

CREATIVE CAREER PATHWAYS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE SOLENT REGION

Research summary

Our research project explores the current creative career pathways for young people within the Solent region, their experiences, and barriers they face in getting into the creative industry. We have identified five main barriers that are significantly affecting young people locally and have made five initial suggestions on what young people need in place to be able to overcome these barriers.

Within our research, we used both primary and secondary sources. For our primary research, we ran a survey with participants aged 14 - 30 and interviewed local young creatives and professionals to gather the opinions and experiences of a diverse range of young people. When sharing our survey we targeted local organisations and charities both in the creative and non-creative sectors. Our secondary research includes statistics and qualitative data regarding employment and working conditions in the UK creative industry.

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5 Main Barriers

Diversity & representation

Working conditions for young people within creative industries

Education & experience requirements

Lack of early career roles

Exposure to creative industries & access to opportunities for young people

5 Suggestions

Local creative jobs & opportunities directory

Creative industry events

Cross-section dedication to fostering diversity & inclusion in the workplace

Mentoring & career support

Support for freelancers & small businesses

From our research, the five barriers we have identified are:

1. Diversity and Representation

We established that the lack of diversity and representation within the UK creative industry is a barrier to many young people. Our research highlights that young people with a range of minoritised and protected identities have a disadvantage when finding creative work. Including but not limited to:

- Digital poverty prevents access to opportunities within the creative industry for young people from low socio-economic backgrounds. 95% of our survey respondents look for work online, showing that it has become the most used source for finding creative work. This risks excluding many people.
- Our survey shows that neurodivergent young people generally feel less confident in finding work and less included, welcomed and supported in the creative sector than neurotypical people.
- Our secondary research shows a lack of diversity within the creative industry. Black, Asian and other minoritised Ethnic groups are underrepresented. They were also less likely to be employed among our survey respondents.

2. Education and Experience Requirements

In secondary research, we found that the creative industry has higher proportions of degree holders when compared to all workers in the UK. Our primary research shows the majority of creative graduates did not get any support once leaving university, which has impacted their current employment. Young people that are non-graduates but have completed routes into employment, such as Apprenticeships and Kickstart Placements, have had more support from their employer and are more likely to be in a creative job.

3. Working Conditions for Young People within the Creative Industries

We found there are multiple working conditions currently present for young people in the creative industry that are barriers to them working within it. Including but not limited to:

Many of the job opportunities available to young people are short / fixed term hours, leaving young people without security of employment or stability of finances. This is a significant barrier for young people from low socio-economic backgrounds. 'Unstable employment / income' ranked highest as a barrier that makes working in the creative industry difficult or out of reach to young people.

Many of the opportunities available are minimum wage or low paid fee-based opportunities.

Access needs for young people who are neurodivergent, disabled, or have a long-term health condition are often not considered. This is a barrier to them getting into the creative industry and having support in the workplace. Poor accessibility includes long and irregular working hours being common practice within the creative industry.

4. Exposure to the Creative Industries and Access to Opportunities for Young People

The majority of young people we surveyed do consider themselves to be creative, and those who don't still take part in creative activities and hobbies. Our research suggests that many young people are not being encouraged to follow creative routes. The majority of young people have listed what their dream creative jobs are but are 'not sure' if there are jobs in their preferred role in the local area. The largest demographic within this category is under 16s.

5. Lack of Early Career Roles

Our respondents shared that they think there is a significant lack of creative early career roles suitable for young people in the Solent region. We found that young people with a wealth of experience and skills are struggling to find creative work locally. Location has a large impact on whether young people feel that there are creative jobs available to them, with those in the Gosport and Isle of Wight areas sharing that there are fewer opportunities available than those living in city centres. Many young people move to city centres for this reason.

From these five barriers and also from our primary research, we have come up with five ideas that could help overcome these five barriers:

1. Local Creative Jobs and Opportunities Directory

To make the time-consuming task of looking for jobs online easier and quicker, a dedicated place for organisations and individuals to list creative jobs in the Solent region would help. It should be easy to use and filtered by categories such as discipline and location. It could make the time-consuming task of searching for jobs online easier and quicker. It could boost the visibility of local creatives and foster collaboration. As digital poverty is a barrier for so many, it would be important to have access points in public spaces such as libraries and job centres.

2. Support for Freelancers and Small Businesses

With many creative opportunities being short-term, support for freelancers and small businesses is crucial. Young people wanting to work as a freelancer or establish a small business are discouraged by start-up costs and exposure. Affordable studios/workspaces, start-up grants and mentoring could help young people.

3. Creative Industry Events

Many of our survey respondents shared that creative industry events would help them find creative job opportunities locally. This could include things such as:

talks from professionals, sharing industry insight, advice, inspiring young people

- taster workshops where young people can try out different creative skills
- interactive events for different career disciplines. young people can get a better idea of what each career involves & what it would be like to work in that discipline
- networking events for young creatives to help build their connections and visibility

4. Mentoring and Career Support

Young people who have had ongoing mentoring and career support feel a lot more confident and in a better position to find creative work. There is a clear need for this support across the board.

Other career support could include:

- introduce programmes / paid internships so young people can gain professional experience
- low-cost workshops to enable young people to upskill without University
- well paid commission and job opportunities for young creatives

5. Cross-sector Dedication to Fostering Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace

To truly make creative careers achievable for all young people, we need organisations and employers working together to celebrate diversity and inclusion.

There are already many resources available for creative employers and organisations which can guide best-practice in terms of recruitment processes and working conditions.

We feel that collaboration across local organisations that can hold each other accountable to these standards and support each other in achieving them would be a good way forward.

Ways of doing this could include:

- a working group
- creating a Solent Region toolkit / framework to follow
- focus groups with underrepresented young people
- funding projects led by underrepresented young people, giving them agency and voice