

Reimagining Hiring

What is the future of hiring for the new generation?

Reimagining Hiring

Foreword



Getting young people into good jobs is a key priority. Today, almost one million young people who want to be in work are not. There are a range of reasons for this, from structural barriers in common recruitment and hiring processes to problems facing the disadvantaged, and a lack of a joined-up approach to skills. I am delighted to support this important work, and to support the work of the Better Hiring Institute more generally, one of the largest employer bodies active in the UK.

Resolving the issues facing young people in the labour market today is critical to the future prosperity of the country as a whole. Harnessing the potential of our next generation will help drive us forward, but to do this change is required – more so now than ever – as many of our next generation have already been negatively impacted by Covid.

This important guide for employers highlights the structural challenges young people face, and the practical changes employers can make to create a hiring process that is more inclusive for young people. In Parliament we heard from young people who spoke about how the “selection process is a rejection process” and about the rise of ghosting (the phenomenon of not hearing back from an employer), which exacerbate the problems already facing young people when applying for jobs.

The challenges go beyond the hiring process itself. Disadvantaged young people and those not already in education, employment or training often face an even steeper mountain to climb. As the UK puts more emphasis on skills in its hiring process, it’s critical young people are not left behind, and qualification and training strategies help young people to find good work. Employers should hire for the potential the next generation have, and help support skills development, so young people can have productive and positive careers.

The Better Hiring Institute are driving change to UK Hiring, working closely with government and industry to make UK Hiring the fastest globally, the fairest in the world, and the safest it can be.

Lord Lucas
House of Lords

Reimagining Hiring

Introduction



Over the last 10 years, there has been great progress in the way we engage the next generation with the world of work. Huge efforts have gone into creating opportunities for talent everywhere to follow the career of their dreams, turning back the wheel on decades of elitism across many of the UK's leading business sectors.

Most importantly, these efforts have been felt by diverse talent. Our annual 'What do graduates want?' research has shown this, as Bright Network members from a Black heritage background now rank among some of the most confident in securing a graduate role.

This is one stat among many success stories that should stand as a reminder that change can happen if industry and education work together to connect the dots for next gen talent.

However, we cannot sit on our past successes. There is still much work to be done to show diverse talent they're welcome in our workforce, and we have new challenges to grapple with when considering how we hire. The skills gap is growing, the roles of today are unlikely to be the same tomorrow, and the way we hire is completely evolving. None of these challenges are new, but they are being brought to the fore by GenAI.

How we address these challenges will define the lives of the next generation. So, I'm reassured to see leading voices from business, education and government coming together to discuss these challenges.

Balancing the priorities and needs of all parties will be essential in driving the right change, but one thing is clear. We must stop trying to retrofit the world of tomorrow to today. We will only succeed in reimagining hiring for the next generation if we break the mould. Career pathways should be transformed to embrace non-traditional routes, squiggly careers should be embraced, and human connections must be prioritised.

I'm delighted to be part of this conversation with the Better Hiring Institute and look forward to driving it forward with them.

Cecile Bonnet
Bright Network

Reimagining Hiring

Introduction



The need for hiring reform is great, as society and technology is changing at a rapid pace there is a need for hiring to keep pace, moreover for hiring to take a lead in how we want to be as a society. Nowhere is this more the case than how we hire our next generation of talent. As young people enter the labour market each year the expectations and needs change. There are very real barriers in the hiring process of today, many of which adversely affect our younger population. There are complex issues sitting behind early years recruitment such as the role of education in supporting people's future careers and the role of AI in the hiring process.

Whilst we may not be able to solve all of these complex problems at once, this work identifies many practical ways in which UK hiring could become fairer for our next generation.

This work provides a roadmap on how we could improve the hiring process for young people. How we remove barriers to young people getting work, from needing set periods of experience to ensuring better feedback is given to help young people improve their job applications. We need to be sensitive to the specific situations of the next generation. A good example of this is the employee screening process, something I am very familiar of in my role running Reed Screening, where young people might have more challenges with providing references or more adverse credit shown on credit checks, or challenges proving address history when going through vetting processes. Taking a more nuanced approach to hiring and employee screening helps to create a more understanding world.

The Better Hiring Institute have long been campaigning for faster, fairer, and safer hiring. Creating a fairer hiring process for young people is essential to this aim. Much can be done to reduce the number of young people not in work, education, or training especially in our new age of digital hiring and remote working. This guide should be adopted by all employers keen to improve their hiring processes and secure the excellent talent available in the UK today.

Keith Rosser
Reed Screening & The Better Hiring Institute

Reimagining Hiring

The next generation of young people need to see changes to the outdated hiring system, finds the [All-Party Parliamentary Group \(APPG\) on Modernising Employment](#). A plethora of challenges and barriers leave young people such as school-leavers and university graduates feeling “humiliated” and “demoralised” by the experience of trying to get their first meaningful job. Barriers include the availability and accessibility of opportunities, the gap between what education providers teach and what employers want, and biased hiring practices.

These barriers are explored in this guide with recommendations as to what employers can do to reimagine hiring for the next generation.

Availability of accessibility of opportunities

a. Diversity of apprenticeships and non-formal education options

Legally in England, young people are required to be in some form of education, apprenticeship or other formal training until they are eighteen years old; however, in practice, the options available to young people are limited if they choose not to pursue sixth form or college education. Apprenticeships are often paid lowly and are limited to the specific industries and businesses that are available and willing to offer opportunities in the local area.

b. Work experience

Young people are finding that to get a job they are often required to have some level of previous experience, even for jobs described as ‘entry-level’. Finding work experience in such a scenario can be challenging, even where work experience is supposedly offered or mandated.

Year 10 and 11 students in school are typically provided time during their school year to undertake a 1 to 2-week work placement, however, Amaya (Young Mayor of Hull) highlights that often students are left to find work placements by themselves. This leads to many students having to undertake work experience in a field irrelevant to their elected career path or even not finding an opportunity at all.

At University, there are often placement opportunities offered, either as a sandwich year to the course or during holiday periods, however many of these are offered as ‘unpaid’ or ‘voluntary’, creating significant barriers for students who are not financially privileged enough to be able to work on an unpaid basis, something which the higher education community does not support.

c. Location and demographics

The availability of job opportunities is disproportionately skewed to the country's largest cities, which limits participation in these jobs for the vast quantities of young people living outside of these cities. The Better Hiring Institute has already gone some way to unblock this by driving the availability of a fully-remote hiring process for employers, but there is more that needs to be done to support young people outside of large cities in particular.

d. Cost of living/ transport

The cost of living combined with first jobs being typically low paid (especially apprenticeships) mean that young people may not be able to take up an opportunity because they cannot afford to travel to work. This is especially compounded for those who live outside of large cities where the majority of opportunities lie.

The skills gap

a. Growing disconnection between the education sector and the workplace

The education sector plays a critical role in the development of future generations' skills and capabilities to enter and thrive in the workplace. The pace of change in the workplace, especially in the age of digital, is typically much faster than that of educational frameworks, therefore leading to a growing disconnection between the skills taught in schools etc. and what is required by employers and society.

b. Lack of funding and/or frameworks for options that are non-traditional

Non-traditional forms of education such as apprenticeships and on-the-job training are underfunded, with cost often sitting with employers to facilitate these. Employers noted how there is growing concern around the apprenticeship levy, and whether it is achieving what it is meant to, with large portions of the levy remaining unspent and being remitted back to government treasury akin to a tax.

Furthermore, many non-traditional forms of education still require an element of traditional 'off-the-job' academic style learning, which can be off-putting to those young people who do not thrive as well in traditional education structures. A framework where education allows for a blend of traditional and non-traditional learning styles at varying degrees as appropriate to the individual, could go some way to plugging the skills gap.

Technology dominating the hiring process without proper review

a. Lack of human intervention

The development of technology continues to bring many opportunities to improve and optimise the hiring process. Technology now plays a predominant role in hiring – from the application process through to the onboarding process. Whilst providing efficiency and systemisation to hiring for employers; young people are advised to put in the effort to personalise their application but at times do not receive a personalised process in return - in some cases, applicants do not encounter another human throughout the entire process.

Nathan Bell, Lancaster University, indicated that in his experience, only 63% of his applications were responded to, with little to no feedback provided as to why his application was rejected. Limited and templated feedback prevents young people from improving their application technique, and they fall into a cycle where "what is supposed to be a selection process is actually a rejection process".

Of Nathan's applications, 37% received no response at all, which is a growing phenomenon called 'recruiter ghosting'. It can occur at any stage in the hiring process, and leaves young people with a poor experience when trying to start their career. Margaret Heffernan, at University of Bath, highlighted the most applications are never read by a person and never

acknowledged given the 1000s of opportunities presented on hiring sites. The vast number of applications received by employers puts them in a position to believe that they have no choice but to use automation to process them, disadvantaging the applicant.

b. AI and bias

Various tests already undertaken on AI in the hiring process have shown that AI is yet to be rid of bias, as it is trained on past data and any bias in this data could have influence. For example, it was quoted that one large multinational corporation attempted to build an AI algorithm for optimising their hiring processes, but it was found to be rejecting applications based on identifying factors such as mental health challenges, and was therefore scrapped.

Download the UK's first industry led guidance on AI in Hiring [here](#).

Outdated teaching and hiring practices

a. Old fashioned and slow-to-adapt education system favouring academic grades over abilities/ skills for a successful career

The education system in the UK, from primary school through to University, remains focussed on attainment and measurement of academic achievement. Whilst academia via testing/assessment is much easier to measure than diverse skill sets and potential are, this unwavering focus on academic qualities is less aligned with what employers need in the workplace nowadays, especially as technology is even more prevalent. Employers are requiring workers who are versatile with transferable skill sets, and a strong set of basic soft skills and understanding of technology, which academic grades do not always necessarily demonstrate.

Further to these changing needs of the employer, skills are ever evolving and McKinsey estimates that the average shelf life of a skill is two and a half years. Meaning that educators not only need to redefine how young people are educated but there are also requirements to stay on top of the ever-changing landscape of skills needed. The approach to solving this challenge will involve employers, educators and government working together.

b. Lack of new approaches to the hiring process

Linked to the outdated education system, the hiring process followed by some employers has not fundamentally changed for considerable time, whilst others are developing innovative processes. Adaptations have been made in line with technological advancements however the general basis of hiring in the UK still values length of experience and academic credentials over skills and potential. The Better Hiring Institute recommends that employers move to review their hiring processes, by considering what type of candidate is needed to fill a role (their skills, their aspirations etc.) and then consider ways that this type of individual can be accommodated in the hiring process so that skills are at the forefront.

c. CV and cover letter

Margaret Heffernan at University of Bath points out that in the current technology-led process, "CVs are scanned, not read". For young people, where they may have limited experience in the field they are applying to, the chance of being able to stand out in the 5 seconds that is provided for the reading of a CV is slim.

The CV and cover letter themselves are archaic, traditional ways of demonstrating experience but it is possible that there could be newer, more modern ways to demonstrate this that is easier for both the employer and the applicant.

d. Requiring experiences for entry-level roles

Young people note regularly encountering job advertisements for roles that would suit their limited experience, their skill sets and with an entry-level salary, but they state a requirement of, sometimes years, of experience, to apply for the role. This puts off young and/or inexperienced people from applying, even if they have a suitable level of competency, and the right skill set to excel at such a position. This leads to young people being limited in the roles they can pursue, and businesses missing out on new ideas and creativity.

e. Poor application experience

It was highlighted that young people are unenthusiased by applying for jobs based on the poor application experience provided by employers. Examples of frustrating and inefficient elements of the hiring process include being asked to upload a CV or their LinkedIn profile, and then complete an application form which asks questions similar to what they have already included on the latter, such as questions about past experience. Other examples include multiple-stage hiring process (tests, interviews etc) that require significant time commitment from the applicant, without guarantee of a job at the end of it. Young people and graduates are left feeling “demoralised” and “humiliated” by the experience.

f. Employee Screening

Employment screening can unfairly disadvantage young people. The blanket approach used by many screening firms is not flexible enough to take into account individual situations. Young people will often find it more difficult to provide proof of address due to living in rented accommodation, formal references can be more challenging, young people may be adversely affected by negative credit when undergoing credit checks for certain roles, and in many cases have less access to official identity documents. It is important that employee screening processes cater for these challenges and different approaches are taken to support young people going through the onboarding journey. With many UK screening companies now owned by global multinationals, and the screening itself conducted overseas, it is important for organisations to have a solid understanding of the UK education system to be able to confirm qualifications, identify hiring fraud (link to BHI doc), and navigate UK-based institutions and rules.

Download the UK's comprehensive guidance on Tackling Hiring Fraud [here](#).

Recommendations for employers

Advertising and attracting

- Consider whether they are opportunities to offer 1 or 2 week work experience for a young person, and approach local school districts with details of these opportunities.
- Review your talent management frameworks and recognising whether roles, particularly those that are entry-level, truly need to be in one location, or whether opportunities could be offered outside of large cities (remote or otherwise).
- Consider offering a loan or subsidy programme for entry-level and apprentice employees.
- Engage on both a local and national level with the education sector. This could be through a variety of methods (including visiting careers fairs, offering work experience and running workshops), but it will begin to close the gap if educators are informed directly by the businesses in their local area as to what their future needs are.
- Consider removing from your job adverts the requirement to have a specific level of time-based experience, focusing more on the key skills and attributes expected of an applicant.
- Ensure that you are paying a fair wage for any work undertaken, regardless of whether it is permanent employment or an extended work experience opportunity.

Application and interviewing

- Engage with SEND specialist organisations to ensure that the hiring process is appropriate and fair for all.
- Consider where it might be appropriate in your own hiring process to retain or reintroduce human contact between applicant and recruiter.
- Aim to always respond to an applicant even if it's a rejection, and where possible, aim to provide at least one key identifying factor as to why their application was not suitable. If employers are working towards setting up the recruitment process from the start to only attract the most suitable and relevant applicants, this could help with the volume of rejections to be processed.
- Proactively work to avoid 'ghosting' candidates in the hiring process. Ways to achieve this could include implementing systems that flag when an applicant has not been appropriately dealt with, and, as above, appropriately setting up the hiring process to avoid mass applications.
- Engage with the Better Hiring Institute's guide on the use of AI in hiring to ensure fair and appropriate use of AI-based processes when hiring.
- Revise your hiring practices to ensure that the most important requirements such as skills are given priority.
- Consider whether the CV and/or cover letter still offer value in your hiring process, or whether there are other ways that this information could be obtained (without placing additional burden on the applicant).
- Review your hiring process from an applicant experience perspective, to ensure that you are offering the best experience you can, while avoiding duplication and unnecessary extra steps.

Offers and onboarding

- Consider supporting the Better Hiring Charter to ensure that you are working to make hiring faster, fairer, and safer for young people.
- Review the use of any pre-employment screening organisation, ensuring this isn't unfairly disadvantaging young people.

Our Collaborators...



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