



All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modernising Employment

MEETING MINUTES:
13th May 2024, Portcullis House

Chair's Welcome: Emma Hardy welcomed the speakers and reiterated the importance of the APPG and the work which it is undertaking.

Present: Emma Hardy MP, Lord Lucas

Apologies: Baroness Stedman-Scott

Speakers:

Keith Rosser

KR introduced the topic, the APPG and the work being done by the Better Hiring Institute (see attached slides). KR talked about the growing disconnect between schools and employment, and the increasing rate of change being driven by technology in the world of work. KR spoke about the lack of an overriding framework for how hiring is done in the UK, with skills-based hiring, values-based hiring, competency-based hiring, and traditional hiring all being done in practice with mixed results. This lack of framework and approach is harming inclusion and, importantly, harming the chances of our next generation. KR covered the recent work of the Better Hiring Institute to make UK Hiring faster, fairer, and safer. The Institute have recently launched the Better Hiring Charter – an employer's "Back to Work Plan" – and asked the audience to all sign up to the Charter to show their support for better hiring (free to join). KR also covered the launch of the UK's first Tackling Hiring Fraud Guide endorsed by the Prime Minister's Anti-Fraud Champion, Simon Fell MP, and the pending launch of the UK's first best practice on the use of AI in Hiring endorsed by Lord Holmes of Richmond. KR remarked that AI has a big role to play in the future of hiring, being both a positive and potentially negative force.

Margaret Heffernan

Young job seekers face many difficulties in applying for a job from roles demanding a minimum of 3 years' experience to AI systems which are biased in different ways. Amazon tried to figure out a way of removing the bias and failed. MH talked through the many hidden biases written into the AI algorithms. A simple typo can rule your CV out.

Video interviewing is done by BOTs nowadays with no human interaction whatsoever. People tend to use cliches such as "I love team work" as the BOTs are trained on these types of speech. A BOT cannot have insight or a conversation with a candidate. Job interviews used to be 2-way but now one way. Some companies use online games to score candidates but these fail as human achievement depends on context and other people. There are no absolutes in this business. AI gets rid of the human decision. Creativity is therefore being designed out of the job search.

Recruitment can be humiliating and debilitating for young job applicants fresh into the job market. It creates depression, MH cited a local example of this.

Job readiness is no longer common amongst graduates. This means that managers dealing with new entrants need to have the skills and expertise to manage and train young people. Many



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young people get sucked into the Gig economy which does not care about training, career progression etc.

In the US because the School timetable is different most schoolchildren have jobs. This teaches them about what sort of jobs they do want and how to behave in the workplace.

This lack of empathy, training etc can put social cohesion at risk. Will employers change? Not sure but a whole generation of talent is being betrayed.

Amaya Newman, Young Mayor of Hull

3 themes to talk about: Diversity of apprenticeships, accessibility of career opportunities, and work experience.

Aside from the direct trades there is a scarcity of apprenticeships available. Those who want to go into the Arts, Teaching and Childcare and Emergency Services have to stay in the classroom as there are little apprenticeships available and therefore immense competition to secure one.

Location: this is a restrictive factor, young people in and around Hull think that the opportunities are limited. Concentrated in the city centre, rising cost of transport to get there is a hurdle.

Work experience system – almost every young person has to complete a 2-week work experience session. Almost impossible for someone to find work experience if they do not have access through family and friends to suitable companies and do not know how to approach a company, or do not receive any responses from companies. Also difficult for employers to take on a lot of young people at once. Hard for young people to find the work when left to their own devices. Many often end up not taking advantage of work experience or complete a two-week window in a job not relevant to their career prospects. Waste of time and opportunity. Schools not currently acting as links between students and employers.

Work experience system needs to be reformed. Employers should re-address the opportunities that they offer, and schools should get more involved in matching pupils to career prospects. Also need to look at where work placements are and how to overcome the wealth barrier that stops people travelling.

Nathan Bell, Postgraduate at Lancaster University

Finding that many students have no idea how to navigate the jobs market. Not sure that the careers teams at University can keep up with the rapidly changing hiring systems.

NB cited a colleague who had made 186 applications for Graduate roles and had 118 rejections. Student has no idea why the rejections are coming through as no feedback is ever given. Very disheartening to do so many applications and one questions how many have been processed by a human. Is the CV poor, what about the covering letter? The hiring process has become more standardised, process driven and robotic. The implementation of AI is hidden from job seekers. Hard to understand if you are being noticed or not.



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Reputational aspect – students talk about the jobs they have applied for and the results. If they are rejected by AI or feel like their time-consuming application wasn't even noticed, it is likely that they will tell others not to apply. Bad for the employer's reputation.

Firms should partner directly with Universities to find the graduates that they want. This would shorten the hiring process and give direct access to jobs. India is already doing this for example. The process now feels like a cull, designed to whittle down candidates as quickly as possible. The AI that reviews the CV knows why it has failed a particular application, could this not be given as feedback?

Cecile Bonnet, Managing Director at Bright Network

(see accompanying slides #13 to 30)

Focus on the hiring process and how this can evolve. Talent is everywhere but opportunity is not. Bright Network gives students the insights, opportunities and advice that they need to find jobs by bringing together graduates and companies. Need to listen carefully to these audience.

Annual research report – 14k students took the survey. Slide shows one aspect of this: which skills are most valued. What graduates and employers think is not necessarily aligned. Skills such as resilience are not easy to teach.

Big rise in tech roles, applicants are from a narrow spectrum and there is a major skills shortage. Digital Skills gap projected to cost £141 Bn to the UK economy over next 10 years. The ask of tech roles will grow and grow.

Accenture report slide 22.

Slide 24 shows the traditional model, small talent pool. Can be hard to take a different approach within a company.

Slide 25 Not enough people are studying CompSci at university, not a welcoming sector.

Slide 27 non-traditional pathways to create a more diverse workforce and quickly adapt to the changing needs of the tech sector. Diversity brings innovation into the workforce. You can use schemes like Bootcamps to be agile and train people quickly.

Slide 27 – Bright Network alone could double the pipeline of women entering tech overnight if businesses, government and the education sector embraced non-traditional pathways.

Slide 28 if graduates think that the tech sector is accessible, more will apply. Bright Network Technology Academy has trained hundreds who do not have a background in technology and deployed them in leading UK businesses

Slide 29 shows how changing hiring techniques can grow diverse talent. This drives forward employment

Questions and comments



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Estelle McCarthy – thanked the speakers.

- 1) It is clear from what we have heard that we need to rethink how we select e.g. hire for potential not polish and scrap the CV. AI and technology, correctly deployed, helps us to make better decisions. Need to think about the right moment for human interaction in the process.
- 2) AI and GenAI is driving a huge rethink in what we should be looking for in candidates. The WEF and McKinsey have been thinking about this. 40% of workers will need to change their skills over their working lifetime. BCG says a skill will last only a couple of years. We are seeing a move towards skill-enablers. It matters less what skills you have but the way that you think, manage yourself and your resilience. Companies want people who can adapt and change as business life changes.

Christine Morton – concerned about the apprenticeship levy and how it is not working well. More apprenticeships were offered in the UK prior to the levy. HMRC had £3.5bn returned to it in unused levy funds.

Jacqui Shurlock – New Futures Foundation

Runs a Youth employment centre for helping marginalised young people into work. Recent survey among young people on discrimination was published in March. Nearly half of applicants had experienced discrimination when seeking to enter the workforce. One of the key finds is the impact on young people's confidence. If a new starter experiences discrimination, they will look elsewhere. Recommendations for employers are to report on ethnicity pay gaps. Supports work experience comments, a good experience really helps someone get into a job. Recruitment practices do need to be reviewed. Offer a toolkit for youth employment and this has shown that apprenticeships are key to getting people into work.

Vladimir Korotkov, Suoniapp – growing frustration with AI. Candidates are also using AI to write letters. Can the Govt play a bigger role in regulating AI? Should Govt force businesses to change their practices?

Iron Crown – new companies do not have the same roles that used to exist. Open AI at \$20 per month has replaced my accountant, lawyer etc. This has multiple effects, young people will not have the opportunity to do trainee roles. Does not see that new companies will hire young people to train them up.

Sophie Adam – in 2023 the ONS reported that we have nearly 1M NEETs. Should HMG do more to invest in that community? Should we go back to basics in the schooling system to get the student into the right jobs.

Olli – runs a start up allowing people to swap roles. Gap in education about the career pathway and which skills will be required to progress. AI is fed by human bias.



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One solution would be for HMG to provide an incentive for employers to bring young people in to do certain jobs and train them.

MH touched on mental health and disabilities, many of which are not visible.

Philip Virgo - House of Lords skills enquiry, deadline end May, would Amaya make a submission?

Bobby Medlam, Yorkshire SENDS Alliance. Keen to see what is being done for people with disabilities and how AI handles this. What accommodation could be made within the hiring process to allow for more specialist support?

Panellists response:

MH – our education system is very old-fashioned. Grades are everything but they are only predictive of academic success. No correlation between good grades and career success. This has led to plagiarism. Emphasis is in the wrong place. Want to develop people who love learning and want to learn all of their lives. Should focus on potential but you cannot predict this because people change throughout their lives. Cannot swap one model for the other.

Cleveland company story, we get tied up in knots trying to predict people. The tools we use are very poor. Need to give people the environment to flourish.

Should HMG regulate AI? AI bias is not the hard problem which we think it is. You can test the AI to find the biases, you just need to put it through lots of practices first. AI is chopping off the first rungs of the employment ladder.

Agrees with career specialists in schools but their understanding tends to be historical. Need much better networking between schools and employers as done in Manchester. You need pollinators not career specialists.

Victoria Russell, Artivisual Media – should AI be clever enough to appeal to everyone so that it obscures the actual culture of that organisation?

MH – should not empower AI to make choices which are illegal.

NB – hiring has many strands and should be an enjoyable experience. What do we want from candidates? Start with what you want. Beware the quick-fire questions as not everyone can think quickly on their feet. Get the ethos of hiring correct and then go into a more granular approach.

AN – mandatory work experience and career specialists were two brilliant ideas. Need to ensure that young people pick up the correct skills from doing a course rather than completing it merely for applicability to a CV.



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Alexandra Sufit – wanted to talk about the breaking of the contract, what about the mid-lifers who have been thrown off the career ladder? 50% of women working in tech leave by the age of 35 just when your career would take off. Ageism is a huge issue.

CB – on the AI aspect we need to realise that it will not go away. Companies need to be clear about the use of AI by candidates and to feedback. One element not raised is applicants who are neurodiverse and use AI to help them complete CV and job applications, what happens to them?

You need to start early to help people come into tech. Role models are important. Some corporations do work with schools but teachers may not feel equipped to talk about this.

Rosie Baber, London South Bank University – an internship must be paid but work experience is a grey area. Can this be addressed?

MH – in Germany it is against the law to give unpaid internships to students. Should not matter if is an internship or work experience, it is part of the experience of work.

KR – thanked everyone for coming and talking. AI and Hiring report will be out next week. Need to address structural problems in hiring.

Attendees

Keith Rosser, Cal Wright, George Warrington, Reed

Andrew Henderson, Secretariat APPG

Sophie Adam

Rosie Baber, London South Bank University

Cecile Bonnet and Joe Hrycak, Bright Network

Fiona Cuthbertson, Keystone

Margaret Heffernan, Bath University

Vladimir Korotkov, Suoniapp

Bobby Medlam, Yorkshire SENDS Alliance

Estelle McCarthy

Sean Moran, Orara Group

Christine Morton

Helen Norris

Victoria Russell, Artivisual Media



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Alex Sadler, Dervico

David Shribbs

Jacqui Shurlock – New Futures Foundation

Joanne Speak, Adecco

Alexandra Sufit

Caroline Williamson, Sunderland Software

Philip Virgo

Curtis Yip, Youth Councillor