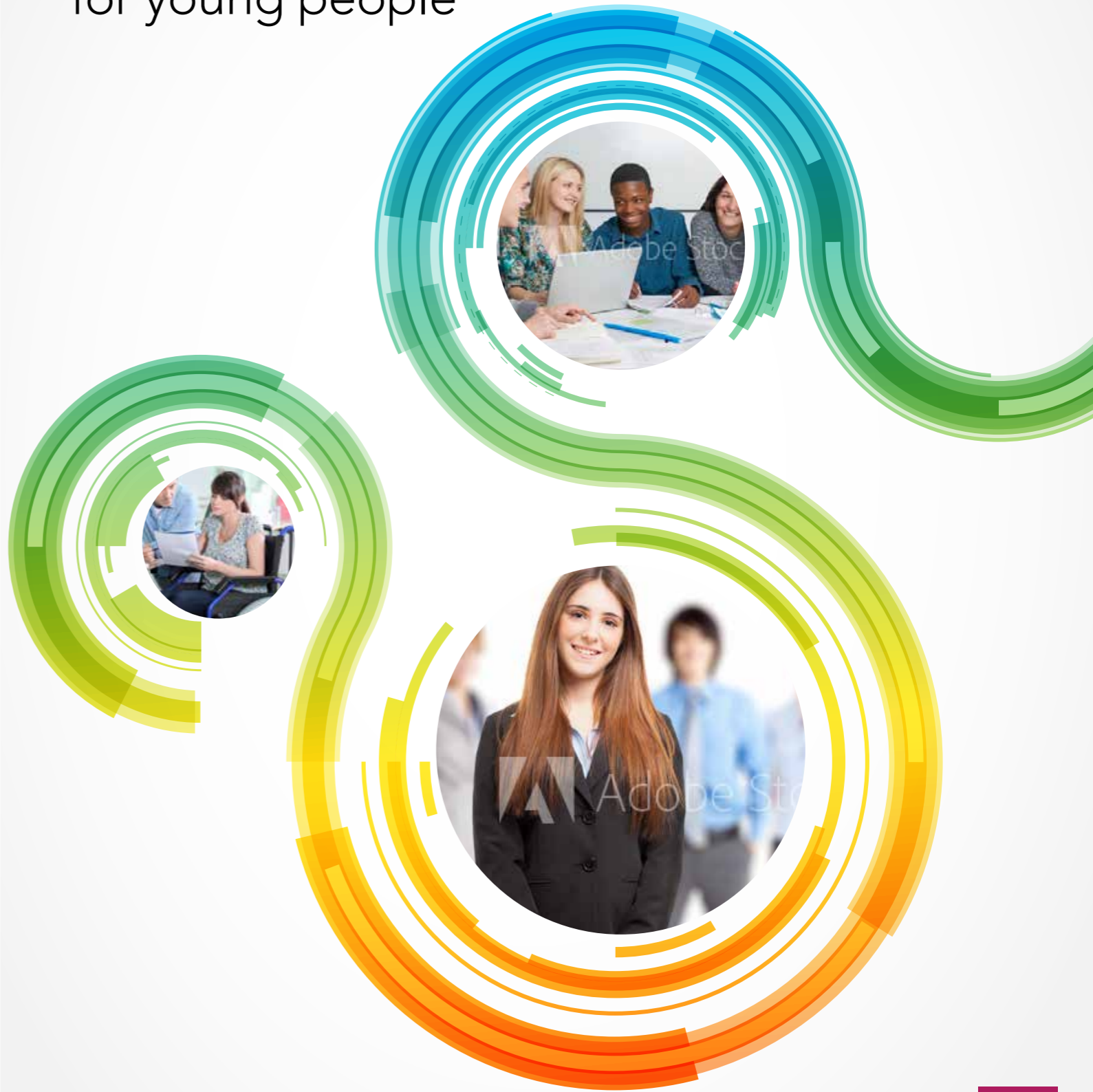


EMPLOYABILITY & SKILLS GUIDE

for young people



If you have any feedback on this publication

please email: help@somersetchoices.org.uk

This document is available at www.somersetchoices.org.uk

Types of work opportunities and how to access them

Introduction

The prospect of looking for employment can be incredibly daunting for anyone, but it's especially hard if you've never had a job before. How do you find out what employers expect from you as a candidate? How do you write a CV? And how should you get ready for a job interview.

If you are thinking about your future career, applying for work experience, an apprenticeship or you're just considering finding a part-time job to earn money while you study, this guide is for you.

How can I explore my options and what jobs I would be suited to?

Where do I start?

There are loads of types of work – the difficult part is figuring out what sort of job would be right for you. But these things can help:

- Talk to family, friends, teachers, youth workers or tutors about their experiences and job roles; build a network of people who could help you think about the world of work.
- Think about your interests and what kind of job you would like to do. Be realistic when you think about this, even if your dream job is to be a singer, or a footballer you'll need to work hard and be ready for setbacks. It is also useful to have other options. Also, try to be realistic about the level of job you go into – most people start out at the bottom of the ladder in their first job; over time you can work your way up and into the role you really want.
- Consider where you would like to work, this could be in an office or you might prefer to work outdoors and be more active. Also, think about whether you would like to work near to where you currently live or if you would be prepared or able to move or travel further to work.
- Think about which companies are in your area and the sorts of jobs they offer- try to speak to local employers directly about the different kinds of work available; you can also find this out by looking at their websites. Take advantage of any careers fairs or employer talks at your school or in your local area (these might be organised by your local Job Centre or local Council).

Types of work opportunities:

Work experience

Normally a one/two week unpaid placement with a company or organisation to give you a taste of what it is like to work there. (see page 4 for more information).

Volunteering

Any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment, community or someone/group of people (not including your family or close friends)

Traineeships

A new scheme for young people who want to work, but who need extra help to gain an apprenticeship or job. Traineeships provide you with the opportunity to gain work experience and the skills that will help you to find a job.

Apprenticeships

A job with training so you can earn while you learn and pick up recognised qualifications as you go. If you live in England, are over 16 and not in full-time education, you can apply. www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Saturday/weekend job

A good way to earn some money and get experience if you attend school, college or university during the week. It involves working during the weekend and often includes jobs such as working in a shop or restaurant.

Temporary job

This is a job that is advertised for a fixed amount of time – such as Christmas seasonal work. For a certain number of weeks or months you will have a job, but when your contract ends the job will be over.

Full - time permanent job

Usually this involves working 35+ hours per week and the job will continue unless you resign or are made redundant. Although most jobs will give you an induction and, in some cases, additional training, this can be less than you receive when an apprentice.

Part-time job

A job that involves working fewer than 35 hours per week.

Self-employed

This is where you work for yourself – you might set up your own business, selling products (such as clothes) or a service (such as graphic design) to customers.



How do I identify my skills and why is this important?

When looking for work you will often hear people talk about 'skills' – these are the proven abilities you have that will be useful to a potential employer. Examples include:

Communication, Team working, IT skills, Foreign Languages. Or more job-specific skills, such as: Money-handling, Car maintenance, Child care, Gardening, Customer service.

Your skills are important because they are what make you stand out when applying for a job. They are separate from your qualifications or education - but you could have gained them at school, at home, via hobbies or previous work experience. Speak to a family member or a friend to help you think about the skills you have and how they can help you decide what sort of work you would be suited to. For example, you could have proven your childcare abilities by looking after younger siblings or cousins – this might make you well suited to work in a nursery or children's shop. A website such as www.plotr.co.uk can help you explore types of work which match your interests.

Researching your options

Using the Internet, careers advice services at school or family and friends can help you match your experience, skills and interests to different job roles.

These websites might also be able to help you with your search:

National Careers Service

nationalcareerservice.direct.gov.uk - the careers advice section of the website features over 700 job profiles across a wide range of different sectors – a good place to look for inspiration. They also have a helpline (0800 100 900 – free from landlines or you can arrange for them to call you back on a mobile) and a free face-to-face service for those aged 19+.

Plotr

www.plotr.co.uk – this is an interactive website that provides loads of information about different kinds of job roles – the Careers World section features 29 different sectors for you to explore. You can also chat online to an adviser via the site if you want more advice.

National Apprenticeship Service

www.apprenticeships.org.uk – Provides information about different types of Apprenticeships and allows you to search and apply for the roles.

What should I expect from my first job?

It's good to be ambitious but you also need to be realistic, especially when you are just starting out.



How can I get experience?

Work experience

Getting work experience is a great way to see what it's like to work and test out different career options – it can also help you to build up your skills and be more likely to secure a job in the future.

- Work experience placements typically last one-two weeks and can be undertaken at any age – providing the employer is willing to offer you the opportunity.
- If possible, it's good to start thinking about work experience when still at school – some schools will arrange work experience opportunities for you – but there is nothing stopping you from setting this up yourself during the school holidays.
- A good work experience placement will usually involve a bit of time working alongside someone else to see how they work – perhaps joining them in a meeting or watching them serve a customer. To get the most out of your experience you should also be undertaking some tasks yourself; you will be able to talk about this in future job applications or interviews.
- Family and friends might be able to help you find a work experience placement – but remember that the employer will be more impressed if you contact them directly.
- Some employers may ask for you to send in a CV or letter to highlight why you want the experience. Unfortunately, not all employers are able to offer work experience – but don't give up – the fact that you have shown your enthusiasm is a good thing.

The Prince's Trust 'Get into That'

Need some work experience to help you get a job? The Prince's Trust runs short courses called 'Get into that' for UK residents aged 16-25 who are unemployed. On the course you get intensive training and experience in a specific sector. This could be sport, construction, logistics, cooking, customer services – or one of many more. To find out more and see whether any opportunities are available in your area visit: princes-trust.org.uk/need_help/courses/get_into.aspx

Volunteering

Volunteering is any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone/a group of people, outside of your family and friends. It can be a formally organised activity, with a group such as the Guides/Scouts, or it could be organised by yourself – for example, you might help an elderly neighbour with their shopping every week. Volunteering is one way you can get experience that can help boost your job prospects. In some ways, it can help you more than getting a work experience placement. Good-quality work experience opportunities can be hard to find and even if you do one, they will often last only one to two weeks, whereas volunteering can last for a much longer period of time.

Where to look for volunteering opportunities

There are loads of volunteering opportunities for young people – ranging in commitment and outcomes. Some popular examples include:

- Opportunities via Girlguiding or the Scouts Association
- Volunteering at local charity shops
- Helping out at an old people's home
- Volunteering at a local youth club or community centre
- Being a volunteer sports coach

The websites below might help you to find an opportunity that is right for you:
www.vinspired.com
www.do-it.org.uk
www.volunteering.org.uk
www.csv.org.uk

Work Experience Case Studies



Name: Henry

Placement: Buglers

Type of work I did:

I did not have a daily routine as every day was different. One day I was stock taking, the next was helping replace a fuel filter on a tractor.

The best bit:

The best bit was doing a pre-delivery inspection on a tractor and checking the hydraulic pressure on a T6.140.

The worst bit:

I did not have any bad experiences at all.

I would recommend this work experience placement because - if you like practical work this would be a good job for you.



Name: Anya

Placement: Primary School

Type of work I did:

I was a teacher's assistant for reception/year 1 class, helping the children in their learning.

The best bit:

Talking with the staff and helping the children to make progress.

The worst bit:

I did not have a bit that I didn't enjoy.

I would recommend this work experience placement because - it is very enjoyable and improves your confidence in working alongside strangers/new people.



Name: Amy

Placement: HMV

Type of work I did:

Tagging and labelling stock, putting stock on the shelves.

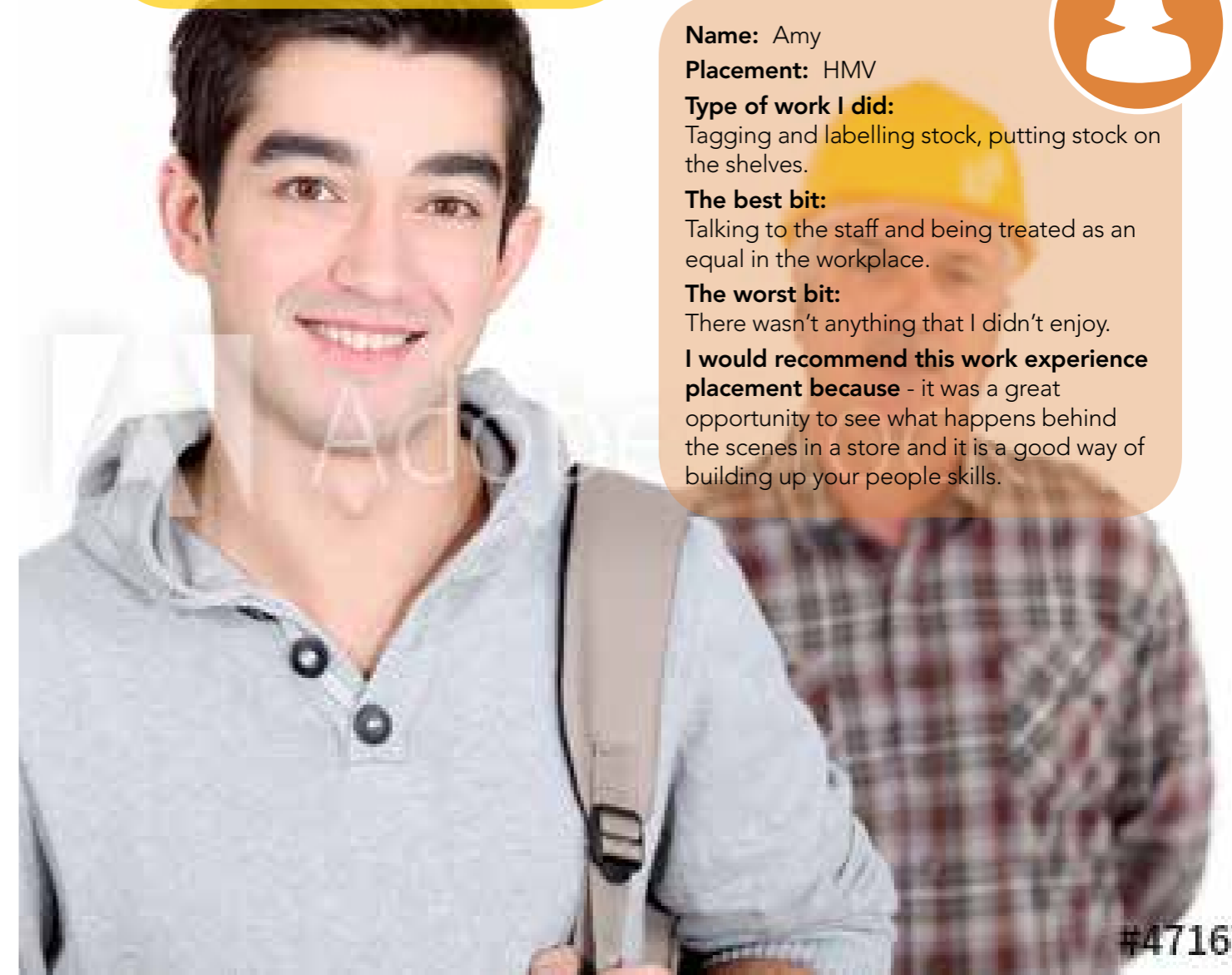
The best bit:

Talking to the staff and being treated as an equal in the workplace.

The worst bit:

There wasn't anything that I didn't enjoy.

I would recommend this work experience placement because - it was a great opportunity to see what happens behind the scenes in a store and it is a good way of building up your people skills.



How to sell your experience to employers

When talking about your volunteering, don't just say what you did – explain the background, your role, the results and the skills you learned. For example, you might have helped do up your local community centre. You shouldn't just say 'I painted a wall', you should remain honest but expand on this to fully highlight your experience and achievements to the potential employer. For example, you might say: 'I worked as part of a team to redevelop the local community centre. I was involved in discussions about the project and took a lead on the redecoration of one room. I chose the paint colour and led a team of other volunteers to ensure we were co-ordinated in our efforts to repaint. The result was a new bright space for the local community to use. This experience taught me team working skills and time-keeping – as the room had to be painted by a certain time'.

Traineeships

Traineeships are a new scheme to help some young people get the key skills and experience they need to get a job. Anyone who does a traineeship will get work preparation training, maths and English support as well as unpaid work experience.

Traineeships are an ideal opportunity if you are keen to get a job but currently lack the skills and experience that employers are looking for. If you have been applying for Apprenticeship vacancies but not getting the job you could be an example of someone who would be a good candidate for a Traineeship. However, they are not designed for anyone who is educated to A-level standard or above or who already has a job (or work less than 16 hours per week) Traineeships are starting to be offered in different areas across the country. Look out for the latest information at www.apprenticeships.org or call 08000 150 600 to find out more.

Apprenticeships

If you are keen to continue learning, alongside working, you might consider doing an apprenticeship. An apprenticeship is a real job with training so you can earn while you learn and pick up recognised qualifications as you go. If you live in England and are over 16 you can apply. They take between one and four years to complete and over 1,500 job roles in a wide range of industries, from things such as engineering to financial advice, veterinary nursing to accountancy. There are lots of benefits to doing an apprenticeship. You can earn while you learn, and learn in a way that is best suited to you – through hands-on-experience on the job. For more information on the benefits of doing an apprenticeship, visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Be-An-Apprentice.aspx

How to apply

The steps you need to take for applying for an apprenticeship are slightly different from other jobs. There is an apprenticeship website that allows you to search, view and apply for Apprenticeships online:

www.apprenticeships.org.uk

A step-by-step guide on how to apply can be found at:

www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Be-An-Apprentice/Applying.aspx



Self-employment or starting your own business

Becoming self-employed or starting your own business can have loads of advantages. Many people like the idea of being their own boss and deciding themselves what they do on a day-to-day basis. You can also be helping to boost your local economy; all businesses had to start somewhere and who knows how your idea might grow. It can also be an option worth considering if you are struggling to get a job but know you have an idea or set of skills that someone would be willing to pay for.

There are some drawbacks to becoming self-employed at a young age which are worth considering. You might struggle to get the money together to start your business or train yourself, although the Government does offer start-up loans and mentoring for some young people. Also, if you do decide to work for someone else in the future, it will be more difficult to provide a reference. You will also not be paid on a regular basis and if you take a holiday, this will be unpaid.

However, some people have great success as a result of their business idea but it does take a lot of hard work and commitment.

The CIPD will be releasing new research that will be full of examples of young people that have started their own business. If you would like a copy of this when it is published please email research@cipd.co.uk

All businesses had to start somewhere and who knows how your idea might grow...

Some examples of the sort of work that many people do on a self-employed basis are listed below, but the full range is much bigger than this:

- Graphic designer
- Gardener
- Painter/decorator
- Musical instrument teacher

If becoming self-employed is an option you are considering there are a lot of resources out there that might be able to help you:

The Citizens Advice Bureau website provides helpful information for those wishing to become self-employed: www.adviceguide.org.uk

The Prince's Trust runs a programme called Enterprise which is designed to help young people with setting up their own business. Their website also has loads of helpful advice and can point you to the best places to look for information on issues including health & safety considerations and your legal requirements. Visit princes-trust.org.uk and search for the Enterprise programme.

Start Up Donut - written in bite-sized chunks, this website helps to explain everything you need to know in the early stages of setting up your own business: www.startupdonut.co.uk

Greatbusiness is a Government backed website that helps people to start and run their business: www.greatbusiness.gov.uk

The Start Up Loans Company is a government funded scheme that can provide a start up repayable loan together with a business mentor for anyone looking to set up a business across England and Northern Ireland: www.Startuploans.co.uk

Where do I look for jobs?

Employers advertise vacancies using a wide range of methods. Here are just a few examples of places to begin your search.

Online:

The company website - a company's own website is often the first place employers will advertise vacancies. Many have either a 'Work for us', 'Careers', or 'Jobs' page that highlights positions. So make a list of the local employers or companies in the relevant sector you want to work for and take a look.

Job sites or Job boards - These websites can be a useful way of searching for jobs as they allow you to view a wide selection of vacancies in one place. Some of the best ones are:

- www.gov.uk/jobsearch - official Government Universal Jobmatch website
- www.monster.co.uk
- www.Totaljobs.com
- www.jobsite.co.uk
- www.fish4.co.uk

Many of these sites also let you sign up for job alerts tailored to the types of roles you are interested in, so you will receive an email outlining new vacancies. Although, remember to keep track of any you apply for and some jobs will be advertised on more than one site.

National Apprenticeship Service: If you're looking for an apprenticeship, www.apprenticeships.org.uk is the best place to start. For local Somerset apprenticeship vacancies take a look at www.dstpn.co.uk

Social media - Some employers will use social media – LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter are the most popular websites, so try searching for an employer's page, profile or fan pages that then link to the company's job site. When applying for opportunities it's important to always remain formal – even if you did find out about it on Facebook. Also, make sure your profiles are up to date and any photos or anything you might not want a potential employer to see is hidden from public view.

Other ways to find opportunities:

Jobcentre Plus: Your local Jobcentre Plus will have information about jobs available in your local area. Visit www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus to locate your nearest one. As a young job seeker you may also be eligible for additional support, including benefits or loans for things like transport to interviews.

National and local newspapers: Many employers still advertise roles in newspapers or on newspaper websites – particularly for vacancies in the local area.

Develop a contact network: See if you can develop a contact network of friends, family, teachers and tutors who may have heard about jobs being advertised, or have ideas about where to look for opportunities. This is also why volunteering, work experience placements and internships are so important. It's not just about putting something on your CV, they give you access to those networks.

Careers fairs and talks by employers: Attending jobs fairs organised by your school, college, university or local council can be a perfect way to meet employers and find out about job vacancies in your local area.

Go direct to the employer: Once you've identified a company you want to work for, why not get in touch with them directly to see if they have any vacancies or opportunities. Even if they don't, an employer will be impressed by your motivation and may consider you for opportunities in the future. For jobs in shops, restaurants, coffee shops or cafes (this also applies to bars or pubs if you are over 18) it is also worth checking for adverts in windows or popping in to ask directly whether they are recruiting.

Remember: Don't ever think because you have not got a specific placement/job you won't ever get a job there – it's worth trying again, many people get a job after a while. Persistence can pay off!

How to plan my job hunt?

Ten step plan: Finding work can feel like a job in itself, but your hard work will pay off. To keep on track, think about setting up a plan. Here are ten steps that will help:

01

Think about what you want to do - Be clear on the type of job roles you are looking for and the location you would like to work in – a couple of options is plenty to start with.

02

Think about where you could work - who offers the types of jobs you are interested in, both locally and nationally?. Research possibilities and pathways as you may have to start out doing something else before moving on to what you really want to do.

03

Make a list - of ten possible organisations and start a spreadsheet with their details and job possibilities.

04

Find out about job opportunities - do any of these 10 organisations have any job opportunities that would be suitable for you, at your current level? You will need to read the Job Description to find out the job level and what experience you will need in order to apply.

05

Make sure you read the job advert properly - make a note of important information such as the company name, contact details and application deadlines as these will be essential later on.

06

Start applying for the vacancies - starting with the ones that have the nearest closing dates so you get them in on time! Keep copies of your application and CV so you can refer back to it if called for interview and use it again for future applications.

07

Make sure your application is tailored to every role - some of the content (your education) will be repeated in each application but make sure you read the job description carefully and make your application relevant to each job. Don't forget to check for spelling and grammar.

08

Keep adding to your list - as some may not have any vacancies that are right for you. Keep them on your list so you remember where you have applied and then research new ones you can add.

09

Keep an eye on application deadlines - within a few weeks you should hear back if you have made it through to the next stage. Sometimes organisations don't have time to contact everyone but you can follow up and ask for feedback on your application.

10

Be persistent and don't give up! - don't blame yourself if you have setbacks. Talk to other people and find out what has worked for them in the past. Use any employer feedback to make changes to future applications. Remember – keep positive!!

Advice on social media:

Some employers will use social media to check people's profiles before offering them a job - there are no laws against doing this and so the best thing for you to do is make sure that whatever they find when they search for you will not put them off.

You can help yourself by:

Making your profile on sites such as Google+, Facebook and Instagram restricted to just your friends. All of these sites have pages that allow you to set your privacy settings.

For some sites, such as Twitter, you might be less keen to only allow your friends to follow but you should make sure that anything that is open to the public is suitable.

There should be no bad language, reference to alcohol or drugs, and any opinions expressed should not be offensive to others – if in doubt, don't post it (or delete if it is too late).

Be aware of any photographs you are in that might be visible to the public – think about whether they are photos you would mind a potential employer seeing.

Remember that things on social media sites stay on there – there have been cases where people have lost their jobs over things they posted when they were much younger. With your public profiles, don't forget to scroll down to check for anything unsuitable.

LinkedIn is the social media site used by professionals – it is now possible for anyone aged 13+ to set up a LinkedIn account – where you can put information about your skills and experience, similar to what is included on your CV. It can be a good way to network with people who work in the type of job you want, but remember it's not suitable for updates relating to your social life – keep it professional.



How do I apply for a job?

Some employers will ask for a covering letter and CV; others will ask you to fill in an application, either online or in paper form. In most cases you will need to provide some sort of written documentation when applying for a job role. Remember – check the presentation, spelling and grammar of any CV, letter or application before sending it to employers – including online forms. Ask a family member or a friend to check that it reads well – a fresh pair of eyes will spot any small errors that you may have missed. This is really vital.

What is a CV?

Your CV, short for curriculum vitae, is a short document completed by you, about you, which can be used to sell yourself to a potential employer. It should highlight that you have the right skills and experience (not just paid work experience) for a job role within their organisation, as well as detailing your motivation to succeed and why you are just the type of employee they are looking to recruit for that particular job.

Basic tips for preparing your CV

Make your CV a maximum of two A4 sides long - if your CV is too long, the employer won't have time to read it.

- Keep the design simple, use a font size no smaller than 10 and use a normal font such as Arial or Times New Roman – if an employer can't read about you, they won't want to meet you.
- Use simple, plain and positive language with clear concise content – don't waffle!
- Make sure your CV is laid out in a way that is easy to read and nice to look at. Look at a 'standard CV template' online and then add your own small touches to make yours different.
- Print out your CV on quality paper and make sure that you save a copy on your computer so that it's ready for any other applications. There is no need to include a photograph.
- It's important to be honest – don't make things up to make yourself sound better.
- Don't include reference details unless specifically asked to – instead say 'references available on request'. (When requested, for your first role it is okay to give the details of a teacher, or perhaps a volunteer leader or sports coach as referee).

Sections to include in your CV

Contact details - Your name should be at the top of the page, full home address including postcode, Mobile phone number and home telephone number if possible, an email address – make sure this is appropriate (using an email such as iloveseats@gotmail.co.uk is not appropriate and employers will sift you out straight away).

Personal profile - This is the most important and useful part of your CV because it highlights you as a candidate and why you are different from others. Make it a short and snappy paragraph, ask someone you know to give you a few points on the type of person you are; this should help you highlight your best personal qualities.

Key skills and achievements - Use bullet points to highlight your key skills here; for example, highlight your IT or public speaking skills. If you have any achievements (awards or certificates) that are relevant to the job for which you are applying, you can also list them. For example, you may have won a prize at school, undertaken your Duke of Edinburgh Award or raised money for charity via a fun run or something similar. Don't put anything and everything here (an employer won't want to know about every swimming badge you ever won) – stick to key highlights that can show you in the best light. If you don't have any relevant achievements, it's nothing to worry about. You can leave this out.

Work and voluntary experience - List your most recent job (even if it was a summer job) first and work your way back. Employers will want to see your up-to-date experience at the top. Don't forget to list your job title and the dates you were with the organisation. Also highlight your main responsibilities and any key achievements.

Education and training - List your education (school/college/university) and qualifications. Highlight the dates and where you attended (go in reverse date order but not as far back as primary school). If you have them, include your grades – put 'grades pending' and the likely date if you are yet to take your exams or receive your results. If you have done any additional training at school or as part of any voluntary work or summer jobs, also list this here (for example, a food hygiene certificate).

Interest and hobbies - These may sometimes be used as an 'ice breaker' if you are called for an interview, so make sure that they are genuine interests. Remember to include relevant hobbies to the job for which you are applying, for example cooking if you are applying for a chef's role. Make sure you have examples to back your hobbies up if called for an interview.

Remember - Don't worry if you have little or no work experience. There are plenty of other ways to show employers that you have the right skills and abilities to work for them and highlight that you are the best candidate for their company.

Think about including the following examples in your CV, covering letter or application form:

Were you part of a club or group at school/college/university where you had responsibilities? Have you helped to arrange any events? Did you have to keep records? Hold meetings? If so, these are perfect examples of being organised, working in a group, using your initiative and sticking to deadlines.

Have you taken part in any Duke of Edinburgh awards or similar? These are also examples that you have worked within a team and followed instructions.

Have you ever played a team sport? Think about the skills and behaviours you have gained: dedication, reliability (turning up for training/matches), motivating others (if you've just lost a game!), organising and leading others.

Have you done any voluntary work? Girl guiding? Local charity shops? Local elderly home? Helped at a local church group? These are good examples to use as well.

Covering Letter

The letter or email you send with your CV is your opportunity to grab the attention of the employer and get them interested in reading more about you. Here are some things you should consider when writing an effective letter:

- The focus of the letter should be on what you can bring to the organisation that you are applying to and how you can help them achieve their goals.
- This is your chance to tell the employer what specific skills/experience/interest you have that could be useful to them. Show the employer what value you can add to their business.
- Have a 'draft' copy saved on your computer so you can tailor it each time you apply for a job.
- Don't just copy generic paragraphs from another covering letter – the employer will spot this. You need to tailor it to the role you are applying for as much as possible.
- Remember to begin by telling them why you are writing to them – and include the specific role you are applying for if there is one.
- You should also look to explain what interests you about the job and the company - show you have done your research.
- Point out your key skills, experience and/or qualifications that are relevant to that particular job. Expand on the points that you have highlighted in your CV.
- End the letter in a positive way, expressing your willingness to discuss your application at interview.

Style of covering letter

Make sure the letter is typed and is in the same font and size as your CV

Stick to one page of A4 - it doesn't need to be too long – three or four paragraphs is acceptable.

Address it to a named person if possible; if not, use 'Dear Sir/Madam'.

Make sure any names you have included are correct – including the name of the company you are applying to!

Keep to the point – don't waffle.

Finish the letter with 'Yours Faithfully' if you don't know the name of the person you have addressed it to, or 'Yours Sincerely' if you do and sign your name (type it if you are sending electronically).



Application form

Companies may ask you to register yourself on their website and apply for their vacancy via an online application form; others may have a paper form that they want you to fill in and send back to them. A lot of the information you put together for your CV – such as your education, skills and experience – will also be useful for your application. Depending on the organisation, they might also ask you a number of specific questions to demonstrate your suitability for the role, or ask you to do this via writing a profile of yourself. It's really important that for these sections you have read the job description carefully and can give examples of how you match the requirements they are looking for.

When it comes to online forms, remember:

Make sure you have filled in all the sections before clicking the 'send button'.

Many organisations filter by grades (GCSEs or UCAS points) during the first stage of the application – make sure you meet the minimum requirements; otherwise you might be wasting your time by filling in the rest of the application.

Remember not all sites will have a spell-check facility - use a dictionary if you're not sure.

If you are having problems submitting your application, don't just hope for the best. There is always a helpline number or email address to contact, this will ensure that your application is received properly and on time.

The company will probably have a lot of online applications to sift through, so you need to make sure yours will stand out from the other applicants'.

Competencies

Competencies are the knowledge, understanding, practical and thinking skills needed to perform effectively in a particular role, and for the individual to show potential to grow and develop within a business. They are the key behaviours that drive people's performance, getting the right people in the right jobs ensuring an optimum match between a person's competencies and those required for the job, has become a key driver for organisations seeking improved performance.

individuals to
show potential
to grow and
develop within
a business



Being employed and having a job has helped me become an independent person and has also allowed me to acquire life skills that are needed to become a fully functioning adult. I am also doing an apprenticeship in social care which has allowed me to explore a range of options. Being able to work has allowed me to become part of a community, therefore I have more of a social life. As part of my job role, I have to speak in front of large audiences which made me nervous and anxious, but now I have done presentations more, this means I am now able to have my own say. Kiah

How can I make my CV and/or application stand out for the right reasons?

Once an employer receives an application, they will immediately discard it if:

- It fails to meet essential criteria or minimum educational standards
- There is key information missing (e.g. name and phone number).
- It is poorly presented or in any way unclear.
- It includes spelling or grammatical errors.
- It mentions the wrong company or the company name is spelt wrongly.

There is a lot of competition for vacancies – standing out from the crowd is therefore essential. Here are a few ways to do it:

If you are applying for a job that requires a specific skill, for example, a gardener, make sure that you highlight this skill – you have to show that you are capable.

Use the job description for the vacancy. If you don't have one, look at the company's website or use any brochures you can find. This will help you to establish the kind of candidates that particular company is looking for.

Use words from the job advert and put these in your CV. This can also be included in your covering letter. This will prove that you have read the advert properly and paid attention to detail.

What should I expect from a job interview?

There are several types of interview and, depending on the role/organisation you are applying to, there might be multiple stages in the interview process. These are not designed to put you off – they exist so employers can find out which candidates will be the best fit for the role/company.

Types of interview

Telephone/Skype interviews – These are quicker for employers to set up than face-to-face interviews and are often used as a first stage. If you take part in this sort of interview, make sure you conduct the interview from a quiet place and that your equipment works and you have a signal. You do not want to miss or be late for your interview because of technical problems – you might not get another chance to impress.

Assessment Centres – These enable employers to assess your performance in a range of situations. Activities are usually timed, which allows employers to see how you work under pressure. The assessment centre might combine a mix of face-to-face interviews, group activities and tests.

Group interviews/exercises – Often included as part of an assessment centre day – you might find you are asked to take part in an activity with other people who have applied for the same role. This form of interview will be used to assess your team working skills, and whether you stand out as someone that is a good fit for the role. Although the other people in the room are your competitors, it's important to keep it professional and that you shine for the right reasons.

Informal interviews/chats – Some organisations like to meet candidates in a less formal setting first so they can gauge your personality and work out whether you're right for the job. The word 'informal' can be a bit misleading – remember you still need to sell yourself in the best way possible. They might not have a structured list of questions prepared to ask you, but they will still be keen to see how you present yourself and talk about your skills and experience.

Formal interviews - The most common type of interview is a sit-down, face-to-face interview where you will be asked questions by usually one, two or three people from the organisation. They will often run through a list of questions, taking brief notes of what you say, and might ask some additional questions in response to your answers. This type of interview can typically last anywhere from 30-90 minutes.

Interview tests

Some employers may ask you to complete a test as another way of assessing your suitability for the role. These could take many different forms, but common ones include:

Aptitude tests – These allow employers to see how candidates perform on tasks or react to different situations. They are often computer-based (although sometimes done on paper) and are used to assess a range of things including numerical and verbal reasoning. If you know in advance that you have one of these as part of the interview process, try to get information on what kind. There are various free online practice tests you can take that could help you prepare and get used to taking the same sort of test.

Work based tests – If you are going for an office job they may ask you to complete an 'in-tray exercise', which will assess your ability to prioritise and complete tasks. Alternatively, if you are going for a customer service or sales role, you might be asked to take part in a role-play exercise or even complete a trial shift. For an administration job you may be asked to complete an IT test, for example to assess your typing speed or ability to use certain computer programmes.

Personality tests – Some organisations like to check whether and how your personality will fit in with the company culture. There are several types of test but most involve filling out a multiple choice questionnaire. There is never a right or wrong answer to these – just relax and try to answer the questions honestly.

how your
personality
will fit in with
the company
culture



Interview preparation

Before the interview

- Always confirm that you will be attending by phone, email (or in some cases letter)
- Do your research on the Job/Apprenticeship and company before hand
- Practice your interview technique – get a friend or family member to help
- Make a practice trip to the interview location so you know where you are going and approximately how long it will take to get there. If you are travelling by public transport, remember to factor in time for delays!
- Save a contact number in your phone, in case you are delayed and need to let the interviewer know.

Researching a company

In order to impress an employer you need to go out of your way to research the organisation before an interview – its purpose, its products, even its history.

This sounds like a huge task, but fortunately there are lots of resources you can turn to that will help you in your search. In your search for information this step by step guide might help:

in order to impress you need to have done your research

STEP ONE

Call or send an email to people in your 'network' you think may be able to help. Perhaps a relative or friend knows someone who works for the organisation – you never know so it's worth asking around.

STEP TWO

Search on the Internet – enter the company name into Google (or a search engine of your choice) to see whether they have a website or LinkedIn/Twitter page.

STEP THREE

Look for the relevant pages on their website: 'About us' 'Our people' 'Careers' or 'Working with us' sections might be particularly useful. The organisation might also have its Twitter feed or LinkedIn page – have a look to see if any information on there might be of use.

STEP FOUR

You want to find out what the company culture is like – what is really important to them – so, if they have one, make sure you look at the 'Mission statement' or 'Values' page on their website. If they have a 'News' page this might also be helpful as it will give you an idea of the current issues that are relevant to the company.

STEP FIVE

Make a note of useful words and phrases that you come across in relation to the organisation, and think about how you can link these to your knowledge, skills, and attitude within your application or interview.

What to wear

As a rule you should always dress smartly for interviews. Your dress sense is clearly very personal and individual to you; however, these guidelines might help:

Go for a formal look, even if you think the job will not need you to dress that way or provides a uniform. Jeans, leggings or sportswear are not appropriate.

Wear clean, fresh and ironed clothes; make sure your shoes are smart and clean too – trainers or flip flops aren't a good option.

Clean hair, nails and breath is vital – remember, some jobs may mean that long nails and nail varnish are not allowed, for example nurse/carer/caterer.

Whatever the fashion, please keep underwear under clothes; plunging necklines, visible bra straps or visible boxers can give the wrong impression.

Keep make-up and jewellery at a minimum (unfortunately some people are still negative about piercings so take them out).

During your interview

Arrive ten minutes early: Smile, and be polite to everyone. Remember to look people in the eye.

Speak clearly and always say 'please' and 'thank you'. Never use rude, offensive or swear words. If a bad word pops out by mistake, apologise immediately.

Having the right attitude can make all the difference between flying and flunking your interview. Above all, employers are looking for candidates who show a willingness to learn and enthusiasm.

Don't let nerves get the better of you: Everyone suffers from nerves in one form or another, but learning to keep them in check will really help when it comes to interviewing. Try and ensure you appear interested in what is said at all times. **Remember – first impressions count!**



MEN

2 piece suit – light grey to dark colours, shirt with collar and tie, proper shoes and socks.

Or smart dark plain trousers, plain sweater/pullover or contrasting jacket and shirt with collar and tie, shoes and socks.

You could substitute collar and tie for smart plain polo shirt or short-sleeved shirt.



WOMEN

Skirt or trouser suit (any colour) with blouse/shirt and proper shoes and tights (very high heels are a bad idea).

Or a plain, smart dress with proper shoes/sandals and tights (if wearing a skirt)

Or skirt/trousers, sweater/pullover, shirt/blouse and shoes.

Be yourself

Employers want to see the real you – but remember you're there to be assessed on your suitability for a particular role, so it's important to remain professional, polite and engaged at all times.

Employers are looking for people who not only have the qualifications they need, but also strong personal skills, including an ability to communicate, positive attitude and a good work ethic. Companies are looking for someone who is the 'right fit', with personality and motivation. Therefore, being able to show an employer that you have these skills will boost your chances of success.

When the interview is over thank the interviewer for their time and shake their hand. Leave them with an impression that will make them want to call you back!

Interview questions will vary according to organisation, but essentially all interviews are designed to find out:

Your suitability for the job or apprenticeship – skills, knowledge, experience (this could be voluntary rather than paid work experience)

Your enthusiasm for and interest in the company/role – including why you want this role and what you already know about the organisation.

Whether you will fit in with the rest of the team and organisation.

Think about these questions in advance, using real-life examples to illustrate your points.

be yourself -
employers
want to see
the real you

Tell me about yourself...?

This is a standard opening question used in many interviews. When you answer this question, think about the following:

Don't be tempted to give a short response – use this time to introduce yourself to the employer in the best possible light.

Your response to this should be well rehearsed, confident and relevant. Don't reel off your life history – instead, focus on things that relate to the job you're going for.

Include some impressive achievements – awards you have received, competitions won, leading a school club or society, volunteering activities or charity fundraising.

Talk about how enthusiastic you are about the job and the organisation – do your research beforehand so you know what to say.

What do you know about the company/organisation?

Many employers want to test whether you have researched the company you are applying to. For those that have, it shows you are interested in the role and are someone that prepares for things. However, when you don't, you look unprepared and like you might not really want the job.

Why do you want this job?

Your answer should reinforce why you are a good fit for the job and convey your enthusiasm for the role. You should mention:

The good match between your skills and what the job requires – including what you will bring to the company.

Your interest in the organisation's area of business/products, for example, if you are going for a job at New Look and you always shop there – say so!

The job being an exciting challenge for you.

What are your key skills/strengths?

Focus on what you know they are looking for, even if it has only been a small part of what you have done to date. Take another look at the job advert and download the job description from the company website, work through it carefully and think about how your experience and skills meet the requirements.

What are your weaknesses?

Nobody is perfect and everyone can identify areas for improvement. However, when thinking about yours, make sure they are relevant to a professional context:

Don't tell your interviewer that you watch too much TV or you're bad at time – even though it relates to your spare time, this will create a bad impression of you that will be hard to shake off.

Think about areas that you know you need to develop, or that teachers/tutors or even your parents have singled out for improvement.

Remember to acknowledge that improving on your 'weaknesses' is important to you and, where possible, show how you are working to develop them. For example, you might be someone who is shy, but you purposely make an effort to talk to people as you recognise this is an issue.

Where do you see yourself in five years'?

Your interviewer might want to know how the job or apprenticeship you are going for fits in with your long-term plans. It's okay if you haven't worked out the next 20 years in your head – very few people have. However, you should have a general idea about what your interests are, what kind of areas you would like to work in and even perhaps where you see yourself in the next few years.

Tell the interviewer how the job and how their organisation fits in with these ideas – perhaps the organisation offers lots of opportunities for training and development, which in time will help you progress.

Do you have any questions?

Most interviews will end with the interviewer asking you this. As a rule, it is good to ask your interviewers a question or two as it shows an interest. Here are some questions you might consider asking:

How many people are in the team I may be working in?

What's the best thing about working here?

When can I expect to hear your decision?

Remember:

Don't ask the interviewer how they think the interview went. You won't get immediate feedback and it will not reflect well on you. Interviewers will understand you being nervous but you will appear far more confident and self-assured if at the end of the interview you shake their hand, thank them for seeing you and tell them you look forward to hearing from them.

focus on what
you know
they are
looking for

I haven't heard back - what do I do?

Waiting to hear whether an application has been successful can be a nerve-wracking experience. It can also be disappointing when you receive little or no feedback from an employer you've contacted. Feedback is important because it allows you to understand whether there are any improvements you can make in terms of your application or interview – ensuring that you can do the right things next time.

Many employers will send an automated email confirming they have received your application, and some may also use this method to inform applicants if they have been unsuccessful; however, this is not always the case.

Most employers want to help you become more successful, but face too many applications and too little time. However, there are things you can do:

Request confirmation: When submitting an application form or CV, politely ask to be notified once it has been received. This will prevent unnecessary concern, and show that you're enthusiastic about the opportunity.

- If possible, try and find a contact name to address your application to - having a name will make following-up your application easier.
- If your application has not been successful, and it has been confirmed that you will not go forward to interview: you may ask the reason why – however, it's important to bear in mind that if the response is automated, you may not receive an answer. This is much easier when you have the name of the person to ask.
- Read the small print - most advertisements will include a closing date and guidance around when you can expect to hear from them (which can be anywhere between 2 weeks and a month in some cases). Make sure you don't chase until the deadline has passed, or you will look too pushy, which can put prospective employers off.

If you have not been successful after an interview or attending an assessment centre

If you have not been successful at interview or assessment, you should request feedback. This feedback will usually be given by someone who was involved in assessing you. Good feedback will focus on areas for improvement, not criticism, and is designed to help you do better at your next attempt. Feedback can be delivered in a number of ways:

You may receive an automated email which lists the most common reasons why you were unsuccessful.

You may be offered an opportunity to receive telephone feedback, where your assessor or interviewer will discuss the reasons for their decision and advise you on what improvements you can make.

You may be provided with a feedback form, which the assessor completed following your interview or assessment. Often, these forms often contain useful links to other sources of advice and information.

How to handle feedback

Try to be gracious when listening to feedback. Make sure you listen carefully and take on board any points being made. Say thank you and let them know how useful their time and pointers have been – it will encourage them to continue providing it to others who come after you.

Write down the feedback you receive - and use it when you apply and interview for other opportunities.

Unless asked, don't provide the person you're speaking to with feedback on how you thought the interview went.

Try not to be defensive - sometimes it's tempting to fight back, but don't. It may mean you're not considered for subsequent opportunities with them. Leave them with a positive lasting impression of you.

If you want more help or support

There are many free resources available aimed at improving your interview skills and performance. Here are just a few of them:

Websites such as Monster.co.uk and National Careers Service provide sections on interview tips.

YouTube contains a number of helpful videos and online tutorials giving general advice on interview 'Do's and Don'ts'.

Practice! Interviewing is a skill, and takes practice and repetition. The more you do, the better you become. So make sure you practice regularly. Ask a family member or friend to interview you or you could even organise an event at your school, or youth club, where you could interview each other and provide feedback.

Your first job

Once you get your first job, well done - your hard work has paid off! However, you may still have questions about your hours, your pay and what to expect in terms of training and how an employer treats you.

Some of the basic advice is listed below, but you can find more detailed information at www.adviceguide.org.uk/ and www.acas.org.uk

Your employment contract

All employees, regardless of the number of hours they work per week, are entitled to receive a written statement from their employer, within two months of starting work. The statement describes the main terms of the contract of employment.

The statement must give details about your job title, wages, hours of work, holiday entitlement, sick pay, pension schemes, notice period (how long either you or the employer must give before leaving or ending the job) as well as the grievance, dismissal and disciplinary procedure. If you do not receive this you are well within your rights to ask for this information.

Hours

You have a duty to work the number of hours per week that are stated in your contract – if your job is part-time, your employer has a duty to shift you on for these hours. However, a number of employers will also employ people on 'zero-hour contracts', particularly in jobs such as shop or restaurant work. It is not illegal for an employer to do this and can be beneficial if you want your job to fit around being a college student, for example. However, it can also be difficult as it's harder to manage your time and finances – as the fewer hours you work, the less you will be paid.

Workers don't usually have to work more than 48 hours per week on average, unless they choose to. However, in some full-time jobs you might be expected to work more hours than are stated in your contract (full-time hours normally range from 35-40 hours per week) but not be paid for them. Generally, it should be your choice if you are prepared to do this – an employer should not expect it or insist on it.

If you are over school-leaving age and under 18, the law says that you must not work more than eight hours a day, or more than 40 hours per week. You must have 12 hours rest between each working day, and two rest days per working week. You are also entitled to a 30-minute rest break when you work for longer than four and a half hours.

Pay, tax, national insurance and benefits
In the UK employers are legally obliged to pay you the National Minimum Wage if you are aged 16 or over – information on the current rates can be found at www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates.

Before accepting a job you should find out what the pay is – remember that when you receive your pay cheque some of the money will have already been taken off by the Government in tax and National Insurance – so the money you actually receive in the bank will be less than the role was advertised for. For more information on the rates of these, visit www.hmrc.gov.uk/rates/taxes-ni.htm.

The Citizens Advice website includes tools for budgeting that you may find useful to ensure that you keep to your limits in terms of what you spend on day to day living out of your first pay cheque. To access it visit: www.adviceguide.org.uk

Remember: If you are in receipt of any Government benefits such as housing benefit or job seekers allowance you must inform the relevant organisations of your change in situation. If you don't and you continue to receive these payments then you may be committing benefit fraud which can lead to a fine or in some cases a criminal conviction.

Holidays

If you are under school-leaving age you are not legally entitled to paid holiday from work. If you are over school-leaving age, you are legally entitled to paid holiday and are entitled to 5.6 weeks of paid holiday a year. To work out how many days' holiday you can take a year, you need to multiply 5.6 by the number of days you work in a week.

For example:

If you work a five-day week, you are entitled to 28 days' paid holiday a year (5.6 x 5)

If you work 2.5 days a week, you are entitled to 14 days' paid holiday a year (5.6 x 2.5).

Training

If you are aged 16 or 17 and have not yet achieved a certain standard of education or training, you are entitled to reasonable time off work for study or training. The time off should be paid at your normal hourly rate.

If you are aged 18 or over, you may be entitled to ask for time off for training (although the employer does not have to give it to you and, if they do give it to you, they don't have to pay you for it). You have the right to ask for time off for training if:

You are employed

You work for an organisation with 250 or more employees.

You've been working for your employer for at least 26 weeks when you make the request.

You can ask for time off to do any training which would help you be more effective at work, and improve the performance of the business you work for. The training can be training that leads to a qualification or that helps you develop skills at work. There's no time limit on the amount of time you can ask for. Some employers may encourage you to do training as part of your job or be impressed that you have shown enthusiasm for the role by asking to take time off for it.

once you get your first job, well done your hardwork has paid off



One reason I enjoy my job is because I feel I'm making a positive contribution to the community. Being a Young Person's Champion allows me to share experiences about what it is like to work when you have a disability. With the right support most people with a disability can be productive employees. Harry