

## Young People and Work Report: Call for Evidence

### About the Skills Federation

[Skills Federation](#) brings together the shared perspective of different industries on how the UK can build a workforce able to meet our skills needs. Our members are 19 employer led sector skills bodies who work across more than 20 sectors of the economy and represent over 150,000 employers, both large and small, across the UK. They are funded by their industries to provide sectoral voices and vital support on skills issues. This includes workforce planning and intelligence, professional standards, tailor made skills solutions, qualifications, kitemarking, accreditation and quality assurance.

Our vision is for a skills system that supports industrial investment and growth by providing a pipeline of talent into each sector of the economy, giving the opportunity for everyone to get in and get on at work through pathways that turn jobs into great careers.

### Skills Federation response

We welcome the Milburn Review's focus on understanding and addressing the drivers behind the rising numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training. While a major element of this will involve ensuring that all young people are well supported to enter the labour market, we believe that it is equally important that the Review also considers how to create more employment opportunities for young people.

The combination of the current economic climate, recent policy changes, and advancements in technology have led to a reduction in employment opportunities, particularly for young people and at entry level. Without a dual focus on both supporting young people and increasing opportunities for them, the Review risks simply heightening competition for a diminishing number of jobs.

As the collective voice of employer-led sector skills bodies, our response offers a strategic industry perspective on tackling the twin challenges of expanding employment opportunities and ensuring young people can access them effectively.

### 1. What is stopping more young people from participating in employment, education or training?

We welcome government's increasingly sector focussed approach as demonstrated through the industrial strategy and the related sector and jobs plans. In attempting to address the NEET crisis, government should consider both improving support for young people and tackling the barriers faced by employers in recruiting young people, as well as maintaining a relentless focus on securing economic growth to ensure more opportunities are available.

One of the biggest challenges for young people seeking to enter the labour market is around information. There are at least two aspects to this. The first is that young people don't always understand the range of jobs available and/or have an accurate understanding of what's involved in the jobs they do know about. Skills Federation members [Enginuity](#) (engineering and manufacturing), [CITB](#), [National Skills Academy Food and Drink](#), [Lantra](#) and [Energy and Utility Skills](#) report that attraction is a particular challenge in their sectors, but this is the case across other sectors as well. In the health sector young people are often aware of jobs including doctor, nurse, paramedic and midwife but not about the range of jobs available at

entry level and which can lead onto other opportunities. Attracting young people to jobs in the NHS is also made more difficult by the negative picture painted by the media.

The second is that progression routes into employment aren't always clear and so young people don't always know what skills and qualifications they need. There is an ongoing challenge to create clear progression routes to work and further study and to ensure that young people have the information, advice and guidance they need to make good decisions.

There are also barriers for employers to recruiting young people and it is equally crucial that these are addressed. The challenges include:

- The growing cost of employment has increased the risks of recruiting people who have yet to develop skills and so employers are logically more likely to go for the easier option of recruiting people with experience.
- Relatedly, employers may have concerns about recruiting young people including about their preparedness for a work environment, practical skills and employability skills. Fewer young people have part time or 'Saturday jobs' which means they don't have real experiences of work whilst at school or college.
- The inability to get insurance holds back some employers from offering work experience or job roles to young people. For example, there are specific challenges for employers in safety-critical industries to be able to recruit young people to work on site. Whilst safety should always be of paramount concern, any unintended consequences need to be considered.
- Employers, particularly smaller businesses without a dedicated HR function, may struggle to identify effective ways to recruit young people and/or may feel ill equipped to deal with mental health and wellbeing within their workplace.
- Entry criteria for some apprenticeships can act as a barrier to entry for those without the right GCSE grades but who show the right attitude and behaviours to an employer. This combined with a general unwillingness from the FE sector to support young people to resit maths and English because of the low level of funding available prevents, particularly SME employers, from giving those who are at risk of becoming NEET or who are NEET an opportunity.
- SMEs often rely on their local college or provider for support with recruiting and training young people. However, availability and quality is inconsistent across the country.
- The pace and complexity of change within apprenticeships and the wider skills system risks employers disengaging. This risk is increased by employer concerns that the changes to apprenticeship assessment will have a negative impact on quality, and government appearing to move away from employer involvement in the development of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans.

## **2. What would make the biggest difference to support more young people to participate?**

To improve support for young people to participate, we would recommend:

- **Alternative provisions for 14-19 year olds.** Invest in provision to provide alternative pathways for young people at risk of becoming disengaged. An example is the funding provided by [Enginuity](#) to fund organisations to set up accessible, practical training spaces that give young people a strong first step towards a career in welding and fabrication.

- **Sector entry programmes.** Develop and fund sector-specific programmes which provide coherent and accessible progression routes for young people into priority sectors. There are already programmes in place, for example, work that Energy and Utility Skills are doing with DWP to pilot sector entry programmes, alternative provision set up by Enginuity and Babcock into engineering apprenticeships, and [bootcamps](#) in horticulture, which could be learnt from and applied to other sectors. There are also international examples which could be considered, for example, in the [land-based sector](#). To support this the national jobs plans should include a focus on creating clear and accessible routes for young people (and others) into growth sectors.
- **Sector attraction campaigns.** Extend the approach in the [Clean Energy Jobs plan](#) and roll out awareness and attraction campaigns to other priority sectors. This is being led for clean energy jobs by [Energy and Utility Skills](#) and involves [ECITB](#), both Skills Federation members.
- **Improve career guidance.** Develop a new careers strategy to set the direction and purpose of career development for young people and adults and provide adequate funding at both national and regional levels to ensure that young people have access to the resources and activities they need to make good decisions about jobs and work. Utilise the rich information already available from sector skills bodies.

To overcome barriers to employers recruiting young people we would recommend:

- **Review regulation and insurance requirements, including around intellectual property.** Whilst necessary protections for both young people and employers need to be in place, government should review, and implement changes where these are creating barriers and holding back opportunities.
- **Greater support for HR for SMEs.** Capacity can be a challenge, and smaller employers may not have the resource to develop workforce plans and to recruit and support young people effectively. More practical tools and resources provided by Strategic Authorities as part of their Youth Guarantee plans could support this, as can toolkits provided by other organisations including the [NHS](#).
- **Review options to price young people back into the labour market.** Government to review options to make employing young people make more economic sense. This could include looking at the youth minimum wage or additional exemptions from national insurance contributions. Another option would be to provide wage subsidies alongside support to train young people. There are lessons from programmes such as 'Kick Start' which could be learnt.
- **Work with sector skills bodies as key strategic partners.** Sector skills bodies provide a collective voice for employers in their sectors on skills and are keen to work with Skills England, Mayoral Strategic Authorities and government more widely. They have extensive employer contacts across their sectors, including with SMEs, and can be used as a trusted voice to advise on sector specific challenges and messages, and to encourage engagement across their areas. This could add value by capturing economies of scale, identifying where places need sector specific support, and avoiding duplication of effort by sharing what works.
- **Streamline processes.** Any processes associated with delivery of government initiatives including apprenticeships, sector based work academies, and the Youth Guarantee more broadly should be simple and easy to engage with.
- **Join up related initiatives.** There are many related services which could be helpfully coordinated including the extensive information offered by sector skills bodies including:

- [Skills Miner](#) a game created by [Enginuity](#) to help young people discover engineering and manufacturing through problem-solving challenges in Minecraft.
- [Tasty Careers](#) created by [NSA Food and Drink](#) which provides a wealth of information about careers in the industry
- DCMS funded [Discover Creative Careers](#) led by [Screenskills](#) and contributed to across the creative industries which includes a career finder tool to help people to match their skills to roles in the industry and an opportunity finder for schools to find industry inspiration events.
- [Routes into Rail](#), a single source of advice and information on the breadth and depth of careers offered in the rail industry provided by [National Skills Academy Rail](#).