



# FACTSHEET

## COVID-19 AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

COVID-19 is having a wide-ranging impact on people's lives and livelihoods with some predictions expecting the economic impact of the crisis on unemployment to last for at least five years.<sup>i</sup> Already, young people have experienced a significant disruption to their education and those who are in employment are among the groups of workers hardest hit by furlough and redundancies.

Past recessions have had devastating effects on young people's employment prospects. A number of businesses and youth sector organisations are calling on the Government to take urgent action to create jobs. These organisations are also asking for a 'youth guarantee' to prevent young people becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training).

This factsheet looks at what employers themselves can do to support young people in this challenging time.

There are actions every employer can take now to mitigate against a 'lost generation' as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether that's protecting jobs for young people within your organisation, inspiring the next generation of talent, removing barriers and actively hiring young people or ensuring young people have development and progression opportunities

### The stark picture

Early analysis of the current COVID-19 crisis has led the United Nations and International Labour Organisation to coin the term 'lockdown generation'. This refers to the current cohort of young people who face permanent exclusion from labour markets<sup>ii</sup>.

One month after the UK went into lockdown, the number of 18-24 years old claiming unemployment related benefits increased by 59% compared with the previous month<sup>iii</sup>, while the number of apprenticeships offered by employers fell 80% of pre-virus expectations<sup>iv</sup>.

## ONE MILLION

**under 25s face unemployment by the end of the year, with the youth unemployment rate predicted to reach 27%<sup>v</sup>**

A report from the Resolution Foundation confirmed that young people already in work have been among those hardest hit by the crisis with 23% of employees aged 18-24 years old being furloughed and a further 9% losing their jobs.<sup>vi</sup>

A recent survey also found that three in five organisations have stopped apprentices due to COVID-19, and that a third of apprentices had less than one in five chance of completing their programmes<sup>vii</sup>.





### Impact on young people leaving education

Before the crisis, more than 700,000 young people were NEET<sup>viii</sup> and this is expected to rise. A study from Impetus suggests lower qualified young people are already twice as likely to be NEET (as those with five GCSEs (29% vs 15%)<sup>ix</sup>.

Longer-term prospects have been damaged too. The Resolution Foundation says that the employment rate of today's graduates is projected to be 13% lower three years down the line, than it would have been without the crisis.

**Those leaving education this year are likely to face reduced pay and employment prospects even after the economy has recovered.**

Resolution Foundation, 2020

### Capital One: supporting young people in education

Helping young people reach their potential is a core pillar of Capital One's Corporate Responsibility agenda. Since schools closed in March, they've been working with education partners to best understand how to continue the support they usually provide through face-to-face activity.

As a result, two major education projects emerged:

- **Learning at Home Kits:** Capital One donated 500 Chromebook laptops to school children, alongside a Wi-Fi dongle and a stationary kit. These kits will help children access online learning opportunities via

their schools, ensuring they do not miss out on valuable educational opportunities and risk falling behind.

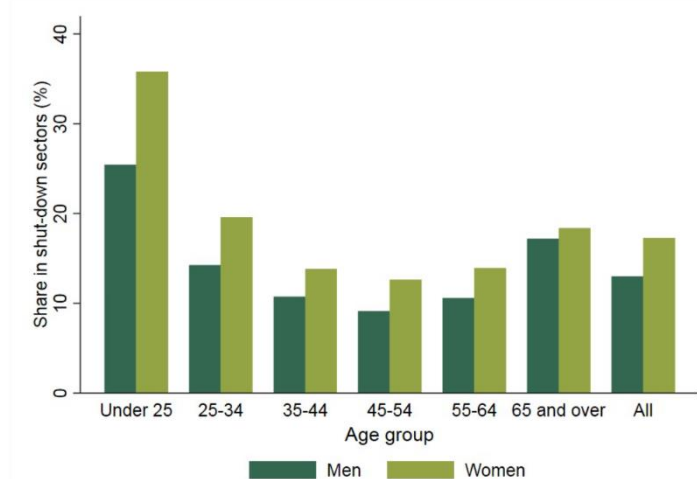
- **Capital One Pathways:** This flagship school engagement programme aims to raise the career aspirations of young people in local communities. When physical events had to be paused, they invested in creating the Capital One Pathways Digital Hub, an online experience where students can access some of the employability materials no matter where they are – and take part in interactive online live sessions too.

The Learning at Home Kits are benefiting some of the most in need children living near Capital One's Nottingham HQ and London offices. Many children do not have digital access at home for remote study. The Capital One Pathways Digital Hub is aimed at students aged 10-17 from across the country interested in working on their essential skills and having a glimpse into the business.

"We're hugely grateful to Capital One for making these Learning at Home kits available to our pupils. Sadly, Covid-19 has highlighted the challenges faced by families on the wrong side of the digital divide. It's vital we do everything we can to prevent pupils from falling further behind their classmates because they do not have access to the same digital resources" – Wayne Norrie, Chief Executive, Greenwood Academies Trust.



## Impact on employment



Source : <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14791>

Analysis of the UK sectors where most jobs have been affected so far, show that employees under 25 years old are about two and half times more likely than other age groups to work in a sector that was shut down<sup>x</sup>.

Young people are also overrepresented in the gig economy, on temporary and zero hours contracts, which means that they are less protected by labour law and therefore more vulnerable<sup>xi</sup>.

For those able to find work, pay is expected to be 7% lower two years on from leaving education following a recession. Young people who were planning to leave education this year and enter the labour market, are now entering a market in decline and with limited opportunities.<sup>xii</sup>

### Tees Valley Routeway programme goes remote

Business in the Community delivers employability support to young people aged 18-29 and not in education, employment or training in the Tees Valley as part of the Routeways programme part-funded by the European Social Fund and supported under the Youth Employment Initiative.

Tees Valley Routeways offers employment and learning opportunities in partnership with employers linked to growth sectors such as construction, advanced manufacturing and logistics.

Since social distancing measures were introduced, the programme has been delivered remotely with more 1:1 support by phone or online. The team is now developing a virtual programme of support.

### Wider social and personal impact

COVID-19 will not only impact young adults economically. Other wider and personal effects identified in a UK Youth survey<sup>xiii</sup> were:

- Increased mental health or wellbeing issues
- Increased loneliness and isolation
- Lack of safe space – including not being able to access their youth club/service and lack of space at home
- Challenging family relationships and lack of trusted relationships
- Increased social media and online pressure
- Higher risk of engaging in gangs, substance misuse, carrying weapons or other harmful practices
- Higher risk for sexual exploitation or grooming.

### Actions for employers

COVID-19 has seen business transform at a pace unimaginable until now and they must continue to be bold, seizing the opportunity to build a better, fairer economy and society for everyone.

Employers can support young people in four key areas, based on Business in the Community's Employment Framework:



1. **Protect** – entry-level roles and make sure furlough or redundancy plans do not have a disproportionate effect on young people in your organisation.
2. **Inspire** – young people to work for your organisation through adapting pre-employment and employability support for virtual delivery.
3. **Hire** – remove barriers for young people to enter your organisation and proactively target young people for new roles.
4. **Grow** – ensure development and progression opportunities for young people.

## 1. Protect

- Recognise the contribution of people who joined your organisation as young people in entry-level roles and ensure that restructures do not remove too many of those roles that provide a talent pipeline into your organisation.
- Monitor for age in any furlough and redundancy plans to ensure young people in your existing workforce are not disproportionately affected. BITC recommends using Equality Impact Assessments across all demographic groups, recognising that BAME, women, older workers and younger workers are currently being hardest hit with furlough and redundancies.

## 2. Inspire

- Support young people's employability through working with schools and employability partners. Explore with your partners whether there are ways you can continue to support young people remotely through online programmes or remote support, e.g. virtual work experience, or help your partners develop their capacity to provide remote support themselves e.g. through assistance with technology or skills.

- Use the [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) to develop young people's essential skills through outreach programmes in schools and employability partners.

## Jacobs: inspiring Y10, 11 and 12 in STEM

In response to the current situation, Jacobs recognised it may not be able to deliver its traditional work experience programme encouraging young people to pursue a career in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) fields. The company has developed a virtual work experience programme for Year 10, 11, and 12 students centring on the design of a Coronavirus vaccine research facility.

Students learn about the wide range of people within the STEM fields that come together to make this project a reality from architects and engineers through to project managers and safety specialists. In addition to focussing on the technical skills, Jacobs are also introducing students to some of the essential skills they will need in the workplace such as creativity, team work, leadership and resilience.

The programme has been rated to the Silver Level by Industrial Cadets, meaning the students will have about 30 hours of structured work experience they can use on their CVs as they apply for universities or an apprenticeship.

The programme is comprised of 10 sessions including:

- A video introduction from an expert in each discipline.
- A series of activities for students to complete.
- A live Q&A session with a Jacobs employee

The programme is delivered via Microsoft Teams, also using Word and PowerPoint.





### 3. Hire

- If your business is hiring, actively seek to recruit young people to address the disproportionate effect COVID-19 is causing and ensure newly unemployed young people are not out of work for long.
- Remove barriers to work for young people with criminal convictions through [Ban the Box](#).
- [Remove jargon](#) from your job ads and job specifications so young people can understand the roles you have to offer.
- [Remove unnecessary qualifications](#) and encourage applicants to describe how they have gained equivalent experiences to any desired qualifications, recruiting for attitudes and skills rather than experience.
- Embed [essential skills](#) into your application and interview processes.

### 4. Grow

- Provide [good work](#) and healthy workplaces with fair pay benefits, job security and flexibility, learning and development.
- Continue to [offer apprenticeships](#) to enable young people to learn on the job.
- [Develop young people's essential skills](#) at work through personal development plans, training and employee volunteering.
- Provide [good work](#) and healthy workplaces with fair pay benefits, job security and flexibility, learning and development.
- Continue to [offer apprenticeships](#) to enable young people to learn on the job.

### Accenture: supporting unemployed young people into apprenticeships

Accenture's Skills to Succeed programmes support unemployed young people from disadvantaged communities to thrive in the digital economy and improve social mobility. Movement to Work (MTW) is one of their flagship programmes and is a charity Accenture helped to co-found in 2013 when unemployment was at a record high. Since then, MTW has provided 95,000 high quality work placements for people aged 18-30 years through 100 participating employers – breaking the cycle of “no experience – no job, no job – no experience”.

Accenture itself provides 100 MTW work placements every year across its offices and supports participants to apply for its technology degree apprenticeship programme to help young people kickstart their careers in tech.

During the pandemic, Accenture has had to rethink how it delivers work programmes and internships. Its new virtual programme was designed in five weeks and piloted in May 2020.

Young people were dialling in from busy households so Accenture adapted the programme to be part-time, using MS Teams and other collaboration tools for live sessions covering design thinking, coding and employability skills and delivered by Accenture faculty mentors and buddies. Digital inclusion was a priority and all participants were provided with a laptop and dongle, as well as pre-programmed 1:1 support to get the equipment/software set up.

15 young unemployed people from Newcastle, London and Edinburgh joined and completed the programme – several of whom have progressed through Accenture's Assessment Centre for apprenticeship opportunities.





One participant commented, *“It was amazing to be part of Accenture’s very first Virtual Tech Taster Event! I was able to learn Python and JavaScript, 2 languages I’ve been keen on learning. Not only did I gain valuable technical knowledge and skills, but I was also able to polish up my soft skills!”*

Learnings and top tips from the programme have been used to create a toolkit to help other employers plan virtual programmes. Contact [info@movementtowork.com](mailto:info@movementtowork.com) for a copy of the Virtual Work Experience Toolkit and visit the [MTW Blog](#) for more information.

### **Bupa: making new roles available to young people through Movement to Work**

In response to the increased pressures arising from COVID-19, Bupa has created a new temporary Home Assistant role which will help contribute to the safe running of their care homes by providing housekeeping, kitchen and admin support.

Recognising the challenges young people can face gaining employment without previous work experience, and the disproportionate impact sector closures have had on young people, Bupa has worked with its partner Movement to Work to promote the role to young people facing barriers to work.





### Further information and support

- [Movement to Work](#) – support employers to unlock potential in young people by offering quality work placement opportunities.
- [The Prince's Trust](#) – work with delivery partners across the UK to offer hundreds of free courses, grants and mentoring opportunities to inspire young people to build their confidence and start a career.
- [Youth Employment UK](#) – independent, not for profit social enterprise tackling youth unemployment by supporting employers to develop and be recognised for their youth friendly employment practice.

<sup>i</sup> Learning & Work Institute (2020) Emergency Exit: How we get Britain back to work, accessed [here](#)

<sup>ii</sup> UN News, (2020) 'Lockdown generation' of workers will need extra help after COVID-19, urges UN chief [online] Available from: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1064912>

<sup>iii</sup> House of Commons Library (2020) Youth unemployment statistics [online] Available from: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn05871/>

<sup>iv</sup> FE Week, (2020), Revealed: COVID-19 hit to apprenticeship starts [online] Available from: <https://feweek.co.uk/2020/04/30/revealed-covid-19-hit-to-apprenticeship-starts/>

<sup>v</sup> Resolution Foundation (2020) Class of 2020: Education leavers in the current crisis, Available from: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/class-of-2020/>

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vii</sup> People Management (2020) Three in five organisations have stopped recruiting apprentices due to COVID-19 survey says 19 [online] Available from: <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/articles/three-five-organisations-stopped-recruiting-apprentices-covid19>

<sup>viii</sup> ONS (2020) Young people not in education, employment or training May 2020 release, Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneetukmay2020>

<sup>ix</sup> Impetus (2019), The long term NEET population [online], Available from: <https://impetus.org.uk/assets/publications/Youth-Jobs-Gap-The-Long-Term-NEET-Population.pdf>

<sup>x</sup> Institute for Fiscal Studies (2020) Sector shutdowns during the coronavirus crisis: which sectors are most exposed? Available from: <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14791>

<sup>xi</sup> CESI Youth (2020), Youth employment and COVID-19, Available from: <https://www.cesi.org/youth-employment-and-covid19/>

<sup>xii</sup> Resolution Foundation (2020) Class of 2020: Education leavers in the current crisis, Available from: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/class-of-2020/>

<sup>xiii</sup> UK Youth (2020), The impact of COVID-19 on young people and the youth sector [online], Available from: <https://www.ukyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/UK-Youth-Covid-19-Impact-Report-External-Final-08.04.20.pdf>

