

# BECOME A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL



**LAURA-JANE  
RAWLINGS ON  
EMPLOYABILITY  
SKILLS FOR YOUNG  
PEOPLE**

**Y**outh Employment UK is a national not-for-profit organisation set up to tackle youth unemployment. We work with young people, organisations and policy makers. Our role is to empower and support young people to develop the skills they need and to give them voice on the issues that affect them. We work closely with young people aged 14-24 to understand the barriers they face and use this information to support organisations and policy makers to become youth friendly and change the future of young people throughout the UK.

Whilst we hear good news about ONS employment statistics, young people still have the highest unemployment figures of any other age group. Impetus PEF report that nearly 2 million young people every year spend some time being NEET (not in education, employment or training) and that the number of young people who are long-term NEET (12 months or more) is increasing. The biggest reason for the discrepancy in numbers is that more young people are becoming 'hidden' NEET, i.e. not claiming welfare support and falling off the national radar.

## Barriers to employment

Working with 14-24 year-olds across the UK, Youth Employment UK's unique youth-led approach ensures that we are listening and responding to the needs of young people and taking active steps to improve their life chances.

Young people tell us that their biggest barriers in transitioning from education to employment are lack of experience, not understanding fully the careers that exist, lack of networks and lack of confidence in their skills. Young people are often not aware of the employability skills they need to progress and fail to recognise those skills in themselves.

## Employability skills

It is generally accepted that if we can improve the employability skills of young people, they are more likely to progress. A plethora of reports, reviews and suggested skills are available online often with new terms being added each time making it difficult for young people to know what skills are and how they can further develop them. Initial searches showcase a range of skills listed under employability, life skills, capabilities and career management skills.

If we agree that a mix of skills exists, that's useful both in employment and in a young person's transition from school to further study. What these skills are - and how they're labelled - is a subject of lengthy discussion, with

a lack of clarity both anecdotally and in literature related to the topic.



Youth Employment UK conducted a significant review of employability skills in the first half of 2017. This review included round-table discussions with key stakeholders and a literature review of

more than 80 Employability Skill Reports. What became apparent to those involved in this review is that this has become such a complex area it is no longer serving the people this work is aimed at - young people. Our findings and full report can be found here [www.youthemployment.org.uk/youth-employment-uk-employability-skills-review-2017/](http://www.youthemployment.org.uk/youth-employment-uk-employability-skills-review-2017/)

We recommend that the youth employment sector should agree to a common framework of skills, that is simple and easy to access for all young people (including those with low literacy and/or social mobility). Young people need ownership of these skills and for this to happen there has to be a clear and common language around skills. These skills should then be put into the hands of young people so that they can begin to become really familiar with them and take ownership of their own personal development.

We brought forward 5 skills in the report that were agreed as the most relevant and accessible from a list of over 18 different frameworks:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem solving
- Self-belief
- Self-management.

As part of our wider work we are strongly encouraging those that develop policy and services for young people recognise these skills and embed them as the core to any programme. We have taken the lead on this and adopted these skills as the core of our Young Professional Membership.

## Young Professional Membership

Young Professional Membership is free to all 14-24 year-olds in the UK, by calling a young person a Young Professional it immediately changes the way they see themselves and their place in the world. It's a total



paradigm shift in most young people's thinking around their future potential.

Young Professional Membership is about empowering young people to take ownership of their skill development; all young people can access the membership regardless of their employment or education status. They can keep accessing the support that comes with it for as long as they want and need.

Following the completion of a short introduction, Young Professionals receive an email confirmation that they are now Youth Employment UK Young Professionals. This is just the beginning; Young Professionals get access to a range of content and resources online to help them continue to build these skills. Young Professional Members (where they opt in) receive a weekly email providing some additional learning and ongoing development. This keeps the engagement high and helps young people to stay focused on their development.

#### What about careers?

To complement our skills resources we have added a growing careers hub. [www.youthemployment.org.uk/careers-hub/](http://www.youthemployment.org.uk/careers-hub/)

This hub provides impartial information about the careers available, LMI data, routes to study and training as well as support for creating CVs, applications or attending interviews. Much of our support content is created by young people providing a really relevant peer-to-peer platform. Employers are helping us create content and providing insight into different sectors, a plethora of roles and opportunities.

#### How can you get involved?

We are working with a number of schools and colleges who want to embed the Young Professional into their setting or use it to complement existing programmes. To help them with this we have created resources for professionals to access; assemblies/lesson plans, posters and guides. A school or college can choose how much they want to lead on the Young Professional or put in the hands of students, nothing is dictated and everything is flexible.

Unity City Academy became the first official Young Professional School in December 2017, with other schools soon to follow. Trafford College and West Sussex College will become Young Professional Colleges in the first quarter of 2018. Details of how these institutes are working with us can be found on our website. Free teaching resources can be found here [www.youthemployment.org.uk/organisations-support-our-work/teachers-resources/](http://www.youthemployment.org.uk/organisations-support-our-work/teachers-resources/)

We are, in some cases able to support with our network of volunteer Youth Ambassadors visiting the school to help kick off the Young Professional and even train up young students to become Ambassadors themselves.

Our approach has been one of co-creation with young people; we believe that only by having young people at the heart of a service can lead to real change. I want my own children to grow up in a world full of Young Professionals rather than NEETs and personally hope our work will go some way to realising that ambition. We welcome all members of the CDI to try the Young Professional out for yourself and talk to us about how we can support you in the settings you work in.

“

Young Professional Membership is about empowering young people to take ownership of their skill development.

”

Laura-Jane Rawlings  
is the CEO of Youth  
Employment UK  
[www.youthemployment.org.uk](http://www.youthemployment.org.uk)