

The UK's Forgotten Youth: training and employment opportunities in construction

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Abstract

The Construction Industry is facing an ever-widening skills gap. It has an increasing ageing workforce and is struggling to attract young people into careers within it. Over the years the Industry has researched ways it can attract the brightest and smartest people into professional roles, but what about the UK's forgotten youth - the circa one million young people aged 16-24 who are not in education, employment or training?

In 2018, the UK reported that nearly 1m young people were not in education, employment or training. Evidence suggests these young people face greater difficulties securing meaningful training and employment opportunities resulting in a likelihood of downward social-economic mobility and an increased risk of social inequality.

This research examines reasons these young people are not securing meaningful training and employment opportunities in the construction industry and challenges the industry to address these issues.

The findings demonstrate that there is an urgent need for the industry to create and communicate quality career pathways and provide opportunities for meaningful progression and upward social mobility. It also demonstrates that young people offer viable talent to enhance Industry skills.

A strategic approach must be taken now to provide young people with the opportunity to develop fulfilling and prosperous careers at all levels within the industry, regardless of their background or academic level.

Acknowledgements

Over the last four years I have worked with hundreds of young people from diverse backgrounds. This work has predominantly consisted of supporting, mentoring and empowering young people who may not have had the best start in life, to offer them the skills and confidence to access training and employment opportunities.

In 2016, at the end of an employability workshop, a young man (only seventeen years old) approached me. 'Miss' he quietly pleaded, 'please help me find work experience or a job otherwise I will end up back in prison or dead'. The comment stuck with me.

I have since worked with hundreds of young people just like that seventeen-year-old. Young people who have high aspirations and a desire to find meaningful career opportunities, but ultimately require a helping hand to succeed. This report is inspired and dedicated to them.

I would like to thank the young people who agreed to be interviewed for this study. I hope their stories will go some way to inspire Government and businesses leaders to make changes to better support their transitions into meaningful careers.

I would like to thank Willmott Dixon Interiors for the opportunity to undertake this study, my mentors, Lisa Gould, Jon Coles and Charles Tincknell for their support and words of encouragement over the course of this research.

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Aimbec

Ebrit
KPH
Falcon Green
K&M Decorating
RMF

Abbreviations

BAME:	Black Asian Minority Ethnicity
BIS:	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
CCS:	Considerate Constructors Scheme
CIC:	Construction Industry Council
CSCS:	Construction Skills Certificate Scheme
CIOB:	Chartered Institute of Building
CITB:	Construction Industry Training Board
CSR:	Corporate Social Responsibility
ECITB:	Engineering Construction Training Board
DFE:	Department for Education
JSA:	Job Seeker's allowance
NEET:	Not in Education Employment or Training
ONS:	Office of National Statistics
TUCA:	The Tunnelling and Underground Construction Academy
REME:	Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
SME:	Small and medium sized enterprises

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Problem

In 2018, an estimated 783,000 young people aged 16-24 were not in education, employment or training in the UK (ONS, 2018). More recently a study undertaken by London Youth reported there are an additional 480,000 Hidden NEETs (not in education, employment or training) in the UK who are unaccounted for (London Youth, 2018).

If these statistics are true, this suggests there are **over 1 million** young people not in education, training or employment in the UK.

The long-term consequence of youth unemployment is treacherous. Economically, in 2014, youth unemployment in the UK was estimated to have cost the tax payer £4.2 billion in Welfare payments and £10.7 billion in lost output (Thurlby-Campbell & Bell, 2018).

The social consequences are devastating too. Youth unemployment affects mental, emotional and physical well-being, as well as posing fundamental social risks such as an increase in crime, civil unrest and potentially political extremism (Thurlby-Campbell & Bell, 2018).

In 2017, the UK recorded its highest ever challenge with knife crime. Juveniles aged 10-17 were the offenders in 21% of all cases (House of Commons Library, 2018). Could rising crime and youth unemployment rates be a mere coincidence?

Whilst writing this report Government have released several policies to reduce the number of young people who are NEET, evidence this is a pressing issue.

The Post 16 skills plan (BIS, 2016) has increased school children's participation in education to 18, to ensure all young people leave school with adequate training and employment provision.

From 2020 onwards young people will have the option to select from a variety of T-levels, providing an alternative vocational pathway to the standard academic route (House of Commons, 2018).

The introduction of a new apprentice levy has also been implemented by Government to encourage more businesses to provide training and employment opportunities for young

people. The programme aims to provide 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020.

Clearly youth unemployment is an important issue and Government are working on initiatives to tackle it. So why should the Construction industry care?

The Construction industry is one of the largest industries in the UK economy, contributing nearly £90 billion, and supplies 2.90 million jobs in the UK (BIS, 2013).

It is also facing an ever-widening skills shortage. In 2017, Arcadis estimated the UK would require over 400,000 new recruits each year to deliver housing and infrastructure needs (Arcadis, 2017).

The industry is also at the mercy of an ageing working population, with 43% of its workforce aged 45 over. (ONS, 2018)

Over the years the industry has invested in short term fixes, with 12% of construction jobs filled by European labour. (ONS, 2018)

With a hard Brexit deal on the way, recent research suggests the sector could miss out on many as 214,000 EU workers (Arcadis, 2019).

The industry needs to invest in young people.

So why would it not invest in training and employing the nearly 1 million young people in the UK not in education, training and employment?

This of course is not a new suggestion. There are already pockets of activity from industry professionals and Government to connect these young people with training and job opportunities in construction.

In 2014, the report 'No more lost generations' sought to better understand how the construction sector could do more to support youth unemployment. But was it enough? (CIOB, 2014)

In 2016, ministers urged the construction industry to do more to develop home grown talent in construction (UK Gov, 2016) a suggestion there is still a long way to go to connect these young people with training and employment opportunities in Construction.

This was particularly evident in 2017, when the former minister for Skills and Apprenticeships approached Shirley Watson (former Interim Chair of ECITB) to set up a forum to support more NEETs into the industry.

The workshop held by Watson at the Department for Education (DfE) in September 2017 was attended by employers, charities, training providers and central Government representations.

Over 50 cases studies were compiled in advance and examined, demonstrating there are already a range of initiatives and programmes across the construction industry and Government to engage young people who are NEET.

However, whilst there is clearly a great deal of activity and passion to address this issue, there are still an array of barriers preventing young people from accessing training and job opportunities in construction.

Why is this the case? And what can the industry do to address this?

This research asserts a lack of understanding of those barriers, and a fragmented, inconsistent approach to tackle this issue leads to an endless cycle of disconnection.

1.2 Aims & Objectives

Aim

This report aims to investigate the barriers preventing young people who are NEET from accessing training and employment opportunities in the construction industry.

Objectives

1. Who are these young people?
2. Why are they NEET?
3. What is construction currently doing?
4. What are the barriers?
5. Recommendations for engagement

2. The UK's Forgotten Youth - Literature Review

2.1 Forgotten Youth

Youth unemployment is a global crisis, so much so that in 2015 the UN included it in its sustainability developments goals. (Thurlby-Campbell & Bell, 2018). To give this some context, in 2013 over 70 million young people across the world were unemployed (Vogel, 2015).

It would be no exaggeration to say young people are growing up in an era of great economic, political and technological change, and this is already starting to affect the way they access training and employment opportunities (Vogel, 2015)

On the one hand these changes are exciting. Young people are likely to live longer, will work flexibly through digital means, and will have several meaningful careers that never previously existed. (Vogel, 2015)

However, research also suggests these changes may also lead to social inequalities.

Academics suggest young people who are more suited to practical based learning might well be left behind in modern economy that places value on knowledge transfer over practical skill (Macdonald, 1997).

Technological advancements are also rapidly changing the labour market. Automation and the use of industrial robots may well replace low skilled labour, putting people with low academic attainment out of work (Macdonald, 1997).

In addition to labour market concerns, rising house prices, increased taxes (due to an ageing population) welfare cuts, and a mismatch in the education young people receive and the skills required for the modern world of work threaten a young person's access to equal opportunities and upward social mobility (Green, 2019).

Youth unemployment is a big subject. This report cannot and will not address all these issues in its entirety.

It does suggest however that young people from low socio-economic backgrounds face even greater risks of inequality and downward social mobility because of these changes.

Since the 1990's, young people at risk of unequal access to education, employment and training have been classified as NEET.

The NEETs agenda has been hotly debated across the world with academics and policy makers working together to better understand who these young people are, why they become NEET and how to keep them engaged in education, employment and training.

The term NEET was originally developed in the UK with the primary purpose to tackle social exclusion and to ensure equal access to education, training and employment opportunities (Thurlby-Campell & Bell, 2018).

However, over the years the labelling of young people as 'NEET' has led to unhelpful pigeon holing and stereotyping of young people as lazy, lacking motivation, and unemployed because of their own decisions (Mendick, et al, 2018)

This mislabelling has all too often led to unconscious bias and therefore the inequalities this group of young people face are all too often overlooked and forgotten.

This report asserts the construction industry is the best industry to champion and support these young people into training and employment opportunities. The industry offers a range of careers from low skilled labouring opportunities to professional routes in management and skilled trades.

Over the years a plethora of articles have been written on the construction industries skills shortage, difficulties engaging young people, and difficulties attracting diverse talent pipelines (Women and people from BAME communities)

There is however only one construction specific report (CIOB, 2014) dedicated specifically to investigating ways the industry can engage young people who are unemployed.

There is no construction specific research on the NEET agenda. The industry would benefit from a wider understanding of the diverse nature of this group of young people and the various complex reasons why they become NEET.

For example, recent academics Spielhofer, et al (2010) suggest the NEET population are diverse, with varying complex reasons for why they are NEET. Businesses might therefore need to consider if the appropriate structures and opportunities are in place to support these young people in their companies.

Simmons & Thompson (2011) suggest wider social, economic and political issues are barriers to education, training and employment opportunities counter arguing the debate that young people are NEET because of laziness and low motivation.

Arnold & Baker's (2013) research suggests young people who are NEET are blocked from training and employment opportunities due inappropriate systems, and Finlay et al (2010) suggest young people are NEET due to a lack of quality education, employment and training opportunities.

Most recently Thurlby- Campbell & Bell (2017) suggests the reason young people become NEET could be a combination of all these theories.

Their research examines whether young people are NEET because of their own personal agency and or as a result of external factors (social, political, economic structures). They suggest a multidisciplinary approach to address these issues.

Clearly to better support young people who are NEET there is a need to bring all these theories together to better understand how businesses can take appropriate action to support this group of young people.

The following literature review aims to provide the reader with a wider understanding of:

- Who these young people are
- What the opportunities are in the construction industry
- The barriers engaging young people in construction
- The barriers young people face and why they become NEET

2.1.1 Who are they?

The term NEET describes a young person aged 16 to 24 who is “not in education, employment or training”. It is a term widely recognised and used by countries all over the world since the 1990’s.

Demographic & Characteristics

In August 2018, 783,000 young people aged 16-24 were not in education, employment or training in the UK (House of Commons, 2018)¹. Data suggests young people with disabilities, lower levels of academic qualifications, and ethnic minorities are more likely to be NEET. As evidenced below:

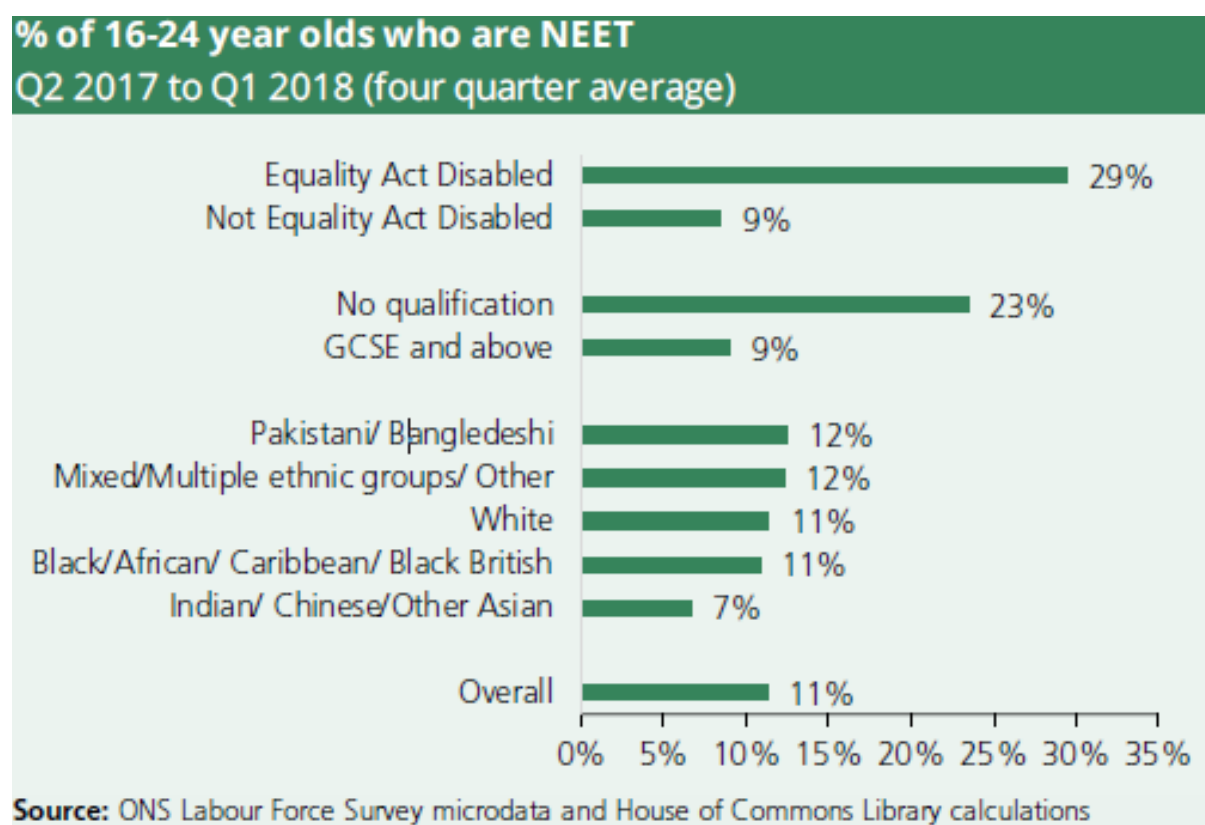


Figure I: Percentage of 16-24 year olds who were NEET Q2 2017 to Q1 2018

¹House of Commons Library, Powell, A. (2018). NEET: young people not in education, employment or training August. London: House of Commons Library.

The Longitudinal Study of Young People also suggests young people with the following characteristics are also at risk of becoming NEET:

- Those with their own child
- Those who have been permanently excluded or suspended from school
- Those who did not achieve 5+ A*-C GCSE grades
- Those eligible for free school meals
- Those with disabilities are twice as likely to become NEET

In 2014 the DFE funded a report on students who were NEET. This study suggests young people characterized by the following are most likely to become NEET:

- Low educational attainment at GCSE due to a lack of motivation, poor health and having special needs
- Personal risks were identified including health problems, caring responsibilities and difficult family circumstances
- Structural risk included difficult labour market conditions, a lack of training and apprenticeships opportunities and welfare support providing a higher income than potential wages

This research suggests young people who are NEET are likely to face direct social and economic inequalities.

Hidden NEETs

A study undertaken by London Youth offers an alternative perspective. The research suggests there are an additional 480,000 young people in the UK who are hidden NEET. (London Youth, 2018).

This group of young people do not claim benefits but support themselves outside of the benefit system, either through financial support from their families and or cash in hand activities.

The report demonstrates there are differences in the demographic and characteristics of these young people.

- Hidden NEETs for example are more likely to have at least five GCSE's A*-C including English and Math's (53%) in comparison to young people who were claiming benefits (22%).
- Many of these young people are also still living with parents or guardians (79%) in comparison to those claiming benefits (66%) and are less likely to have a disability (8%) in comparison to 20% registered NEETs.
- Some young people who fall into the hidden NEET category are also graduates who are struggling to find employment and or are gap year students.

Diverse & Complex

Young people who are NEET are diverse and complex in demographic and characteristic. They are also diverse and complex in the reasons they become NEET and how they engage.

Spielhofer et al (2010) and Finlay et al (2010) suggest the NEET population is made up several sub-groups, those who are:

- **Open to Learning** – positive attitude and likely to go back to education and training
- **Undecided** – negative attitudes towards education and employment and unable to make up their minds
- **Sustained** – complex / chaotic backgrounds, negative experiences in schools and likely to be NEET for more than a year.
- **Other** – gap year students, carer, children from wealthy backgrounds

What we can conclude from these findings is young people who are NEET are diverse with varying levels of skills and talent, and complex reason why they become NEET.

2.2 Barriers Young People Face

Research suggests young people face an array of barriers. The following section of the report details the key barriers to training and employment for young people who are NEET.

2.2.1 Education

Research suggests young people who are NEET face barriers to training and employment because they lack the relevant qualifications.

It is estimated young people who are NEET at the age of 17 are four times likely to be those with no qualifications (Simmons & Ron Thompson, 2011) and a lack of basic English and Maths (Centre point, 2015) increased a young person's chances of being NEET.

In some instances, low grades are a consequence of factors outside of the education systems control. For example, unsettled homes lives or the experience of being in and out of care (Simmons & Ron Thompson, 2011).

More recently however, academics suggests young people who are NEET face inequalities because the education system is not tailored to their diverse needs.

Vogel (2015) Anderson (2017) and London Youth (2018) suggest there is mismatch between the content young people learn at school and the skills required to gain meaningful work.

Cultural shifts in the education sector, under the labour government in the 1990's, has created an environment where academic subjects and university is favoured over practical, vocational pathways (London Youth, 2018).

It is suggested schools place an emphasis on a young person's ability to absorb knowledge (content-based learning) as opposed to equipping them with the skills they will need in the work place (Skills based learning) (Vogel, 2015).

This is particularly challenging when we consider a high proportion of young people who are NEET have learning difficulties or disabilities (Simmons & Thompson, 2011) and in many instances are more suited to practical and vocational studies.

This can lead young people to disengage from an academic curriculum which does not meet their diverse needs.

Long term this not only stops a young person from achieving suitable skills and qualification to progress into further training and employment but also creates a feeling of social exclusion and disengagement (BIS, 2013).

2.2.2 Further Education and Training

The September Guarantee was developed by Government to ensure local authorities secure education and training opportunities for young people leaving education.

However, recent research suggests young people who are NEET experience significant difficulties securing the right provision to support their transition into work.

Research undertaken by BIS (2013) suggests young people who are NEET struggle to apply for courses or there is a limited access to provision that meets their diverse needs.

Examples of this might be over subscriptions on courses or a lack of course in the areas they are interested in.

In other cases, young people drop out of courses because the content or the format of delivery mirrors the academic teaching methods in school (BIS, 2013) or they are blocked from applying for courses because they lack the relevant qualifications in the first place.

2.2.3 Careers Advice

A common theme across all literature suggests young people may not receive informed careers advice.

This is particularly problematic for young people from hard to reach communities who do not have networks of people or family that can support them.

Choosing the wrong qualifications due to poor careers advice can disrupt a young person's transition into further training and subsequently employment (London youth, 2018) and (BIS, 2013).

Youth workers also report young people are often encouraged to take courses or pursue qualifications that are not aligned to their interests or aspirations, as a result of colleges becoming more like businesses and thus more motivated by the number of enrolments as opposed to the young person's development and future career (London Youth, 2018).

The knock-on effect is that young people drop out of further education and feel frustrated that the provision has not met their expectations (BIS, 2013).

In addition, due to cuts in careers services teachers are pressured to provide careers advice.

This could be considered problematic as teachers often have limited labour market experience and thus are more likely to encourage young people to pursue academic pathways based on their own experiences.

Moreover, research suggests young people are not well informed on the benefits of apprenticeships. Due to the emphasis on academia and university degrees, young people consider apprenticeships as low paid and for low academic achievers with limited opportunities for progression.

Centre Point (2015) Policy Connect (2018) suggests this is particularly harmful for young people from hard to reach communities who would hugely benefit from entry level apprenticeship opportunities.

2.2.4 Apprenticeships

Research shows young people who are NEET face greater challenges accessing apprenticeships opportunities.

Whilst in the past apprenticeships were an option for people who were more practical, today apprenticeships are increasingly more academic.

Research suggests young people are required to achieve a minimum of A*- C or equivalent in English and maths GCSE to apply for an apprenticeship (Policy Connect, 2018).

Young people who are NEET are less likely to achieve academic qualifications for a variety of complex reasons (disabilities and disruptive home lives) and thus the requirements to achieve Maths and English can block them from accessing an apprenticeship opportunity.

The introduction of the apprenticeship levy has created further barriers for NEETs. Research undertaken by Centre point (a charity providing provision for young people who are homeless) suggests only 2 per cent of young people were able to access an apprenticeship (Centre point, 2015).

Policy Connect (2018) suggest employers use levy funding to upskill staff, and or invest in higher apprenticeships, displacing level 2 apprenticeships which are invaluable routes into employment for disadvantage young people with lower levels of academic attainment.

In an environment where jobs and training opportunities are already scarce, the research suggests young people who are NEET are competitively blocked from further training and employment opportunities.

2.2.5 Financial

Research suggests young people from deprived backgrounds are blocked from training and employment opportunities because they simply cannot afford to sustain themselves whilst in training or employment.

Howker and Malik (2017) back this theory. Young people from wealthy backgrounds are considered more likely to benefit from the support of wealthy parents who can help them in the early years of their careers (Howker & Malik, 2017).

Middle class young people are supported through “bad jobs, high debts, and expensive housing by their parents – while the poorest have no means of escape”²

In contrast young people from disadvantaged communities lack the funds for basics such as course fees (BIS, 2013), funds to travel to learn or work (BIS, 2013) and basic rental and food costs.

As a consequence, young people at risk of being NEET are more likely to turn down learning and employment opportunities as they fear they would be worse off in employment than on benefits (Centre Point, 2018) and (BIS, 2013).

Single parents, carers, homelessness youths often turn down the opportunity to pursue apprenticeships because wages are too low and or it affects their access to housing and food benefits (Policy Connect, 2018).

² Howker, E. and Malik, S. (2010). Jilted generation how Britain has bankrupted its youth: UK: Icon Books

For some young people this leads to a long-term dependence on benefits, whilst others opt for short term quick fixes to earn money (Policy Connect, 2018).

Research undertaken by London Youth (2018) revealed some young people who are hidden NEET, are pressured to engage in informal cash in hand work or criminal activities (drug and gang related) to pay for basics such as food and household bills.

2.2.6 Personal Circumstances

There are of course barriers that employers and Government cannot always control.

Young people who are NEET are likely to have an array of personal challenges which can disrupt their ability to access training and employment opportunities.

Charities London Youth and Centre Point suggest many young people lack housing stability. Many are often between places, sofa surfing, living with friends and or homeless (London Youth, 2018) and (Centre Point, 2015).

For others caring duties (London Youth, 2018) are a contributing factor to why they are unable to undertake training or employment opportunities.

Family break downs as a result of severe cases of abuse or domestic violence (London Youth, 2018) affect training and employment outcomes. This may result in a lack of confidence, substance misuse, or in some instances crime and disaffection

Cultural and social differences can also pose a challenge. Particularly in some Asian and Bengali communities, where strict gender norms have restricted women on what they can and cannot do outside the home (London Youth, 2018) and (BIS, 2013).

London Youth (2018) and Centre point (2015) cite mental health as a barrier to training and employment with high rates of depression and anxiety holding young people back.

This might be caused by strained relationships with friends, a sense of frustration or lack of accomplishment due to persistent periods of unemployment and or fears leaving their home as a consequence of gang related activity (London Youth, 2018).

2.2.7 Work Readiness

The primary reason why construction employers are often concerned to engage young people who are NEET is often attributed to their lack of employability skills and the wrong attitude (CIOB, 2014).

Research suggests young people who are NEET are more likely to require additional support on basic employability skills such as presentation, attendance and punctuality (Policy Connect, 2018).

Centre Point assert a lack of motivation and confidence is often a consequence of chaotic homes lives and or negative experiences growing up (Centre Point, 2015).

Research undertaken by BIS (2014) backs this and suggests negative learning experiences and or the consistent lack of employment may create feelings of worthlessness, low confidence and disengagement.

There is an argument then to suggest young people at risk of becoming NEET may well require further support to increase their confidence and gain basic employability skills to become work ready.

However, recent research suggests this might not be the case at all.

Research suggests young people do not lack motivation, but rather they have high aspirations and the opportunities on offer today do not meet their expectations.

London Youth (2018) suggests poor attitudes are a consequence of young people feeling frustrated by the lack of quality opportunities.

Young people reported feeling they were at a disadvantage by an education system that placed emphasis on an academic pathway overall all else, but this did not guarantee access to quality career opportunities. (London Youth, 2018)

This was particularly the case for young people who leave university with a degree, debt, (London Youth, 2019) and the option to engage in low paid, zero-hour contract work, as opposed to a quality long term career (Furlong, 2016).

⁵ Howker, E. and Malik, S. (2010). Jilted generation how Britain has bankrupted its youth: UK: Icon Books

The report *Young People on the Margins* (2010) back this. This research suggests young people are ambitious and become dissatisfied with the options available to them. They want quality career pathways.

In addition to quality career pathways, young people today are growing up in a very different time and have very different expectations of the world of work.

Peter Vogel's (2015) research suggests Generation Y and X want to work for companies that encourage collaboration, creativity, are diverse, offer flexibility.

Research suggests young people are motivated less through material rewards but through their sense of purpose and belonging and the opportunity to make a real difference.

2.2.8 Unconscious Bias

Recent research suggest employers unfairly misjudge young people who are NEET and this leads to barriers accessing training and employment opportunities.

In their compelling research Mendick et al (2018) suggest meritocracy and neoliberalism is used as a weapon to condemn and brand young people as lazy, selfish and self-entitled, distracting policy makers from addressing the real social inequalities they face.

They present a theory that young people are judged much like X factor contestants. The ability to rise out of poverty (and limited opportunities) through persistence and courage is the narrative by which young people today are judged.

In the media and Government, good young people (middle class and young people who can overcome poverty and austerity) are described as hardworking, talented, keeping themselves to themselves, dedicated and respectful, whilst bad young people (those who cannot find work and on benefits) are described as lazy, unruly, scroungers (Mendick et al, 2018).

These dangerous and irresponsible representations of young people in the media mask the complex situations young people are in.

These stereotypes narrowly overlook the systemic and social barriers many of these young people face, and most importantly the support they require to overcome an array of complex challenges. (Medick et al, 2018)

This theory is supported by Johanna Wyn (Furlong et al, 2016) who suggests meritocracy has created a culture where young people 'increasingly bear the responsibility for navigating an unpredictable world and those who are the least well-resourced face the greatest challenge in managing the (limited) options open to them.'³

Of greater concern however, is some young people today blame themselves for their lack of opportunity.

In their interviews with young people who were NEET, Thurlby-Campbell and Bell's (2018) discovered a plethora of social and systemic barriers. And yet despite this, all the young people interviewed felt being NEET was a choice (Thurlby-Campbell and Bell, 2018).

Rising house prices, welfare cuts, young people falling into gangs to make ends meet, post code discrimination, education systems that do not upskill and prepare young people for the world of work, a lack of opportunities for training and jobs, inappropriate provisions for young people with disabilities and mental health challenges are rarely discussed.

This begs the question, have these unhelpful stereotypes created an array of unconscious biases about who these young people are and what they are capable of? And does this affect the training and employment opportunities offered?

³ Wyn, J., (2016). Educating for late modernity. In: Furlong, A., Ed., *Routledge Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge Press, pp 90-99

2.3 NEETs in Construction

The following section examines the opportunities for young people who are NEET in Construction.

2.3.1 Opportunities for NEETs in Construction

The construction industry is considered a ripe environment to engage young people from diverse communities and offers the opportunity for upward social mobility (CIOB, 2016).

With a range of careers from trades to management the industry offers a variety of entry levels and lucrative opportunities for progression.

The industry is well known for its rags to riches stories whereby people start in trade-based positions and progress to become managing directors of multi-million-pound organisations (CIOB, 2016).

In addition, young people are also more likely to be well rewarded financially through competitive salaries.

The department for business, innovation and skills suggest wages for graduates aged 21-30 and young people aged 16-24 are higher than other industries (CIOB, 2016)

It is within the construction industries gift to be able offer wider social value, by training and employing young people who are NEET.

However the opportunity to engage young people into the industry offers mutual benefit for companies too.

In 2018, a considerate constructors scheme survey suggested 77% of industry professional considered the skills shortage a pressing issue facing construction (CCS, 2018). Shortages range from a lack of trade professionals, to a shortfall of construction managers and surveyors.

Research suggests young people who are NEET are diverse, ranging from graduates to young people who prefer practical based work such as skilled trade labour.

The construction industry would hugely benefit from addressing its shortages, and an enrichment in diversity.

Recent research suggests engaging people from diverse communities add massive value to a business. The McKinsey report (2015) on diversity suggests companies are:

- 35% more likely to have financial returns above other companies for ethnic diversity
- 15 % more likely to see commercial returns as a consequence of gender diversity provides an increase of 15%
- higher proportions of females on a business's board significantly decreased a company's chance of going bust.

In addition to financial returns diversity is also considered to improve a business's ability to innovate and problems solve (National Centre for Diversity, 2016) which would add massive benefit in an industry that is lagging in its approach to technological change (Farmer, 2016).

The industry could hugely benefit from the opportunity to tap into this diverse pool of talent.

2.4 Barriers accessing careers in Construction

The following sections outlines possible barriers affecting young people from accessing training and employment outcomes in construction.

2.4.1 Lack of Leadership

The report 'No more lost generations' (CIOB, 2014) suggests there is a lack of industry leadership to train and employ young people.

When asked how the industry could attract the next generation only 26% suggested engaging school and colleges and 15% mentioned apprenticeships and training (Construction Manager, 2018)

In 2013 the number of construction apprenticeships completions fell to 7,280. Research also suggest 42% of companies did not employ apprentices, 61% of businesses had not offered any unpaid work experience, and 40% of companies had a workforce comprising of only 1% apprentices and 56% did not plan to take any on (CIOB, 2014)

More recently between 2017 - 2018 the construction industry employed 23,000 apprentices. Meanwhile Business, Administration and Law employed 111,000 apprentices (House of Commons, 2019).

Is there a lack of industry leadership to address this issue?

Farmer (2016) reached similar conclusions suggesting the construction industry is yet to commit to a sustainable approach to address its skills shortage, relying on short term fixes such as migrant labour instead.

Farmer's report Modernise or Die suggests the industry is still operating on a survivalist shape and structure (Farmer, 2016) creating a culture where time and cost are a priority, at the expense of investing in future talent.

This may suggest the industry does not consistently train and employ young people who are NEET because it is yet to develop and deliver a strategy to engage young people into the industry.

2.4.2 Lack of support for supply chain

The report 'No more lost generations' (CIOB, 2014) suggests the industry's culture of sub-contracting through a supply chain also restricts opportunities for training and employment outcomes.

The suggestion is contractors who win work do not directly employ trades people, instead smaller supply chain partners do. Over the years this has been considered an excuse from businesses who do not want to invest in upskilling young people.

However, a high proportion of construction companies are small businesses (SME's) with few employees and limited resources (Policy Connect, 2018). Thus supply chain partners (sub-contractors) in construction may well be at risk of not having the right support to train and employ young people.

Moreover, supply chain partners report funding pots to train and employ young people are complex and confusing (CIOB, 2014).

The average net cost of 3-year apprenticeship in construction is £22,000 in comparison with £2,300 for retail (CIOB, 2014) and thus a SME might not invest in an apprentice simply because the training is too expensive.

2.4.3 Image

Like the young people who are NEET, the construction industry also faces an array of challenges with unconscious bias.

Evidence suggests young people do not engage in careers in construction due to the misconception that the industry is dirty and low paid.

Liz Water's (Sir Robert McAlpine) research supports these perspectives. Primary data collected from 100 school children suggests young people are not interested in careers in construction because the industry has not clearly articulated the opportunities or the routes into construction. (Waters, 2017)

Water's research also suggests a lack of diversity may hinder a young person from considering a career in construction (Waters, 2017).

Over the last few years the construction industry has placed considerable emphasis on attracting the brightest and smartest into the industry, particularly in managerial roles. (CIOB, 2014).

This emphasis has predominantly aimed to tackle the misconception that construction is dirty and low paid.

However there is a risk the industry is not equally selling the quality opportunities within skilled trade routes.

This suggests the industry is not necessarily doing enough to clearly articulate and show case the diverse careers opportunities (from skilled trades to professional routes) and or the opportunities for upward progression.

2.4.4 Diversity

As well as showcasing the diverse range of careers in construction, there is a need to consider if the industry has the right environment to support people from diverse backgrounds.

It is known a significant number of young people who are NEET might well be single mothers, BAME and or young people with physical or hidden disabilities. Does the working environment support their diverse needs?

Recent research suggests not. In 2016, The CIC found only 14.1% of the professional construction workforce was female; 11.3% were BAME, less than 5% have a disability, and only 2% LGBT. (CIC, 2016).

The industry is lagging when it comes to diversity.

The Equality and human rights commission suggests the industry is still considered "traditional, with a paternalistic culture" (Equality and human rights commission, 2011).

The industry still faces difficulties being inclusive of people with disabilities with professional's feeling "it's not ok to be open about disability in a macho working culture" (Equality and human rights commission, 2011).

The research also found Black, Asian, minority ethnicities were a minority in the supply chain (Equality and human rights commission, 2011).

2.5 Conclusion

The construction industry could benefit from engaging young people into training and employment opportunities in construction. This would not only increase the industries diversity but will also offer an untapped talent pipeline to meet its skills shortage.

However, the industry really needs to take a hard look at the way it operates. The industry is yet to commit to developing a robust strategy to engage young people into diverse roles in construction, from skilled trade opportunities to managerial positions.

It also has an image problem and lacks the working environment to support people from diverse backgrounds i.e. those with disabilities, women (and single mothers) and persons who are BAME.

In addition to construction specific findings, the research suggests young people who are NEET are diverse and face an array of complex challenges (unconscious bias, systemic, and social) which may well create a disconnection between young people and employers.



Figure II: NEETs disconnection theory

The literature review has offered an insight into potential barriers facing young people and construction companies.

Unconscious Bias:

- To what extent is the construction industry affected by these widespread biases? Do employers in the industry perceive young people to be 'lazy' and 'idle' and does this affect recruitment and retainment?
- Do wide spreads biases affect young people from considering a career in construction? What is their perception of the industry?

Systemic Barriers:

- **Education / Further education** - Does a lack of qualifications in English and Maths affect employers from taking young people on? And is there suitable provision in schools and colleges to train young people in construction?
- **Careers Advice / Work experience** - does the construction industry provide young people with a well-rounded understanding of the career pathways in construction through constructive and well-informed careers advice?
- **Apprenticeships** - Is the construction industry engaging young people in apprenticeships or upskilling its own people and high achieving school leavers and graduates?

Social Barriers:

- **Social / Economic barriers** - is the construction industry equipped to train and employ young people with an array of complex, personal challenges?

Industry Leadership:

Industry Behaviour & Structure
Diversity

This report seeks to challenge to what extent these barriers block access to quality training and employment opportunities in construction.

3. Qualitative Research

To gain a rich and nuanced understanding of these challenges and to test if these barriers play a role in the disconnection between young people who are NEET and opportunities in construction qualitative research was undertaken:

- Semi-structured interviews with 10 construction companies
- Semi-structured workshop with 23 young people who are NEET aged 16-25

3.1 Methodology

Semi-Structured Interviews - Construction

Primary data was collected via semi-structured interviews from ten construction companies. Eight companies were Supply Chain Companies (Demolition, Asbestos removal, Painting and Decorating, Raised Access flooring, Mechanical and Electrical, Carpentry, Labour agency, Masonry specialist), one company was an apprentice training provider and one company was a main contractor.

An average of one to two people per company were interviewed, those interviewed were either senior members of staff and or the managing directors of the companies. The semi-structured interviews lasted roughly one hour and were recorded via notes taken. All companies were asked the exact same questions.

Semi-Structured Workshop – Young People

Primary data was collected via semi-structured workshops with two groups of young people aged 16-26 who were NEET. One group of young people had undertaken construction related training and the second group had not engaged in any construction related training.

Posters outlining the scope of the research were sent to organisations working with young people who were NEET. Young people were offered a £25 incentive to take part in the research on a voluntary basis.

An initial workshop was held at the Southwark Construction Skills Centre with 15 young people who had engaged in construction related training but were NEET. The workshop was carried out in the break out area of the Southwark Construction Skills Centre.

Young people were invited to take part in an open discussion which lasted roughly one hour, followed by a one to one interview using the exact same questions used in the initial open discussion. Questions were used to prompt discussions and were recorded via notes taken.

The second workshop was held at The Amber Foundation in Surrey with 9 young people who were NEET. The workshop was carried out in the living room.

Young people were invited to take part in open discussion which lasted roughly one hour, followed by one to one interview using the exact same questions. Questions were used to prompt discussions and were recorded via notes taken.

In addition to recording young people's comments to questions prompted via notes taken, participant observations were also recorded. This included making notes on body language and tone of voice.

3.2 Analysis

Data collated from both groups was transcribed and analysed separately and then comparatively. Using content analysis, the construction and young people data was open coded to categorise the key themes and to identify key barriers across both sets of data.

Key patterns from both sets of data were then analysed together under the key themes social, systemic and unconscious bias to compare the disconnect between young people and construction and to develop a narrative of the challenges.

3.3 Rationale and limitations of the research

Qualitative data was employed to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges the industry and young people are facing.

This method helped capture the wider commentary and personal challenges faced by the individual businesses and young person offering a holistic understanding of the barriers.

There were however some limitations to the research. Due to time pressures and a high numbers of drop outs of young people, the research is reflective of a small group of young people who are NEET.

Future research would benefit from a larger sample of young people and in-depth interviews with young people who have construction specific qualifications only but are still NEET.

This would help to better understand more specifically why young people engage in training in construction but remain NEET.

4. Results

4.1 Unconscious Bias Findings

Questions were designed to better understand if unconscious bias affect employers from offering training and employment opportunities.

Construction Specific Findings:

Question 1: Are NEETs a viable talent pipeline?

- 80 % - yes
- We need low skilled labour
- We consider them but wrong attitude puts us off
- Process of recruiting these young people needs to be robust

Question 2: Do you recruit young people who are NEET?

- Yes but only one person
- From time to time but via an agency
- Only in labouring positions not directly
- They need a lot of support we do not have the time
- We target university graduates and school leavers
- We do not actively recruit NEETs

Question 3: If you do not engage young people who are NEET why is this the case?

- Engaging them is difficult - finding them is pot luck!
- Lack of engagement and commitment
- Lack of qualifications
- Time and cost
- Lack of experience
- They are a big investment

Question 4: Do young people who are NEET stay engaged?

- 60% - no they do not stay engaged
- They do not want to stick at labouring opportunities

- If there is an easier option, they will take it
- Many arrive on JSA and go back as it is easier
- Young people consider labouring beneath them
- They want to make lots of money quickly
- Cultural issues – young people don't want to work

Whilst 80% of the companies were open to training and employing young people who were NEET, many companies reverted to stereotypes.

Businesses concentrate on the recruitment of graduates and school leavers who have achieved good grades.

All businesses interviewed were concerned young people who are NEET are hard work to employ and retain.

All employers considered young people who were NEET for low skilled labour opportunities only.

Young People Specific Findings:

The following questions aimed to understand the barriers young people feel they face accessing training and employment opportunities.

Question 1: What barriers do you face accessing employment opportunities?

- We do not want to be labourers, we want careers
- We are judged
- We fake our qualifications
- Employers want high achievers with excellent CV's and grades
- Our mental health and criminal convictions go against us
- Finding work is 'pot luck'
- Our biggest concern is helping our family, not being poor, not going to prison, not dying
- We just want stability, nice food, family and friends
- No one gets back to us

Young people were particularly vocal about the biases they faced. Overall, they felt blocked from jobs and training opportunities. Comments captured their frustrations finding work, with many describing the labour market as a 'waiting game' where no one gets back to you.

Young people did not want jobs as labourers. They wanted skilled careers with the opportunity to upward progression.

Question 2: What is your perception of the construction industry?

Both groups of young people were asked to describe their perceptions of the construction industry. The question was designed to better understand how young people who NEET perceive the industry.

YOUNG PEOPLE SOUTHERN CONSTRUCTION SKILLS CENTRE	YOUNG PEOPLE AMBER FOUNDATION
We are proud of the industry	Dirty industry
It is open and inclusive	Not impressed by the industry
They are like us	Employers do not care
They treat us like adults	Employers have 'attitude'
They are our role models	They never finish work on time
The industry cares about us	They pay us late
The industry helps us to grow	Some people are nasty and horrible
The industry cannot build without us	Always must do extra on the job
Gives us stability and something consistent	Muddy boots and hard hats
Practical work, never bored, always learning something new	We like the idea of having a trade, travelling the world and starting our own business

Young people who had engaged in construction related training activities with Southern Construction Skills Centre were extremely positive about the industry. They were inspired to develop careers in trades, as engineers and project managers and were desperately seeking an opportunity within the industry.

In contrast, young people at Amber who had little to no experience in construction considered the industry as low paid and low aspiration industry. A handful of the young people who had worked as labourers described being paid late and spoken to in an aggressive manner.

They did not have a wider understanding of the possible opportunities in the industry and therefore very few were interested to gain a career in construction.

4.2 Systemic Barriers Findings

Questions were designed to better understand if systems and process blocked or supported young people to access training and employment outcomes in construction.

Construction Specific Findings:

Question 1: What qualifications does a young person need to gain a career in construction?

- Valid CSCS card
- 100% of employers valued employability and life skills over qualifications
- We will give young people all the qualifications they need
- Basic maths and English – unless applying for managerial roles and Mechanical and electrical A*-C

All employers required young people to have a valid CSCS card. All employers valued employability and life skills over qualifications; however, many felt young people lacked these basic skills.

Companies keen to recruit skilled labourers did not require a young person to have specific qualifications such as Maths and English.

Businesses stated many skilled foreign workers had very basic English. Maths and English were of greater importance to trades such as mechanical and electrical and main tier contractors looking to employ young people as trainee managers.

Question 2: Do young people access the right training for careers in construction?

- It is difficult to find young people to train them
- There is a lack of support from local colleges
- NVQ standards are not up to industry standards
- Maths and English are a barrier
- There is no qualification for our trade
- Funding further training is a challenge

On the whole Construction employers felt young people were not accessing the right training to get into a career in their trade.

They were keen to engage young people but suggested local colleges were not providing courses for their trade. In some instances, companies suggested there was no qualification for their trade.

Employers commented young people who were unable to pass Maths and English functional tests were refused access to further training in construction.

Question 3: Do you engage young people through careers advice, work experience and or further training opportunities such as CSCS card accomplishment?

- Little engagement from supply chain
- Only 33% offer work experience
- Most companies offer training opportunities on an ad hoc basis
- Supply chain lack quality resources to support delivery
- Supply chain require support to engage in school activities

Most supply chain partners were keen to engage young people however they were not consistently engaging young people through careers fairs, STEM activities or work experience.

Many supply chain partners felt they did not have the time or resources to show case the array of career opportunities in their business and wanted further guidance and support from main contractors to do this.

Question 4: Do you provide apprenticeships or traineeship and what percentage are from disadvantaged communities?

- 60% of businesses offered apprenticeships
- 40% provided opportunities to NEETs (on an ad hoc basis)
- 90% used funding to upskill staff
- Most companies recruited graduate and school leavers
- Funding, lack of time and difficulties engaging young people were cited as challenges

Whilst several companies offered apprenticeships opportunities, these were often on an ad hoc basis and were often limited to one or two apprentices at a time.

Apart from Mechanical and Electrical, most supply chain partners were not satisfied with the apprenticeship standards for their trade.

A handful commented there were no standards for their trade and or it was too expensive to train apprentices.

Surprisingly a high proportion of Supply Chain partners were focused on recruiting graduates into managerial roles, as opposed to back filling trade based labour roles. This was predominantly due to frustrations accessing people for these roles.

Young People Specific Findings:

Questions were designed to understand the systemic barriers young people felt they faced securing training and employment opportunities.

Question 1: What was your experience of school, did it prepare you for the world of work?

- School did not prepare us for a career or the real world
- Academic subjects were boring we wanted practical experiences
- Most young people left without GCSE's
- English and Maths were difficult to pass
- We felt pressured to be academic / undertake degrees
- Construction was not an option at school
- We had bad experiences in school

Young people were very vocal about their experiences at school. The resounding message was school did not prepare them for the work of work, and or equip them with the relevant life skills to navigate their way through life.

Several young people suggested they had struggled with learning difficulties and the focus on academic subjects excluded them.

English and Maths were difficult for many young people. Many left without GCSE's. Young people felt pressured to be academic and pass qualifications to go to university. Practical and technical roles were frowned upon.

Several young people were bullied. Young people stated they were made to feel stupid for having learning difficulties and this led to poor behaviour, low motivation, and or the motivation to prove teachers wrong.

Question 2: Do you have access to further training and careers advice?

- Limited access to support to find further training
- Lack of quality careers advice and guidance
- Unsure what options are available
- Young people need one to one support
- We prefer training centres because we are treated like adults
- We know what we want to do we just do not know how to get there

Overall young people had a good idea about what they wanted to do but there was a feeling they did not always have a clear map of how to get into the careers they wanted. They lamented that they did not receive quality careers advice at school.

Young people did not want to engage with colleges, likening the environment to school. Those working with the Southern Construction Skills Centre preferred working with the mentors and tutors at the centre as they made them feel like they were adults. Young people at the SCSC were heavily reliant on tutors to access information for training and employment opportunities.

Similarly, young people at Amber Foundation were heavily reliant on trainers at the centre to support them to find further training. Many knew what they wanted to do but felt helpless and unsure of what their options were and how to get there.

Question 3: Do you know how to access training and careers information about construction?

- Young people relied on the SCSC centre for further training and employment information in Construction
- Young people were unclear how to access entry points into construction
- Young people were unsure how to find employers and or when they recruit
- Young people had not heard of CIOB, CITB, of the Go Construct Website
- Young people used the internet and or sought guidance from youth workers / mentors at training centres to access careers information

Whilst young people at the Southern Construction Skills centre had a good idea of the types of careers they could access in construction, routes into the industry and opportunities for progression were unclear.

Young people relayed stories of mentors contacting employers directly to negotiate training and employment opportunities.

There were no clear routes into companies. There was a sense companies do not have a clear recruitment drive but rather offered positions on an ad hoc basis.

Young people were not aware of industry bodies such as CIOB, CITB and or Go Construct. Young people used the internet and or preferred to ask friends, family and tutors at centres for one to one support and guidance to find training and employment opportunities.

Question 4: Do you know how to access apprenticeships, do they work in practice?

- Wages are too low, we cannot survive on £5 an hour
- Hard to find apprenticeships as they are competitive
- Location, age and travel are barriers
- Apprenticeship website was not helpful
- Trainers / friends might help you find an opportunity

Whilst young people considered apprenticeships a good thing, the majority disregarded this as an option for further training and employment.

Common comments included not being able to survive on the wages, not being able to afford housing, food, travel. Location, age and finding opportunities were also barriers for young people.

Young people were demotivated commenting apprenticeships were for A grade middle class students and they would not 'get a look in'. These issues were compounded by limited access and guidance on how to find apprenticeships. Many commented the apprenticeship website was not helpful and most opportunities were not local to where they lived.

Young persons at the SCSC centre who had support were more likely to consider an apprenticeship, whilst those at Amber who were struggling to secure housing and basics such as food could not.

4.2.1 Case Studies - Systemic Barriers

The following case studies offer a detailed view of the systemic barriers young people face accessing construction specific training and employment outcomes. For data protection purposes the young people in the following sections are unnamed.

Case Study 1 - Budding Engineers as security guards

Two young men aged eighteen relayed their difficulties to secure apprenticeships in engineering. Both young people achieved good grades at school but struggled to achieve a C grade in Maths.

They were inspired to consider a career in construction after they attended a school trip to the Southern Construction Skills Centre. They went on to undertake work experience, achieved CSCS cards and took part in a summer refurbishment project at the centre.

After their sixth form studies, both were inspired to become engineers, but were refused apprenticeships because they were too young. To fill their time, they undertook IT apprenticeships.

They live local to the SCSC centre and coincidentally bumped into one of the SCSC tutors on the street. They have asked the tutor for support to access engineering apprenticeships. They are both seeking zero-hour contracts as security guards and are awaiting an opportunity for further training in construction.

Case study 2 – Qualified plumber but long-term labourer

A twenty-five-year-old man relayed his difficulties sustaining employment in construction. He was not very academic and did not achieve good grades at school. He went down a slippery road and ended up in prison.

After leaving prison he struggled to find training and employment opportunities. His mother suggested he engage with St Giles Trust. The trust supported him onto a course

with TUCA (The tunnelling and underground construction academy). After completing the course he went on to start a plumbing course in college.

Despite achieving the relevant modules to pass the qualification, the college refused to pass him because he missed a week of college due to personal challenges. He therefore left the course with no qualification.

He felt disheartened and considered the course a complete waste of time. Pressured to secure an income, he went on to secure work as a labourer and has worked on a variety of construction sites. He went on to secure a paid work experience placement through a main contractor with the hope of gaining an opportunity for further training into a trade based apprenticeship.

The placement led to a position with a scaffolding company for 6-7 months. However, both he and twelve others were subsequently let go due to uncertainties in work load.

The young man still aspires to be a plumber but has not been given an opportunity for further training despite applying.

He relayed his interest in computers and digital modelling and was unaware this could be an option in construction. He is currently registered unemployed and is seeking work.

Case study 3 – Academic barriers

A young man with autism shared his difficulties accessing further training and employment opportunities in construction. He attended a special school for children with learning difficulties. He was particularly keen to stay on in the sixth as the school offered a construction specific course.

However due to funding, the course was stopped half way through. Fortunately, he was able to secure a one-week work experience programme which cemented his love for construction.

Due to course funding issues, the young person moved to another sixth form college to pursue a Level 1 multi-trade diploma which he passed. He was not however allowed to progress to Level 2 because he was unable to pass his Maths and English GCSE and functional skills. He relayed how disheartening this was and how difficult he found Maths and English due to his learning disabilities.

He stayed on at college to pursue another Level 1 multi-trade course. Unable to progress due the restriction on Maths and English, he moved to another college to undertake a Level 1 in Bricklaying.

Despite passing the course, he was refused the opportunity to progress to a level 2 without English and Maths.

The young man is clearly motivated and keen. With the help of this mother he researched local opportunities to access a CSCS card and has undertaken multiple work experience placements with tier 1 main contractors.

He received excellent feedback on his attitude, motivation and time keeping, but again was not offered a permanent opportunity. He tried to find part-time work at Travis Perkins but was turned down. He is struggling to secure an apprenticeships position.

This has affected his self-esteem and confidence. He mentioned feeling the industry was not inclusive of 'people like him'.

Case study 4 – Aspiring plumber turns to drug dealing

A twenty-one-year-old shared his ambition to become a carpenter. The young man had a difficult start in life.

To cope with the emotional difficulties in his home life, he turned to drug and alcohol abuse. His mother kicked him out at the age of 16. The council offered him housing. He continued to attend school but left with an English and IT GCSE.

Prior to leaving school he took part in a work experience placement with REME (Royal Electrical and mechanical engineers). He described his placement with joy and shared his passion for fixing tanks.

He enjoyed his experience so much that he wanted to go into the army to learn a trade in construction. He applied for an apprenticeship in plumbing but never heard back.

He went on to become a drug dealer and was arrested for theft, and disorderly behaviour. After leaving prison he was offered a chance with a local carpentry company.

He found the work engaging and said it had been 'life changing'. The work has inspired him to rehabilitate. The young man is committed to gaining work in a trade and would very much like to go into the army.

At the end of the interview the young man commented 'it's interesting to look back on this, had I secured that job as a plumber my life might have been very different'.

4.3 Social Barriers Findings

The final section of the research aimed to better understand to what extent social barriers affect a young person from accessing training and employment opportunities. The same question was asked of employers and young people.

Question 1: Do social barriers affect access to training and employment

The following were cited as challenges for young people and employers:

- Mental Health - anxiety, depression, alcoholism and drug abuse
- Disabilities and Learning abilities
- Lack of experience
- Housing challenges
- Safety concerns
- Travel issues
- Gang issues
- Family challenges
- Financial challenges

- Lack of confidence, self-esteem and general employability skills

In line with the literature review young people who were NEET faced an array of social barriers. Each young person had a unique story and required one to one support.

Employers felt social issues deeply affected a young person's confidence, self-esteem and sense of self-worth. In addition, many lacked basic communication, presentation and social skills.

There were however various case studies demonstrating ways construction employers were supporting young people with holistic support.

Case study 1 – K&M Training School

K&M McLoughlin Decorating LTD (K&M) is a family owned business and one of the largest painting and decorating companies in London and the southeast. Over the last twenty years the business has run the K&M training school. The school offers young people painting and decorating skills.

Over the course of the 5-week training course, young people are monitored on their attendance, time keeping and attitude, helping to support them with employability and life skill training.

The course is free. Of the 205 students that have attended the course, 95 have gone on to become employable and 88 secured full-time work

The course demonstrates ways construction skills are used to support young people to develop trades as well as improving their confidence, self-worth and basic employability skills.

Whilst unconscious bias data suggests construction employers consider NEETs hard work to engage and retain in training and employment, an array of case studies demonstrates construction employers are actively offering holistic interventions to support NEETs through a variety of complex social challenges.



Figure III: K&M Training Centre

Case study 2 – Joe Brennan Training provide apprenticeship training to support young people to gain careers in the construction industry. Joe shared a story that JBT had noticed a young apprentice was falsifying expenses. On the surface this was gross misconduct.

JBT went through the disciplinary procedure with the young person but soon found out he was an ex - drug dealer who was in trouble. Despite leaving drug dealing in the past, he was struggling to get rid of debt he had incurred with another dealer.

The dealer threatened to kill his mother and father and thus he was trying to make money where ever he could to ensure his parents were not harmed. JBT lent him money to clear his debts and put a repayment plan in place. Consequently, the young man was able to complete his apprenticeship and was taken on by a main contractor.

Case study 3 – K&M offered an eighteen-year-old an apprenticeship. The young person was one of two children. Unfortunately, the young apprentice's mother had died when he was a child. One day the apprentice did not turn up to site.

Tutors at K&M received a distressed call from the young person to say he had found his father had died unexpectedly of a heart attack. A tutor from the school rushed to his house to support him.

Following the incident, the young man became the legal guardian of his thirteen-year-old sister. He fell on hard times when the local council threatened to evict them from their home because he had failed to pay his bills. The young person was trying to come to terms with the trauma of losing his father.

Thankfully K&M spoke with the local council and found him new housing. With the support of tutors, the young man was able to complete his apprenticeship, won a young achievers award and is now a qualified painter and decorator.

4.4 Industry Specific Barriers

In addition to challenging systemic, social and unconscious bias barriers, questions aimed to understand how industry leadership affects training and employment outcomes.

Question 1: How does industry's behaviour and structure affect training and employment outcomes for NEETs?

The following were cited as challenges for young people and employers:

- Industry focus on commercial at expense of training
- Lack of support for supply chain to upskill
- Procurement targets are a tick box
- Disjointed approach to training and employment
- Lack of long-term strategy and process
- Lack of collaboration between customers, supply chain and contractors
- Lack of quality opportunities for young people
- Lack of education and guidance to engage young people

Findings suggest the industry does not feel it is working strategically to consistently engage young people in training and employment opportunities.

Companies commented there was a disjointed approach to training and employment. There was a resounding sentiment that supply chain partners, main contractors and customers need to work together to address the skills gap issues.

Companies commented that procurement targets were a tick box that did not lead to meaningful outcomes for them or young people.

Industry behaviour that focused on cost and time, at the expenses of quality and training was a serious issue for many companies.

Companies commented this affected their ability to take people on. They also felt pressured when they did take young people on, that they could not give them a quality experience which led to drop outs and disengagement.

Supply chain were keen for further support and in particular wanted access to work experience packs, careers guidance and support to liaise and engage with young people.

Question 2: Is the working environment suitable to accommodate diverse talent pipelines?

Questions aimed to understand if the industry has the right environment to attract, support and retain a diverse talent pipeline of young people.

- Very few women engage in site-based roles
- Site banter is a challenge
- Women need 'thick skins' to work in the industry
- Flexible and agile working is difficult for site-based roles
- BAME representation low
- Few businesses employed persons with physical disabilities
- Mental health was a challenge for businesses
- Businesses were open to take young people with learning disabilities and or ex-offences

Findings found that whilst the working environment in the construction industry has improved, there is still a long way to go, to create an inclusive environment.

Companies commented site banter was still an issue. This was particularly the case for young women. Companies relayed stories of female apprentices who had dropped out of courses due to inappropriate site banter.

Managers commented many women felt intimidated to work in site-based roles, and women who did consider the industry would require 'a thick skin'.

There were very few women employed in site operative roles, except for painter and decorators. Companies were unable to confirm the number of BAME workers in their businesses, but overall stated representation was low.

Companies were not willing to accommodate persons with physical disabilities for health and safety purposes, and flexible and agile working was difficult for supply chain partners due to time and cost pressures from main contractors.

5. Discussion of Results

5.1 Unconscious Bias - Employers Perceptions of Young People

The literature review suggests young people who are NEET are inappropriately labelled as lazy, unruly and irresponsible. Mendick et al (2018) suggest these stereotypes lead to unconscious biases which block young people from progressing into training and employment opportunities.

The research aimed to test if this was the case among construction employers. The research suggests that unconscious biases might very well be at play.

Whilst 80% of employers were open to offering opportunities to young people who were NEET many employers were not actively employing them.

The wider commentary suggested young people who were NEET 'were lazy, lacking motivation and resilience' and 'only interested in making money fast'.

Employers described young people who were NEET as unreliable, lacking the right attitude and at times as burden to their business.

Several employers suggested young people were not hard working, or committed to labouring positions offered to them, but rather focused on material gain and earning cash fast.

The findings also suggest most employers only consider young people who are NEET for low skilled labour positions. Employers automatically assume what roles these young people can do.

The negative perception of NEETs was so strong, that companies were not employing or training young people who were NEET. Instead companies focused on recruiting university graduates and high achieving school leavers for managerial roles.

This was even the case among supply chain partners, despite an urgent need to invest in the training of skilled trade's people.

The perception that these young people being were difficult and a burden was a very real concern for contractors.

These findings were reflected in the young people data too. Both groups of young people were asked what barriers they faced accessing employment and training opportunities.

Young people commented they felt judged on their names, grades, postcodes, how they dressed and talked.

Many young people commented they had to fake their qualifications to access opportunities. They described finding work as a waiting game and pot luck.

All young people commented that they did not want to be laborers. Young people were ambitious and wanted professional careers as technicians, engineers, managers, language specialists, cooks, IT specialists, barbers. They did not want to be stuck in low paid jobs with no progression opportunities.

They were extremely vocal about the lack of quality opportunities available to them and many felt this was due to unconscious bias

The number one concern for these young people was a lack of stability. Young people were pressured to support their families and their biggest concern was to escape poverty, prison and death.

The drive for upward social mobility was not driven by greed or materialism, but their experience of serious inequality and hardship.

This may suggest what employers consider a lack of motivation and attitude is not laziness and self-entitlement but frustration.

Findings in the literature review (London Youth, 2018) (Vogel, 2015) suggest young people were not satisfied with the training and employment opportunities available to them. The data reflected these findings.

Their feelings of anger and frustration were compounded by competition in the labour market. The literature review suggests young people who are NEET are blocked from training and employment opportunities (Policy Connect, 2019). This was confirmed in the data.

Comments included being blocked from opportunities as employer's valued high achievers from middle class backgrounds.

Findings suggests that young people who are NEET face an array of social inequalities and their frustrations at these inequalities are misunderstood by employers as self-entitlement and attitude issues.

The data may well suggest then that underlying stereotypes and biases block young people from equal access to training and employment opportunities.

5.1.1 Unconscious Bias - Young People's Perception of Construction

The literature review suggests young people have negative opinions of the construction industry and this puts them off applying for training and employment opportunities (Liz Waters, 2017).

In line with the findings in the literature review young people who had not engaged in construction related training and or engaged in part-time 'one off' jobs in construction had very negative opinions of the industry.

Data collated from young people from the Amber Foundation described construction as low paid, dirty and horrible.

In contrast data collated from young people who had engaged in construction related training activities at Southern Construction Skills Centre was the complete opposite. Young people felt extremely inspired and excited to engage in careers in construction.

Young people expressed a sense of belonging and pride to be part of the industry. They considered the industry as open and inclusive, describing employers and trainers as their role models.

The centre was described as a safe space to hang out, network and gain ad hoc advice and support. The centre had also raised young people's aspirations.

Their engagement with the centre had affected them so deeply that they commented the industry cared about them and wanted them to grow.



Figure IV: Student and tutor at Southern Construction Skills Centre

Findings suggest young people feel the industry offered them the stability they did not have in their personal lives.

Young people with disabilities voiced their joy engaging in practical work which kept them engaged and gave them a sense of purpose and belonging. They referred to the trainers as 'like them'.

These positive perceptions were formed because of quality one to one interactions with the centre's tutors, quality work experience placements, and the opportunity to gain CSCS cards.

In addition, young people who had engaged with the centre were offered opportunities to be involved in a local construction projects over the summer period. Young people felt proud to build projects for their community.

This new data suggests that young people who receive quality opportunities and mentoring within the industry are 100% more likely to have a positive perception of the industry and more likely to engage in a career in the industry.

The industry therefore has a golden opportunity to engage and recruit these young people into long term careers through quality opportunities and mentoring.

5.2 Systemic Barriers

Research uncovered in the literature review suggests the construction industry is the ideal environment to accommodate persons from a diverse range of backgrounds (CIOB) from trades right through to professional routes.

However, findings show that whilst the industry has the potential to engage and inspire young people to consider careers in construction, it does not have the appropriate systems to recruit and retain them.

In the first instance data suggested the education system does not equip young people with appropriate qualifications and skills to enter careers in construction.

Young people describe school as a waste of time and boring. They felt they were not prepared for the real world, commenting they were taught subjects they would not need.

A high number of young people interviewed relayed their struggles with various disabilities, many were without qualifications, particularly Maths and English. Most young people wanted to undertake practical subjects such as construction, but this was not an option.

As the literature review suggests, changes in the education system have changed the way young people access vocational pathways. (Green, 2019).

Whilst young people in the past might have accessed trade-based opportunities without any qualifications, today young people are expected to possess high levels of academic capability.

This does not however reflect the skills the industry needs and thus there is a mismatch between what young people learn and what employers require.

Findings suggest the top qualifications construction employers expect from young people above all else, was a valid CSCS card and employability skills.

Despite this, data shows young people who are practically gifted with their hands (particularly those with disabilities) are consistently denied opportunities to access further training in construction due to a lack of Maths and English.

This was a huge issue for SME's and young people who wanted to learn a trade. Young people were particularly frustrated by this and commented the industry is made up of foreign workers (12%) who do not speak English and lack formal qualifications.

This suggests then that the UK has a pool of highly talented young people who could be highly skilled in practical trades but are restricted due to academic attainment.

Alongside a mismatch of what skills young people learn and what employers expect, young people were limited in their options to pursue practical training.

Barriers to access construction careers appear at every stage of their development; at school, in college and when accessing apprenticeship opportunities.

Young people interviewed were not taught about construction at school. In some instances young people did not even know what opportunities were available to them. 0% of young people interviewed had heard of CIOB, CITB and or the Go construction website.

Data also suggests there is a lack of provision for construction related training in colleges, with several employers and young people stating provision in local colleges were cut due to funding issues.

It was also very clear that the industry is not offering young people who are NEET the opportunity to undertake traineeships and apprenticeships.

Whilst 60% of companies employ trainees and or apprentices only 40% provide opportunities to young people from disadvantaged communities. Is this a consequence of unconscious biases?

Data suggests companies focus predominantly on attracting graduates, high achieving school leavers and 90% of companies invest in upskilling existing workforce.

Whilst the literature review suggests young people are paid comparatively well (CIOB, 2016) this did not seem to be the case in the data.

Young people commented that they could not afford to live off an apprenticeship wage and thus this added a further barrier.

In some instances, employers suggested apprenticeship standards did not meet industry requirements and or there was no standard to train young people in their business.

As a result, supply chain partners were not actively back filling trade specific skills, as they lacked the resources and qualifications to train people. These difficulties may also explain why businesses are less likely to recruit young people. The data suggests employers consider young people who are NEET a risky investment (due to unconscious biases) and thus a lack of resources only heightens the feeling that these young people are a burden.

In addition to challenges educating and training young people the industry has a communication problem.

Data suggests the industry does not take responsibility to clearly articulate the various career opportunities in the industry, and or how to access them.

Whilst main contractors may do this, supply chain partners lack resources and quality programmes to inspire and engage young people into their industry.

Findings suggest only 33% of businesses offered work experience and further training (such as CSCS card accomplishments) and careers advice is offered on an ad hoc basis. Thus data suggests companies are not actively taking responsibility to engage young people into their businesses.

When we layer this data with the number of young people who stated they were unsure of the routes into construction and how to find entry points into the industry, we start to see the disconnection.

The above findings suggest the industry does not consistently attract and recruit young people.

Underpinning these barriers is also a lack of leadership and a lack of appropriate behaviours to engage and retain young people.

Findings suggest the industry desperately needs to change the way it leads and behaves if it is to attract a new generation of millennials with diverse and complex needs.

Data suggests the industry is still commercial driven and this affects training and employment outcomes.

A high proportion of companies (particularly supply chain partners) suggested they did not have the time or skills to properly nurture and coach young people.

Therefore, businesses do not invest in young people and or they judge young people as lacking in resilience and motivation because they do not have the time to develop and train them.

Time cost pressures lead to cycle of dysfunction whereby the industry does not slow down to put a strategic plan in place to engage young people.

There was a resounding feeling that a lack of collaboration between supply chain, main contractors, Government and customers led to young people falling through the gap. Companies commented accessing young people was pot luck.

Similarly, young people commented accessing jobs in construction was waiting game and pot luck. This suggests organisations need to work together to channel young people into training and employment outcomes.

Finally, findings in the data suggest the industry does not have an inclusive working environment.

The literature review and findings suggest young people are diverse. Many have disabilities, are single mothers and or are from BAME communities.

However inappropriate behaviour was still an issue on site. Many companies commented that site banter was still an issue.

Many companies told stories of young women who embarked on careers in the industry but dropped out of training because they did not feel respected valued and included.

BAME representation was low and flexible and agile working was virtually impossible in site specific roles. Whilst companies were open to taking young people with learning disabilities and or ex-offences, they were not open to offer young people with physical disabilities opportunities.

Whilst young people were keen to access stable nine to five jobs, many young people battled with mental health issues and or disabilities.

Whilst data from young people overall suggested they felt the industry was inclusive, some case studies suggested otherwise. In the instance of the young person with autism, he felt blocked from opportunities.

5.3 Social Barriers

The literature review suggests young people face an array of wider social barriers that affect them from accessing training and employment opportunities.

In line with the literature review findings confirmed young people who are NEET face a substantial disadvantage due to mental health challenges, disabilities, housing challenges, crime related complications and a general lack of self-esteem and self-worth because of chaotic homes lives.

Research in the literature suggests these wider barriers put employers off employing young people who are NEET.

To a certain extent the findings in the research echoed some of these stereotypes. The data suggests unconscious bias exists in recruitment practices.

However, the findings also suggest where employers are engaging with young people who are NEET, they are delivering quality and inspiring outcomes to support these young people through an array of personal challenges.

This was also reflected in the young people data. Young people who had engaged in training with SCSC commented that they felt the industry wanted to see them grow. There was a sense of loyalty, belonging and pride to work with the industry.

The literature review suggests construction companies invest a great deal of time in CSR activities to deliver social value outcomes as part of their contribution to sustainable outcomes.

However, data from construction companies suggest there is no strategic approach which leads to a tick box affect. It also suggests that companies really do want to engage, but due to a lack of process and ease to train and recruit, employers revert to unconscious biases.

The industry might consider how it might build on its strengths and develop training schools or academies to support young people who are NEET to develop their confidence and employability skills through construction related training.

5.4 Industry Feedback - Forgotten Youth Presentation

The initial findings of this report were presented in a presentation evening at the Building Centre in May 2019. The event was attended by the professional bodies CIOB, WCC, construction companies, charities, training bodies, local authorities.



Figure V: Forgotten Youth Presentation Evening May 2019

Following the presentation, findings were debated by a panel of industry experts. CEO of Build UK Suzannah Nicol MBE, Former CEO of Construction Youth Trust Christine Townley, and Managing Director of K&M, Kevin McLoughlin. Audience members debated the findings and offered comment and suggestion. The workshop was recorded, and top findings reported below:

Industry Leadership:

- The NEETs challenge is not looked at strategically
- Industry agreed there was a lack of system to recruit, train and retain young people.
- There are over 60 industry engagement campaigns to engage young people but no structured campaign for industry to work together
- Young people do not know where the front door is to access opportunities – the industry does not clearly articulate what career opportunities there are.
- There are insufficient delivery mechanisms - limited college courses and access points
- There are limited visible mentors to support young people into the industry, particularly to support disadvantaged young people
- The industry tries to deliver construction on the cheap and this affects training and quality outcomes.

Fragmented Approach & Behaviour

- The way we buy construction has to change
- Supply chain invests in migrant labour but does not invest in British talent.
- Supply chain see training as a burden and not an investment
- Supply chain companies do not have the resources and process to engage and require support

Lack of Collaboration & Government support

- A lack of collaboration results in a disjointed approach. This makes it hard to find young people
- Greater London Authority could bring everyone together through the construction programmes
- The industry could benefit from reviewing and standardising examples of good practice where companies are engaging young people who are NEET.

Economic and Social Issues

- Youth service cuts affect young people from accessing holistic support
- Young people require this support before they get to industry
- There is a lack of qualifications i.e. maths and English which is a national travesty
- Reliability and basic work readiness are issues
- Education system is not preparing young people for the world and this cannot be down to the employer to provide.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 What the research is telling us

The construction industry is facing an ever-increasing skills shortage. With Brexit on the horizon there is a pressing need for the industry to widen its talent pipeline to engage the next generation of workers.

The UK has nearly 1 million young people who are NEET. These young people are diverse in their demographic and characteristics. They face an array of barriers.

Many of the barriers are systemic. Unsupportive processes and systems block these young people at every level. With helpful processes and systems young people will be empowered to overcome wider social barriers to access training and employment opportunities.

However, instead of addressing those systemic barriers (whether intentional or not) unconscious biases are used to brush over the social and systemic inequalities these young people face.

This urgently needs to be addressed.

Young people require holistic support and understanding to assist them to overcome the array of social barriers, to ensure they have equal access to training and employment.

The construction sector is arguably best placed to lead this agenda. With an array of jobs from practical to managerial, the industry can offer a diverse range of careers, for a diverse talent pipeline.

Though the industry cannot be solely relied upon to tackle some of the wider social issues facing young people (homelessness, mental health, chaotic home lives) research suggests construction employers are offering quality holistic support.

Data shows construction employers are providing young people with employability and life skills training as well as increasing their self-esteem and confidence, through one to one support and construction specific training.

However, findings suggest the industry has a number of critical systemic barriers that prevent young people from easily accessing opportunities. The industry does not have a robust system to attract, recruit, retain and sustain young people in careers in construction.

To deliver meaningful outcomes the industry needs a strategy for engagement. It needs to build the right systems and resources to consistently support these young people.

It also requires a collaborative approach to ensure young people do not fall through the gaps. Main Contractors, SME's, Government and Customers need to work together to ensure young people receive the right education, careers advice, and further training opportunities to access apprenticeships and employment in construction. This will prevent young people from falling through the gap.

This research suggests the industry should urgently work with Government to implement a framework for engagement to support young people who are NEET with training and employment outcomes in construction.

6.2 Recommendations

Findings in the literature review and primary data suggest unconscious bias, systemic and social barriers prevent businesses from training and employing young people who are NEET.

The findings also demonstrate the construction industry lacks a robust strategy to engage, attract, recruit, retain and sustain young people in the industry.

To address this, this report suggests the industry should immediately develop a robust framework for engagement.

This framework challenges the industry to carefully reflect on the way it recruits young people into the industry to ensure it is offering equal access to young people from all walks of life.

The below diagram visually demonstrates how this recommendation remedies the disconnection theory presented in the literature review (page 29).



Figure VI: NEET's disconnection theory
Figure VII: Framework for Engagement Theory

Recommendation 1: Strategy to engage

Based on the findings from the research it is clear the industry needs to develop a high-level strategy with specific targets to support more young people who are NEET into the industry.

At present there is no industry strategy to engage young people who are NEET into careers in construction. The Government has developed policies to reduce the number of NEETs but there are no industry specific targets targeting businesses with the responsibility to recruit young people who are NEET. Government should hold businesses accountable for training and employing young people who are NEET.

The Construction Leadership Council, Build UK, CITB, DFE, Social Mobility commission and key procurement frameworks such as SCAPE, SCF and Pagabo should partner up to develop a committee made up of senior leaders from all main contracting companies and trade associations to agree an approach to roll out the framework for engagement.

Recommendation 2: Attract - CITB to offer funding opportunities to Supply Chain partners to set up employability and life skills training schools

The research suggests young people who are NEET face greater barriers with employability and skills training, and this is likely to put them at a disadvantage when applying for work.

The Southwark Construction Skills Centre demonstrates young people can benefit from having a local centre that provides practical learning opportunities and holistic support.

Young people spoke highly of the centres trainers and there was a sense that the centre provided the stability and encouragement these young people needed.

Young people who are NEET are more likely to experience instabilities in their home lives. Creating training and employability academies would support young people to gain core life skills through mentoring and training.

Supply Chain specific employability and life training skills will empower SME's with a direct pool of young people to support sustainable recruitment.

CITB could consider offering funding opportunities to SME's to set up training academies similar to K&M's academy, to provide one to one mentoring and core trade skill training.

Recommendation 3: Attract - Revise CITB Go Construct page and CIOB academy websites for interactivity

CITB's Go construct page offers an excellent platform to showcase careers in construction. However, whilst young people mainly search for careers information online, the research shows very few young people engage with these sites.

Supply chain partners also require support to develop careers literature and activities to engage young people. At present the CITB Go Construct page acts as generic page for employers and young people.

CITB and trade associations should revise the pages to make it more specific to the individual trade associations. This would support clarity over what careers are available and could offer young people direct links into companies.

CITB could also develop resources such as work experience packs or extra-curricular activities to support quality delivery of activities. This would better support SME's who do not have time or resources to develop these.

Recommendation 4: Attract - CITB & CIOB Diverse Roles Models & Mentoring

The research demonstrates young people would benefit from holistic one to one support to gain access to careers in construction.

CITB and CIOB should launch a nation-wide mentoring scheme and recruit diverse professionals from across the UK to become mentors in schools, local probation services and charities to support young people who are at risk of becoming NEET or are NEET.

The mentor offering could be run as part of the CITB's Construction Ambassador training. CIOB could mandate that all professionals wishing to gain their MCIOB must take part in mentoring as part of their professional training.

Recommendation 5: Recruit - Industry bodies to develop UCAS search engine for Construction specific training and employment opportunities

The research suggests young people find it difficult to find training and employment opportunities. Data collected from young people suggested they found it particularly hard to find apprenticeship opportunities in construction.

Young people were unsure when traineeship and apprenticeship programmes were available and when they could apply for them. They also felt the Government's apprenticeship website was not helpful as there were very rarely local opportunities.

The considerate constructor's scheme has recently supported the development of Construction Map. An online tool that enables people to find out more about the various live projects across the UK. Companies can post updates on project progress and job opportunities.

Companies could advertise training and employment opportunities on each project utilising Construction Map. This could be advertised at a local and national level.

Another option of course, could be that Government mandate that all companies must advertise and track training and employment opportunities on the Government apprenticeships websites.

Considerations in the design of any digital platform should accommodate young people with disabilities for ease of access. For example to better support young people with dyslexia Construction Map could offer a 'read out' function.

Recommendation 6: Recruit - Review of T-level & Apprenticeship Qualifications

Main contractors, Supply chain and Government should review T-level's and apprenticeships to ensure every trade and professional role in construction has a relevant T-level or apprenticeship pathway.

This should include a review of existing apprenticeships to ensure the qualifications meet industry standards. This is already being looked at by DFE however more needs to be done to ensure standards are reflective of all the opportunities across the industry. Government should engage all trade associations to ensure qualifications match industry needs.

It is also clear young people are often blocked from opportunities to pursue further training due to barriers obtaining Maths and English.

Young persons with disabilities or difficulties achieving Maths or English should be empowered to pursue a qualification in construction and undertake the subjects as part of their training.

Recommendation 7: Recruit - Main contractors to leverage Supply Chain funding for Apprenticeships

Government should mandate a proportion of all business Levy funding should be allocated to supply chain partners to deliver trade based apprentices on projects.

Government and CITB should also work together to create better resources for supply chain to access funding and information on how to engage apprentices.

Recommendation 8: Recruit - Levy to include targets to support young people who are NEET

Research suggests construction companies use funding pots to upskill staff and recruit higher apprentices.

Young people from disadvantaged communities are more likely to be competitively blocked out of apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities because businesses recruit graduates and school leavers with excellent grades. (Policy Connect, Centre Point)

As part of the apprenticeship levy, Government should measure businesses on the number of positions offered to NEETs. Government should deduct payments from companies who cannot demonstrate they are supporting persons from vulnerable communities.

Recommendation 9: Retain - Government to provide additional funds to support young people undertaking training and apprenticeships

Government to provide bursaries to sustain young people in apprenticeship opportunities.

Government should introduce a policy to enable young people to claim housing benefits and maintenance allowance to enable them to pursue further training and apprenticeships.

The Government should include this policy into the youth obligation.

Recommendation 10: Sustain - Industry to share best practice NEETs interventions

The research suggests there are many excellent case studies showcasing ways the industry is already supporting young people with the wider social barriers they are facing. This includes financial support, mentoring and guidance.

The industry would benefit from sharing these case studies and working collaboratively to develop industry programmes. The case studies should be shared among all companies as part of the NEET engagement strategy.

Recommendation 11: Sustain - CCS to include specific diversity targets to drive inclusive behaviours on site

At present the Considerate Constructor's Scheme monitors construction companies on their approach to diversity.

To encourage more inclusive practices (particularly on site) the organisation could revise its inspection criteria to support the NEETs agenda.

The findings in the research suggest we are still a long way away from creating an inclusive environment on site. This was particularly the case with supply chain partners.

CCS could monitor main contractors on supply chain performance on:

- Agile / Flexibly Working Practices – questions could include monitoring how the main contractor and supply chain are set up to work flexibly.
- Supply Chain Diversity Performance – questions could include monitoring the number of women and BAME training and employment opportunities.
- NEETs – question could include monitoring the number of young people classified as NEET receive training and employment on site.

The organisation has a big drive to better understand how the industry can be innovative. It could include specific targets to challenge the industry to come up with ideas to support physical and hidden disabilities in the site environment.

6.3 Conclusion

This report set out to better understand why there is a disconnection between the circa 1 million young people who are NEET in the UK, and the thousands of vacant jobs in construction.

The literature review focused primarily on understanding who these young people are and what their barriers are. The conclusion was these young people are diverse and they face systemic and social barriers as well as unconscious biases.

The literature review also aimed to better understand how the construction industry is engaging with young people. The research suggests the industry does not have a robust system to engage, recruit and sustain young people in careers in construction.

The research aimed to test the findings of the literature review. How do young people feel? What challenges do they face accessing training and employment outcomes in construction? It focused on gathering real stories from young people who are out there trying to find work right now.

The research also aimed to understand how construction companies are currently engaging young people. It focused on gathering primary data to test if systemic, social barriers and unconscious bias affect training and employment outcomes for this group of young people.

Whilst the research showed there were challenges in all areas, the outcomes really boil down to one thing; inappropriate systems and a disjointed approach.

Whilst yes, there was evidence of unconscious bias, these are only heightened and used as excuses to not engage. This is demonstrated in the fact that construction employers are already doing incredible work to tackle some of the wider social challenges facing these young people.

Businesses want and need to engage young people, they are aware there is a skills shortage. However inappropriate systems make it difficult engage.

Companies interviewed for this research were very vocal and passionate about supporting young people into the industry, but they desperately require guidance and support, particularly SME's (which makes up the majority of businesses in construction).

The various challenges from inadequate qualifications, difficulties accessing funding and training courses, a lack of resources to offer work experience and quality careers information, made it very difficult for businesses to engage young people. This was made worse by a disjointed approach between supply chain, main contractor and Government.

There needs to be a united and consistent approach.

Likewise, young people want to engage but they have no idea where the front door into a career in construction is.

Young people are not signposted into careers in construction at school, sometimes they do not even know the various career pathways in construction. In addition they do not always receive quality holistic support through one to one mentoring and guidance to transition into meaningful training and employment opportunities.

This needs to change.

The recommendations laid out in this report offer a handful of suggestions to make that change.

The construction industry needs a diverse workforce to meet its ever-increasing skill shortage.

For social and economic reasons, the Government need young people to engage in meaningful and productive training and employment in the UK.

The NEET's debate is discussed time and time again. Collaboration, commitment and leadership to get on with these recommendations is all that is now needed.

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8. Appendix

Appendix A: Interview Questions: Supply Chain & Main Contractor

Unconscious Bias

- The construction sector has been accused of not doing enough to support young people who are NEET into construction – is this the case?
- Do you consider NEET's a viable 'untapped' pipeline for recruitment?
- Do you employ young people aged 18-25 who are NEET?
- How many each year?
- What percentage of NEETs have you retained?
- Do they stay committed and engaged?
- Do you seek particular qualifications - If so what?
- Do you employ anybody without those qualifications?
- What percent of those applying have the above qualifications?
- If you do not employ young people who are NEET why is this the case?
- Do you know how to access young people who are NEET?

Systemic Barriers

Education / Further Training

- Are you satisfied there is a qualification available to train young people to work in your business?
- If so, which ones? If not what why?
- Do you require a young person to have a basic level of English, maths & IT to work with you?
- Do young people have basic employability skills such as good communication, listening, motivation, and time keeping skills?
- Does a lack of employability skills deter you from employing a young person?
- Are you willing to take a young person on who does not have the above employability skills?
- Do you offer employability training?
- How many young people have successfully completed employability training with you this year?
- Do you offer apprenticeships and or traineeships?
- What percentage of your apprenticeships / traineeships are from disadvantaged communities?

- Do you offer CSCS training and card accomplishment?
- How many young people have accomplished CSCS cards in the last year?
- Do you offer any other construction qualifications such as fire marshall training?
- If so what do you offer?
- How many young people aged 18-25 have completed the above qualifications with you this year?
- Do you offer work experience opportunities to young people who are NEET?
- How many young people have completed work experience this year?
- Do language

Diversity

- How many applications do you receive from women?
- Of these applications what percentage are mothers?
- How many young women are working on your site(s)?
- Do you offer return to work programmes for mothers?
- Are there suitable changing and toilet facilities on site for women?
- Do you offer flexible / agile working?
- How many applications do you receive from persons from Black Asian minority ethnicities?
- What percentage of your work force is from Black Asian minority ethnicities?
- Who should prepare NEETs for employment?
- Does time affect your ability to train or employ NEETs?
- Do commercial pressures affect your ability to train or employ NEETs?

Industry Behaviour & Structure

- Are your teams open to training / working with NEETs?
- Do your teams have the skills to mentor and train NEETs?
- Do your teams have the necessary skills to listen, communicate and empathise with NEETs?
- Are targets to support NEETs part of procurement frameworks?
- Does this lead to successful employment and training outcomes for NEETs?
- Can you give an example where a contractor and supply chain partner have successfully worked together to support NEETs into construction?
- What support do you (Supply Chain) require from a main Contractor to help you train and employ NEETs?
- What support do you (Main contractor) require from a Supply Chain partner to train and employ NEETs?
- How do you think main contractors and supply chain partners can better support one another on this agenda?

- Who funds training and apprenticeship opportunities in your business - main contractor OR supply chain?
- Does this model work?
- Are you aware of CITB funding opportunities?
- Do you access CITB funding?
- If yes how do you use this funding?
- Where do you go to find out how you can support young people with apprenticeship and training opportunities?
- Does a lack of Technology and flexibility put young people off working with you?

Social Barriers

- Do financial issues affect a young person's ability to work with you?
- Do mental health challenges affect a young person's ability to work with you?
- Do physical challenges affect a young person's ability to work with you?
- Do learning disabilities affect a young person's ability to work with you?
- Has gang / crime related activities affected a young person's ability to work with you?
- Do drug or alcohol habits affect a young person's ability to work with you?
- Has a young person's home life affected their ability to work with you?
- Does your company have the necessary support to deal with the above issues?
- If yes what support do you feel you require?
- Are you willing to employ young people with the above challenges?
- Do you have any examples of any interventions you have put in place to support young people faced with the above issues?

Appendix B: Interview Questions: Young People

Education

- Do you feel your experiences in school prepared you for a career in construction?
- Is academic attainment a barrier to you entering a career in construction?
- Do you feel you had the opportunity to access an appropriate course to progress a career in construction?
- Did you receive the relevant career guidance on what to expect from a career in construction?
- Do you have the relevant skills to enter a career in construction?
- Did you receive employability skills training?
- Do you have a CV?
- Have you undertake a mock interview?
- Did you receive life skills training – do you feel you require this?

Training courses

- Have you been on any training courses for construction – if so please outline which?
- If you have attended a construction related training course wa what was most / least helpful about the course?
- Are training courses easily available for construction?
- Are you aware of construction charity organisations / construction skills academies? Are they helpful for training and employment opportunities?
- Do you know what type of training courses you require to access a job in construction?
- Do you feel there are enough 'into work' programmes to support you into a career in construction?

Work Experience

- Have you undertaken work experience in construction?
- If yes was it helpful? If no why not?
- How did you get a work experience placement?
- Do you know who to contact to organise a work experience placement?
- What did you get out of your placement?
- Did you feel valued and supported on your placement?
- What would you improve about work experience placements in construction?

Apprenticeships:

- Is there an apprenticeship for the career you wish to pursue?
- Do you know where to apply for an apprenticeship?
- Have you completed an apprenticeship? If yes was it helpful?
- Have you faced any barriers securing an apprenticeship – if so what barriers have you faced?
- Are you able to support yourself financially whilst undertaking an apprenticeship?
- What are your thoughts / feelings about apprenticeships?

Employment:

- What barriers are you facing securing employment?
- Do you have a CSCS card – has this been a barrier securing employment?
- Do you know where to apply to access a job in construction?
- Do you know who your local subcontractors and contractors are?
- Do you know where to access information of local job opportunities?
- Have you sought support to help you find a career in construction - if so from who?
- Where do you go to find out about opportunities in construction?
- Have you ever been employed in the construction industry – if yes and you are no longer working in the industry what were the reasons why?

Social / Economic Barriers

- Does money / funding affect you accessing a career in construction – if yes how
- Does travel affect you accessing a career in construction – if yes how?
- Have personal circumstances affected you accessing a career in construction? If yes in what way?
- Have learning abilities affected you finding work in construction?
- Has a criminal record affected you accessing a career in construction?
- Do you require the ability to work flexibly – if yes has this affected you accessing a career in construction?

Construction Industry

- What is your perception of the industry?
- Do you have a clear understanding of what employers expect of you?
- Do you have a clear understanding of the working environment?
- Do you feel the industry is open and inclusive?
- Do you feel the industry values your input?
- What expectations do you have of an employer?
- Do you have any role models in construction? If no would this be helpful?
- What attracts you most to the industry?
- Have you heard of CITB or CIOB?
- Do you know where to go to find information on the industry / and employment / training opportunities?

Local authorities / DWP

- Are you registered as unemployed / not in training?
- Have you sought guidance from DWP / Local authorities?
- Have DWP / local authorities provided you with information about further training / job opportunities in construction? If yes was this helpful