

WorldSkills UK Youth Summit Report

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1. Executive Summary

The inaugural WorldSkills UK Youth Summit brought together a collective of 70 16 -24 year olds from diverse backgrounds, organisations and experiences to look at the impact of careers advice on young people's lives. It consisted of a number of activities aimed at identifying the challenges that young people believe exist with careers advices, looked at mechanisms for improvement and how these can be effectively implemented.

Shaping the debate

Young people debated the following motion: **This House Believes that traditional careers advice is no longer relevant to young people and the future of work.** An incredible 95% of young people in the room agreed with this statement when votes were cast before the commencement of the debate. As the discussion continued young people began to hear arguments in favour of the motion picked apart by the opposition. This resulted in a large group of the young people changing their opinion when the vote was recast at the end of the debate - with an incredible **65% of those in the room disagreeing with the statement above and believing that careers advice is relevant to young people.**

The debate identified a few challenges as highlighted by one of the debaters, Patrick Cantellow:

“One of the big outcomes of the day was the recognition that careers advisers aren't the problem but the time resources and 'traditional' nature of having 10 - 30 minutes once in your school life was not going to be sufficient for a changing world and workforce. It was recognised that with so much information available, guidance and support was needed from careers advisers, parents, teachers and employers too.”

The time is now....Problem solving on a deadline!

Following on from the debate, delegates used an accelerated approach to design thinking¹, in which they were tasked with working together to define tangible solutions that will make a real difference to careers advice in the UK. Many of the needs identified by the young people can already be found through provision in the new careers strategy, but there remains a perception amongst young people that there is a need for **'a modern careers experience based approach in schools'** as identified by one young person at the Youth Summit. What does this mean?

¹ <https://www.ideo.com/pages/design-thinking>

Two key conclusions from the dialogue in this session include:

1. The identity of the careers adviser is essential - careers advice needs to include time with a 'role model' or inspirational figure.
2. There needs to be more variety in the information given – more must be done to promote non-traditional routes that young people can go into.

The Pitch

We asked the delegates to refine their ideas into 120-second pitches (and link this to the new careers strategy), the five best pitches were then selected to be delivered on the 'Top Influencers' stage of The Skills Show to a panel of industry experts. When it comes to effectively implementing the careers strategy, a number of overall themes began to emerge from the pitches, forming the basis of items which can be taken away on what young people are saying about careers advice:

- **Digital:** Young people from the Youth Summit were emphasising the importance of using digital mediums to connect and speak with other young people when it comes to careers advice. **'Being digital is crucial and creates equal opportunity regardless of location, area and school,' a member of the group commented.**
- **Inclusion:** There needs to be a focus on inclusion in terms of how careers advice takes into account the needs of all young people regardless of background, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation but in particular **young people felt the greatest improvements were needed around careers advice offered to those with disabilities and learning difficulties.**
- **Collaboration:** While there are platforms for collaborations between businesses, schools, colleges, parents and young people - this needs to be ramped up, in particular when it comes to businesses themselves providing careers advice in schools.
- **Inspiration:** 'Real life role models' - each of the groups incorporated the importance of inspiring young people with individuals they can look up to or be motivated by, whether that is a careers adviser or an ambassador from industry.

WorldSkills UK Youth Summit 2017

2. Introduction

The inaugural WorldSkills UK Youth Summit brought together a collective of 16 -24 year olds from diverse backgrounds, organisations and experiences to look at the impact of careers advice on young people's lives. In the backdrop of the launch of the governments new Career's Strategy; the Youth Summit used a range of participatory approaches to unlock the perspective of young people on careers advice in England and Wales. This report outlines the key issues young people identified concerning careers advice, solutions for overcoming them and recommendations for how these can be effectively implemented in the future.

Why?

As an organisation WorldSkills UK were moved to host a Youth Summit, as we exist to see young people make the very best start in work and life. We believe in the amazing potential that exists within the UK's young people, and we wanted to provide them with resources and a platform to change the national conversation on topics such as careers advice. Accordingly, the Youth Summit was held on Thursday 16th November at The Skills Show, the UK's largest skills and careers event, with participants from across the country being invited to attend the event.

The purpose of this summit was to show a commitment to the understanding that careers advice is accessed by all young people, and as such the conversation needs to be as inclusive and open as possible. Underpinning the importance of this is young people being able to speak and work in tandem with those who may have had a different experience of careers advice to them.

How?

WorldSkills UK's Youth Advisory Panel consists of Skills Champions – a growing network of young people who have competed in WorldSkills UK National Finals. The Skills Champions explored a range of topics that they would like to see focused on at the Youth Summit such as aspirations, diversity, equality of opportunity and unconscious bias. Careers Advice was the one universal theme that all young people have interaction with and are in need of. The Skills Champions believed that debate would be a great mechanism to engage young people about the world beyond the classroom, addressing issues that affect them, their communities and the wider world through an activity they enjoy. Sitting alongside this was the use of interactive activities that were fast paced and would challenge the delegates to develop innovative ideas. Below you will find the approach that was used by delegates and also the outcomes from the different sessions.

3. Shaping the careers debate

Working with Debate Mate - an organisation that specialises in teaching critical thinking through after-school debate clubs and bespoke debating programmes-the following question was formulated by the organisations motions committee, which consists of young people who vote on the topic and question to be debated:

This house believes that traditional careers advice is no longer relevant to young people and the future of work

For the purpose of this debate ‘traditional careers advice’ was defined as careers advisers in school, work experience and placements. From this, the debate became an exploration into what the best way of preparing young people for the world of work was; specifically looking into the best ways to inform students about the options available to them. Given that the discussion was being held in the context of a rapidly changing employment landscape, special attention was paid (on both sides of the debate) to informing young people about their options, without overwhelming them with too many options that they may not understand.

The format for the debate consisted of three speeches on the proposition, and three speeches on the opposition of the motion. Before the debate began, the audience of delegates were asked if they were for or against the motion. **An incredible 95% of the young people in attendance agreed that ‘traditional careers advice is no longer relevant to young people and the future of work.’** This reflects a face value view that the perception amongst young people is that ‘careers advice’ is ‘outdated’ and no longer relevant to them. However, as the debate began to unfold, the opposing team began to pick apart this perspective. The key arguments advanced by both teams during the debate are covered below:

Arguments in favour of the motion

1. Traditional careers advisers have experience and can provide greater context for the information.
2. Traditional careers advisers are verified trusted sources, unlike more modern careers advice.
3. Traditional careers advice is more accessible for everyone.

Arguments against the motion

1. Traditional careers advice can’t keep up with the fluid, modern labour market.
2. Traditional careers advisers aren’t as good at accessing the young.
3. Traditional careers advice can reinforce stereotypes.

The quality of the debate and arguments advanced on both sides were extremely strong. When the debate opened up to the audience for questions and comments a shift in the room towards young people being more open to ‘traditional careers advice’ began to emerge. **When the vote at the end of the debate was recast there was an incredible 65% swing towards the delegates disagreeing with the statement *that traditional careers advice is no longer relevant to young***

people and the future of work. Whilst this swing may have been due to the mastery of the opposing teams debating skills it tells us something more than that:

What does this tell us?

Recent research commissioned by WorldSkills UK and Careers Enterprise Company found that amongst the 2000 11-19 year olds surveyed, 73% of them felt informed about their careers. However 53% felt overwhelmed by the information they received.

Two identifiable challenges emerged from the debate - how careers advice is delivered and how information is relevantly synthesised for young people. This is highlighted by one of the debaters, Patrick Cantellow:

“One of the big outcomes of the day was the recognition that careers advisors aren't the problem but the time resources and 'traditional' nature of having 10 - 30 minutes once in your school life was not going to be sufficient for a changing world and workforce. It was recognised that with so much information available guidance and support was needed from careers advisers, parents, teachers and employers too.”

4. The time is now....problem solving on a deadline!

The Youth Summit isn't all about talking, it is also about creating tangible solutions for real problems. Following on from the debate, delegates were divided into teams of a range of young people who would have only met each other for the first time. Using an accelerated approach to design thinking², they were tasked with working together to define tangible solutions that will make a real difference to careers advice in the UK. Delegates were asked to put themselves in the shoes of a 16 year old making decisions about their future and work, taking into consideration the issues they would face. They were also asked to take into account the issues that were highlighted through debate. Through this exercise the young people identified some of the following key barriers when it comes to careers advice, many of which are noted in the new careers strategy:

- **Resource:** a lack of access to resources depending on the area and school of the individual.
- **Too generic:** careers advice suited to the individual and not multi-generational.
- **Delivery:** careers advice being too 'structured' or 'boring' to appeal to young people.
- **Careers advisers:** the image of the careers adviser not being inspirational or motivational - needs to be a celebrated career.
- **Ambition:** careers advisers manage but do not challenge expectations, being unilateral (one directional towards university).
- **Employer engagement** – lack of opportunity to engage with employers and build work experience.

² <https://www.ideo.com/pages/design-thinking>

- **Quality** – not all advice received is of the same quality and not enough is known about all routes by careers advisers.

What does this tell us?

In context the needs identified by young people can be found through provision in the new careers strategy, but there remains a perception amongst young people that careers advice is 'outdated' and 'old fashioned' as shown at the beginning of the debate. What do young people mean by this?

"The fundamental flaw of careers advice is its impersonal nature. Academic ability defines an individual capacity whilst what makes that individual an individual is overlooked. It's unilateral in the sense that university is supreme." – Youth Summit delegate

Which, as identified by one young person at the Youth Summit, leads us to the question of what does 'a modern careers experience based approach in schools' mean?

Two key conclusions from the dialogue in this session include:

1. That careers advice received needs to be from a 'role model' or inspirational figure.
2. More must be done to promote non-traditional routes that young people can go into.

5. The Pitch

We asked the delegates to define tangible solutions that will make a real difference to careers advice in the UK and the issues that they had identified above. We asked them how they would link this to the Four Pillar's of the Government's new careers advice strategy, if relevant to their point or idea. Delegates developed their ideas into 120-second pitches, the five best of which were selected to be delivered on the 'Top Influencers' stage of The Skills Show. These were honed and presented to a panel of industry experts including Claudia Harris (Chief Executive of the Careers and Enterprise Company), Sue Husband, the (Director of the National Apprenticeship Service), Trudy Harrison (MP for Copeland and a member of the Education Select Committee) and Steve Fogg (Managing Director of BAE Systems). The pitches can be summarised as follows:

You will find a summary of the top 5 pitches in appendix A, and the winning pitch is detailed in the case study below.

Winning Team – Careers Busters

When all pitches had been made, the panel chose Careers Busters as the winner. This group focused on the problem of access to careers advice, proposing that the government to bring in new legislation to make it compulsory in schools.

“We think businesses with a turnover of £10 million or more a year should bring specialist careers teams into schools and communities to bridge that trust with young people,” said Tommy, a team member.

His colleague Atia wants careers mentors introduced to help disadvantaged people, especially those with disabilities or learning difficulties.

“Some people with disabilities need extra time to explain what they want and are good at,” she said. “A mentor would help not only disabled people but someone who is, say, not so good with English, to get a connection and build trust so they feel more comfortable to sell themselves.”

Liam meanwhile wanted to see an app or online service introduced. “It would make it easier for anybody with disabilities to use an online service,” he said. “If someone were deaf, for example, we would have sign language on the service. If they have a disability and feel too embarrassed about talking about what career they want to go into, the service will make them feel more comfortable for them to speak.”

Announcing Careers Busters as the winner, Ms Harrison said: “We chose this team because of their recognition with the problems of accessibility, it is obviously really important to them and that came across really well in their pitch.”

What does this tell us?

When it comes to effectively implementing the careers strategy, a number of overall themes began to emerge from the pitches which form the basis of items which can be taken away on what young people are saying on careers advice:

- **Digital:** Young people from the Youth Summit were emphasising the importance of using digital mediums to connect and speak with other young people when it comes to careers advice. **‘Being digital is crucial and creates equal opportunity regardless of location, area and school,’ a member of the group commented.**
- **Inclusion:** There needs to be a focus on inclusion in terms of how careers advice incorporates the needs of all young people regardless of background, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, In particular **young people felt the greatest improvements were needed around careers advice offered to those with disabilities and learning difficulties.**
- **Collaboration:** While there are platforms for collaborations between businesses, schools, colleges, parents and young people - this needs to be ramped up, in particular when it comes to businesses themselves providing careers advice in schools.
- **Inspiration:** ‘Real life role models’. Each of the groups incorporated the importance of inspiring young people with individuals they can look up to or be motivated by - whether that is a careers adviser or an ambassador from industry.

What did we learn?

Additional to the amazing pitches generated by the young people involved in the Summit there were three overwhelming themes that ran through all the discussions, debates and concepts. We believe that these themes should be considered as we work together to develop a careers advice offer that really works for young people.

1. Improving the **perception** of careers advice, to inspire and motivate young people to engage with the provision. Careers advice has an image problem - the perception regarding careers advice needs to be addressed. Young people need to be both inspired by and trust the advice they are given. While in a lot of places this is just a perception, we do need to make sure that young people have access to role models they can relate to alongside more formal careers advice. We need to educate people that careers advice can come in many different guises and that sometimes variety can be as important as quantity.

2. To effectively implement a **personalised** service for all young people. In today's culture everything is bespoke and customisable to our own tastes and needs. Young people expect nothing less from their careers advice. We believe that young people are looking for careers advice that can be tailored to their own learning style and taste. This requires us to provide young people with the skills to both effectively access formal advice as well as self-serve. We need to be teaching young people how to make the most of the vast amounts of information and support that is available. There will always be the need for professional careers advice, however this needs to support and empower further exploration not be the first and only place young people look.

3. **Accessibility** – to have a careers advice offer which provides the same level of quality and service regardless of a young person's background or location. This was a particularly strong theme throughout all the discussions, the young people at the Summit felt that good quality careers advice can be a huge factor in enabling social mobility and broadening diversity. They believed passionately that careers advice should be a strong factor in dismantling stereotypes and promoting a wide range of possible careers regardless of background, race or disability.

This was the first of a series of Youth Summits that WorldSkills UK hopes to hold around the country in 2018. We are committed to enabling everyone to go further and faster in their career. You can take a look at our blog entry about the summit [here](#).

If you are interested in having a visit from our inspirational [skills champions](#) to talk to your students about careers or to run a fun, interactive skill workshop, please take a look at our [website](#) and contact us.

Appendix A - Summary of Pitches

Team Red Bull

Issue: Team Red Bull focused on the issue of the quality of careers advice in the UK - how this varies depending on an individual's geographic location and who they are receiving the advice from. The group's concerns related to the lack of standards implemented on careers advice and the regulation of it – often due to schools controlling this budget and diverting the resources elsewhere. This is further complicated by information not being personalised to the individual and very little collaboration between schools, colleges and businesses.

Solution: The group felt that standards shouldn't not become too rigid for young people and there needs to be a degree of flexibility. These standards should be set and contributed to by the National Apprenticeship Service, schools, colleges and businesses so that young people can make an informed choice at an early age.

Implementation: The group would create a digital hub where there is standardised careers information which is accessible to all people in the UK. they would also introduce a communications system where there can be an exchange of information between colleges, schools, businesses, parents and young people. This system will document necessary content and conversations enabling families and young people to stay in touch with employers and education providers.

Career Busters

Issue: Tackling the accessibility of careers advice for young people who have been out of work for a long time and have learning difficulties or a disability.

Solution: Government would need to bring out new legislation to make careers advice compulsory in schools, so young people are able to begin to build the relationship with their careers adviser. Businesses with a turnover of £10m a year should bring in specialist teams or their early years' career teams into schools and the community, to support the building of this trust with young people.

Implementation

- Introduce mentors to support those with learning needs or disabilities, to enable them to connect to and build trust with a mentor that will help give those young people careers advice. The desired result of this is that young people feel more comfortable with the mentor and able to open up to them about their aspirations.
- App – an online service or platform that is compulsory and part of the curriculum for all schools to use. This would incorporate a design feature which is accessible and inclusive of those who have a learning difficulty or disability who may prefer this option to more traditional face to face careers advice. **'Being digital is crucial and creates equal opportunity regardless of location, area and school,'** a member of the group commented.

Debating Devils

Issue: The group focused on the perceived bias of careers advice in schools, in particular when it comes to young people with disabilities and complex needs. Posing the question, 'when it comes to funding, can schools be impartial with their careers advice?' Additionally, the group felt the information young people received appears to be too complicated and that there is too much of it.

Solution: Funding new initiatives - both vocational and academic - in order to raise the bar. Also, regulating and assessing the careers advice given - this being done by organisations such as Ofsted. Measuring the success of these initiatives to see if they have been successful by assessing if there has been a reduction in the number of NEETs.

Implementation

- Increased training on soft skills for teachers and improved awareness of careers information available for parents and teachers.
- Industry ambassadors and champions from different sectors who can inspire young people about their career journey, so the young person can then determine whether they want to follow that career pathway or route. **'All people from the Youth Summit should be ambassadors as while we are all active, we have heard ideas from each other today that we might not have heard before'** a group member commented.
- Compulsory external careers advice involvement, with local and national businesses acting as ambassadors to come into the local school.
- Exit survey sent to all young people on their destinations and where young people are after they leave school.

Up & Up

Issue: The team identified the issue of the training that careers adviser receive as their being a need to 'educate the educators, to have experiential careers advice for young people,' one team member remarked. Additionally the team felt that careers advice is not tailored to the young person and that a careers adviser needs to be someone that a young person can relate to.

Solution: There needs to be collaborative solution where businesses are brought into the conversation. **'Young people want to move beyond speaking to careers advisers and want to speak to a careers professional.'** There should be an expectation for businesses to register on a portal to connect with young people and schools online. With young people and parents being able to access businesses this would 'put the inspiration back into careers advice!'

Implementation: A 1% tax on businesses with over 500 employees if they are not engaged or involved with careers advice or the online portal. “As if they (businesses) are not engaged or inspired how do we get them to do that for young people? We need to show real life people and examples to inspire young people!”

Career champions

Issue: Four out of the five of the group felt that they had not received good careers advice, if any at school at all. They asked the audience the question how many people out there are thinking about becoming a careers adviser? The point the group was making was that they felt careers advisers are there to inspire but may lack personal motivation and interest in some of the careers young people could potentially work in or suggest, which in turn affects the young people they work with. This may be linked to a lack of resources where there may only be one or two careers advisers in the whole school (time and pressure - leading to a lack of passion amongst advisers.)

Solution: How do we get careers advisers to be more passionate about their role? The solution lies in changing the name from ‘a careers adviser to a ‘careers champion’ to motivate and inspire young people.

Implementation: We need careers advisers in the traditional sense, while online portals are great you need the face to face interaction which can inspire young people. Careers advisers should be celebrated and encouraged with more investment.

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