

MOVEMENT  
TO WORK



# Youth Action Forum #6

December 2023



TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION

**What are the challenges and solutions associated with **working from home** and the **hybrid working model**, and how does this affect today's young workforce?**

The Covid-19 pandemic undoubtedly expedited flexible working practices here in the UK, as organisations transformed how and where their employees worked and conducted business. As a result, hybrid working remains in the spotlight, with 83% of organisations having hybrid working arrangements in place.\* 45% of organisations have a formal policy, while 24% take an informal approach, and 13% develop policies through learning/trialling.

The positives of hybrid working for employers include; productivity/efficiency remaining positive; attraction and retention of talent; ability to recruit from a wider geography in the UK and ability to recruit a more diverse workforce (including those with parental or caring responsibilities).

However, with that comes challenges and reports of negative impacts such as; employee disconnection to organisation purpose, less collaboration, ability of managers to lead teams effectively, the culture of the organisation and risk of exclusion. For employees, those who hybrid work report benefitting from a better work life balance, however, for young people who are starting out in their careers, hybrid working can negatively impact the process of making connections and forging relationships with colleagues and key stakeholders, as well as learning from simply being in the same environment as their peers and colleagues – “learning by osmosis”.

For hybrid working to work in the best way possible, consideration must be given to ensuring employees have suitable working areas/workstations at home, as well as guidance on building digital healthy habits, knowing when to take a break and avoiding ‘work extensification’. With the ever-increasing mental health pandemic in young people, loneliness and isolation can have a huge impact on this so if working in a hybrid way, it's important to make sure employees regularly connect with other team members and colleagues. Additionally, managing in a remote or hybrid working environment is different to managing people face to face. Employers should think about some extra training for line managers around mental health and wellbeing.

We would like to thank those who took part, including representatives from **IBM, Strive Development, City & Guilds, AMS, Diageo A2Dominion, BT Group, BBC Scotland, Accenture and ISG**. We have anonymised feedback in order to create a truly safe space for authentic discussion and debate.

\* [CIPD: Flexible and hybrid working practices in 2023: Employer and employee perspectives](#)

# THE YOUTH ACTION FORUM PRINCIPLES

## *Peer-to-Peer*

*Respectful and open sharing of challenges and opportunities related to youth employment*

## *Action-oriented*

*Helping more young people access quality work experiences by solving the problems employers are facing and maximising collective success*

## *No formal presentations*

*Short stimuli will be sent ahead of each session*

## *No formal speakers*

*The speakers and content will be shaped by those in attendance*

## *Intimate and meaningful*

*No more than 5-10 individual attendees, ideally representing diverse business sectors*

## *Invitation only*

*Sign up / Registration process - first come, first served*

## DISCUSSION POINTS

The session predominantly consisted of an open discussion for attendees to share their **experiences, opinions and ideas.**

A number of key comments came from that discussion including the impact on company **culture**, a decrease in **social interaction**, a loss of **professional “belonging”** and the **cost of living crisis** impacting employee ability to commute.

*“It is now  
harder to be  
a role model  
and set  
standards  
for others.”*

### **THE CONTEXT**

Now more than ever, young people are going into the workplace less and less, as working from home has become the new norm.

Working from home undoubtedly has its benefits, but also its drawbacks. Managers and senior leaders find it hard to portray themselves as role models when young, aspiring colleagues are not in the office.

In order to allow senior leaders and managers the chance to set an example, employers need to encourage young people to come into the office and make this more appealing.

*“When working from home, it can take longer to pick up on natural cues if someone is struggling or not doing well.”*

## **THE CONTEXT**

It can be easier to pick up on whether someone is doing okay or not when physically seeing them as opposed to seeing them on a screen.

For line managers, senior leaders and colleagues in general, ensuring their staff are mentally and physically well becomes a lot harder for them than if they were in the office as certain cues can be easier to pick up on.

With mental health especially, it can be easy to overlook signs. If managers or leaders don't pick up on these, it can further damage an individual's health as well as their work.

*“Young people miss out on the social benefits of work when they work from home.”*

## **THE CONTEXT**

As a result of more people working from home, it has meant that less people get to enjoy the social aspects of work.

It was felt by many that missing out on ‘drinks after work’, for example, is one of the biggest drawbacks of working from home. During planned social events, colleagues are able to bond and speak about things that are not work related. This is where colleagues are able to nurture better connections which will ultimately reflect how they work together within their roles..

You really get to know your colleagues better outside of the work environment, however it was noted that there appears to be a general trend to move away from events which focus around alcohol. Many of our employer representatives shared ideas and experiences where they have moved away from purely ‘drinks after work’. Those suggestions are contained within slide 10.



*“There is a growing risk of a whole generation lacking skills which could have been learned in easier and more effective ways.”*

## **THE CONTEXT**

Similar to the issue of not being able to set standards and be a role model for those younger colleagues, young people lack the opportunity of gaining skills due to not being around colleagues in the workplace, coined by some as “learning by osmosis”.

When in the workplace, if you’re uncertain, it is easier to ask a colleague sat beside you to quickly show you how to do something than having to send them an email or drop them a message (which they may not see or be able to reply to anytime soon).

Alongside this, the constant ‘back and forth’ of ideation is limited when you work from home and so young people find it harder to learn or pick up on things quickly.

# Ideas and solutions shared by employers...

## Team effort

Having agreed team days in the diary each week where all team members come into the workplace.

## Team interaction

When young people do come into the workplace, ensure that there is a system in place for them to interact with their colleagues and are not just left to sit on their own (I.e - brainstorming ideas together / collaborative meetings).

## Mentors & Buddys

Having a trusted person allocated to a young person that's a presence in the workplace for them to speak to. This can help lower the anxiety of being in an office or workplace with people they're not used to seeing.

## Meet & greets

In person networking events and having a community space for people to connect in the workplace with colleagues they wouldn't usually speak to.

## Sense of belonging workshops

If young people aren't used to coming into a work environment, it's vital that they're taught what the expected behaviours are and are supported with this learning and development.

Explain to young people how they bring their full self to work, whether that's at home or in the office. It's important to show why it's not just about how a colleague contributes as an individual but also how they make a group/team stronger.

## Leading by example

Line managers should commit to working a minimum number of days per week in the workplace, to increase the expectation and importance of having a physical presence. Mandatory office presence is imperative in the first months of a young person starting a role to help with development and learning by osmosis.

## Social incentives

Businesses need to incentivise its younger employees to come into the workplace with fun, social activities to make the prospect of commuting less daunting and more exciting.

Budgeted social networks for junior staff, team lunches and creative team activities are just some of the things that would make young people more likely to come in to work.

## Financial assistance

Some young people want to go into the workplace but they struggle to pay for travel fares. Setting up a bursary or travel expense option will support young people to work in the office or workplace more often.

## Team training / bonding

Upskilling the workforce is important and holding team training and bonding sessions in the workplace can bring a team together. Having a shared experience with colleagues will make young people feel 'part of a team'.

# Next Steps



# NEXT STEPS

01

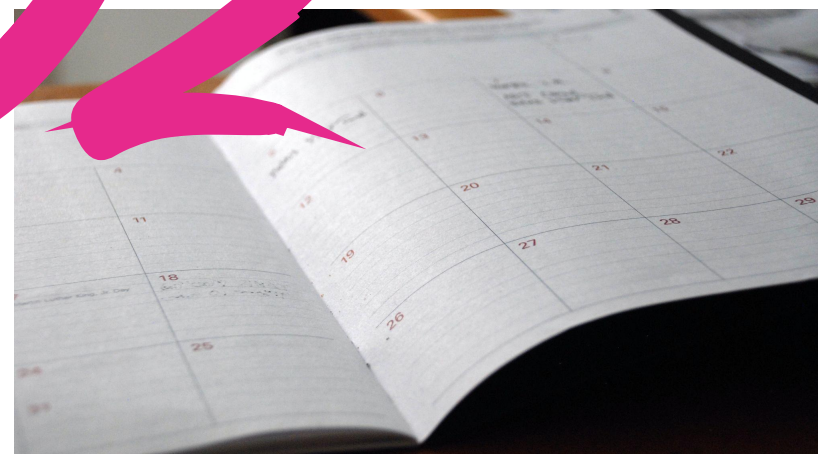


## Refresher of our aims; what have we achieved so far?

The Youth Action Forum discusses some of the challenges and barriers businesses are facing with regards to running employability programmes and more importantly, potential solutions to help ensure we continue to offer quality work opportunities for young people.

So far we have focused on challenges impacting business delivery of work experience programmes and how we can help the emerging mental health emergency affecting young people today.

02



## Save the date for the next Youth Action Forum

The next Youth Action Forum will be held in late February 2024 with the date to be confirmed ASAP.

Once the invite has been sent, please give an indication of attendance by responding when this drops into your inbox.

03



## The topic we'll cover at the next Forum

Our next topic we will focus on the subject of AI, looking at the how this impacts young people applying for work in today's world.

We look forward to discussing this with you in February!

Thank you and see you next time!

