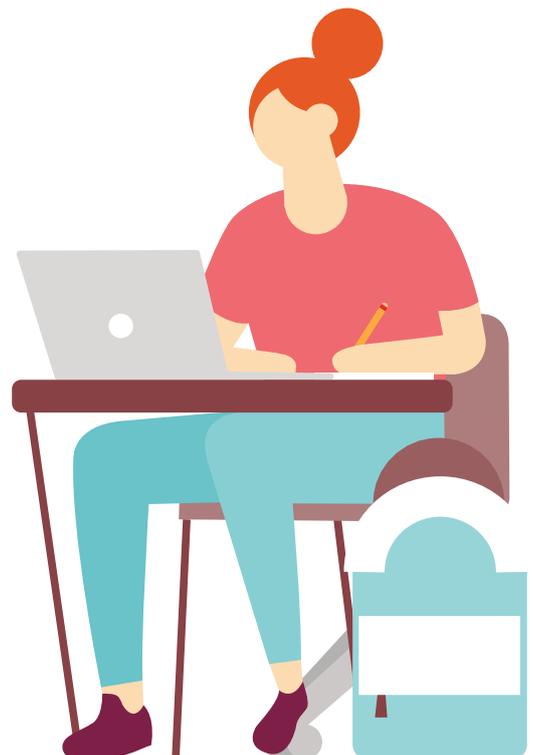
Most UK models blend:

- philanthropic or foundation funding
- government or local authority contributions
- employer-provided placements and supervision

For most employers, the main contribution is time, supervision and offering a meaningful work placement.

Some programme models may ask private sector employers for a financial contribution, depending on the level of support provided. Where this applies, expectations are made clear in advance and aligned to the size and capacity of the organisation.

Crucially, employers do not usually cover core programme costs such as wages, training or pastoral support, and wider programme infrastructure.



Key take aways

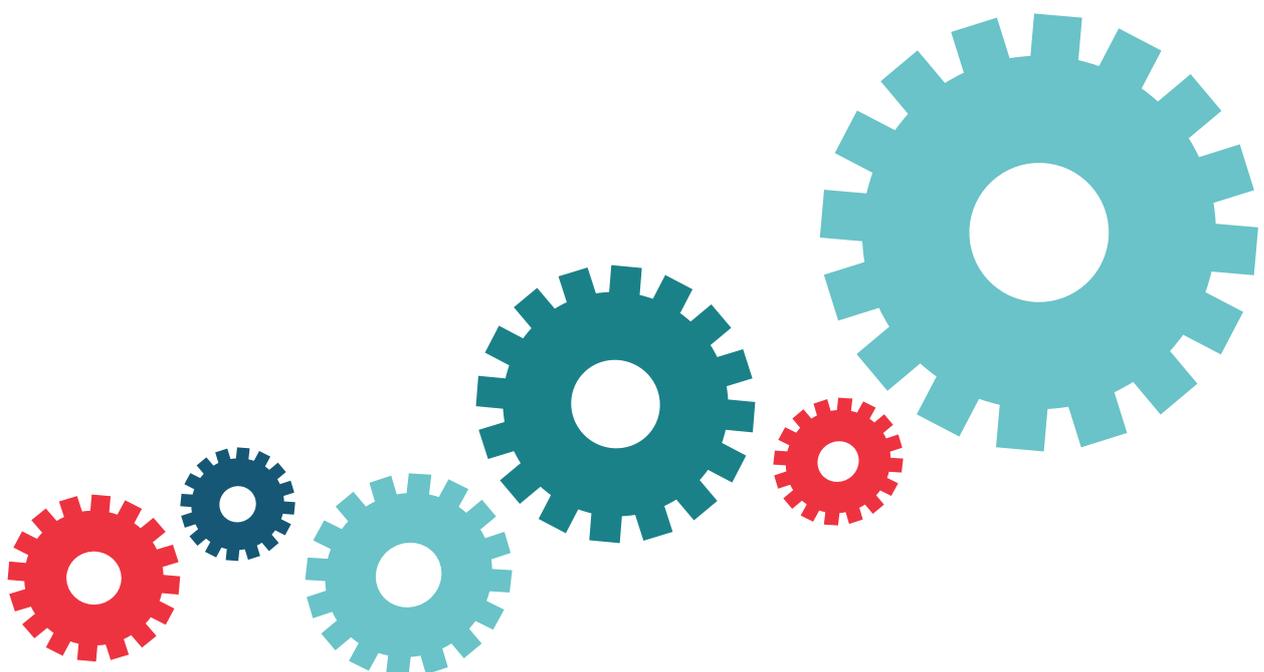
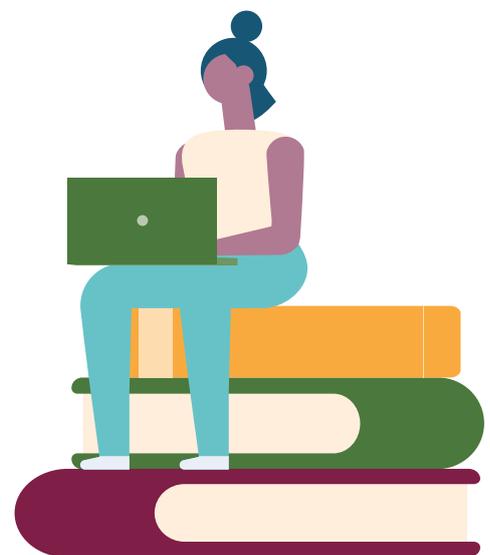
- Summer employment programmes offer young people meaningful, paid experience that builds confidence, work readiness and long-term employability.
- Employers benefit from additional capacity, early access to talent and strengthened community impact.
- High-quality placements are built on nine practical principles
- For most employers, the financial commitment is low: time, guidance and a supportive placement environment are the main requirements.
- Offering a permanent or extended role where possible is one of the most impactful ways employers can support young people's progression — and often brings longer-term benefits to the organisation too.

Further reading

- [Impact of summer programmes on the outcomes of disadvantaged or 'at risk' young people: A systematic review](#) (Institute of Employment Studies, Campbell Collaboration and Youth Futures Foundation 2024)
- [Summer Jobs impact evaluation](#) - We are partnering with Youth Endowment Fund and UK Youth to conduct the first large-scale trial of a summer employment programme in the UK.

Support

The UK Government's website provides information on [finding training and employment schemes](#).





The national What Works Centre for youth employment



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