



# AN AGE OF UNCERTAINTY.

Employer case studies – getting young people into work.

September 2016

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We're also grateful to each of the young people quoted in this report, whose enthusiasm for the opportunities ahead of them is clear.

Interviews were undertaken by Lysbeth Plas and the report was edited by Patrick Woodman and Shadi Ghezelayagh at CMI.



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# INTRODUCTION

The CMI and EY Foundation share a common agenda around ensuring that all young people get access to the right skills, training and opportunities to enable them to have good prospects for their working lives.

We wanted to hear directly from young people about the challenges they face preparing for the world of work. We surveyed 1,510 16-21-year-olds from across the UK as well as speaking directly to young people through the Campus CMI programme and EY Foundation's Youth Panel. These findings and accompanying recommendations can be found in the full report, *An Age of Uncertainty – Young people's views on the challenges of getting into work in 21st-century Britain* (see Further Resources – page 17).

The report identifies that young people are looking to employers to provide them with advice and guidance on their career options and want to see them offer more experiences of work. At the same time, we still hear that employers face a skills gap and struggle to fill vacancies due to a real or perceived lack of suitably talented people in the labour market.

During the course of this research we interviewed several employers to explore what they are doing about the challenges raised in the report. We found many are working hard to grapple with these issues: engaging with schools to provide more experiences of work, strengthening the range of pathways into work including apprenticeships, and developing opportunities to nurture key management and leadership skills at a younger age.

This paper presents six case studies of employers who have turned words into action and made engaging young people part of how they operate. The case studies show in more detail what leading employers, large and small, have done. The recommendations included in our full report aim to build on this work and encourage a more systemic, joined-up approach that helps young people better navigate the uncertain and rapidly changing landscape ahead of them.

*Many employers are working hard to engage with schools to provide more experiences of work, strengthen the range of pathways into work including apprenticeships, and develop opportunities to nurture key management and leadership skills at a younger age.*



## DHL DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

Sharon Davies,  
Corporate Affairs Director

**DHL is the global market leader in the logistics industry. The company commits its expertise in international express, air and ocean freight, road and rail transportation, contract logistics and international mail services.**

**DHL is present in over 220 countries around the globe and has a workforce exceeding 325,000 employees worldwide.**

Global logistics company DHL makes young people part of its business in many different ways. The company organises everything from formalised engagement activities, such as going into schools to talk about the importance of work and careers available within the logistics industry, to strategic programmes such as Teach First, Outward Bound and apprenticeship programmes.

### Why?

DHL's reason for engaging young people is simple: they will be running the business in 20 years' time. And not only do young people bring diversity to a business, says Sharon Davies, Corporate Affairs Director, but they also come with their own set of skills: "Their digital literacy is astounding. They bring a whole new perspective to problem-solving. Plus there's an energy and vitality that encourages a culture of new ideas and innovation."

It seems so simple, but there are many companies who haven't made young people part of their strategy. Sharon suspects that a misconception about the younger generation might partly be at fault here: "Sometimes companies are worried about the management time and handholding it will take. But maybe they don't understand what many of these young people are like: hugely keen and fast learners. They think quickly, and they pick things up really quickly."

### Work experience and apprenticeships

DHL is currently focusing on their formal work experience and apprenticeship programmes. With constant changes in funding and the upcoming Apprenticeship Levy, they're trying to ensure that both the business and the young people get the absolute most out of their experiences.

Some of the programmes focus specifically on young people from underprivileged backgrounds, recognising the talent they may otherwise miss out on and Sharon believes this is particularly important: "Unless they're part of programmes like these they may never become visible. If they're up against some of the apprentices I've seen they may not make it through a regular interview process – simply because they're often not as confident. It's got nothing to do with talent, and you've got to give these young people that additional help."

Apprenticeships have been part of the company for a long time; we currently have 111 active apprenticeships. "Apprentices are working in all of our departments and are seen as a new and exciting talent pool. We may want to keep them on after their apprenticeship ends, and if they do leave we want them to have had a great experience." In fact, to date, DHL has kept 72% of their apprentices in the business.

### Employers and schools need to do more

Sharon believes that both schools and employers could do more to offer valuable experience of work: "Employers should have a good sit-down with schools to make them understand what they offer. The more businesses can help make it easier for schools, the better. It's about working together in the most flexible way possible, so that both the school and the employer can keep running 'business as usual'." This approach has often resulted in DHL and their partner schools building skills into the curriculum, topped up with, for example, industry days to give students an all-round understanding of the world of work.

### Management support

To make it work, management buy-in is essential: "Our CEO is passionate about getting young people in and he regularly sits down with them to discuss ideas. And of course there are the line managers who work with the young people on a day-to-day basis. A lot is driven by them – they need to be supportive of the programme or it simply will not work." After all, there's something in it for them as well: "Employees benefit significantly by developing their own coaching and mentoring skills, but in addition it has a real 'feel good factor'. From a business point of view, developing these softer skills among existing employees is great, whilst we are also developing our workforce of the future."



### An apprentice's perspective

Harry Tugwood  
Rewards and Recognition Apprentice  
in the HR department

Harry studied accountancy at college before he embarked on his apprenticeship journey with DHL Express. "It [college] wasn't for me. I didn't feel motivated and it wasn't challenging enough", he says. "I much prefer my apprenticeship: I feel more determined and motivated."

Harry is delighted with his development so far. "I feel great about what I've achieved and feel much more prepared for my career," he says. "I've grown as a person too: I'm assertive and can communicate with people on all levels. I've come on leaps and bounds! The situations work has put me in have made me develop problem-solving skills and also the confidence to speak up and bring a proposal to the table. Professionally this has enabled me to get my foot in the door to a major global company and progress to a position where I feel comfortable, with continuous development. I've also picked up all sorts of other skills including IT, presentation skills and speaking in front of others. They're all transferable skills that I can use now and in the future, which makes me very employable."

Harry stresses the importance of having a supportive manager – and has nothing but praise for his own: "My manager was a tremendous role model to me, and she's one of the main reasons why I hit the ground running when I started my apprenticeship. I cannot stress the importance of having a supportive, knowledgeable and engaging manager."

He concludes: "College and university aren't for everybody, which is why apprenticeships need to be talked about more in schools. Students will then be able to consider all the options available to them. I would absolutely recommend an apprenticeship with DHL Express to anyone."



*College and university aren't for everybody, which is why apprenticeships need to be talked about more in schools.*



### DHL'S TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

- **Get management buy-in** – make sure to get full support from the top – it will filter down to all management levels and get employees engaged and prepared
- **Recognise the effort and communicate the benefits** – make sure that employees are recognised for the time and effort they put into coaching young people, and communicate the benefits for all involved
- **Have a plan** – know what you want to get out of the apprenticeships and work experience, and be very clear and upfront with both the company and young people from the beginning.



## EY LESS SOCIAL BIAS, MORE OPTIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

*Maggie Stilwell,  
Managing Partner for Talent in the UK and Ireland*

**EY is a global leader in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services. The insights and quality services we deliver help build trust and confidence in the capital markets and in economies the world over.**

**We develop outstanding leaders who team to deliver on our promises to all of our stakeholders. In so doing, we play a critical role in building a better working world for our people, for our clients and for our communities.**

EY is giving young people more and different choices. Their philosophy recognises that everyone's path in life is different, which is reflected in their strong focus on increasing social mobility and the diversity of their workforce. Together with the EY Foundation, a charity set up in 2014, EY is spreading the word that having a great career shouldn't be dependent on education or background. Their programmes open up the world of work to a wide range of young people from as many different backgrounds.

### Eliminating social bias

EY are actively putting strategies in place to achieve their goals. To eliminate social bias, for example, young people applying for roles at EY do not submit a CV. Maggie Stilwell, Managing Partner for Talent in the UK and Ireland: "We think it's much better that our students complete a standard template without having to disclose the school or university they've been to. All of that is filtered out to enable us to look at people's raw potential." EY have also dropped their requirement for a 2:1 degree or above and a minimum of 300 UCAS points. Maggie: "In the UK, these come loaded with social bias because of the way our education system works. But a 2:1 degree doesn't of itself mean you're suitable to work at EY."

### Smart Futures and Our Future

EY is a major corporate donor to independent charity the EY Foundation, which it founded two years ago (2014) to work directly with disadvantaged young people, with employers and social entrepreneurs, to create and support pathways into education, employment and enterprise.

EY supports young people through the charity's Smart Futures programme: a 10-month programme for Year 12 students in England and 5th Year students in Scotland. It gives young people access to paid work experience and improves their chances of getting a job, doing a degree apprenticeship, or going onto higher education after school or college. And it gives employers the chance to spend time with local young people they might not otherwise meet.

EY provides business experiences to young people and volunteers to the charity, who run workshops and training or become mentors.

### School leaver apprenticeships

Since they introduced their School Leaver programme EY are getting into schools more and more. Maggie: "The programme offers a fantastic career entry point once you finish school, so there's no better place to promote it. It gives access to exactly the same career trajectory as graduates. You're earning good money and don't have to repay loans of 40 grand or more that the average university leaver comes away with." To support diversity there's no requirement for finance or accountancy degrees – the programmes are open to all degrees.

But Maggie recognises this path may not be for everyone; the point is that EY offers young people a chance to join at different points in their lives. There are many options, all of which offer a great way of experiencing EY and the opportunity for both parties to see whether or not it's a suitable match. "And if it isn't, at least a young person goes away with a great brand on their CV and a better knowledge of themselves and what might suit them."

### Getting in

"Our website is the main portal for all of our opportunities – anybody can apply. But there's no substitute for contact with real people, so our teams spend a lot of time in schools, on university campuses, career evenings and other networking opportunities. That's because this is about finding a two-way fit: what does the young person need and what can EY provide."



*I didn't think I'd have a chance (getting onto Smart Futures), a boy from a state comprehensive in East London. How wrong could I have been?*

*Adam, a London alumnus*

*Learning how a business actually works, was a key reason for me in applying to the programme and for me this was definitely the best part.*

*Sachvir, a Birmingham alumnus*



### Getting in

There's a lot of emphasis on the selection process, and finding the 'raw potential' they're after. "We've committed to focusing on students' aptitude and attitude in the workplace – behaviours that many employers are now saying are more important than GCSE or A-level results. We think we're good at giving young people all the knowledge, skills and (exam) support they need to be successful from day one."

One of the most important things about the programmes, says Maggie, is showing young people – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds – that if you're smart and willing to work hard there will be a role for you. "It's about making them aware of that. And it's incredible to see that people come away with a completely different sense of who they are and what they can achieve."

### The role of business

Maggie says businesses are often interested in taking on young people, but there's "a lack of confidence, a lack of know-how, and a fear of getting it wrong." And while she understands their apprehension, she is convinced that "the benefits of getting it right and having these young people on board are enormous". Her advice to businesses is to "just try it with a few. Link up with an organisation like the EY Foundation and see what happens. My guess is that next year, you'll take on a few more because you will see first-hand what these people add to your business".

### The role of schools

Up to very recently schools main priority was getting young people into higher education, not employment. Maggie: "Schools, as well as parent's are still a bit sceptical of programmes that take on people aged 18, likely because of the perception that if you aren't on a graduate scheme you're not going to have the same chances for progression." "But for EY this just isn't true."

Maggie says that EY is keen to emphasise that rather than a second-class solution for 'those who aren't bright enough to go to university', EY's programmes offer a real choice and opportunity for everyone. What's needed now is to promote as loudly as possible that both options are equal, and for parents and educators to promote them as such.

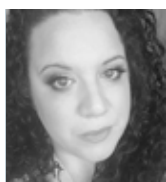
Maggie believes there is also more to be done to eradicate gender stereotypes in careers. She has been to technology career events at schools where the audience was 100% male. "This isn't acceptable in 2016, and more needs to be done to encourage girls to come along to these events as well. Educators need to challenge gender stereotyping in young people's subject choices. STEM subjects, and a career as a manager or leader in technology, are not just for boys."

### Work-readiness and skills

When Maggie first learned that EY was taking on more school leavers, she admits an initial prejudice now eliminated from experience: "I thought I'd be able to spot them a mile off due to lack of maturity or confidence. But actually I can't tell the difference between them and graduates. I can't tell you how impressive they are." While there is an enhanced level of pastoral care for school leavers in the first few weeks, Maggie says they learn very fast. They are mature and confident, which she believes is partly a consequence of their approach to recruitment: focusing on raw potential rather than background. They've made it that far – why not go that bit further?

## EY'S TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

- **Eliminate social bias** – job suitability has nothing to do with educational background. Keep an open mind, embrace diversity and welcome talented young people
- **Keep an open mind** to the benefits and the perceived risks you have around employing young people
- **Start small** – try and test it. You don't have to make a big commitment to be able to judge for yourself whether it's the right thing for the organisation
- **Don't feel you have to go it alone** – there are people and organisations out there to help, such as the EY Foundation. They will help you make it a success.



## INTERSERVE ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE TO CREATE STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Leah Shafik,  
Group Work Placement Manager

**Interserve is a large support services and construction company. Head-quartered in the UK, they employ around 80,000 people globally and run a successful, growing business that is a leader in delivering innovative and sustainable outcomes for clients.**

International support services and construction group, Interserve, constantly strives to improve the communities in which it works as well as the lives of those who live in them. Part of the company's sustainability strategy is to take on more young people from all backgrounds to increase diversity and help grow a culture of innovation. Over the last 18 months, Interserve and its charity, the Interserve Employee Foundation, have been working to make this mission reality.

### Where to start

Leah Shafik, Group Work Placement Manager, came in to implement the new strategy. She explains: "The question was: how can we use our significant influence as a large business to build lasting relationships with schools and other organisations and get the most out of them?"

The answer lay in formalising the approach and coordinating all activity from one place. "We are structuring the work experience and apprenticeship programmes, and developing more ways to invite young people into our business."

### Back to school

To match the schools' needs with the work experience placements available Interserve develops tailored programmes together with schools, colleges and other providers. It's not always easy to get in touch with schools but there are things organisations can do to get the ball rolling, such as getting in touch with the education lead in the local authority or the Education Business Partnership network, says Leah.

Part of the job is to educate teachers about business opportunities in the area. "They are often the ones giving career advice, but also often lack the knowledge about jobs and careers available in their area." According to Leah, that's because experience of the world of work doesn't play a big role in Ofsted assessments of school performance: "All that many schools are forced to care about is getting students through their GCSEs, keeping them on for sixth form and getting them into university."

The other part of the job is to get young people in the classroom excited and inspired. Workshops give them a

flavour of what working for the company could involve, the value of the work they do and the kind of salary they can expect. "We often surprise young people with the variety of roles within the business – from cleaners to architects and from nurses to rehabilitating offenders."

### Work experience

#### "There's no death by PowerPoint."

"We're really keen to ensure that the experience is meaningful for both parties." All employees receive an induction and an information pack, so they know how to support someone on work experience. Before getting stuck in, the young people also go through an induction where they learn about the business. They receive information about the types of jobs available at Interserve, as well as broader career advice on what skills most large businesses will be looking for.

The actual work experience focuses on the two sides of any job: the technical side and the 'softer' side, including personal, communication and people skills, which underpin good management and leadership. Young people get a workbook that includes tasks such as doing research, preparing presentations or inputting data. Then there are so-called bootcamps, which are all about employability, management and leadership skills, enterprise skills and personal branding. "We try to make it interactive. So we get a group of them to write a job specification, give that to a member of the team and interview them as a panel. We flip the process on its head."

### Stepping it up a gear – Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are often the next step for those having completed work experience. A number of our existing apprentices started their career with Interserve via this route and we are currently developing career pathways for all early talent entering the organisation. The introduction of the apprenticeship levy in 2017 gives Interserve a great opportunity to increase the number of apprentices recruited and work experience will be just one of the pathways for recruitment.

Interserve recently commissioned a report on apprenticeships with one of the key findings being that positive attitudes towards apprenticeships still rank lower than other, largely academic-based career pathways among young people and their parents.

Read more about the Interserve Society Report here:

**[www.interserve.com/docs/default-source/Document-List/research/apprenticeships-the-path-to-success.pdf?utm\\_source=ns-res&utm\\_medium=pdf&utm\\_campaign=2016-society-report](http://www.interserve.com/docs/default-source/Document-List/research/apprenticeships-the-path-to-success.pdf?utm_source=ns-res&utm_medium=pdf&utm_campaign=2016-society-report)**





### Challenges

Interserve has been developing its work experience programmes for the past year and a half and Leah admits there's still a way to go. The company has developed a resource library that employees can use for templates and ideas to make work experience work for their team specifically. "The only way to do that is to be flexible and give employees the freedom to be creative. 99.9% of employees who may have had their reservations about having young people around have had their minds changed."

### INTERSERVE'S TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

- **Find out what's out there** – there are many organisations out there ready to put you in touch with schools, just as there are many schools out there who'd love to get in touch with employers
- **Find enthusiastic employees who love working with young people** – get them involved, gear them up and get them talking to schools and other organisations. Make it part of their job and their appraisal process
- **Trust the domino effect** – once one team or department has taken on board young people, more than likely they'll enjoy it and spread the word, and more will follow
- **Make it meaningful** – when there is a relationship with a school, make it count and get the most out of it. Speak to teachers and students and develop programmes that benefit.

### An apprentice's perspective

**Kianna Annakie, 18**, did a work experience placement with Interserve and is now doing an HR apprenticeship. "My initial thoughts about my Apprenticeship have been blown out of the water. It is far better than I anticipated. I love that I'm learning, gaining experience and earning money at the same time."

Kianna explains how she found out about the Apprenticeship: "When I was at college I was lucky enough to do seven days of work experience with the Learning and Development Team at Interserve. They told me there was an Apprenticeship opportunity and I applied the same day." The interview process wasn't easy: "I was interviewed by the Team Leader and HR Manager, which made me extremely nervous. But within a week I found out I'd been successful."

For Kianna, working, learning and earning at the same time are a perfect combination, and she has nothing but good things to say about the team she works in: "They're so supportive. I'm never afraid to ask questions. Everyone is more than happy to take the time to explain things to me. And if they don't know the answer they will point me in the right direction. I'm also given the opportunity to complete some of my NVQ coursework if I have time, and that helps a lot."

The Apprenticeship experience has also changed her: "When I started in July 2015, I wasn't the most confident person. However, my confidence has grown massively and I think that's down to my team being such a great bunch."

**Tyrell Taylor, 20**, became an Apprentice after attending an Apprentice Taster Session hosted by Interserve: "I came across the opportunity when a friend invited me to the session. I got chatting to their National Skills Manager and decided it was something I was interested in. After spending 18 months at Solihull College doing an Engineering course I was keen to get more hands on and get practical experience. Before you know it I was working alongside a qualified engineer!"

Tyrell says he particularly enjoys the hands-on approach to learning: "I really like being able to roll up my sleeves and get on with fixing a problem. A typical day for me includes responding to jobs that come in via email or over the phone – they can be anything from lighting issues to moderating room temperatures. I also have to carry out prepared maintenance every week. When I'm on a job, I shadow a qualified engineer. Although I still spend one day a week at college, I prefer the practical side to the job. I learn so much by actually doing the job."

His message to others in his position: "I would definitely recommend an apprenticeship at Interserve. You get hands-on experience in an environment that motivates you to push forward. Who wouldn't want that?"



## PKF FRANCIS CLARK AN SME THINKING BIG

James Robinson,  
Partner

**PKF FRANCIS CLARK**  
Chartered accountants & business advisers

**PKF Francis Clark is an independent accountancy firm offering a range of financial services to a large variety of businesses.**

**They have eight offices across the South West of England, which makes the company the largest independent firm of accountants in the region.**

A top 25 accountancy firm with offices across the South and South West, PKF Francis Clark shows that you don't have to be a big corporate in order to engage young people in the workplace. In the case of Francis Clark it's part of the firm's DNA: Partner James Robinson started as an apprentice at 18 himself, as did four other senior team members. All employees feel very strongly about the importance – and benefits – of working with young people to develop the company's pipeline of employees and future leaders.

### What it does...

Francis Clark is involved in a great many activities and programmes, including significant work experience and apprenticeship programmes. It takes part in local careers fairs and speaking events at schools and colleges, often involving both a senior manager from the company and a current apprentice. According to James: "The students get to see someone their own age that has gone through the programme and now has a job. It's good for them and for the apprentice's development."

For the past eight years Francis Clark has also been involved in initiatives such as Young Enterprise, a charity that empowers young people to harness their personal and business skills. "It's a great way of getting talent into the business, and it's an excellent way to develop our teams' skills," said James.

### ...and why

The company's interests and those of young people are aligned. "We want to develop our business and get good team members. It's also a way of giving back to, and being part of, the local community," said James. With extensive networks in the area, Francis Clark also gets to help its own clients by signposting talent to them: "If our clients can't get new team members who are ready for work then ultimately our own client base will dwindle," he added.

Another reason to engage with potential talent at a young age is the huge amount of loyalty the company gets in return. Young employees can be taught the tricks of the trade and both parties can make sure they're a good fit

for each other. James has seen that they really value the opportunities they're given – it makes them want to go the extra mile.

And then there's marketing: "There's no better way to network and advertise our firm. It's a brilliant way to get our name out there by just doing the right thing," he said.

### Progression routes from experience to employment

The work experience placements offered by Francis Clark are quite informal and consist of shadowing employees, spending time in all departments of the firm. James said: "They don't just sit there with a box of records and get told to do filing. We try very hard to give them a good experience so they can get a taste of what working in accountancy is like."

When it comes to apprenticeships, all candidates go through a formal interview process, but James believes there's scope for more, such as problem-solving and presentation exercises in groups to make the experience more educational.

Those who succeed receive one-to-one mentoring throughout their apprenticeship, which also helps to develop the coaching and mentoring skills of existing employees. And all apprentices are involved in community work: they also go into schools to spread the word.

“““

*Just because school-leavers are more computer-literate than we are doesn't mean they understand how to apply that to a business. That's the employer's job, and they need to be educated so they understand their own responsibilities.*

### Why SMEs have a role to play

James recognises that many smaller businesses are put off from engaging with schools and young people. The challenge, he says, is establishing what can be done. "There are so many different people doing different things that a lot of SMEs just think 'I'll leave it to the big boys'. Employers don't know where to start."

Equally though, "schools don't have the time or the network to get involved. The result is that no one does anything – and it's the young people that lose out."

Some employers, James says, are also a little naïve: "Just because school-leavers are more computer-literate than we are doesn't mean they understand how to apply that to a business. That's the employer's job, and they need to be educated so they understand their own responsibilities."

### "Joined up thinking" – simplifying how employers and schools interact

James would like to see steps taken to simplify how employers engage with schools. This could be in the form of a central or regional database where all opportunities available to employers and schools are made clearly visible so that they can connect and sign up to activities they want to take part in. According to James: "We need a bit of joined-up thinking. It's a bit of a mess and it doesn't need to be."

In the absence of a government led initiative, Francis Clark is experimenting itself. "We are trying to create a matrix so that employers can actually see what activities they can take part in, and the commitment that they come with," said James. Francis Clark hopes it could provide a model for others to build on.

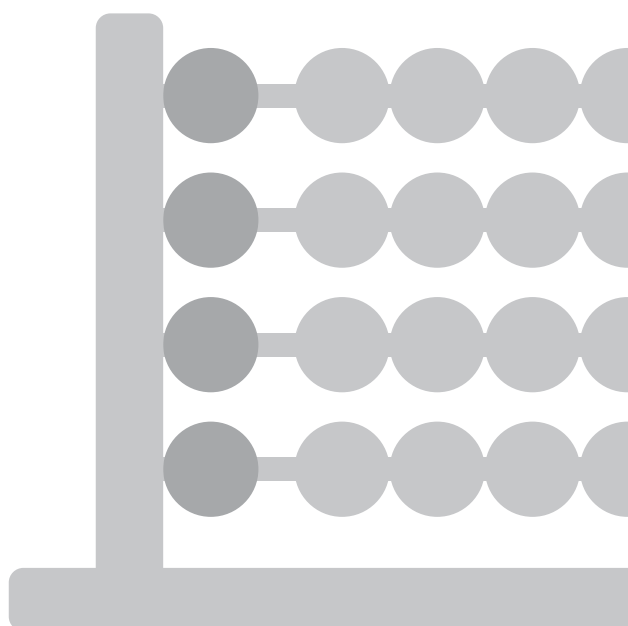


I joined Francis Clark in August 2015 after my A-levels. I was aware of their apprenticeship programme through the work that they did at my school, and I went along to the apprentice evening at their offices. This really helped as I had a chance to talk to the other apprentices and find out more about the opportunities – and I joined shortly after. I am taking my level 3 AAT exams and hope to progress to ACCA in September 2017.

Roddy McIntyre  
Apprentice at Francis Clark

### PKF FRANCIS CLARK'S TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

- **Eliminate social bias** – build on business networks – companies should work with those in their networks including clients and suppliers to connect with local schools, charities and relevant initiatives for young people
- **Work with your apprentices** – involve existing or previous apprentices when taking up guest-speaking slots with schools or colleges
- **Sell yourself by doing the right thing** – showing what you're doing to successfully engage young people is an excellent brand and marketing tool.





## SCOTRAIL SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO BRIDGE THE GAP

Michelle Murray,  
Apprentice Programme Manager

**ScotRail is Scotland's national train service, providing passenger train services throughout the country with intercity, regional and suburban rail services across 355 stations across the Scottish rail network.**

**ScotRail is responsible for 4,850 employees, carrying 227,000 passengers on 2,000 services per day with 794 train vehicles.**

Scottish rail operator ScotRail offers apprenticeships in engineering and customer service, including a Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award and Customer Service Level 2 SVQ. They also offer a Certificate of Work Readiness, and every month they visit Scottish primary and secondary schools to talk about employment in general and working for ScotRail in particular.

Apprentice Programme Manager Michelle Murray explains why engaging young people is part of ScotRail's everyday business, how they make it work and why other companies should be doing the same to be the best they can be – both now and in the future.

### Investing in young talent

ScotRail wants to find future talent at an early age, and invest in them so that they will develop a great and fulfilling career with the company. Michelle: "As a business we like to nurture and train young people – give them the right tools to progress. It's great to see them work their way up in the company. I myself started working on a train at 18, then went into the training department, and eight years later I'm the Apprentice Programme Manager." A number of other employees, such as ScotRail's HR Director, followed a similar path, which shows that the investment has really paid off.

### 100% on board

Working with young people doesn't require a lot of convincing within the business. Michelle explains that she has always experienced ScotRail's culture as being very team-orientated: "Support is a big part of how we work. One of our principles is 'we are one team', so being asked to support an apprentice or be a mentor never comes as a shock to anyone. Staff understand the positive impact they can have on an apprentice, and realise it is also an excellent opportunity for them to pass on knowledge and show they can train and support people."

### Finding the right fit

In order to get talent in, ScotRail cast their net wide – from internal advertising to visiting schools all over the country. The next step is a tough selection process. After an online application, successful candidates are invited to an assessment day at the ScotRail Training Academy where they do a basic maths and English assessment as well as a scenario-based, problem-solving activity and presentation. Then they go straight into a formal interview. "We want to find out as much as possible about the candidate most questions are competency-based to spot the raw potential. 'Do you volunteer?' 'When have you worked in a team?' 'Are you part of a sports team?'" If the interview was successful, the final steps are a medical examination and a drugs and alcohol screening before the apprentice's career at ScotRail can begin.

### The apprenticeships

During the training weeks the apprentice learns about how the company works, and the contents of the entire apprenticeship are discussed. What do they expect from the programme? What does ScotRail expect from them? There's a 'Residential', where all apprentices stay in a hotel for four nights and take part in a lot of team-building and group activities – from time management to communication skills. "And it also gives us a chance to see how they cope." Back at the training academy there's a disability awareness course in partnership with the charity DeafBlind Scotland, customer service training, conflict management training and train emergency training. "They get an excellent all-round and hands-on experience of the company. We give them the core skills; they put them into practice."

### Bridging the gap

It can be "quite a shock" for young people coming from a school environment into the world of work. But Michelle thinks that more and more, schools are promoting apprenticeships and inviting employers into their classrooms to give students a sneak peek of what the world of work is like. "In the past five years apprenticeships have grown arms and legs. Before that, it was all about going into further education. But schools are cottoning on to the fact that apprenticeships aren't just for manual labour – they're just as much about gaining qualifications."



### Thrown in the deep end – but with full-time support

Regardless of apprentices' level of experience, ScotRail has its own way of showing them around the business. They receive the same policies and procedures induction as any other employee, and on top of that the all-important basics are very clearly explained.

Michelle: "From day one we are very clear about what it means to work for ScotRail, such as being on time, being professional, and using appropriate language when speaking to customers. We discuss what can happen if they don't adhere to these standards, and the negative affect it can have on customers and the business."

Of course, with such a strict approach a strong support network is essential. ScotRail emphasises the importance of building positive relationships throughout the company and makes sure that young people know where to go with questions or comments. "They're encouraged to use the support network and to speak up. "They're never left on their own. They've always got the support of a member of staff."

### SCOTRAIL'S TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

- **Nurture young talent** – finding talent at a young age gives you the chance to teach them the tricks of the trade, nurture them, watch them progress and gain loyalty. A great way to prepare for the future of your company that makes complete business sense
- **Engage** – make sure that the experience you offer, whether it's work experience or apprenticeships, attracts the talent you're after. This in turn will make you attractive as a business. One way to do this is to offer more than just the one-off experience to make you stand out. Partner with, for example, the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, to combine both into one attractive package
- **Create a strong support network** – be open and transparent about the potential challenges of working with young people. Make sure everyone in the company knows where to go if there are questions or issues, and have dedicated people or teams in place (such as mentors) who will know how to assist.



*Schools are cottoning on to the fact that apprenticeships aren't just for manual labour – they're just as much about gaining qualifications.*







## UKFAST HOMEGROWING YOUR TALENT

Aaron Saxton,  
Director of Training and Education

**UKFast is one of the UK's leading cloud and managed hosting companies with over 16 years' experience in cloud and dedicated hosting designed to help businesses grow.**

**Founded in 1999, UKFast now has nearly 300 employees and many happy clients including the NHS, Virgin and British Cycling.**

Developing the next generation is at the heart of everything that cloud company UKFast does. The company is known not just for providing high-quality hosting services to their clients, but also for their extensive work with schools, colleges and universities to help inspire a future generation of digital entrepreneurs and tech talent.

Aaron Saxton, Director of Training and Education, said: "Our founder and CEO, Lawrence Jones, realised that the future of the business isn't tomorrow or next year, it's 10, 20 years away. If you want to build a business that will last, you need to start developing those future leaders now."

### School engagement is the future

**"Investing in future talent is investing in working with schools."**

UKFast believes that recruitment starts with schools, so they're building an ever-increasing educational network. Currently, the company works with 45 schools, reaching 35,000 students in the Greater Manchester area. Aaron, a former school teacher himself, said: "We hold workshops, career events, conferences and talks. Where better to promote digital careers than in schools?" And it works: the company was named a Top 100 Apprentice Employer for the second year running and is seeing former apprentices move into key roles within the business.

UKFast and their partner schools create tailored programmes to ensure students are inspired and get the most out of their education. That way, they come into the workplace equipped with the skills that the tech industry is crying out for.

The company runs activities ranging from career master classes to workshops on interviewing skills, CV writing and applying for a job. Aaron said: "We bring students on site to immerse them in an inspirational environment. We make them aware of the opportunities available to them like work experience, apprenticeships and, of course, an incredible career."



UKFast works with students from all backgrounds and aims to bring access to technology and business to all children in the Greater Manchester region. Aaron added: "Some of the young people we work with don't have positive role models in their lives and can't access the curriculum in the same way other students can. Often the only thing restricting them is their own ambition, so we show them the opportunities that are right on their doorstep. That can be all they need."

### Home-grow your talent: work experience and apprenticeships

**"Work experience isn't about making tea and shredding paper."**

UKFast employees are supported by a dedicated, five-strong training team to help deliver the practical elements of work experience and apprenticeship courses. The programmes are in high demand, so there's a stringent selection process. The full application process includes assessments, psychometric testing and group interviews. Aaron said: "Some schools think this is bonkers, but we see it as a job interview for our future talent."

Successful work experience candidates are placed in teams within the business, shadowing some of company's most senior employees. They're given a 'curriculum' of projects to work on during their one or two weeks with the company, dealing with real customers.

The work experience programme is also key for recruiting apprentices. Apprentices currently make up 15% of the company's workforce and some of the most successful of them were introduced to UKFast through work placements.

About building diverse teams, Aaron said: "We have a holistic approach to reviewing candidates. GCSE results are important, but so is attitude.

"We want the full picture of someone's skills, values, what drives them and how we can motivate them to achieve their potential. You wouldn't want a team where everyone's the same."

UKFast have linked their programmes so that there are clear pathways into the business. Aaron added: "The instant you look at home-growing your talent, you're saving time and money on recruitment. Instead of investing in trying to bring in the right people with the right skills, you simply look for great young people and nurture the skills, creativity and loyalty in-house." So far, 100% of UKFast's graduated apprentices have moved into full-time roles within the company.

### Challenges

One challenge is for schools to find time on the curriculum to work with companies like UKFast. At the moment employer engagement isn't part of Ofsted's criteria, so schools aren't that focused on it.

Aaron explains: "We're trying to get to the source of this problem. We work with educational partners to try and feed business engagement into the teacher training programme. Teachers need to understand what businesses can offer their students and how to build that into their teaching."

Another challenge is recognising that working with school leavers is different to working with established professionals. That's why softer skills are a key focus for UKFast. Understanding the expectations of a commercial business, such as the consequences of being absent or underperforming, is a huge part of starting a career.

Aaron said: "I'd be a liar if I said that we didn't encounter any problems. Some young people can be a bit lazy; punctuality can be an issue. They're not necessarily 'work ready'.

"Many young people haven't had the opportunity to develop these skills. It's our responsibility to point them in the right direction. I think a lot of employers complain about this, but just because there are areas for development doesn't mean there's no potential."

“““

*Teachers need to understand what businesses can offer their students and how to build that into their teaching.*

### UKFAST'S TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

- **Get started** – services such as the National Apprenticeship Service are a great place to start. This organisation, for example, gives advice on funding, delivering apprenticeships and how to engage with schools
- **Be committed** – ensure there's a person or team in the business whose role it is to develop young people and work with schools
- **Get out there** – get involved in educational events and go and visit schools. Make yourself heard and seen – both online and offline. A lot of businesses don't realise that schools can be the best place to promote who you are and find new talent to bring into your business.



### An apprentice's perspective

**Apprentice Daniel, 21,** said: "I have a varied role, working in the back-ups team and helping to run a first-line support service for a big client.

What I like most about the apprenticeship programme at UKFast is the amount of trust that they have in me. You're treated as an equal, part of the team. But there is still an amazing support network from the training and education team.

There's loads of opportunity to expand your skill set here. Not just completing the apprenticeship, but doing other qualifications as well. For example, I've just finished Microsoft exams that I was able to do in our test centre and I'm looking at doing more. It means you come out of the programme with more strings to your bow than just an apprenticeship.

It's also great to see how the course develops you as a person. The apprenticeship programme reflects how the people make this company. Coming straight from sixth form, working in a professional environment was a learning curve. But because you're working with real clients and projects, you adapt really quickly. You're building professional relationships and working with some of the most qualified people in the business every day.

I haven't decided what I want to do when I finish my apprenticeship but I definitely want to stay at UKFast. I've had the opportunity to explore different aspects of the business so I've got a lot to think about when deciding where I want to be. The training team are really focussed on progression, talking to the apprentices and feeding them into the areas that we're interested in."

**Former apprentice James, 19,** said: "The great thing about UKFast is that the training team really want you to follow your own path – they listen when you say you need a change. They let you decide what you want to do and as long as you show you're motivated, they help you to get there.

The apprenticeship programme is really immersive. You spend most of your time shadowing the tech teams, learning on the job. There is structure and loads of support, but what I liked the most was the independence – getting to learn in your own way and finding out what you're really passionate about.

It's a great balance; you're not just watching other people work but you're getting stuck in. And when you've got questions people are there to help you. Everyone has the time to give you advice or help you solve a problem.

I've found where I want to be and I'm really enjoying working on the network launch team. I want to progress in this area and I know that UKFast will support me to do this by giving me training and helping me to pass the qualifications I need to achieve my goals."

“““

*What I like most about the apprenticeship programme at UKFast is the amount of trust that they have in me. You're treated as an equal, part of the team. But there is still an amazing support network from the training and education team.*

# FURTHER RESOURCES

## An Age of Uncertainty

Find out more about this research and read the full report on [www.managers.org.uk/ageofuncertainty](http://www.managers.org.uk/ageofuncertainty)

And also visit [www.eyfoundation.co.uk/youthandemployment](http://www.eyfoundation.co.uk/youthandemployment)

## Apprenticeships

For more information about the Apprenticeships offered by CMI, including the Degree Apprenticeships or to read case studies and to meet the apprentices, visit: <http://apprenticeships.managers.org.uk/>

You can also send an email to [apprenticeships@managers.org.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@managers.org.uk) and follow us on Twitter [#MgtApprenticeship](https://twitter.com/cmi_managers)

## CMI Mentoring

Mentoring has been evidenced as a valuable tool for many young people wanting to learn more about the world of work. CMI Mentoring is unique in its focus on management and leadership, providing practical support to managers at all levels of their career. Find out how you can be involved – as a mentee, or as a mentor – at [www.managers.org.uk/mentoring](http://www.managers.org.uk/mentoring)

## CMI'S Career Development Centre

Our new Career Development Centre contains a wealth of tools, information and advice. From CV writing to everyday management advice and problem solving – it's all in one place – at [www.managers.org.uk/individuals/existing-members/career-development-centre](http://www.managers.org.uk/individuals/existing-members/career-development-centre)

## Campus CMI

We inspire, create confidence and support young people aged 14-18, by providing professionally accredited CMI Management and Leadership qualifications to the next generation of managers and leaders. To see how you, as an employer, can support us visit: [www.managers.org.uk/individuals/qualifications/campus-cmi](http://www.managers.org.uk/individuals/qualifications/campus-cmi)

## EY Foundation

### Three Year Strategy

Our Three Year Strategy sets out the EY Foundation's plan to encourage and help thousands of young people into employment, education and enterprise by 2018. You can download and read the full report here: [www.eyfoundation.co.uk](http://www.eyfoundation.co.uk)

## EY Foundation

### Smart Futures Programme

Smart Futures is a 10-month programme for Year 12 students in England and 5th Year students in Scotland. It gives young people access to paid work experience and improves their chances of getting a job, doing a degree apprenticeship, or going onto higher education after school or college. And it gives employers the chance to spend time with local young people they might not otherwise meet. Interested in getting involved? Find out more here: [www.eyfoundation.co.uk/SmartFutures](http://www.eyfoundation.co.uk/SmartFutures)

## EY Foundation

### Our Future Programme

Our Future is a six-month programme that offers skills training and paid work experience to 16 to 18 year olds who might otherwise struggle to get a job (because their academic achievements don't always reflect their true ability, for example). Interested in getting involved? Find out more here: [www.eyfoundation.co.uk/ourfuture](http://www.eyfoundation.co.uk/ourfuture)

## EY Foundation

### Accelerate Programme

Accelerate is a 12-month programme offering structured business support to young social entrepreneurs (18 - 30 years-old) and social enterprises that focus on supporting young people into jobs, training or business. Interested in getting involved? Find out more here: [www.eyfoundation.co.uk/Accelerate](http://www.eyfoundation.co.uk/Accelerate)

## Chartered Management Institute (CMI)

The Chartered Management Institute (CMI) is the only chartered professional body for management and leadership, dedicated to improving managers' skills and growing the number of qualified managers.

Our professional management qualifications span GCSE to PhD equivalent levels, including the unique Chartered Manager award, which increases earning potential and improves workplace performance.

We provide employers and individual managers with access to the latest management thinking and with practical online support that helps them to embrace change, create high-performing teams and keep ahead of the curve.

With a member community of more than 120,000 managers and leaders, we promote high standards of ethical practice through our Professional Code of Conduct, and help managers to build their expertise through online networks, regional events and mentoring opportunities.

Visit [www.managers.org.uk/ageofuncertainty](http://www.managers.org.uk/ageofuncertainty) for more information, and follow us on Twitter @CMI\_managers #schooltowork

## The EY Foundation

The EY Foundation is a registered charity that helps young people who face barriers in the labour market – such as living in a low-income household – to find pathways into work, higher education or self-employment. We do this by designing, developing and running our own programmes and working with employers and local communities across the UK.

Our vision is that every young person in the UK, regardless of their background or circumstances, can begin to realise their career ambitions and make a successful transition into work, higher education or self-employment. And that every employer in the UK, regardless of size or sector, plays an important role in supporting all young people to realise their full potential.

Our mission is to work directly with disadvantaged young people, with employers and social entrepreneurs, to create and support routes into education, employment and enterprise.

Our purpose is to inspire and engage young people across the UK who are at a disadvantage in the jobs market and help them to fulfil their potential for work. And to reduce the barriers to work for young people and make them more employable – with the support of employers and other stakeholders.

Visit [www.eyfoundation.co.uk](http://www.eyfoundation.co.uk) for more information, and follow us on Twitter @EY\_Foundation #schooltowork

## The EY Foundation

Registered charity number:  
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## Chartered Management Institute

77 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6SR  
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