

New research finds just one in four employers recruiting young people think they are well-prepared for the world of work

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New research from the [CIPD](#) finds that many UK employers believe young people aren't 'job-ready' and lack important workplace skills, with a fall in earning and learning opportunities cited as a key reason.

Its latest report, *Changing face of the youth labour market*, found that just one in four (28%) employers who've recruited someone aged 16-24 in the past 12 months think that young people are well-prepared for the world of work.

It also found:

- Over half (52%) don't think that young people are generally well-prepared for the world of work.
- Almost two-thirds (64%) think young people often lack important social skills in the workplace, while 71% think they don't always know how to behave in the workplace.
- More than half (56%) think that young workers are more difficult to manage than previous generations.
- One in three (34%) don't think young people are generally good communicators in the workplace.

The report finds that one of the main reasons behind the poor perception employers have of young people is a sharp decline in opportunities to combine earning and learning over the last 20 years.

In response, the CIPD is calling for the UK government to introduce an Apprenticeship Guarantee for all 16-24 year olds, which previous CIPD research* shows has the backing of almost 90% of employers.

This would help many more young people to combine earning and learning and build key skills such as communication, teamwork and problem solving, while providing more vocational routes into employment.

According to this latest report:

- Despite the strong policy focus on apprenticeships over the last decade, just 6% of 16-24 year-olds are in an apprenticeship, the same figure as 20 years ago**.
- In 2024 just 20% of 16-17 year olds were combining earning and learning, down from 42% in 1997***.
- Just over a third (34%) of 18-24 year-olds were earning and learning in 2024, compared to 40% in 1997***.
- The number of 16-24 year olds who have never had a job, excluding seasonal and holiday work, has increased by almost a third in the last 20 years***.

Lizzie Crowley, senior skills adviser at the CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development, said: "There are some fantastic skills and ideas that young people bring to the workplace, but there are also some significant challenges that they face in adjusting to working life. While studying for a degree is still the default choice for many, too many young people are disadvantaged because they have limited opportunities to develop an understanding of what's expected in the workplace, or to take that first step into employment.

"There needs to be bolder action from the government to rebalance the youth labour market by making apprenticeships a viable alternative to university, addressing the collapse in apprenticeships in recent years. Currently just 6% of young people participate in an apprenticeship each year, and we need this figure to be much higher. The government's Youth Guarantee is a step in the right direction, but we want to see the government broaden out its ambition to benefit all young people aged 16-24 through introducing an Apprenticeship Guarantee. This will help better prepare them for working life and gain valuable skills, earn while they learn and give employers a skilled talent pipeline."