

Virtual interviews and induction toolkit

GMCVO

Making virtual interviews and remote inductions work for young people

Remote Chance?

This toolkit offers employers practical advice in the designing of remote interview and induction processes that allow young people to perform at their best.

The toolkit has been produced with particular emphasis on young people with limited experience of the workplace.

Hiring during the Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated a first-time switch to virtual recruitment for many employers. Comparatively lower in cost whilst quicker and easier to schedule than in-person interviews; remote recruitment will likely become part of the longer-term norm for recent adopters.

This shift tacitly accepts that candidates are confident users of the video platforms that are now part of daily life for many of us.

Whilst many school leavers and graduates are familiar with the likes of Zoom and Teams, young people who have been out of work; have limited work experience; or who have previously been employed in sectors like retail, hospitality, logistics, construction – basically any job in which online meetings are not the norm – may not be so confident using said platforms. Equally, these young people may simply be unaware of the accepted good video call practice that comes with experience.

Again, through nothing more than lack of experience, some young people may also need additional guidance when starting a job working from home or fulfilling the working from home element of a hybrid job.

The adaptations and considerations we suggest in this toolkit are far from burdensome. **With an empathetic mindset that seeks to understand the candidate or new starter experience, they are easy to implement.** Many of the hints and tips, although geared towards young people, are relevant to employees of any age: good practice is good practice!

Where this came from

GMCVO



Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (GMCVO)

Between 2013 and 2021, GMCVO led two Lottery funded youth employment programmes targeting young people with multiple barriers to employment Greater Manchester Talent Match (2013 - 2018) and Greater Manchester's Hidden Talent (2019 – 2021). Both programmes discovered fantastic recruitment and induction practices across Greater Manchester but also instances of disconnect between recruiting employers and young people.

This toolkit was the idea of staff working on Greater Manchester's Hidden Talent.



Greater Manchester Youth Network (GMYN)

This toolkit has been co-produced with members of the Greater Manchester's Hidden Talent Youth Panel - young people who have experienced / are experiencing barriers to employment. The recommendations and pointers in the toolkit therefore directly reflect young people's concerns, thoughts and feelings.

The Greater Manchester's Hidden Talent Youth Panel is hosted by GMYN, a youth charity that creates opportunities so that disadvantaged young people from across Greater Manchester can take steps towards a positive future.



Youth Employment UK (YEUK)

YEUK is an independent, not for profit social enterprise founded in 2012 to tackle youth unemployment.

As experts on youth employment and unemployment, they understand the complex landscape facing young people, employers and policy makers.

YEUK have partnered with GMCVO on projects in the past, and given their leading role in offering free resources for employers, were happy to endorse this toolkit.

Other Resources

- This toolkit can be used in conjunction with GMCVO's [existing employer toolkit](#), which contains guidance on creating accessible job adverts, delivering supportive candidate communications and adopting appropriate selection methods.
- YEUK hosts the [Good Youth Employment Charter](#). Employers are invited to sign the Charter and agree to work towards a set of principles and to being recognised as a Youth Friendly Employer. Youth Friendly Employers can choose to be listed on the national Youth Friendly Database connecting to thousands of young people. Youth Friendly Employers gain access to exclusive guidance on how to develop good youth employment practice and specific examples of how to provide quality opportunities to help young people develop.
- Youth Employment UK also provide a raft of [free resources](#) for best practice in your organisation's youth recruitment, training, support and development.
- Movement to Work have created a [Virtual Work Experience Toolkit](#). It identifies possible tools, techniques and ideas as well as exploring key considerations to take into account when creating a virtual programme for young people.

Making video interviews accessible for young people checklist



- ☐ Provide interviewees with a screengrab or video walkthrough guide that shows how to activate / open the platform you are using to host the interview. A friendly call the day before the interview to check candidates' familiarity with your chosen platform can be reassuring. You could offer young people the option of testing their setup with you by scheduling in five minutes the day before an interview.
- ☐ Consider hosting the interview on a platform that will be familiar to younger users (e.g. WhatsApp or FaceTime). Okay, these could be considered 'less professional', but ask yourself, "What it is you want from candidates?" **Remote interviews should not be an exercise in assessing a candidate's grasp of a given platform but a window into someone's personality and potential.**
- ☐ Your invite to interview should clearly outline the structure of the interview and what tasks will be involved. Sending an email, WhatsApp message or text containing the interview questions before the interview, can give young people time to prepare optimum responses.
- ☐ Before the interview day, tell young people what the contingency plan is in case of a connectivity interruption. You might agree to switching to a mobile video call if the young person was on a laptop (make sure you have the candidate's phone number to hand) or agree to resume the video call at another time. Be sure to provide young people with a contact number so they can get in touch if they are having connectivity issues immediately before the interview. Be clear on what happens if they log into the call early.

- ☐ Don't underestimate the importance of sending candidates seemingly obvious preparation guidance. You and your team may be well versed in the nuances of video calls but young people may never have used video call software in a professional context. This table provides some good pointers to send to young people in advance:

Make sure you...



...connect your device to a power source during the interview.



...check the Wi-Fi signal is strong wherever you intend to be for the interview.



...test the sound and microphone are working on your device.



...tell other people in the house when your interview is and that you'll need some peace and quiet.



...turn off your mobile phone or put it on silent and out of view so that it does not distract you during the interview. Obviously don't do this if you need to do the interview on your phone!



...have a pen and paper to hand.



...listen carefully. We know it's more difficult to stay focused when not talking to someone face-to-face but do your best!



...relax. We know interviews are nerve racking but we're normal people who just want to get to know you and your strengths.

Try not to...



...have a cluttered backdrop behind you. A plain background means the interviewer can focus on you.



...have a bright light source directly behind where you will be sitting for the video interview.



...have anything in your line of site that can distract you e.g. TV on mute, pets.



...have other tabs open in a web browser. Some pages have adverts with sounds that can automatically start playing in the background.



...have a page of interview preparation notes open on your desktop. This can distract you from the interviewer and the questions being asked.



...panic if the Wi-Fi signal is interrupted or if there is a noise interruption from traffic, a letter through the post box etc. You can't help these things!



...lean in too close to the screen or slouch. Also, try and keep your device at eye-level, nobody wants to look up your nostrils! Definitely remember this if you are doing a video interview through your phone.



...rehearse a script. You know you and you don't need to try and remember everything you've ever done word-for-word!

- ☐ In the job advert, stress your commitment to making reasonable adjustments to the video interviewing process. Employers must provide reasonable adjustments to interview processes under the Equality Act 2010. Examples of reasonable adjustments include, offering candidates a copy of interview questions in advance, providing additional time to process information and limiting your own levels of background noise and colour to reduce sensory distractions.
- ☐ Show candidates what they should wear - don't just tell them. Smart casual is a very broad definition. Instead, offer some pictorial or more specific examples of how candidates could dress. If you explicitly say, "Wearing a suit jacket isn't needed, but a shirt and ties looks professional", you can make the candidate's mind up for them and avoid unnecessarily stressful deliberations. Be mindful that some young people may not own an extensive smart wardrobe or be able to afford interview clothes.
- ☐ Remind candidates that they need to stay alert and listen to what is being asked of them. A remote interview may not get the adrenalin flowing in the way a face-to-face interview would, and consequently, attention may not be as focused.
- ☐ Settle young interviewees' nerves at the start. You could compliment them on their attire: "Thanks for making the effort". Finding common ground is an age-old way to put people at ease. Ask where they are calling in from – you may know the area. Later, if a candidate is talking about work experience at a company or organisation you're familiar with, use that as a chance to talk more conversationally e.g. "Yeah I know that place, I used to love looking at their range of...."
- ☐ Take advantage of the fact young people will likely be appearing from within their own home. As part of the informal opening exchanges, you could ask a young person (in advance) to come armed with a favourite item / valued possession to talk about as an icebreaker. You could do the same.



Digital Exclusion

Be aware that some young people may have limited connectivity and may lack access to internet-enabled devices. Social exclusion correlates closely with digital exclusion. Of the 4.1 million adults who are offline in the UK, 71% have no more than a secondary level education, and nearly half are from low-income households (UK Consumer Digital Index 2020).

If employers are serious about diversifying their workforce, ward against perpetuating inequality by offering the option of a socially distanced in-person interview (if safe and viable).

Some young candidates will have the necessary ICT skills to perform well in a working-from-home role but may not own a desktop computer or laptop. Lending hardware and connectivity tech for the purposes of video interviewing candidates may be impractical, so explicitly stating that interviewing via mobile phone is perfectly acceptable can help (young people are much more likely to own a mobile than a laptop or PC).

There is no statutory obligation to pay for employees' internet access or equip them with hardware but such expenses should be seen as 'fair' if requiring a staff member to work from home. Again, if you are serious about being inclusive and costs allow, explain in job adverts that you will offer 'goodwill payments' towards the cost of portable Wi-Fi routers or data dongles.

Adapting your inductions for a remote environment



Before the first day checklist

- ☐ Make sure that your new starter is set up to work remotely. Are you going to provide them with a work laptop and phone, or will they need to source this themselves (reimbursement processes should be explained)? If loaning office equipment explain what the insurance arrangements are.
- ☐ Don't just expect a young new starter to read a homeworking policy word by word - go through the essential sections of any documents with them.
- ☐ Ask if the young person has a suitable workspace. Establishing a dedicated work area can be tough. If a young person is house sharing with friends or living in a busy family setting, quiet space may be scarce and their only working space may be confined or offer poor natural light. If this becomes a problem for a young person, consider that they may be a priority case for a blend of office and home working.
- ☐ Assess your budget for homeworking staff and make clear what is available to make the homeworking space healthy and ergonomic e.g. risers; chairs; back supports; wrist rests; keyboards; headsets; signal boosters etc. Keep checking in on this front. Just because someone said they were comfortable with their set-up on day one, does not mean that is the case three months later!
- ☐ A week before the start date, send the new starter an itinerary for at least the first week. Provide an overview of each day's activity and meetings.
- ☐ Within the Week 1 induction itinerary, schedule a series of video / phone calls / meetings with key colleagues.
- ☐ Make introductions to an in-work mentor who is not the line manager. This person offers an alternative means of support for a young person. For example, if the listener is someone outside the team, young people may talk more freely about any worries or concerns they have. The mentor can also act as a sounding board e.g. listening to a young person's ideas that they may want to run past an impartial ear before taking to their team.
- ☐ Send out a comprehensive working-from-home guide for new starters. This should include self-care advice around establishing boundaries between work and leisure and the importance of getting away from the screen.



"Remote interviews should not be an exercise in assessing a candidate's grasp of a given platform but a window into someone's personality and potential."

The first days checklist

If your company / organisation is hybrid working, we suggest having young staff come into the workplace to cover these next suggested actions. There are obviously planning implications for arranging key team members and mentors to be present at these times.

- ☐ Have a task in your back pocket for proactive new starters. You may have diarised time for them to read induction materials, but if you sent these in advance, they may have already gone through them.
- ☐ Verbally confirm that the young person understands how to report sickness. Explain what happens if you are ill and cannot come into work (who to call and by what time) and outline well in advance any procedures triggered by multiple absences.
- ☐ Confirm the new starter is aware of break, lunch and finish times.
- ☐ A young person may not know that they need to record their hours. Explain how this is done.
- ☐ Make sure young people are familiar with data privacy rulings – they may never have encountered them before. If you have agreed that staff can work from public locations if they want a change of scene from the office or home, explain rules around accessing remote servers through public or premises' WiFi.
- ☐ Tell young people that the only daft question is the one not asked! Establish who it is they ask for help on different topics. If it is a process or task-related ask, who do they contact? If it is a staffing issue, who do they contact?
- ☐ Explain when to call and when an email is necessary. Young people may be nervous about speaking to new colleagues, and opt to email. Explain how calls can get a problem solved quicker. Be sure to explain how staff indicate their availability.
- ☐ Line managers or mentors should attend any meetings with HR/finance staff that cover pay. Young people may not understand concepts like PAYE and the associated deductions (tax codes, auto-enrolment, National Insurance Contributions). Check that the young person understands the terminology that is second nature to finance departments. If the young person does not have a P45, carefully explain the new starter checklist.

Offering opportunities for in-person development

It is worth remembering how important being physically present in the workplace is for younger colleagues. Hybrid working arrangements should bear in mind the following:

- Early exchanges with colleagues are key for all new starters. Listening in on the conversations of the wider team creates a 'feel' for the breadth of work in a team / business / organisation.
- Many young people form lifelong friendships in

those early career days. These friendships are emotionally necessary and foster a sense of belonging / commitment to the cause.

- Older colleagues who have already built strong professional networks may not suffer much from the lack of face-to-face contact at the office, but for those still trying to build a network of professional contacts, remote work can be alienating.

As you go checklist

- ☐ As you get to know your new starter, find out about their living situation. They may live alone and feel isolated. Others may have caring responsibilities that mean they need additional flexibility (compressed hours, late starts etc.) built into their calendars.
- ☐ Schedule regular check-ins with both buddies / mentors and line managers. For the first week or so, a check-in once a day works best but this can be reduced over the following weeks.
- ☐ Pay attention. It is harder to read an individual's mood and wellbeing when communicating remotely, but watch for changes in behaviour: cameras regularly being turned off during calls (where they weren't previously); someone consistently sending emails out of hours; new signs of disinterestedness or frustration such as changed tone of voice and silences on group calls.
- ☐ Set tasks with clear parameters and instructions for new starters. Tell them it's okay not to know something and that you're not expecting an expert. Remember that a young person may be doing certain jobs for the very first time. They may say they can do something that they actually don't know how to do (in an attempt to try and prove themselves) - make sure they know they can ask for help.
- ☐ Agree on how long to spend on a job and check-in regularly to assess progress.