

**Breaking through
Young people at work**

Human Rights Commission

2011



www.neon.org.nz



Human Rights
Commission
Te Kāhui Tika Tangata

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1. Introduction

Youth employment is a major concern across New Zealand according to the findings of the National Conversation about Work¹ reported by the Human Rights Commission in 2010.

In January 2011 OECD figures reported youth unemployment in New Zealand at 19.4%, the highest since the early 1990s and above the OECD average. The youth unemployment rate reported in September 2010 by the Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) was 16.2%, two and a half times higher than the rate for all people.²

Some of the major issues facing young people and work include:

- ⇒ The recession has had a dramatic impact on youth unemployment numbers;
- ⇒ There is a worrying level of employer bias about hiring young people;
- ⇒ Young tertiary qualified people are struggling to gain employment;
- ⇒ Some secondary students are working long hours while still at school;
- ⇒ Disadvantaged youth with low levels of educational attainment are falling through the cracks.

The Human Rights Commission and others such as the New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development³ and the Mayors' Taskforce for Jobs⁴ believe business can and should play a key role in addressing youth unemployment.

This guide aims to inform and inspire, and provide practical advice to employers on how young people can be employed. It is not intended to be prescriptive. Every business is different and will have its own ideas and opportunities for action.



1 <http://www.neon.org.nz/nationalconversationaboutwork/>

2 <http://www.dol.govt.nz/lmr/lmr-hlfs.asp>

3 <http://www.nzbcsc.org.nz/youthemployment/content.asp?id=101>

4 <http://www.mayorstaskforceforjobs.co.nz/>

“The high unemployment of young Māori and Pacific people and the current bias against hiring some young people are issues we all need to be concerned about.”

*Dr Judy McGregor
EEO Commissioner*

Interventions that help move young people into the work force, for example apprenticeships⁵, mentoring⁶ and active labour market programmes are most effective when strong links are developed with local employers. This means young people can be referred to jobs where there are real opportunities. Where opportunities for employment exist, young people are keen to learn, want to work and wish to remain connected to their communities.

Many employers across New Zealand have embraced the opportunities presented by employing young people⁷. The National Conversation about Work⁸ highlights the efforts of incubator programmes aimed at developing young people and employer innovations to realise the potential of young workers.

Many of these schemes have been developed by local government and supported by central government. The National Conversation about Work recommends a national programmatic approach to youth employment schemes.



5 <http://www.modern-apprenticeships.govt.nz/>

6 <http://www.youthmentoring.org.nz/>

7 <http://www.nzbcsc.org.nz/youthemployment/content.asp?id=108>

8 <http://www.neon.org.nz/nationalconversationaboutwork/>

The National Conversation about Work also showed that some employers are biased against young people because of their perceived attitudes to work and because of stereotypes about the youth work ethic.

Young job seekers do better when they receive pastoral care over the period that they are looking for work, undertaking training, or beginning a new job. Some employers believe they have to make a much greater investment in younger people to get them up to speed, and they are not prepared to do that.

Young people's vulnerability is heightened by their relative limited work experience, lack of skills and participation in industries which are more likely to experience employment fluctuations. The challenge is what can you do to engage young people in your business?

Why youth employment?

Young people are especially vulnerable to unemployment because they are not already established in the workforce and they have not yet developed the skills needed to compete with other workers.

If young people are not in education or employment they are not learning skills they need in later life. The resulting social and skill deficits may affect them for a long time and reduce the contribution they make to New Zealand's community and economy.⁹

A number of agencies including the Human Rights Commission have identified youth unemployment as a growing crisis, with wide ranging implications for the future of the young people without work, for the future workforce and for the country as a whole.



⁹ <http://www.nzinstitute.org/index.php/nzahead/>

¹⁰ <http://www.mayorstaskforceforjobs.co.nz/documents/otherdocs/YouthTransitionsReport23July2010.pdf>

For example, both the Mayors' Taskforce for Jobs¹⁰ and the Human Rights Commission have advocated for a national youth-to-work strategy which includes all young people.

The unemployment rate for those under 25 is 16.2% according to the most recent (September 2010) HLFSS, while over 25 year olds have an unemployment rate of 4.3%. The unemployment rate for all people is 6.4%. Just under one in four (23.3%) 15 to 19 year olds are unemployed.

"... all young people under the age of 25 should be engaged in appropriate education, training, work or other options, which will lead to long term economic independence and well being".

Mayors' Taskforce for Jobs

The unemployment situation of Māori and Pacific youth is particularly acute. Māori youth unemployment is 26.8% and Pacific youth unemployment is 29.8%. While up to date data for unemployed disabled youth is not available, disability advocates and commentators note the double disadvantage in the labour market of being both disabled and young.



Worryingly, 10.4% of youth (15-24 year olds) are not in employment or training or education (NEET). Young men are more likely to be NEET than young women, and NEET rates for Māori and Pacific youth are higher than that for all youth.

Globally the recession has impacted severely on youth employment. The Economist reports that in New Zealand, Sweden and Luxembourg the youth-to-adult unemployment ratio is more than four. In an OECD report cited by the New Zealand Institute, New Zealand's youth-to-adult unemployment ratio is the worst in the OECD.

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“Investing in young people is vital to avoid a scarred generation at risk of long-term exclusion.”

OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría

• • •

Over 50% of young people work in just five of the 16 industries in the economy, according to the Department of Labour. Four of five of these industries experienced disproportionate job losses during the course of the recession: hospitality, retail trade, communication services, and construction. In addition, young people experienced greater job losses than older workers in 10 out of the 16 industries.

Some youth experience more disadvantage than others. Those youth are:

⇒ *Māori & Pacific*

Māori and Pacific make up a relatively young and fast-growing share of the New Zealand working-age population and have weaker labour market outcomes, on average than the broader population.

⇒ *Disabled Youth*

Employment opportunities are extremely limited for youth with disabilities. Misperceptions that people with disabilities are costly to employ and a reluctance of employers to hire youth with disabilities are issues.

⇒ *Teen parents*

Limited educational achievement combined with low basic skills, limited job experience and parenting responsibilities means fewer employment opportunities and lower wages for teenage parents.

⇒ *Migrants*

Migrant youth have an increased tendency to combine study and part-time employment. Migrant youth experience difficulties when trying to transition to the workforce.

The business case

Young men and women have been disproportionately affected by the recession. Indeed youth unemployment has increased significantly since 2008 and is two and a half times more than the adult rate.

Many well-educated young people are struggling to find work and those who are in employment, especially young women, are engaged in relatively unskilled or informal occupations, entailing a major waste of human resources, as well as considerable frustration among young people and their families. As job prospects remain weak, many young people might see little benefit of furthering education or training which would have negative socio-economic consequences.

There is real concern that unless action is taken urgently, the youth situation will become unsustainable, representing a threat to social cohesion and to future labour supply. Moreover, young people represent a valuable resource to the economy, business and society. This is why promoting more and better jobs for youth is crucial.

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“At the end of the day the future of our community is in the hands of our youth.”

Open Letter from Ashburton
District Mayor, Rangitata M.P. and
Community & Business Leaders

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Connecting local businesses with young workers can have long-lasting economic benefits. Young people want communities that have opportunities for them to be engaged in. Investing in their well-being can lead to positive, sustainable community outcomes and significant business benefits as highlighted by the Otorohanga youth employment programme¹¹.



¹¹ http://www.nzherald.co.nz/employment/news/article.cfm?c_id=11&objectid=10575842

New Zealand has an ageing workforce. It is predicted that between the years 2011 and 2051 the number of 16 to 24 year-olds in the workforce will fall by 25%.¹² At the same time, skills and labour shortages are emerging so the imperative is to maximise the human capital we already have, maximise the potential of older workers and ensure young workers become a productive resource.

The consequence of non-participation in work, education or training for youth includes:

- Fewer employment opportunities and increasing inequalities;
- Lower earning potential;
- Greater reliance on social assistance;
- Higher involvement in crime;
- Alcohol and drug abuse;
- Greater risk of homelessness;
- Intergenerational inactivity;
- Lower taxation income.



“99.9% of our young people are fantastic individuals, capable of incredible achievements, with a little support, guidance and encouragement – our future is in great hands!”

Mayor Dale Williams



¹² <http://www.eeotrust.org.nz/content/docs/information/Ageing%20Workforce%20Factsheet.pdf>

Why having young workers is good for business:

- ⇒ Investment in the employment of young people brings long term benefits to communities and businesses;
- ⇒ If employed early young people first learn your methods, your protocol and your business principles;
- ⇒ Young workers cost less and businesses who hire young people may receive a government funded employer incentive;
- ⇒ Young workers help boost the morale and productivity of existing employees;
- ⇒ Young people have experience with technology and social networking/relationship building;
- ⇒ Young people are the drivers of innovation;
- ⇒ Young workers are energetic and driven;
- ⇒ Young people are tomorrow's market;
- ⇒ A diverse workforce is more productive and effective.

(Source: New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development)



2. Supporting employers

A 'good employer'¹³ values equity and fairness and has policies, programmes and practices that promote these values. A 'good employer' makes maximum use of skills and strengths of all staff but has special regard for those groups often overlooked or marginalised – including young people.

Key elements of being a 'good employer' relate to recruiting, developing, managing and retaining staff to achieve results.

'The Good Employer'

7 Key Elements

- 1 Leadership, Accountability and Culture**
- 2 Recruitment, Selection and Induction**
- 3 Employee Development, Promotion and Exit**
- 4 Flexibility and Work Design**
- 5 Remuneration, Recognition and Conditions**
- 6 Harassment and Bullying Prevention**
- 7 Safe and Healthy Environment**

¹³ <http://www.neon.org.nz/crownentitiesadvice/howtobeagoodemployer/>

The core 'good employer' elements that relate to youth employment include:

1. *Leadership, Accountability and Culture*
 - ⇒ Strong leadership and clear vision where youth are valued;
2. *Recruitment, selection and induction*
 - ⇒ Diverse networks used to recruit young people;
3. *Employee Development, Promotion and Exit*
 - ⇒ Positive, equitable approach to developing young people;
4. *Flexibility and Work Design*
 - ⇒ Workplace design that assists young employees balance work with the rest of their lives;
5. *Remuneration, Recognition and Conditions*
 - ⇒ Equal access to job opportunities and conditions.

Know your rights

The Human Rights Commission's pre-employment guide "Getting A Job – An A to Z for employers and employees"¹⁴ is a set of guidelines aimed at ensuring equality and fairness for all job applicants regardless of characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, age, disability and religion. The questions and answers are based on enquiries made to the Commission.

For example in relation to age:

Q. Can an employer ask me my age as part of the job application process?

A. No, an employer should not ask you to provide your age as part of the job application or interview processes. The (Human Rights) Act provides protection against age discrimination once you reach the age of 16 and there is no upper limit on age discrimination. It is good practice for an employer not to ask about a job applicant's age or to actively seek out the applicant's date of birth. It is also good practice for an employer not to ask a job applicant about the dates of attendance at schools or other educational institutions as this may indicate the age of the applicant. Good employment practice means hiring the best person for the job, regardless of age.

The Act provides a number of exceptions for age discrimination, including:

- where being of a particular age or in a particular age group is a genuine occupational qualification, for example managing licensed premises;
- where for reasons of authenticity being of a particular age is a genuine occupational qualification, for example an actor;
- in employment performed wholly or mainly outside New Zealand and the laws, customs, or practices of the country in which the work takes place require they be carried out by someone of a particular age group;
- in domestic employment in a private household;

¹⁴ <http://www.neon.org.nz/eoissues/Pre-employmentguidelines/>

- in work involving national security, if that work requires a secret or top-secret security clearance, an employee must be 20 years or over.

Q Can an employer reject a 17-year-old person on the basis of inexperience?

A. Yes, an employer can reject an applicant on the basis of inexperience if experience is a core competency for the job. No employee aged 16 or more can be rejected on the basis of age. All new job applicants, regardless of age, need time to become familiar with their role. Good performance at work is not age dependent.

Other guidance on employment rights and young people is available at the Department of Labour.¹⁵

Financial assistance

Government assistance is available for employers who wish to create opportunities for youth employment. The Youth Opportunities Package is a targeted package of initiatives to help those young people more at risk of long-term unemployment during the recession. It is aimed at creating new job and training opportunities for 16 to 24 year olds.

There is a range of packages available including:

Job Ops

A subsidy to help with the costs of employing young people in entry-level positions.¹⁶

Community Max

A subsidy to help employ young people on projects that benefit the community or the environment.¹⁷

Industry Partnerships

A service that works with industries and employers to find and train workers to fill labour shortages.¹⁸

Limited Service Volunteer

A six-week motivational course which aims to increase the number of young people entering employment or training by improving their self-discipline, self-confidence, motivation and initiative.¹⁹



¹⁵ <http://www.ers.dol.govt.nz/factsheets/employingchildren.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/business/a-z-services/job-ops.html>

¹⁷ <http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/community/a-z-grants-and-other-help/community-max.html>

¹⁸ <http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/business/looking-for-staff/partnering-to-fill-a-labour-shortage.html>

¹⁹ <http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/a-z-benefits/limited-service-volunteer-lsv.html>

Attracting young people

Traditional methods of job advertising like the situations vacant pages may not reach those aged 16–24 years. Young people are likely to find out about jobs from friends, school careers' advisers, community notice boards and internet websites.

It is suggested employers:

- ⇒ ask young people working for them if they know of others interested;
- ⇒ contact careers' advisers at local schools;
- ⇒ ask young people which websites they use for job-hunting;
- ⇒ ensure applications are a helpful introduction to job-hunting for younger and less-experienced applicants;
- ⇒ make sure younger applicants are fully briefed about the job interview and the essential skills and competencies sought.



Additional sources of support

The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions²⁰ provides advice for new employees and the Employers and Manufacturers Association²¹ provides advice to employers.

The Employers Disability Network²² provides advice on employing people with disabilities. Support Funds are available to employers to assist people with disabilities in New Zealand to participate in open employment.²³

The EEO Trust²⁴ provides advice to employers around how to implement EEO to benefit from diversity. The Human Rights Commission provides a raft of employment advice through its NEON network.²⁵

Student Job Search²⁶ (SJS) established in 1982 is a free employment service with 28 years experience at bringing employers and students together. Feedback from employers on the SJS website highlights the benefit of employing students and graduates.



“There can be no keener revelation of a community's soul, than the way it treats its children and young people”

Nelson Mandela



20 <http://union.org.nz/sites/union/files/E-Starting-A-Job.pdf>

21 <http://www.ema.co.nz/publications.htm>

22 <http://www.edn.org.nz>

23 <http://www.workbridge.co.nz/?page=122>

24 <http://www.eeotrust.org.nz/equal/implementing.cfm>

25 www.neon.org.nz.

26 www.sjs.co.nz

90 day trial period

The Commission asked employment lawyer Andrew Scott-Howman to provide simple advice on the 90 day trial period.

An employer may ask a new employee to agree to a trial provision in his or her employment agreement. The provision may nominate a period (of up to 90 days) during which an employee may be dismissed without being able to bring a personal grievance against the employer.

A couple of important things to note about trial provisions:

- ⇒ A trial provision is different to a probationary arrangement. A worker that is on probation may have their performance monitored by their employer – but the employer must follow a performance management process if it wishes to dismiss the employee (i.e. the worker must be told about any concerns with their performance, and must be given an opportunity to improve).
- ⇒ Under the current law, an employer may only ask an employee to agree to a trial provision if it employs less than 20 workers. The law will, however, change on 1 April 2011 to allow all employers to ask new employees to agree to a trial provision.
- ⇒ Agreeing to a trial provision doesn't necessarily mean that your employment will be terminated. A Department of Labour survey in 2010 found that 74% of all employees kept their employment beyond their trial period.

In order to rely upon a trial provision an employer is required to comply with the following requirements:

- ⇒ The trial provision must be in writing, and must be part of the employment agreement.
- ⇒ The agreement must be entered into before the employee starts work. Practically, this means that the agreement (with the trial provision) must be signed before the employee actually starts work.
- ⇒ The trial provision must inform the employee that they could be dismissed within a certain time period (up to 90 days) and that time period must start on the person's first day of work.
- ⇒ The trial provision must contain some information for the employee that they will not be able to bring a personal grievance against the employer if their employment is terminated on the basis of the trial provision.
- ⇒ A trial provision may only be applied to a new employee. An existing worker may not be asked to agree to a trial provision.

If you are offered a job, you should carefully read your employment agreement before signing it – and before starting work. If you have concerns about agreeing to a trial provision, raise them with your new employer before signing and returning your agreement.

You cannot require your employer to remove a trial provision, but you could do one of the following things:

- ⇒ You could ask your employer about the reason for including a trial provision – and whether it is needed in your particular case.
- ⇒ You could suggest, as an alternative, a probationary arrangement. If the employer is concerned to see how you perform in your new job you could suggest that you have regular meetings to discuss your progress – and agree to be performance-managed if required.

The following are some things that an employer should bear in mind if it seeks to terminate a worker's employment in reliance on a trial provision:

- ⇒ An employee must be dismissed on notice. The period of notice which the employer is required to give will be specified in the employment agreement. In some cases, the employer may have an option to pay the employee instead of requiring him or her to work out the prescribed period of notice.
- ⇒ It is possible that when the employer provides notice of termination, the employee might ask for reasons for his or her dismissal. As part of the good faith obligation, the employer must provide some reason for dismissal – and must not mislead or deceive the employee.
- ⇒ A trial provision may be invalid to the extent that it is inconsistent with a provision in the employee's employment agreement (which may be an individual agreement or a collective agreement). If, for example, the employment agreement specifies a particular process which must be followed in the event of specific performance concerns, the employer may be required to follow that process irrespective of the trial provision.

In general, the Employment Court has commented that because a trial provision is inherently disadvantageous to an employee's rights an employer seeking to rely on one must adhere strictly to the requirements of the Act.



Modern apprenticeships

The Modern Apprenticeship Scheme²⁷ was launched in mid-2001 in response to skill shortages and the low numbers of young people in industry training. Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) combine a job and workplace training with mentoring and support and are primarily designed for young people aged 16-21 years and in some circumstances a limited number of people aged over 21 years are able to access Modern Apprenticeships.

MA Coordinators recruit and place apprentices, develop an individual training plan and support apprentice's through their training. MA Coordinators can be industry training organisations (ITOs), tertiary education providers, community trusts or private individuals. MA qualifications take between two to four years to complete and provide level three or four certificates on the national qualifications framework. Apprentices are paid a wage during training.²⁸



The Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner in a 2003 discussion paper 'Modern Apprenticeships: Training for the Boys'²⁹ raised concerns about women's low participation in the scheme of just 6.6% of all MAs. This was followed in the 2006 publication 'Give Girls A Go! Female Modern Apprentices in New Zealand'³⁰ which noted that 8.5% of MAs were female.

Within that figure considerable occupational segregation was found. Half of all Modern Apprenticeships are concentrated in four industries (engineering, building and construction, motor engineering and electro-technology). Those industries employ 53.6% of male MAs and only 6.8% of all female MAs. In contrast the majority of all female MAs work in four other industries: the public sector; hospitality; horticulture and agriculture.

In 2010 there are 12,262 MAs, 1688 more than in 2006. Female participation in the scheme is now at 12.1% of all MAs, but this is almost entirely due to the inclusion of hairdressing in the Modern Apprenticeship scheme. When hairdressing MAs are removed from the data, the participation of women is at 8.7%, a glacial 0.2% improvement since 2006.

The three largest industry sectors (over 1,000 MAs) show minimal change and still have very low rates of young women in the scheme. The building and construction industry has 0.3% female MA out of a total of 2,279. The engineering sector has 1.2% female MAs out of a total of 1,378 and motor engineering has 2.5% female MAs out of a total of 1,813.

²⁷ <http://www.modern-apprenticeships.govt.nz/>

²⁸ <http://www.ers.dol.govt.nz/pay/minimum.html>

²⁹ <http://www.neon.org.nz/documents/ModernApprenticeshipsTrainingfortheboys.pdf>

³⁰ <http://www.neon.org.nz/documents/Give%20Girls%20a%20Go%20Report.pdf>

3. Case studies

The following case studies illustrate some of the issues faced by young people who are either seeking work or who are currently in work.

Getting a foot in the door

Young job seeker Stefan Carter says employers want experienced people who have got skills but young people should be considered because they can soon learn the job if given a chance. He says there are a number of reasons it's been so hard to get that first job: the lack of jobs out there; the high level of competition for those jobs; not having job references and insufficient qualifications. (He has NCEA Level One and a pre-trade course in plumbing). Stefan says that competition for jobs is fierce and he thinks that employers sift through a stack of job applications by quickly glancing at CVs. The CVs that make this first cut are then read more thoroughly. "Mine never made it to this pile" he says. Stefan says that he can understand why employers use this process — it's the "quickest and cheapest way to select people".

The process for the job seeker is very discouraging, however. "Job search is quite a negative experience." Over several months Stefan applied for between 30 and 40 jobs and did not receive a single response. "Not even a 'thanks for applying'. I wanted a job but gave up looking for it." He says employers seem to be looking at what you can't do, not what you can do. "What I can do doesn't show qualifications wise".

Stefan's job-seeking efforts improved when WINZ sent him along to Workbridge's Dave Barry (an employment consultant) for more individualised support. Stefan learnt to be more proactive in his job search – writing a flyer about himself and dropping it in to workplaces, developing networks, moving closer to the city centre and thinking about what employers were looking for. Dave kept in contact with him several times a week and Stefan is now working part-time for a national fast food chain, which he hopes will lead to full-time work. The job interview was conducted in one of the seminar rooms at the local WINZ office, so Stefan was able to talk about what he could do and how much he wanted the job. This process avoided the short-listing by CV that had previously been such a barrier.

Young people with disabilities

How do disabled people convince employers to consider them for work they are capable and willing to do? Anna Nelson, disability co-ordinator at Auckland University of Technology, advises young disabled students to volunteer to get the experience they need to break into the field they want to work in.



Anna Nelson

Anna learned this “trick” from her mother. “I did a lot of voluntary work before I was 25,” she says. She worked in a garden centre, she did data entry at a medical centre and then when she identified disability support as an area of interest she volunteered at Wintec where she was finishing a Business Diploma. She says that volunteering soon led to paid work. “You volunteer to get the experience and the skills”. Anna tells the students that this approach is not a step down if it’s the kind of job you want. “I think that people should be paid but voluntary work has its place”.

Grant Cleland, CEO of Workbridge says that one of the biggest barriers for young disabled job seekers is their lack of work experience. Young people with disabilities are much less likely to

have had after school and vacation jobs that demonstrate to employers that job applicants have a proven track record in employment and understand what having a job entails.

Disabled students at AUT University have closely matched the University average with their pass rates. At times, a specific demographic of disabled students have had higher pass rates than the general student population, Anna says “and that translates in my mind to work. Why are employers hesitant to employ somebody like that?” Employment statistics reveal that disabled graduates have the same rate of employment as non-disabled people without qualifications.

The issue of disclosing disability is a vexed one, which is discussed in the National Conversation about Work.³¹ Anna advises prospective employers that she has a disability, (cerebral palsy) and then describes the implications of the disability (only generally affects my left arm and speech slightly). Anna emphasises what she can do and what she has done.

Anna does not need her employer to provide any extra equipment, other modifications or support in order to work. She uses a modified mouse and an ergonomic chair at work which she provides herself. Grant Cleland says that 75 percent of disabled people do not require any extra equipment or other modifications or support to work. Of those who do require support, the need for modified hours is the most commonly reported requirement. Relatively small numbers need equipment, building modifications, a job coach, personal assistant or communication services. Workbridge³² and other support agencies can assist with workplace support and funding.

The website of the Employers Disability Network³³ provides information specifically for employers. CCS Disability Action and IHC also provide advice to employers about why and how they can employ disabled people.³⁴

31 <http://www.neon.org.nz/nationalconversationaboutwork/>

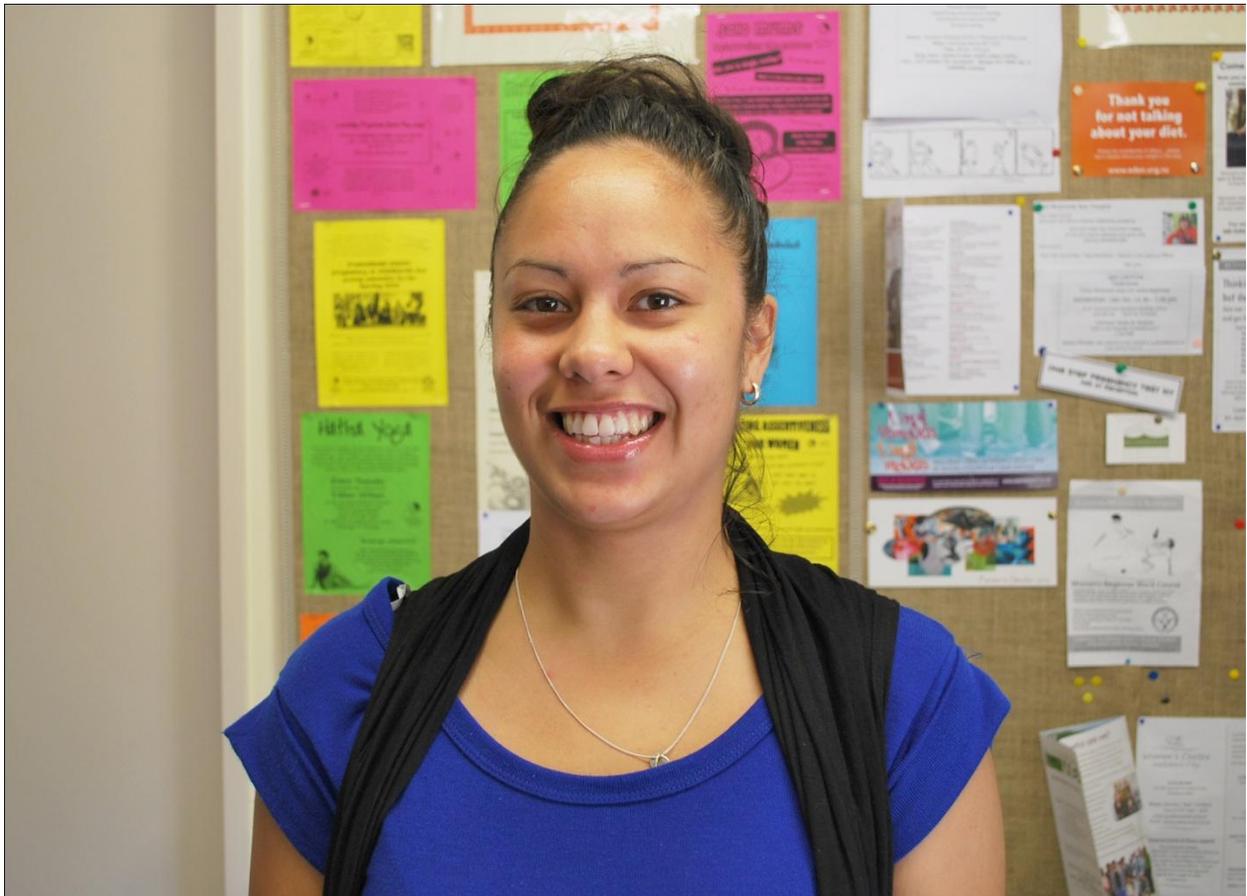
32 <http://www.workbridge.co.nz/?page=1>

33 <http://edn.org.nz/advice>

34 <http://www.ourstories.co.nz/employers.html>

Teen parents and work

Young mother Kate Gray says the main barriers to employment for teen parents are employer attitudes (people can be judgemental and look down on young parents), childcare affordability, education and transport. When asked about how employers could make it easier for young parents, Kate says that employers should give them a chance, as everyone has talents and it was important to recognise them.



Kate Gray

It is hard for young mothers to enter the workforce. After “hibernating at home with your baby 24/7, it’s a big step leaving your baby”. Childcare costs mean minimum wage jobs do not meet living costs. Childcare subsidies are available but don’t fully meet the cost of childcare. The 20 hours free childcare, available when her son is three, is going to be a big help.³⁵

³⁵ <http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/forms-and-brochures/help-with-childcare-costs.html#20hoursece>

Kate says that many teen parents struggle to find work as their education has been interrupted. She thinks that teen parent units are an awesome idea and provide a good incentive for young parents to continue their education.³⁶

Kate works part-time at the Auckland Women's Centre³⁷ running teen mother groups and assisting with SKIP programmes, (Strategies with Kids, Information for Parents). She is also studying for a Diploma in Childbirth Education. She plans to work as a childbirth educator and ultimately, she will train to become a midwife. Kate won a Youth Action for Change scholarship which funds her study and her work at the centre.

Kate says that she has a hugely supportive family and that she couldn't imagine doing it (parenting alone) without them. She also credits the support of the Auckland Women's Centre for building her confidence and skills as a parent and assisting her to secure a decent future for her and her son. The Auckland Women's Centre provides young mothers support groups, SKIP programmes and other programmes for teen parents.

Study opportunities and work experiences which assist young parents into decent sustainable employment are critical.

"Amongst other things, teenage births are an important indicator of future opportunities for women to pursue education and of career prospects. Young mothers are more likely to drop out of education, work in low-paid jobs and with long-term consequences on family welfare," according to the OECD.³⁸

A study of resilience³⁹ in teenage mothers identified the importance of financial support, social support and employment in improving outcomes:

- ⇒ Benefit entitlement and income support payments and allowances to support education, training and childcare is an important contributor to sustainable future employment.
- ⇒ Social support is also important in addressing other barriers to future education and employment. Support includes social contact, someone to talk to in order to resolve difficulties and support to overcome fatalistic attitudes.
- ⇒ Family friendly workplaces that provide the flexibility for young parents to benefit from employment without comprising parenting roles or disadvantaging children.

36 <http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/working-with-us/programmes-services/early-intervention/teen-parent-initiatives.html>

37 www.awc.org.nz

38 www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database

39 <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/sole-parenting/resilience-in-teenage-mothers.pdf>

Pacific youth

Employment of Pacific youth has declined more quickly than for youth of other ethnic groups. The Pacific youth unemployment rate has more than doubled between 2008 and 2010.

Parental expectations, communication issues and a lack of confidence are some of the issues hindering Pacific youth trying to access work. However, with the right support and work experience many young Pacific people are on their way to fulfilling careers.

Jewelz Kilino is a young Pacific woman who was previously on the unemployment benefit and who cared for her sick father. “I couldn’t be bothered and was unmotivated to do anything. I just relied on heaps of people”, she says. Jewelz approached Partners Porirua⁴⁰, one of two Youth Transition Services in Porirua to help get her driver’s licence. “I wanted to get my restricted licence to drive my father to the doctor and to get his medication”.



Jewelz Kilino

While on the course Jewelz met Henry Samia, an Advisor at Partners Porirua and the Manager, Michelle Robinson. Together they created the opportunity for Jewelz to gain work experience.

40 <http://www.partnersporirua.org.nz/>

Both Henry and Michelle believed Jewelz had the right attitude and Henry says he “felt good about her”.

Jewelz’s work experience led to a permanent Administrator role at Partner’s Porirua and now she is running the driver’s course she had previously taken. “I love it here, I buzz out honestly everyday, I can’t believe I work here”, she says.

For Jewelz, gaining employment has meant that, “now I can help out my family’s financial needs at home. I’m more responsible. I feel like I connect more with other youth because I was in their shoes. I just want to help them out. I reckon I’m kind of fresh and I think that’s why I get on well with other youth, I’m on the same level as them”.

Luisa Tapusoa is another young Pacific woman who utilised the services of the Learning Shop⁴¹, the other Youth Transition Service in Porirua. “The Learning Shop helped me find a job by helping me with things like internet searches and updating my CV so it looked professional”.

“I sent out a lot of CVs to different companies but they were all declined”, Luisa says. “It’s because I didn’t have much work experience or many qualifications – but I never gave up”. Luisa went to the Porirua City Training Centre and was sent to the Porirua City Council for work experience. “I started off with work experience then went on a contract for four months”, she says.

Luisa found another job in Wellington city but after a few days decided it was not for her. After a few weeks not working she was contacted by the Porirua City Council again and asked if she would work various contracts in different departments of the council. “I’m still there today and yes, it is something I really enjoy”, Luisa says. She is now employed as a full-time Administrator for the Assets Management and Operations Department.

Youth Transition Services like Partners Porirua and The Learning Shop are valuable resources for Pacific youth in Porirua and have assisted many young people into work. Both services are supported by local employers who provide work experience for youth that often leads to full-time employment.

41 <http://www.thelearningshop.co.nz/>

Rangatahi Māori

Danielle Tairoa (18) was at a complete loss as to what to do after school, “I went on the benefit and was thinking that I just wanted to stay on it”. When applying for the unemployment benefit Danielle was enrolled on the Limited Service Volunteer course or ‘Boot Camp’ introduced by the Government in 2010.



Danielle Tairoa

The six week course, “changed my whole life”, Danielle says. “They taught me physical training, employment and budgeting skills, increased my confidence and taught me how to speak properly. Before that I use to speak ‘Hori”.

Danielle is now the Administrator for Little Men Trades, a business aimed at providing trade services to clients.

“My boss chose me because in the interview I came across as being honest and confident and was good at speaking. He also wanted someone that he could train into the business. He has taught me everything I know and has helped me out a lot”.

Danielle has grown in confidence since starting her new job and has “learned a lot about the business world. I’ve learned how to speak appropriately to clients and have picked up more computer skills. I really like looking the part, meeting people and love the administration side of things. I reckon I can transfer what I’ve learned to any administration role in the future”.

Tama Leaf (20) “landed” a storeman’s job because, “my mate kept hassling his boss telling him that I was a good guy and that he should give me a go”. The manager of the fruit market facility asked Tama for an interview and recognised his potential. “He thought I was really relaxed and confident and said he was willing to try me out. I told him I really needed a job to sort my life out, so now I better deliver”.



Tama Leaf

In the previous three months Tama has applied for over 30 positions. “Out of all those, only 3 employers got back to tell me I didn’t get the job. I never heard from the others”. Friends of Tama’s who are unemployed had experienced similar treatment. Others he says were “unmotivated to find work because of the fear of rejection”. After his first day at work Tama heard that his workmates had started a sweepstake as to how long he would last in the job. Tama is determined to see his workmates lose their money and for him to impress his boss and prove his worth.

Māori job seekers, particularly young job seekers, need comprehensive “pastoral care” over the period that they are looking for work, undertaking training, or beginning a new job. As an example, Ngai Tahu Tourism has created “Tiki Tour” a trial initiative to encourage young Ngai Tahu to work or study in the tourism sector. Its purpose is to actively engage and show young Ngai Tahu the range of career pathways within the tourism sector.

Ngai Tahu also offers cadetships and training or development opportunities to its young people. The Matakahi Cadetships are for Ngai Tahu youth entering into their first or second year of a commercially focused tertiary qualification. Cadets are offered assistance with fees, opportunities for paid Christmas holiday work in Ngai Tahu businesses and mentoring from an established commercial leader.

Young men

Young men have been a casualty in the economic recession. The biggest unemployment increase, which peaked at 18,100 in June 2010, has been young men aged 20-24. HLFs figures in September 2010 show an improvement but unemployment remains volatile and rates are expected to fluctuate. Blue-collar workers, less educated men, and Māori and Pacific Island men have taken a hammering in the labour market. Initiatives that assist young men into work such as apprenticeships and life skills training programmes are critical to ensuring young men become engaged in the labour market.

Time, resources and the costs associated with taking on apprentices or inexperienced youth are prohibitive and present a barrier for employers. The 4-Trades programme⁴² in Dunedin aims to give young people training and employment opportunities as well as focusing on supporting the expansion of local businesses and addressing the lack of professional trades people in Otago.

Facilitators of the 4-Trades programme say, "Trades people were not taking on apprentices, because they do not want more paperwork and because they often could not guarantee work for three years". The programme makes apprenticeships possible for employers by taking over all the paperwork, overall supervision and contractual obligations. If a business runs out of work, 4-Trades find another placement for the apprentice. The programme also handles administration like the apprentice's salary and buys work boots, overalls and a basic toolkit for apprentices.

"It's a win-win-win situation. Businesses win because they get a qualified tradesperson; young people win because they gain qualifications without a student loan and the wider community wins because there are more trades people around."

One business owner contacted 4-Trades after fruitlessly advertising for a qualified joiner for four months. The employer had never considered taking an apprentice because of the extra paperwork and effort involved, and because they didn't "know where to start". Having been laid off during his own apprenticeship, the employer was wary about making the four-year commitment.

"The letter came at just the right time. I thought it was the option that would give us a skilled person at the end of the day, and solve the problem of training staff and then having them leave at the end of three months." "4-Trades organise all the block courses and take all the extra organisation away from us, keep track of the apprentices, learning and skills and also take the risk factor if work dries up tomorrow. . . It's good."

Roman Harrington (21) is 2 years into his automotive apprenticeship and appreciates the help he has received. "I work Monday to Friday and do my paperwork in my own time. I've always liked cars and wanted to get into the car industry in some way", he says. "Bill from 4-Trades is great and checks up on me often. If I need help with my work I can always ask him". Roman applied for and was successful in gaining a State Insurance scholarship which helped pay for his fees. 4-Trades has been instrumental in Roman's career aspirations and has provided him with tools, including a toolbox to get him underway.

42 <http://www.otagochamber.co.nz/bfit/employment-and-recruitment-programmes/#4trades>

4. Conclusion

Youth unemployment is a critical issue in New Zealand and the latest OECD figures show that youth jobless rates have risen to 19.4%, the highest in 20 years. A number of agencies including the Human Rights Commission have identified youth unemployment as a growing crisis, with wide ranging implications for the future of young people and society in general.

There is real concern that unless urgent action is taken the youth unemployment situation will become unsustainable representing a threat to a cohesive labour market, the economy and New Zealand society. The business case for employing young people shows investment in their employment brings long-term benefits to communities and businesses.

This guidance contains practical advice, some case studies, legal help relating to recent employment legislation and linkages to the good employer obligations of Crown entities. It follows the National Conversation about Work conducted recently by the Commission amongst 3000 employers, employees, community groups and people seeking work across New Zealand's 16 regions. In the National Conversation about Work final report the following priorities of action were identified:

- Develop a national youth-to-work strategy that includes a plan for every young New Zealander that has cross-party support and sufficient long-term funding security. The strategy must be responsive to the needs of Māori, Pacific and disabled youth as particularly vulnerable groups of young people.
- Include in this strategy the provision of pastoral care for at-risk groups during further education, job search and job entry stages.
- Include support for employers to assist problem solve any difficulties that may arise and to encourage young employees during the early stages of employment.

The Human Rights Commission strongly urges the hiring and retention of young people to help economic recovery, to improve productivity and to recognise that they are a vital, national resource in themselves.

Crown entities have an important role as major employers in New Zealand to ensure that their staff profiles include young people and that they actively recruit, support, retain and promote younger New Zealanders using merit criteria. In some cases the recruitment of young workers may require active labour market strategies at an organisational level.

The Commission welcomes advice from Crown entities of good practice examples of youth employment that can be promoted within the sector. Please contact moanae@hrc.co.nz to share this information or if you have queries about the employment of young people.

Useful links

YWCA's Future Leaders programme for young women to develop leadership skills:
<http://www.neon.org.nz/newsarchive/futureleaders/>

What communities are doing to support their young people as they transition from school, training and employment:
http://www.mayorstafforjobs.co.nz/documents/otherdocs/Supporting_Youth_Transitions_150910.pdf

Status of employment in New Zealand:
http://www.hrc.co.nz/hrc_new/hrc/cms/files/documents/09-Dec-2010_12-25-21_Summary_of_HR_in_NZ_2010.html#work

Student employment opportunities <http://www.sjs.co.nz/>

Employers of migrant workers tell their stories about what motivated them to hire migrant and refugee employees and the benefits they bring to business and organisational life:
<http://live.isitesoftware.co.nz/neon/documents/Brain%20Gain%20-%20Migrant%20workers%20in%20NZ.pdf>

For advice on employing young disabled people <http://www.edn.org.nz/advice>

Employing children and young people:
<http://www.ers.dol.govt.nz/factsheets/employingchildren.html>

Case studies of employment initiatives:
<http://www.neon.org.nz/nationalconversationaboutwork/>

“A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline.”

***Kofi Annan
Former UN Secretary-General***