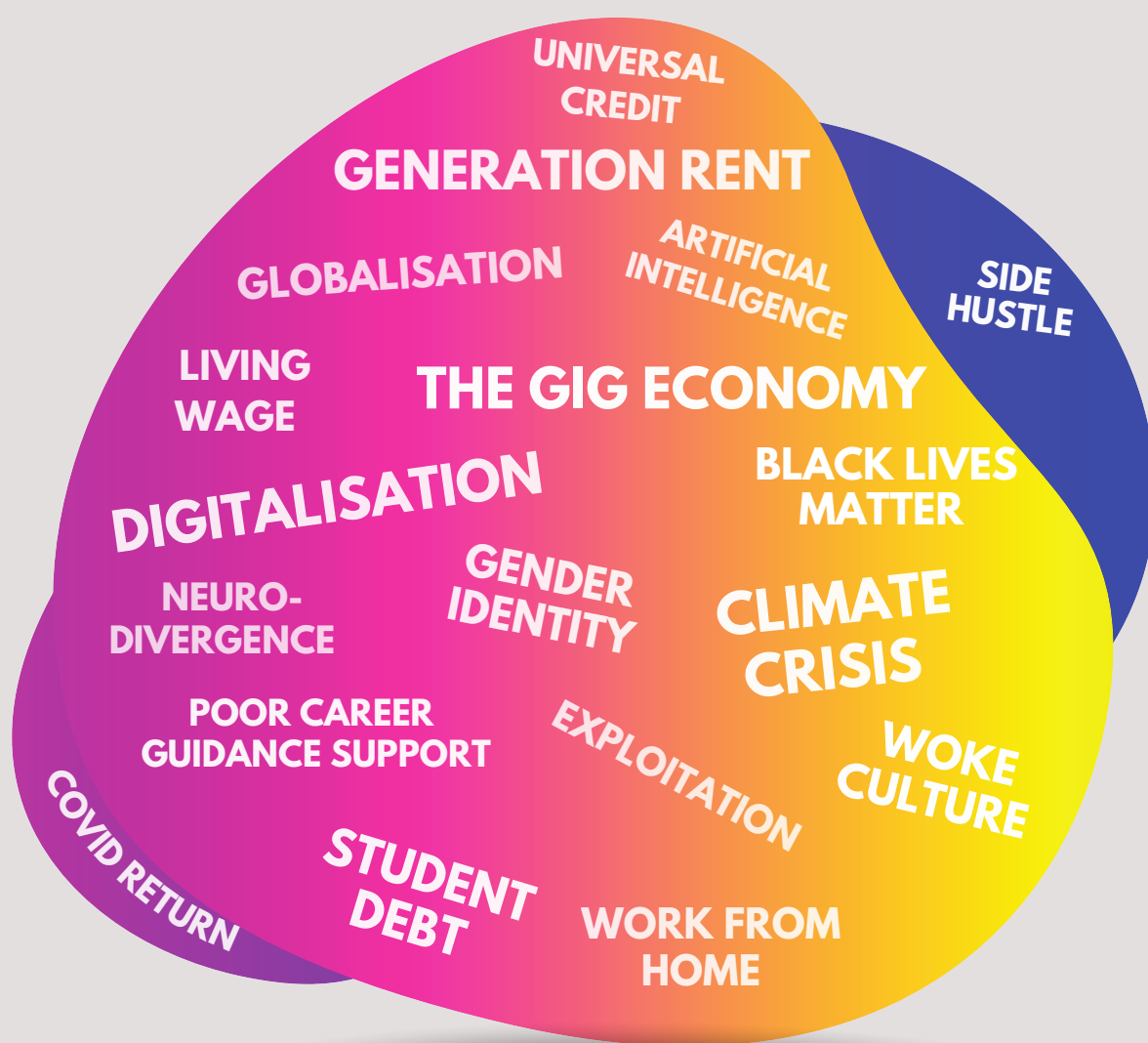


# YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

## AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE

BY LAUREN ROBERTS-TURNER  
& STEPHEN CARRICK-DAVIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

## AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE



*This report should make people stop, think and take action. Lauren and Stephen set out a compelling evidence-base which should not be ignored. The cost of living crisis will affect the wellbeing and prosperity of thousands of young people. These recommendations should form the basis of a national conversation on how to fix a failing infrastructure, particularly for those most in need.*

Deirdre Hughes OBE, Hon Associate Professor,  
University of Warwick, Institute for Employment Research (IER)

*This report highlights the positive impact of high-quality careers support for young people and where there is more to be done. By combining the wealth of evidence with the direct experience of Lauren, its young author, it delivers a powerful message.*

David Morgan, Chief Executive, Career Development Institute

*As a trade union we have been so impressed with the way that Lauren and the Facework team have consulted with us in understanding what we do for young people's employment and training. It is refreshing to have a 360 degree approach to tackling employment.*

Andrew McGregor- Careers Advisor and Chair of UNISON National Careers Committee

*Will we one day look back and wonder how, over a few decades, we so readily created an education system that removed teenagers from the experience of work and pay. This report encourages us to show we care more about their futures than young people think we do, and start looking together at working up new opportunities for them in the world of work. Facework continues to lead thinking in this area and more eyes should be on their recommendations.*

Tom Bullman - Director of Worktree and  
Community Organiser for Citizens MK, + Facilitator at School for Social Entrepreneurs

*It is so inspiring to have the views of such an articulate, wise young person sharing their experience and insights on what actions all stakeholders can play in helping young people into work. I would strongly recommend that every Career Development Professional publicises this Agenda document far and wide.*

Liane Hambly, Author Creative Career Coaching.

### About this image



As this report outlines, young people face many challenges as they leave education, and are often labeled the '**Snowflake Generation**', a derogatory phrase which portrays them as weak and fragile.

But the image we want to portray in this report is of a generation battling through extraordinary societal challenges that, whilst crushing for some, give others a new perspective on structural inequalities and injustices that come into sharp focus when looking at access to good quality work. Young people can show remarkable resilience, and we need to listen to the enlightened views, lived experiences and insight they bring to this debate. Think then of this colourful image as a **flexing muscle** or **heart-beat**. Make no mistake: young people are strong, courageous and we need them.

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### FOREWORD

by Stephen Carrick-Davies, Director of Facework

**Across the UK, young people are being failed in their transition from the sheltered world of education to the fast-changing and insecure world of work.** Ask any 16-year-old about the type of career learning they have had in their last years of school and you will likely hear that, for most, it has been inadequate, piecemeal and far from independent. Indeed, many schools are in danger of not meeting the statutory requirement to provide impartial careers support for all students. This is no fault of dedicated career professionals; there simply isn't the funding or priority given within the curriculum.

Of course, we are not short of reports and commentary on the disconnect between education and employment. Successive governments and think tanks have proposed many initiatives. However, in a world where those entering the labour market have to be flexible, innovative and reliant on both outstanding soft-skills and transferable skills, perhaps what we need is not another national top-down 'silver bullet' initiative, but rather a portfolio of small interventions led by all sectors. These should be relevant and co-designed with young people themselves. This is exactly what this report offers.

I've worked with Lauren, who brilliantly expresses what it feels like to navigate this changing world of work, and together we have consulted widely to identify the shared responsibilities all stakeholders can have to help young people find fulfilling work they love and become more enterprising and successful.

Many of these actions are small and targeted to new stakeholders in our post-COVID world. Some involve a fundamental mindset change towards young people themselves, but collectively they point to some exciting possibilities for change. For **make no mistake, change is coming.** As Lauren outlines in this report, her generation are entering a 'perfect storm' and face an insecurity that earlier generations have never had: globalisation, AI and automation, increased incidence of poor mental health, and structural inequality, all of which the pandemic has exacerbated. But it is not all bad news; many young people are exhibiting highly-advanced skills, adaptability, resilience and drive.

Piloting these new ideas is something that Facework is passionate about. We see a new desire among young people to find meaningful occupations and believe that leaders in every sector can do something small to make a big difference in transforming a young person's job prospects. This is crucial, for as a previous Government Minister said, "We must come together to create this positive change because youth unemployment isn't just an unforgivable economic waste – it's a human tragedy too."

It's been an absolute pleasure to provide a platform for Lauren to share her insight, ideas and passion. We ignore bold, intelligent voices like hers at our peril.

I hope you join the **#Facework movement.**

Stephen Carrick-Davies  
Director [stephen@face.work](mailto:stephen@face.work)

*"When work becomes more than labour for time, we all win. The more we help young people to find fulfilling work they love and to become more enterprising; the more we not only enrich the individual, but also support our local economies and help society to flourish. It's not just 'the Economy, stupid', it's Gross Domestic Purpose."*

Stephen Carrick-Davies

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## MIND THE GAP

Although there are labour market vacancies and record levels of employment in the UK, the number of young people economically inactive is increasing since the pandemic<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, Young People will be disproportionately affected by how the Cost of Living Crisis impacts on the jobs market.

**The message of this document is that we can and must re-double our efforts in supporting young people - especially those who are vulnerable - to find good quality work with clear career progression.**

2

## HEALTHY WORK, HEALTHY MINDS

A person's employment status has a significant impact on their physical and mental health. It is therefore hugely important for the long-term wellbeing of young people that they have access to relevant interventions that can reduce the likelihood of unemployment.

**All those young people who are Not in Education Employment and Training (NEET), have Special Education Needs, or are in the care system, especially need good quality careers support from qualified, empathetic professionals.**

3

## CERTAIN UNCERTAINTY

Current careers education is failing to keep up with massive work and societal changes, in particular the fourth industrial revolution, machine learning and the existential threat of climate change.

**Young people need support in identifying the skills and attitudes needed to be flexible and agile so they can move into new jobs and change careers throughout their lifetime. More needs to be done to inspire young people to go into emerging job roles and new industries.**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## WHERE IS THE INNOVATION?

Most career guidance fails to recognise the new working practices emerging post COVID, including working from home and co-working spaces, the gig economy, job shares or remote working. How do you teach someone to be a good team member when they were recruited over Zoom?

**There are opportunities to develop new career development programmes within the community. For example, Workspaces open up opportunities for peer-career support, employment 'gigs', reverse mentoring and intergenerational learning. Indeed, an important question is not WHAT Career education should be, but WHERE and HOW it could be delivered, so that it is more impactful.**

4

## ISN'T IT IRONIC

The 2011 Education Act made schools responsible for providing pupils with independent careers guidance, yet today many schools in England are not meeting the statutory requirements and, paradoxically, the provision is working 'to promote inequalities relating to gender, ethnicity and social class.'

**As the Career Development Institute (CDI) has called for, Careers education must be reinstated in the school curriculum and much higher levels of resourcing, prioritizing and respect for the subject must be given to schools, higher education and wider stakeholders.**



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### BIG FISH CAUGHT IN LITTLE NETS

There are around 5.6 million small and medium sized enterprises (SME) in the UK which is over 98% of all businesses. Furthermore, there are a huge range of small jobs opening up which youth can excel in. These are usually home-based, require little or no financial outlay, can be incredibly flexible and give young people both independence and a taste for success. For example tutoring, social media influencing, and retail arbitrage (finding high-quality items for a low price and then reselling for profit.)

Parents and schools could equip students through supporting enterprise skills and helping students gain experience of running a businesses from home/school.

Sole traders and small businesses could also do more to appoint young people to undertake 'gigs' to develop key areas of their business that need the skills of youth. This win/win situation helps youth gain experience and confidence, and helps the company reach new markets.

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### ANOTHER WAY IS POSSIBLE

Successive governments have focused on companies as the main job creators, unintentionally dismissing other important job creators. Why can't some of the 200,000+ charitable organisations in this country be eligible to take on an apprentice? Why can't there be tax breaks for any self-employed person wanting to take on a young person?

We call for a much more creative approach of introducing young people into the culture and employability soft skills for work. We should see more widening of access to youth enterprise grants, apprenticeship placements, and work experience reintroduced in schools.

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### FINDING THE COVID RESET BUTTON

The COVID pandemic forced us to stop, step back and think about the sort of society we would like to be. Despite largely avoiding the worse physical effects of the virus, young people were hit hardest by the social effects of COVID, with '84% of young people having lost an education or employment opportunity' as a result of the pandemic.

COVID infections may be decreasing but we must recognise the massive impact COVID has had on young people, especially those who are entering the job market after months of disrupted education and isolation. It is not too late to press the reset button and find better ways to help young people.

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### THIS ONE'S ON US!

Sadly, very few young people are drawn to becoming career coaches themselves, and even if they complete a qualification in career counselling, guidance or coaching, these jobs are often poorly financially rewarded. This is paradoxical as young people have insights into youth culture and how their peers feel about the world of work. Facework is starting to utilise these skills (as evidenced with this report) and develop its soft-skills curriculum through the active engagement and authorship of youth.

If there can be incentives and rewards for some subject areas like maths, why can't there be greater incentives and resources to promote jobs in careers guidance, coaching, mentoring and employability training for young people? It is a great profession but is so undervalued by our current system.

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### NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US!

Finally, as this report demonstrates, we need to involve youth more in piloting new ideas, interventions and employability training resources.

Funding needs to be targeted at organisations piloting youth-led approaches and new models of career support, co-designed with young people including 'pushed out learners'.



Dear fellow Gen Z-ers (as the older generations like to call us),

There are many resources out there about employability and what you can do to get ahead. I won't add to them except to say: don't be afraid to put yourself out there and try new things and experiences. One opportunity often leads to another and can take you in a direction you never even imagined, but it has to start somewhere. I am writing this as an advisor to a social enterprise, and the only reason I am here is because at 16 I applied (with the assumption I wouldn't get in) to a youth research project about something that mattered to me. This became a project that changed my life and led me to do things that were inconceivable just months earlier. In the words of top career coach Liane Hambly, 'You do not need a clear plan in place to get started. You just need the willingness to try something without knowing where it might lead, the curiosity to look beyond what you're familiar with, and to see asking for support as a strength rather than a sign of weakness.'

I say this to encourage and not to put more onus on you as there has been (and there remains) a pervasive culture of placing the responsibility for structural issues, such as intergenerational inequality and previously better supported experiences such as education, on young people. This is occurring in the context of eroding support and an increasingly complex and insecure economic situation. Recently, in a conversation about our futures with a friend, she said, "forget Gen Z were Gen 'F\*\*\*ed'". With the perfect storm outlined above combined with the coming changes to student loan repayments, rising house prices and the change to national insurance contributions it can certainly feel like that.

However, I have hope for our generation. I say that not out of naivety or to justify our experiences but because, whoever you are, if you're reading this you will have survived the pandemic so far. Which means you have likely come out of a period of enforced social isolation, at a time in our lives when that is the worst thing for us, stronger and more aware of the need for relationships, and had experience of how to survive in situations that are beyond our immediate control. I say this not to patronise or defend what has happened, but because the skills you will have developed, such as online working, resilience and increased awareness of injustices, will be the skills that guide you through and help you respond positively to the challenges we will face throughout our lives.

Finally, things can, do, and will change and you can be part of that. Together we can create a world that works for young people and wider society.

Lauren

