



Inclusive Recruitment

Ideas for employers on accessing the untapped potential of unemployed young adults

A collection of ideas co-designed by employers and young adults

Introduction

This document provides practical ideas to make recruitment more inclusive to unemployed young adults.

In their guide to building inclusive workplaces, the Chartered Institute for Professional Development open with 'positive change on inclusion can only come about through concerted, meaningful, and intentional action.' [1]

It is hoped that this guide, which has been co-designed by HR professionals and young adults with experience of unemployment, prompts employers to review their recruitment and selection practices to make meaningful and intentional changes which support young adults into employment.

This guide begins with the knowledge gathered from lived experiences of young adults in relation to employment. This provides context to support you to understand some of the challenges that they have experienced.

Fundamentally, this guide is designed to spark ideas. The ideas have been tested with employers, but we hope that you feel able to test them too. It is only through testing, seeking feedback, and continually improving that you will get the most meaningful impact. We have outlined the co-design process to spark ideas about how you might go on your own co-design journey.

Making recruitment more inclusive to unemployed young adults means attracting a talent pool that is often overlooked. It means offering someone a role that will start their career. It means offering someone security and purpose.

Contents

1. [Timeline of co-design process](#)
2. [Insights from lived experience](#)
3. [Summary of ideas](#)
4. [Ideas for standard documentation](#)
5. [Ideas for attracting candidates](#)
6. [Ideas for application processes](#)
7. [Ideas for interview processes](#)
8. [Ideas for making offers and rejections](#)

Co-design Timeline



Co-design is concerted, meaningful, and intentional action.

Co-design is fundamentally about creating space, sharing power, and bringing the right people together.

Co-design looks different, in length and process, for every organisation or piece of work.

As long as there is a space created, power is shared, and the right people are in the room, then insight and ideas will emerge.

Insights

Contrary to pervasive stereotypes about unemployed young adults, many young adults want to work. Unfortunately, barriers to employment exist which make this process more challenging.

Understanding the lived experience of unemployed young adults will help in designing recruitment practices that are inclusive to them.

We found that:

- 1** Struggling in school has long term impacts
- 2** Self-worth is trounced by traumatic experiences
- 3** Limited knowledge of opportunities stops people dreaming
- 4** Temporary accommodation forbids employment
- 5** Endless rejections make it feel that work is not 'for people like me'

Looking into lived experience: further insight

1

Struggling in school has long term impacts

'To be honest, I'd never thought I was good enough to work in an office.'

Leaving school with few or no qualifications has a long term impact on confidence. Comparisons are made as others from school progress and this amplifies feelings of low self-esteem.

As a result, young adults can feel unworthy of work – feeling that an office based role, a pension, and even minimum wage are 'not for people like me'.

Jargon and unclear communication about the role and who might be suited to it will result in young adults concluding that they are not good enough for the position.

2

Self-worth is trounced by traumatic experiences

Whilst members of this project felt that their difficult experiences gave them a deeper drive and motivation, the impact of trauma on confidence and feelings of self-worth are a massive barrier.

Similarly, these experiences – domestic abuse, parental and sibling loss – are not easily shared to explain gaps in employment history.

Looking into lived experience: further insight

3

Limited knowledge of opportunities stops people dreaming

People gather knowledge about the work available in their community from their 'social capital' – the relationships and network that they have.

For some young adults, their knowledge of opportunities are limited – one young adult involved in this project said 'I don't even know what jobs to dream about'.

4

Temporary accommodation forbids employment

The vast majority of temporary accommodation forbids employment. Being employed, and therefore eligible to pay for your social care, makes the temporary accommodation unaffordable. For many, taking a job means being street homeless.

Many involved in the project lived in 'temporary' accommodation for a number of years. They found it hard to explain such gaps in employment history.

5

Endless rejections make it feel that work is not 'for people like me'

Unemployed young adults are encouraged to apply for as many jobs as possible to show they really want to work. This is often regardless of application quality. As a result, many unemployed young adults are rejected from hundreds of jobs. The impact that this has on their confidence and mental health – especially in relation to ability to get work - is huge.

Summary of Ideas

This page summarises the ideas that you will find in this document. This list is not intended to be exhaustive and we hope this guide sparks ideas of your own. Nor is it intended to be instructive - we hope that you feel able to test any ideas that you see potential in.

Standard documentation

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Advert/webpage | <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Link to salary calculators· Share the why - people want purpose· Always state if training will be provided |
| Job description | <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Use plain English· Aim to explain clearly what the role does |
| Person specification | <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Remove GCSE requirements· Don't match to each point on a job description· Make clear that experience can come from life |

Attracting candidates

- Create graphics with key points intended to be shared
- Share in relevant Facebook groups
- Aim for the people around potential candidates
- Create 'day in the life content'
- Talk about being inclusive, flexible, and recruiting for potential

Applications

- If you use forms, choose forms accessible on mobile
- For application forms, ask clear questions
- If you use CVs, encourage skills based CV
- Make clear that experience can come from life not just work
- Proactively ask what to do to help get the best from candidates

Interview

- Offer bus passes
- Use skills based tasks
- Use structured interviews with competency based questions
- Roleplay works when candidates observe
- Share honest, constructive feedback to all candidates
- Focus on building confidence
- Be willing to adjust onboarding based on feedback

Offers - and rejections

- Regardless of outcome - focus on building confidence
- Create time for generating meaningful feedback (even if standardised)
- Welcome feedback from candidates to improve processes

Standard Documentation

Use plain English

For entry level roles, it is likely that candidates will not come from your sector or workforce. Yet, many job descriptions for entry level roles contain jargon and acronyms. Plain English is written more easily, read more easily, and gets your message across more often. Simplicity is key.

It might feel tempting to include sector specific jargon to attract candidates who work in the sector. However, it can put off suitable candidates. Good application and interview processes will capture any sector specific experience – but they will not be able to make up for unclear job descriptions that put off suitable candidates.

Paint a clear picture of what this role is expected to do

A job description with neither jargon, nor acronyms, and in plain English might still be unclear. Think of the job description as unravelling the role. Be specific about what someone in this role is expected to do and how often they will do it.

Similarly, share the exact location where this role will work. Almost all members of the project use public transport. With the exact location, suitable candidates can be sure that they are able to attend this place of work.

Share the why

Work can give you purpose. From wanting a reason to get up in the morning to wanting to feel part of something bigger than themselves – the young adults involved in creating this document desperately sought the purpose that comes with work. All roles have a purpose to your business or organisation. Share the purpose of the role.

Standard Documentation

Person Specification

Some small changes to person specification made a big impact on inclusivity:

Rethink	Try instead
Measuring basic maths & English skills by requiring GCSE Maths & English.	Use exercises at the interview stage that reflect the level of written, verbal, and numerical skill needed in the role.
Linking each point on the person specification to each point on the job description.	List what is really required for someone starting in this role and take out what will be learnt through training and experience.
Referring to professional experience (or just 'experience' without making clear it can be broad or transferrable) for entry level roles.	Make explicit that skills and experience don't have to be exact matches and can be gained through life experiences.

How much?

Regardless of background, understanding money in relation to living costs can come as a surprise to young adults. Especially those who have grown up on tight budgets, viewing a yearly salary – often an unthinkable amount of money – can trigger feelings of unworthiness. Linking to a salary calculator will allow candidates get an idea of how much they could earn each month and the role can feel more attainable. For young adults in receipt of universal credit, this is paid monthly, so knowing the financial gain from working can be a real motivator to applying.

Attracting candidates

Shareable graphics and posts

Graphics and images about the role help get the word out as they tend to catch the eye of more people on social media. Test your social media posts to make sure that the graphic and link remain when shared onto personal profiles and within groups. WhatsApp is also a great way to get the word out and messages with images and captions can be easily forwarded on.

Don't feel that you have to target young adults

For this group of potential candidates, having someone in their circle sending a job starts the process of confidence building. Whilst Facebook is not the most popular platform for young adults, it might be for a trusted relative.

Use a call to action

Don't wait for people to share your post. Explicitly ask people to share with someone that they think might be suitable – this is especially helpful when targeting the networks of young adults. Share roles with your own employees too who can help promote the role within their networks.

Unravel the role

'Day in the life' content helps these potential candidates dream. Short form video are especially popular and can show exactly what to expect from a role. Being crystal clear in this way reassures suitable candidates and allows those who would not enjoy the role to look elsewhere. Ensure that any content focuses on the day-to-day job, location of work, and less on personal employee choices such as what to have for lunch. Selecting an employee who might speak to your target audience will help your overall message.

You might also wish to share stories of people who have progressed from this role to show that there are career pathways.

Talk about being inclusive, flexible, and recruiting for potential

This group of potential candidates are likely to have low confidence; they will notice what makes them unsuitable for a role first. Sharing information about how inclusive you are as a workplace (especially for those with mental health needs), how flexible you can be and about what, and that you look for potential will start to make this group feel that this role *is* for people like them.

Applications

How many forms?

Cutting down what is required at application stage helps slim down the process for both candidates and for you as an employer. Some information is only needed from successful candidates so avoid asking this of all candidates. If the most important questions and forms remain, you will have enough to make an informed decision on who to invite to interview.

Explain how you want the application to be completed

If your sector or organisation prefers a specific structure to answers or is looking for something in particular – tell potential candidates. This might just be suggesting to use the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) approach to answering questions or writing statements. Not doing so allows those in the know to excel and those who are not to be left behind.

If your sector or organisation prefers to use CVs, state that candidates with great potential but less work experience or gaps in employment can send a skills based CV. This will help suitable candidates feel worthy enough to apply and better demonstrate their potential.

Regardless of application type - make explicit, again, that skills and experience can be gained through life experiences.

Avoid forms created on Microsoft Word

Avoid using Microsoft Word forms. There is no free access to Microsoft Word. Equally, Word documents that are formatted to function as a form takes time and skill. Even if use of Microsoft Word is required in the role, a more inclusive approach would be test this in a task. Those with appropriate skills may not have personal access to the software.

Use online forms that work on mobile devices

When unemployed young adults have no devices, they are often provided with a mobile phone to support their search for a job. Many young adults' only device is a smartphone, so making the form accessible here improves inclusivity. For employers, using an online form software can make pooling answers together easier.

Applications

Choosing the right questions

Specific questions help all applicants and are especially inclusive to neurodiverse candidates. This means using competency based questions instead of theoretical questions. Here, you will be asking candidates 'tell me about a time when', instead of 'what would you do if'. This allows those with transferrable skills from experiences outside of work to shine.

You might also consider sharing questions in advance to support candidates to prepare. This way, the interview is not a memory test but an opportunity to get the best out of your potential employee. This doesn't prevent you from asking follow up questions - you can tell candidates to expect this.

Go beyond the traditional accessibility question

Proactively ask what you can do to get the best from candidates. Even with no response, it will get candidates thinking about how to be their best if offered an interview.

Interviews

Through a workshop based on real job vacancies, HR professionals and young adults who have been unemployed tested a variety of interview methods to find what best helps them demonstrate their potential.

Rethink	Try instead
Only using a structured interview or not showing questions in advance.	Using different tasks to assess ability and potential. If using a structured interview then share questions ahead.
A panel room layout in which the interviewing panel are sat opposite the candidate, as this can be intimidating.	Laying out the room in a more inviting way – having the candidate at a right angle to interviewers can help.
Asking candidates to take part in roleplay at entry level.	Asking the candidates to watch a roleplay, make notes and feedback.
Assuming that attendance without expenses shows commitment to role. It may be true for some but for others it may only show that their support network includes someone with a car.	Offering bus passes – usually available to purchase from local travel companies – and giving the date as far in advance as possible to allow candidates on the tightest budgets to put money aside.

Offers - and rejections

Regardless of outcome, focus on building confidence.

For those who you are making an offer to, share positive feedback and explain why you feel they would be a good fit to the organisation. This will help them arrive at work ready to succeed in the role that you have offered them and go a little way to warding off any impostor syndrome caused by low confidence.

Rejection rarely feels good. But, unemployed young adults often experience something worse: hearing nothing. Giving positive and helpful feedback will play a role in boosting the confidence of candidates to help them prepare for their next opportunity.

Providing individual feedback is not always practical, especially for roles that attract large numbers of applications. Standardising feedback can make this more practical. This can be done by building a small amount of time into the recruitment process to agree a few sentences or short paragraph of helpful feedback that can go into communication with unsuccessful candidates. This feedback should point to where to improve future applications and help an unsuccessful candidate understand why their application was not progressed.

Given that the most common experience is hearing nothing, giving those who do not reach interview stage helpful feedback on their application will make your organisation stand out to potential candidates. Think of it as expanding your talent pool - some may follow your advice and apply again.

You could use this communication to ask for feedback from candidates and adjust your recruitment accordingly.

With thanks to

Co-production Project Members

Alan, MJ, Julia, Ellie, Hannah, Asha, Adam, Jordan, Shaquille, Olivia, Karl, and Danny

Neil Darwish, Peter Cerowski, Martyn Hague, and Emma St. Barbe

ForHousing

Danielle Ainsley, Mat Ainsworth, Andrea Marshall, Jess Marshall-Townsend, and Dave Timperley

Salford City Council

Lorraine Butler, Sarah Henderson, Samantha Phoenix, and Sue Sutton

Salix Homes

Thanks also to those employees of ForHousing & Salford City Council who joined our *Attracting Local Talent* workshops in early 2023.

Co-production Project Funders

Public Health - Salford City Council

Co-production Project Facilitated By:

Laura Edwards - Unlimited Potential

Design Template Adapted From:

Emma Price's (Innovation Unit) *Good Homes in Good Places* Report



Salford City Council

ForHousing



