A Framework for Success: connecting Young People with Employers from School to Work

A White Paper
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Introduction

There is an urgent need for systemic change in the way that young people are prepared for the UK labour market. Many schools and colleges already work well with employers across the UK to support young people into work and a job they want to do. Many employers also already invest time and resources in work experience. However, the evidence shows that more needs to be done.

This White Paper makes the case for the implementation of a new School to Work Framework in every school in the UK. The Framework will form part of the school curriculum each year for every young person from 9-18 years of age, and provide them with the right support and preparation to be able to transition successfully from education into work. Equally, the Framework will provide employers with the skilled talent that their businesses need to increase productivity and prosperity in the UK.

It sets out the origins of the School to Work Campaign supported by the EY Foundation and the broad coalition it seeks to build with those working in education, government, the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (the VCSE sector) and employers. Young people will be central to the coalition which will oversee the development of this new Framework.

The White Paper presents the case for a School to Work Framework based on key findings from new research undertaken by the EY Foundation with both employers and young people.

It concludes with an overview of the next steps to be taken to bring the Framework to fruition.
Why the EY Foundation is supporting School to Work

The EY Foundation believes every young person, no matter what their background, deserves a good start to their working life by having the right skills and access to meaningful experiences of work throughout their school career.

In the three years since we launched we have helped more than 1,000 young people from disadvantaged backgrounds transition successfully onto pathways to work they want to do. We have watched them take their first steps towards discovering their work ambitions and have seen how life-changing that experience can be.

The Foundation continues to increase the number of young people it supports year on year, but we recognise that we will never be able to reach every young person in the UK who needs our help. Yet, with one in three young people from disadvantaged homes lacking confidence in getting a job locally*, the need is more urgent than ever.

That is why we are supporting the School to Work Campaign: to make sure every young person between 9-18 years of age, regardless of background, is provided with the right support and preparation to be able to transition successfully into work.

We are proud to support the School to Work Campaign. We believe it has the potential to transform the future working prospects of millions of young people around the UK from all backgrounds, both now and in the years to come.

*An Age of Uncertainty, EY Foundation and Chartered Management Institute, April 2016
The School to Work Campaign – the Coalition behind it

The aim of this Campaign is to enable all young people, whatever their background or circumstance, to make a successful transition into work and also enable employers across the UK to meet their skill needs, so that their businesses can grow.

This kind of significant change can only take place if we can bring together a broad coalition of support across UK society, and also harness good practice by employers, schools and the VCSE sector that already help young people into work. To do this we have established three Working Groups and a National Youth Panel.

As Chairs of the Working Groups, we are committed to building a coalition that unites employers, education, government, Ofsted, the Careers and Enterprise Company, the VCSE sector and young people (through a new CBI-backed National Youth Panel) to develop a new School to Work Framework.

In developing the Framework we will also work with specialists in education, accreditation and evaluation. They will help us ensure that the Framework has strong educational value, as well as providing formal accreditation in core skills that employers recognise, and it will be differentiated to reflect regional and local labour markets.

Young people will be at the heart of the Campaign and we will work hard to ensure that the Framework has a focus on building a young person’s readiness for life. This includes preparing young people for their first job but also beyond to help them to be confident, resilient, curious and have a life-long appetite to learn, together with other core skills such as empathy and communications.

Many young people are well supported by their schools and local businesses to make the transition from school to work. We want to build on that good practice and ensure that all young people in the UK have that kind of support throughout primary and secondary school.

We believe that this will benefit not just young people and employers but UK society as a whole. The time to create this change is now. We hope you share our view and will join the Campaign alongside us.

Dame Mary Marsh
Chair
Education and Government working group

Lyn Cole
Chair
Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector working group (VCSE)

Mark Gregory
Chair
Employers working group
School to Work National Youth Panel

Young people will be at the heart of shaping the School to Work Framework through the National Youth Panel. They will represent the voice of young people and ensure the range of needs and challenges that young people face are reflected in the Framework. We recognise that some young people may not even be in school or face additional barriers to learning and whilst we hope to make a focused, significant and measurable difference by starting to develop the Framework in schools, we are committed to keeping in sight the needs of all young people as the Framework is developed.

Afzal Hussein
Co-chair
National Youth Panel

“As 1 of 5 siblings, in a single parent household where benefits and income support were the norm, a lack of networks, a lack of ‘know-how’, a lack of guidance and a lack of confidence all pose huge challenges to getting a job. Young people need to believe they can achieve and that it is possible to get a job they want.”

Duncan McCombe
Co-chair
National Youth Panel

“Young people, including me, are funnelled through the exam factories we call schools. We’re led down a path, usually university, and as soon as we step off the path suddenly we’re on our own with no skills to succeed! That is why the School to Work Framework is so badly needed, to equip young people with the skills they need for the future.”

Alex Otubanjo
Deputy Chair
National Youth Panel

“Young people are just apprehensive about their future and a lack of the right skills and experiences mean they lack the confidence to find a job that fulfils them. Skills such as how to network, how to be part of a team and how to fill out an application need to be introduced in schools at an early age to build this confidence, provide inspiration and broaden opportunities for young people.”

National Youth Panel members are aged between 16-25 years old.
The case for a School to Work Framework

Existing Research

Many schools, colleges, higher education bodies, employers and organisations in the VCSE sector have developed good practice in preparing young people for work. However existing research shows that more needs to be done.

Young people

► The unemployment rate for young people remains high compared with the rest of the adult working population in the UK. Latest figures show that over 12% of 16-24 year olds are unemployed1

► Young people who are working are most likely to be low-paid with a recent report showing that over three-in-four (77%) of employees aged 16-20 were low-paid in April 20152

► Young people want to work and succeed yet employers are increasingly concerned about a shortage of skilled workers3

► Working in “Brexit Britain” may impact young people further, but it also may present new opportunities to enter the labour market if they have been supported in the right way4

Employers

► The Confederation of British Industry report, ‘Helping the UK Thrive’, highlighted that two-thirds of businesses see the skills gap as a threat to UK competitiveness5

► The Resolution Foundation recently highlighted that because of Brexit, “a tight labour market, coupled with an ageing population and lower migration means that firms will need to look beyond their usual pools of talent”6

► Research by the Open University found that 90% of employers have struggled to recruit workers with the right skills in the last 12 months7

► In their report “Growth through People”, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills argued that a key priority to help boost UK productivity is to connect employers and education8. The report stresses that all schools should have links with local businesses and use those links to inform and inspire young people about the breadth of career opportunities available.

1http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN05871 August 16 2017
4Employment Opportunities for young people, House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, March 2017
5http://www.cbi.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/helping-the-uk-thrive/
6http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/work-in-brexit-britain-reshaping-the-nations-labour-market/
7https://www3.open.ac.uk/media/fullstory.aspx?id=31527
8Growth through people, UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2014
The EY Foundation has also undertaken research with both young people and employers which reveals similar findings. This research highlights an urgent demand for a new systemic approach to preparing young people for work, via the school curriculum.

**Young People**

In September 2016 the EY Foundation, in collaboration with the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), published a report called ‘An Age of Uncertainty’\(^9\). Based on research with 1,500 young people, it found that young people’s experience of the transition to work is inconsistent and heavily dependent on where they live, their school and socio-economic background.

Further, the report revealed that young people lack the core skills needed to succeed in the world of work and have a lack of knowledge about the job market and the diversity of routes into work, all of which undermine their ambition.

**Employers**

To mirror the research undertaken with young people, the EY Foundation has also sought the views of employers. In June 2017 it carried out a survey of 500 small and medium businesses (SMEs) to investigate employer perceptions of young people’s readiness for the workplace. Headline results show that more than half of employers felt that young people did not have the core skills they require for an entry level job.

Furthermore, 66% of employers surveyed strongly believed that employability skills should be a statutory part of the national curriculum.

This reinforced feedback received from a series of UK-wide roundtable discussions held with 50 small, medium and large employers between autumn 2016 and spring 2017 and further in-depth interviews held with select employers in July and August 2017.

Common themes have emerged from both our research with employers and young people. This evidence is presented in more detail in the next section of this White Paper.

► **Good practice already exists in preparing young people for work but this support is not consistent:** in-depth interviews with large UK employers (set out on pages 24-29) show that some employers already help young people prepare for work. However, this support needs to come from all employers across the UK to avoid young people missing out.

► **Core employability skills are in demand but hard to get:** core skills are valued by employers as much as academic qualifications. 97% of employers consider core skills as important when recruiting and 42% of employers said employability skills are more important than academic qualifications. Yet, young people are not equipped with the core skills needed: more than half of employers think young people do not have the employability skills they need for an entry level job. Young people agree, for example, just one in four said they were good at communicating.

► **Concerns for the lack of talent and lack of opportunity:** 69% of employers are concerned that they will not find new employees with the core skills they need. Equally, a third of young people do not know about employers in their local area and lack confidence getting a job.

► **Employers value work experience but young people feel it can be difficult to get and does not always deliver:** 71% of employers offer work experience and recognise its value, yet young people say these opportunities do not always develop the skills they need.

► **The need for stronger relationships to connect education, employers and the VCSE sector with young people:** more than a third of young people do not know about jobs in their local area. Of employers who do not offer work experience, 22% said they would if they had strong links with schools. There is a need to build more relationships across the UK between education, employers and the VCSE sector.

► **Preparation for work needs to be learnt both in education and business:** with 45% of employers saying that the education system is not preparing young people for the workplace. Preparation for work also needs to be built over the long-term, starting in primary school.

► **A better way of bringing employers and young people together to prepare young people for work:** two thirds (66%) of SMEs think that employability skills should be part of the curriculum. Over half of those (54%) believe employability development skills should be part of the curriculum every year.
The research shows that the status quo is not working for young people or UK employers. There is an urgency that cannot be ignored.

That is why we need an accredited School to Work Framework to be embedded into the curriculum so that every young person aged 9 to 18 is better prepared for the world of work.

The Framework will develop core skills needed for young people to thrive in the modern workplace, and help them to understand the diversity of routes into work, including apprenticeships and self-employment. It will also ensure employers have access to young people who are “work-ready” and equipped with the skills demanded by employers.

The Framework will involve national and regional components to reflect the differing regional needs of employers.

“\nIt is essential that every young person gets the support they need to fulfil their potential ..... The right behaviours and experiences are as valuable as the right grades.\n\nCBI – July 2017"
EY Foundation evidence
Methodology and key findings

The EY Foundation has undertaken research with both young people and employers which highlights an urgent demand for a systemic approach to preparing young people for work, via the school curriculum. This section presents the evidence to support the case for a School to Work Framework.

School to Work

This survey was conducted by Censuswide with 505 small and medium business (SME) owners and directors aged over 16 in Great Britain between 13 June 2017 and 16 June 2017. The survey was conducted from a random sample of UK SME owners and directors using an online methodology. Censuswide abide by and employ members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles.

Key findings of employers (SMEs) survey

- SMEs offer work experience: 71%
- Young people do not have the core (non-technical) skills they need for entry level jobs: 50%
- The education system is not catering to what they need: 45%
- Do not have a recruitment pathway for young people: 40%
An Age of Uncertainty


Populus conducted a representative online survey of 1,510 young people in the UK between 23 February 2016 and 6 March 2016. Nationally representative quotas were set for gender, age and region and the sample was then post weighted to census data. Populus is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

Key findings of young people’s survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can’t get experience of work to get them the job they want</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think employers should offer young people more experience of work</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know about employers and jobs in their local area</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantaged young people who feel they lack confidence getting a job locally</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Good practice already exists in preparing young people for work

Many schools and colleges across the UK already work well with employers and the VCSE sector to support young people into work. Examples include the Education and Employers Taskforce and Ahead Partnership.

Some employers also focus their recruitment on developing future local talent for their business. For instance, West Midlands based engineering services company, adi Group, funds and runs a pre-apprenticeship programme with a local school (see page 26).

Scotland cashmere and woollen textile manufacturer Johnstons of Elgin runs interaction programmes at its factories for 16 and 17 year olds, in addition to experience of work opportunities (see page 24).

Financial services company Santander has chosen a similar route to nurture young talent, launching programmes for schools, apprenticeships and traineeships in addition to its graduate and internship scheme (see page 28).

Core employability skills are in demand but hard to get

Core skills are valued by employers...

While the recent government focus has been on improving the technical skills of young people in school (for example the introduction of T levels), employers also regard having core employability skills as critical for employees even at entry level. These skills include the ability to communicate effectively, resilience, team-work and organisational skills that enable young people to integrate into the workplace and make an effective contribution.

This is borne out overwhelmingly by our poll which found that 97% employers regard core employability skills as important criteria when recruiting; the most highly valued being communications (96%) and the ability to work in a team (95%). Resilience and organisational skills tied at 94%.

In a sign of how recruitment is changing, 42% of employers said employability skills are more important than academic qualifications with another 42% saying they were equally important.

Disturbingly, however, despite this skills-based approach to recruiting, half (50.3%) of employers believe young people do not have the core, non-technical skills they need for entry level jobs when they leave education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employers’ view of young peoples’ skills</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young people are not good at communicating/presenting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people are not good at problem solving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people are not resilient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people were not good at meeting deadlines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people were not good at punctuality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
...but young people do not feel equipped with the core skills needed

Employers are not alone in their views. In many respects, young people feel the same way. Indeed, in some cases they have an even harsher view of their abilities than employers.

An Age of Uncertainty\textsuperscript{11} revealed that 68% and 65% of young people recognised the value employers put on organisational and communications skills respectively. Furthermore, they recognised that they lacked these skills. Only one in four young people believed they were good at communicating. Only 15% believed they were good at presenting and just 14% thought they were good at getting people to work together in team.

\textbf{Young people’s view of their skills}

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Skill} & \textbf{Percentage} \\
\hline
Good at communicating & 25\% \\
Good at presenting & 15\% \\
Good at getting people to work together in team & 14\% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Both employers and young people are worried about the future.

69% of employers are concerned they won’t find employees with the general employability skills they need. Just under one in four (22%) is very worried. That is perhaps not surprising as 40% of the employers we polled said they did not have a pathway for recruiting young people. It also explains young people’s lack of confidence about getting a job. More than a third (35%) of young people polled in An Age of Uncertainty12 said they did not know about the employers or jobs in their local area and were unconfident about getting a job (25% rising to 33% of disadvantaged young people).

Work experience valued but difficult to get and does not always deliver

Work experience plays a critical role in helping young people transition successfully into the world of work. It is a way to develop and practise new skills and to find out what different careers entail. For businesses there can also be clear benefits. In particular, it can be a way to road-test potential employees and a way to deliver social responsibility. However, our surveys reveal employers and young people have starkly different perceptions of the availability and value of current work experience opportunities across the UK.
Many employers provide and value work experience

Nearly three out of four SMEs (71%) surveyed said they offer work experience and clearly appreciate its value.

Nearly all employers surveyed (94%) said they took on at least one young person for work experience last year and 88% said they hired at least one 16-24 year old last year.

68% of small and medium employers say work experience is a way to assess potential future employees.

29% of employers see it as a way of providing short term labour, 25% see it as motivational for their employees and 17% think they can learn from young people.

In addition, just under two out of three employers (62%) say they offer work experience to support young people and society with 29% providing work experience because of links with local schools.

**Why SMEs offer work experience**

- **To assess potential future employees**: 68%
- **To provide short term labour**: 29%
- **Motivational for their employees**: 25%
- **Can learn from young people**: 17%
Our survey findings make it clear that UK business appreciates the talent that young people can bring and believes that work experience is valuable.

But it can be hard to get...

Young people have a rather different view of much of the work experience on offer. More than half (56%) of young people surveyed in An Age of Uncertainty* said it was difficult to get the experience they need to get a job they want.

Undoubtedly, a major reason for the differing perceptions is that schools no longer have a statutory obligation to arrange work experience for their students. Only just over half (58%) of young people said they secured a work placement through their school.

In other words, it appears that without knowledge of the job market or the contacts with employers, which are out of reach to many young people, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, the chances of getting work experience are slim.

*An Age of Uncertainty, EY Foundation and Chartered Management Institute, April 2016
...and isn’t always what young people need

While it seems most employers recognise the value of work experience, strikingly, young people do not have a positive view of the opportunities on offer and what they can lead to.

For work experience to be worthwhile for both young people and employers, it has to provide opportunities to learn new skills and ways of behaving in the workplace. However, our results reveal that very often young people on work experience are not getting the chance to develop those skills or knowledge.

For instance, 42% of employers said that young people they took on for work experience carried out administrative or filing tasks and 72% shadowed employees – neither of which necessarily develop the kind of core skills employers and young people want. (See chart below).

The young people’s poll (An Age of Uncertainty) also indicates that too often work placements do not provide opportunities for workplace skills and behaviour development: 53% of young people said their work experience involved shadowing a staff member while 37% worked on their own most of the time (See chart opposite).

These findings indicate that work experience regularly fails to deliver enough of what young people and employers need to thrive.

**Employers: what do young people typically cover on work experience with you?**


- **Carried out administrative/filing tasks**: 42%
- **Shadowed**: 72%
- **General support**: 37%
- **Given feedback**: 33%
Young people’s experience of work placements

- Shadowing: 53%
- Worked as part of a team: 63%
- Worked on their own most of the time: 37%
- Given training: 46%
- Given information on training needs for job: 51%

“You don’t want to come out of school and not know what to do in order to be successful. You want to know that beforehand to help you.”

Male, aged 16
The need for stronger relationships

Connect education, employers and the VCSE sector with young people

With more than a third of young people (35%) saying they do not know about employers and jobs in their local area, there is a clear need to build better links between education and business.

At the same time, of the 29% of employers who currently do not offer work experience, 22% said they would if they had strong links with schools. Furthermore, 32% of those who don’t offer work experience said they had never been asked while more than half (56%) said they did not have the resources to do so.

Our survey shows that while some employers do have and want strong links with local schools and colleges and the VCSE sector, the strength of these links is inconsistent and consequently many young people are missing out on valuable opportunities to ease their transition into the workplace.

Strong links between employers and schools and colleges are essential if young people are to learn about employers and job opportunities.

Preparation for work needs to be learnt both in education and business

45% of employers surveyed said they think the education system is not catering to what they need in today’s workplace, contributing to the skills gap.

Reinforcing their view, our survey of young people revealed they are more likely to learn about communication skills during work experience than at school.

There should be the opportunity for young people to develop valuable core skills throughout their school careers, and the earlier they start developing these, the more prepared they will be to make a successful transition into work. Formal work experience, later on in a young person’s school career, is a key means to develop and consolidate core skills.
A better way of bringing employers and young people together

As we have set out, much good practice is being undertaken by schools, colleges, employers and the VCSE to support young people into work. It is critical this is built on to ensure no young person misses out.

**A new Framework for 9-18 year olds**

The School to Work Coalition believes that a new Framework should be included in the school curriculum across the UK. The objective of the Framework is to inspire young people about the world of work and the diversity of jobs, build core skills that are required by employers and increase understanding of the different pathways into work, including apprenticeships. It will also introduce young people to a diverse range of aspirational models and high quality work experience in later years. Finally, it will connect young people more closely with local and regional labour markets, so they better understand emerging job trends.

Young people’s feedback in ‘An Age of Uncertainty’* pointed to the need for some kind of School to Work Framework. Employers agreed.

Two thirds (66%) believe employability skills should be part of the curriculum. An additional 31% thought the idea should be considered. 54% were in favour of employability skills being included in the core curriculum for 9-18 year olds in the UK.

*An Age of Uncertainty, EY Foundation and Chartered Management Institute, April 2016
We have laid out our case for a School to Work Framework in the preceding pages of this White Paper. Based on this evidence and the need for a new School to Work Framework, key actions of the School to Work Coalition will be to:

► Build on existing good practice undertaken by schools, colleges, employers and the VCSE sector to develop a new School to Work Framework.
► Bring together a broad coalition of support for the School to Work Framework across the UK to support its development and implementation.
► Put young people at the heart of developing the Framework so that it meets the needs of all young people, regardless of their background or circumstance.
► Start small – piloting and evaluating the Framework as it is developed to understand what works best to make a measurable impact on young people and employers.
► Share our learnings along the way, across the School to Work Coalition and beyond.
Conclusion

► The School to Work Coalition believes that the evidence is compelling: the UK needs a new systemic approach that enables all young people to transition successfully into work and jobs they want to do.

► The new approach needs to provide a much clearer route for young talent to join local employers facing skills gaps, a win for young people, business and UK productivity.

► Many employers, schools and the VCSE sector already invest a huge amount of resource and effort in supporting young people into work. This good practice needs to be built on to create a new School to Work Framework that should form part of the curriculum in every school and college in the UK, so that all young people can benefit, wherever they live.

► The Framework will generate new relationships across the UK between employers, schools and colleges, the VCSE sector and young people.

► We believe that the time for change is now. The status quo is not working for young people or UK employers. There is an urgency that cannot be ignored.

► That is why we are launching the School to Work Campaign: to build a broad coalition to ensure the successful development and implementation of the new Framework across the UK.

We hope you will share our view of the change needed and will join the Campaign with us to make it happen.
Case study 1
**Johnstons of Elgin**

**Luxury cashmere and fine woollen textile manufacturer**

Makes woven and knitted accessories, knitted garments and fabrics for global luxury brands as well as its own retail outlets

1,000 employees

Turnover: £66m

Johnstons of Elgin was founded in 1797 and is one of the oldest companies in Scotland: its history includes producing the tweed made popular by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert during the 19th century.

The programmes for engagement with young people that Johnstons runs today are helping to ensure the company has a prosperous future, as well as nurturing strong links with local schools and with other educational establishments across the UK.

Most staff work at Johnstons' two production sites, at Elgin, in Moray, north-east Scotland; and at Hawick, in the Scottish Borders. Dozens of pupils aged 16 to 17 from local secondary schools, attend interaction programmes at the Elgin and Hawick factories each year.

HR Director Willie Wood says “We show them all the manufacturing processes, and all the support processes too.” He says even some of the teachers who visit express surprise at the variety of jobs on the site, from design to customer service, marketing, finance, HR and IT, besides all the differing jobs in the production process.

These sessions also help the students to develop and use some of the skills they might need in any workplace. They have to work with pupils from other schools who they don’t know, using problem-solving, communication, teamwork and leadership skills to complete a series of tasks.

The students are also asked to nominate a department within the business where they would like to spend some time. “They will then go to that department and if possible will actually be required to do some work while they are there,” says Wood. “So, for example, if they have chosen to spend time in the retail outlet, they might serve a customer.”

“We educate them on what Johnstons does as a company,” says Willie Wood, HR Director.

Johnstons also provides ‘Experience of Work’ opportunities to some young people each year. “Everybody that comes in to do experience of work gets a project, or a job that they are going to do while they’re here,” says Wood. “They cannot be used as a gopher.” Engagements can range from one or a few days up to several weeks, and include work placements for students during university holidays.
Part of the reason Johnstons puts so much effort into engagement with younger people is a need to inspire a new generation of potential recruits. The company has a workforce with employees aged between 16 and 76, but about 100 staff members at the Elgin site and more than 80 at Hawick are aged 55 or over. “Some of those jobs are very skilled and it could take years to train people for them, so we’re thinking about succession planning now,” says Wood.

“Some of those jobs are very skilled... so we’re thinking about succession planning now,” says Willie Wood, HR Director.

A number of current staff members began their association with Johnstons during the school interactions and/or experience of work placements. Around 100 employees are currently completing or have completed apprenticeships in recent years. They include Accounts Assistant Ewan Asher, who wanted to become an accountant but didn’t want to go to university. He will now obtain a degree-level qualification over the course of five years while working for the company.

Willie Wood has conflicting views on the question of whether young people have the employability skills they need when they leave full-time education. While he has encountered some young people who seem not to understand some of the basic requirements of full-time employment, such as punctuality and reliability, he has also been hugely impressed with others, who have demonstrated ingenuity, a willingness to work outside their comfort zones – in delivering presentations to a room full of managers, for example – and a willingness to question the way the company works.

Wood feels very strongly that more schools and colleges need to work with employers, “to share with these young people and their parents the differing jobs available in the local area and the various pathways that they could take into the workplace”.

Ewan Asher
Accounts Assistant
Johnstons of Elgin
Based in Kings Norton in Birmingham, adi Group provides specialist engineering services to a wide range of manufacturing companies. The business has grown four-fold during the past decade and is aiming to achieve a turnover of £200 million within the next five years.

This expansion will involve almost doubling the size of its workforce to employ over 1,000 people. Most will, as now, be employed in hands-on engineering roles. This is one reason why the company is keen to recruit talented young people. It has been training apprentices since its foundation in 1990 and currently has 19 on its books, mostly aged between 16 and 20. Having signed up to the 5% club, by 2020 it has committed to be among those companies where 5% of employees are apprentices, so aims to be employing 50 apprentices.

“There are lots of good reasons for home-growing our people,” says Group Strategic Account Director James Sopwith. “Having that steady stream of apprentices gives us the opportunity to assess, train and instil in them the adi way of thinking.”

“Our experience of young people coming into the workplace at 16, whilst a general statement, is that they are well schooled academically, but lack many interpersonal, analytical and/or other basic work skills. Typically, most children will have done some form of work placement, but in the main, this has been both short and frequently lacking in quality content.”

To address these shortcomings, the company has developed a unique Pre-Apprenticeship programme in partnership with a local school. It has the potential to provide an additional source of talent, both for adi and for the engineering sector in general, which is currently facing a skills shortage, but the aim is also to raise school awareness of the requirements of business.

The roots of the school partnership is a Business in The Community (BITC) scheme designed to create links between businesses and secondary schools. The company has been working with North Bromsgrove High School, which was undersubscribed and looking for new ways to attract more pupils.

The Pre-Apprenticeship programme offers a group of 14 to 16 year old pupils the opportunity to work at adi one afternoon each week during term-time, throughout the two years when they are studying for GCSEs. There are 12 places on the scheme for each year group. Children learn the core practical skills they would need...
in an engineering career, including making components using hand tools, use and communication of technical information, cutting, forming and welding various metals; and assembling electrical circuits and wiring control panels.

“Our experience of young people... is that they’re well schooled academically, but... lack other basic work skills”, James Sopwith, Group Strategic Account Director.

The programme is fully funded by adi, which has developed the course content and accredited it with skills organisation EAL. After two years work the children will have completed a Level 1 qualification in electrical and mechanical engineering. It is hoped that they will then seek to apply for a full apprenticeship in engineering, whether with adi or another company. “Our aim is that they would then be at the top of the pile for companies looking for apprentices,” says Sopwith.

“The CEO of our business was an apprentice, I’m a mechanical engineer and although I didn’t do an apprenticeship, I am passionate about sharing what fantastic careers are available in hands-on engineering roles,” says Sopwith. “As a business, we are totally committed to inspiring children to become engineers.” In addition, he says, the company is a growing and profitable business “and we believe we also have a duty to society to put something back.”

The first intake of 12 students started the first year of their two year course in September 2016. “The course is carried out in our workshops and the students are mentored by our own workforce. They are effectively part of our employee team,” says Sopwith. “When they arrive on their first day they get given a business card with their name on it. We all wear the same workwear here, so they look and feel part of our business and fit in with our other employees.”

“We want to make the whole process as much like getting a job and being employed as possible. We want to inspire the kids, to let them know that engineering is a valuable and well-paid profession, and that adi is a great place to pursue that career. One of our measures of success will be how many of those 14 to 16 year olds join a full-time apprenticeship scheme either with ourselves or another engineering company.”

There are currently no plans in adi to extend the scheme to other secondary schools, but the Group’s aim is to inspire other businesses to launch similar programmes elsewhere. It has made the resources it has created for the scheme available to any other business, in any sector, who want to launch a similar programme.

Meanwhile, admissions at North Bromsgrove High School have increased. Sopwith is at pains to stress that there are many other excellent aspects of the school’s progress that have led to this change, but there is some anecdotal evidence that the presence of the Pre-Apprenticeship scheme has been a factor in encouraging some children and their parents to consider the school.
Case study 3
Santander UK

Santander UK is a financial services provider that offers a wide range of personal and commercial financial products and services.

Approx 19,500 employees
H1 2017 profit before tax: £1063m

Santander UK has reinvented the engagement programmes it runs with young people over the last three years, launching new programmes for schools and introducing apprenticeships and traineeships to complement existing graduate and internship schemes.

In part, the change has been driven by a conscious desire to bring more young people into the workforce, says Santander UK Head of Emerging Talent, Iain Gallagher. “Bringing the next generation into the workforce helps us to be innovative and to offer the best range of products to our customers,” he says.

The bank also now runs three different types of interactive workshops within schools across the UK, created in partnership with education specialists and delivered to about 30,000 young people every year. The workshops are designed to help them develop financial literacy and other skills they will need in the workplace. Sessions last between 45 minutes and one hour and are led by Santander staff who volunteer for the task.

WorkWise workshops are designed to teach job-search, application and interview techniques and are available in appropriate formats for pupils aged 14 to 16, or 16 to 18. FutureWise workshops, for young people aged 13 to 14, support the school curriculum for STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths), with a focus on the need for innovation in society. MoneyWise workshops that promote financial knowledge are designed for primary school pupils aged eight to nine or for secondary school pupils aged 14 to 15.

Some of those school children will later be among the approximately 250 young people who complete work experience placements with Santander every year. Other work experience candidates are introduced to the bank by two partner organisations, the charities Career Ready and National Citizen Service.

Most placements either run for two weeks during April, July or October; or for six weeks during July and August. Work experience can be based in any of the bank’s offices or branches across the UK. Young people are assigned to work with a team within the business and will be given project work to complete to support the team. They will also spend a few days visiting other parts of the business. They receive a salary at an equivalent level to the National Living Wage, paid leave and some other expenses.

Every summer, Santander also welcomes between 60 and 70 young people to our paid internship ten-week programme. Interns go through a formal induction process and work in entry level roles, usually spending all ten weeks within a single business function, such as retail banking, corporate banking, finance, HR, technology/
operations or marketing. Many are students, who want to take the opportunity of gaining some professional experience over the summer break before their final year at university. A number of these interns will be able to access our graduate programme the following year.

Young adults coming into the workplace at 16 normally have a good level of academic knowledge, and therefore the internships present an excellent opportunity for them to develop their interpersonal, analytical and soft skills more generally. Typically, most children will have carried out some form of work placement, but this is quite frequently short in duration and lacks the desirable quality content.

“There continues to be a disconnect between business and education”, Iain Gallagher UK Head of Emerging Talent

Therefore, our pre-apprenticeships are focused on addressing these deficiencies, as well as helping to increase the school’s awareness of the skills that businesses require.

In many ways an internship can be seen as “a ten week job interview”, says Camilla Nash, now an Emerging Talent Manager at Santander, and also a former intern herself. “I learned a lot and I felt the bank put a lot of investment into me,” she says, highlighting that the additional support the bank gave her removed any concerns she had about being dyslexic and pursuing a career in banking. She feels the experience was hugely important in helping her to decide on the future course of her career.

Santander also began running apprenticeships in 2016, initially offering apprenticeships in digital technology. A second cohort of apprentices started work in September 2017, working towards diploma or degree level qualifications in digital technology, finance or HR.

The different apprenticeships will last for between one and four years.

Alongside this, the bank’s traineeships programme will bring some young people into the workforce who might not have otherwise considered applying for a job at Santander. They may include people who have been out of work since leaving full-time education, or who have been unemployed for a year or more.

New groups of trainees now start work each month at the bank’s contact centres in Bradford and Bootle, and are given the option to pursue careers within other parts of the bank. An initial phase lasts six weeks, with those who attain the necessary standard then offered a level 2 apprenticeship, which lasts for 12 months. Those who complete this process will have the opportunity to undertake a level III apprenticeship in financial services.

Whether recruiting interns, apprentices, trainees or applicants to the bank’s two year graduate scheme, the bank views the individual’s motivation and potential as being at least as important as academic or technical ability, says Gallagher.

But he also believes there is a noticeable difference between those recruits who already have direct experience of the world of work and those who do not. He fears this is because there continues to be a disconnect between business and education, in part because many education professionals have only limited business experience themselves.

“There needs to be more focus in schools and colleges on workplace skills development,” says Gallagher. “Going to university isn’t right for everybody, but at the moment, schools aren’t incentivised enough to look at the alternatives. Santander is committed to addressing this issue to help young people move from education into work.”
The EY Foundation

About EY Foundation

The EY Foundation is a UK registered charity that works directly with disadvantaged young people, employers and social entrepreneurs to create or support pathways to education, employment or enterprise. EY Foundation is an independent UK charity that builds and delivers programmes, working with third parties and volunteers. EY Foundation operates and is incorporated independently of EY and is governed by a separate trustee board.

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