

For immediate release

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Ready for work? What employers are really looking for in young recruits today

Impetus-PEF reveals the character attributes young people need to get – and keep – a job in today's marketplace

In the space of a generation, the UK job market has changed beyond recognition. Gone are the days when the majority of school leavers began their working life in manufacturing and elementary occupations. And gone are the days when employers were happy to train entry-level staff on the job. Today, most school leavers begin work in the service industry and most employers expect them to be job ready from day one. It is no surprise, then, that many young people are finding it increasingly hard to make a successful school to work transition.

School leavers from poor homes are at particular risk. Disadvantaged from the start, they are far more likely to fall behind at school and to become NEET within two years of leaving school than their better-off peers. The long-term scarring effects of being NEET (even for just six months) are well documented. Prevention is better than cure so it is imperative that young people do not become NEET in the first place.

Impetus – The Private Equity Foundation (Impetus-PEF) is committed to transforming the lives of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds by ensuring they get the help they need to succeed in school and work. We do this by supporting selected youth charities, programmes and social enterprises so they can deliver best-in-class interventions to disadvantaged young people. Our report, published today, aims to give practical answers to the question: *how can we help young people get ready for work today?*

[Ready for Work](#) is the result of a detailed review of existing research coupled with a series of specifically designed focus groups and interviews with educators, charities, young people and government. Crucially, employers were also consulted: after all, they are the ones who decide who gets the job – so it is vital their views are incorporated into any programme designed to prepare young people for the world of work today.

One striking finding was the lack of a common language across all stakeholders to describe the attributes young people need to get and keep a job. *Ready for Work* aims to remedy this by identifying six essential capabilities that give young people the edge. They are: self-aware, receptive, driven, self-assured, resilient and informed. The attributes apply to all young people but it is crucial that programmes targeting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds take them into account when designing interventions.

We were equally concerned to find only a handful of organisations in the UK whose interventions are evidenced to a high enough level to give confidence that they really do work. Impetus-PEF will work with our relevant portfolio charities so they can build these capabilities into their interventions and work towards producing evidence-based evaluations.

Ready for Work was produced in partnership with [The Young Foundation](#) and the [Social Research Unit at Dartington](#).

Impetus-PEF Chief Executive Officer Daniela Barone Soares said: “About a third of employers say they are missing out on business opportunities because they can’t find staff with the right capabilities – while there continue to be many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds struggling to find work. This is nonsensical. If we are serious about making NEETs history, everyone working in this field – commissioners, schools, charities, evaluators – has to focus their efforts on backing only those programmes that are proven to help young people develop the attributes they need to succeed in the modern workplace.”

ENDS

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Notes to the editors

Impetus – The Private Equity Foundation transforms the lives of disadvantaged 11-24 year olds by ensuring they get the support they need to succeed in education, training and employment. It does this by identifying the most promising youth charities and social enterprises and providing them with a combination of long term funding and sustained strategic advice. This pioneering approach enables its portfolio charities to reach their full potential, in turn enabling them to reach more disadvantaged young people and to positively impact all our lives for generations to come. For more information, please visit impetus-pef.org.uk or call 020 3474 1007.

Ready for Work is published today and digital copies can be downloaded here <http://bit.ly/1xjM4nC> / an infographic of the six essential capabilities can be downloaded here: <http://bit.ly/1oLC7Fr>

In creating a bridge for young people, educators, social organisations and employers, we found that there are six essential capabilities. They are:

1. **Self-aware** --- when a young person takes responsibility for themselves and others; through active reflection exhibits self-control and understands personal accountability.
2. **Receptive** --- the willingness to address weaknesses, takes feedback, and openness to new ideas.
3. **Driven** --- the positive attitude a young person has; applying him or herself consistently; generally going the extra mile.
4. **Self-assured** --- having good levels of self-esteem, willing to ask questions and seek information, able to work alone, and having a firm handshake.
5. **Resilient** --- coping with rejection and set-backs, learning from failure, determined to overcome challenges.
6. **Informed** --- understanding of the job market and the types of roles that suit him or her; it means they have done their background research and they understand the etiquette necessary for being on a job hunt.