

Business in Parliament Conference (BiPC) 2025

Panel Session 3 Note – *Today's Young People, Tomorrow's Workforce*

Chair:

Mr Graeme Dey, MSP, Minister for Higher and Further Education and Minister for Veterans

Co-Hosts:

- Stacey Dingwall – Federation of Small Businesses
- Julie Degnan – Young Enterprise Scotland

Panel Members:

- Edward Obi – HR HUB Plus/Peridot Recruit LTD
- Sara Cook – Volunteering Matters
- Owen McCarrey - Business Graduate Apprentice (GA) at Leidos

Summary

Co-hosts welcomed attendees to the session and the Minister highlighted the importance of providing a high-quality all-age careers offer that supports people to progress into a rewarding career.

Edward Obi introduced and started the session, exploring what Gen Z are looking for from an employer and how employers can remain flexible, meeting business requirements and expectations. This was described as bridging the gap between Gen Z and employers.

During this discussion, the key messages for employers were:

- Early engagement – meet with Gen Z from a young age to see what value they can bring to the workplace and to align with them.
- Training and Development – Gen Z want learning opportunities to progress within their career and to support further skill development.
- Flexible Working – employers should adapt an approach to engage with this where possible.
- Inclusivity – Gen Z want workplaces to be inclusive.
- Values – Gen Z want to know about employers' values.

Sara Cook led the next part of the discussion, highlighting the issues within a multigenerational workforce and the expectation of individuals from different generations to work holistically without support to do so. She also highlighted how generation / age is not routinely considered as part of EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion). Everyone brings different attributes to the work place - Sara discussed how we can help people harness those strengths and work to any challenges.

Points covered included:

- Gen Z are competitive, they want to progress and achieve success at work;
- They are stressed about their future and this needs to be understood in the context of the times they have grown up in;
- Security and money are important;
- They are independent and prioritise autonomy and flexibility, but they also like face-to-face interaction at work; frequent feedback from their managers is essential.

Sara's presentation covered how Gen Z have grown up in a culture of safety and overprotectiveness, giving less opportunity to learn life skills and assess risk; they need support to understand that failure is ok. Research shows that less young people have experience of work, for example through volunteering or "Saturday jobs" than previously, therefore it is important for employers to adjust where they are starting from.

Julie Degan led the next session of the workshop, highlighting the enterprise projects that Young Enterprise Scotland provide in schools. These projects help develop skills for lifelong learning and work, which builds young people's confidence entering the workplace. Owen McCarrey joined this session and shared his experience of being a graduate apprentice for Leidos, and his experience of the Young Enterprise Scotland Company Programme. Owen shared how this project, allowed him to gain the knowledge and confidence to succeed in his current graduate apprenticeship. Owen flagged the main concerns for young people from his perspective, which included not knowing what career opportunities are available out there and how schools subjects link to them. The need for employers to engage more with schools was highlighted.

Following each discussion session, the audience were able to ask any follow up questions.

In closing, the Minister recognised the importance of improving the career service offer within Scotland and noted his own reflections on working with the younger generation.

Outcome

The Minister agreed on the need for closer, continuous engagement with businesses when developing the career offer for Scotland's young people (Gen Z).