

# Youthalytical Project Report 2022

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
Introduction .....	1
Social Print & Copy (SP&C).....	1
Aims & Purpose.....	2
Key Stakeholders.....	4
The Youthalytical Project Host, Facilitators and Members.....	4
Research Plan & Methodology .....	5
Phase 1.....	5
Phase 2.....	6
The Research.....	7
The Sample Group.....	7
Type of Research.....	7
Statement of Limitations .....	7
Findings .....	8
Recommendations & Conclusion.....	10
Appendix 1 – Survey distributed to Young People .....	13

## Introduction

### Social Print & Copy (SP&C)

SP&C are a self-sustaining, rapidly evolving Social Enterprise that provides printing, photocopying and file management technology and services with transparent and fair prices, returning surplus to the third sector and its communities via employability initiatives and support for other social impact projects.

SP&Cs social objectives will be achieved through supporting communities across a number of key areas:

- **Youth employability**
  - Providing a 2-year (SVQ based) Apprenticeship programme
  - Providing a 2-year (non-SVQ) training programme open to 16-to-24-year old's, enabling inclusion that does not restrict entry through qualification, allowing entry and growth without prerequisite of mandatory educational qualifications.

- Both programmes also providing: Practical skills in the repair and maintenance of industry technology AND transferable employability skills such as communication, teamwork, networking, resilience and self-management.
- **Barriers to work opportunities** for women looking to return to the workplace
- **Environmental benefits** including using inkjet technology (lower operating costs, less electricity to run than laser technologies, fewer parts and consumables, reduction of packaging), software to minimize on-site visits, provision of Green certificates.
- **Third Sector efficiencies** allowing more funding within the sector to be used for the provision of critical services rather than operating costs.

This report specifically focusses on SP&C's work in the Youth Employability space, and outlines:

- **WHY** SP&C have made Youth Employability a key deliverable within their long-term social impact strategy.
- **HOW** SP&C intend to shape their Youth Employability offering, in turn contributing to the Scottish Governments Young Person Guarantee pledges.

## Aims & Purpose

The 2021 apprenticeships and traineeships statistics update<sup>1</sup> highlighted a surprisingly high drop-out rate of the “new style” Apprenticeships across the UK.

Through the youth employability programme (SVQ-based and non SVQ-based), SP&C intend to **retain 50%** of the participants into full-time employment as the business grows, supporting the remaining participants into full time employment with partner (and wider) organisations. To achieve this, the following considerations need to be made:

- **A need to observe and understand the dropout rate from Apprenticeships** by engaging Young People in the research and analysis of the general, and commonly experienced Apprenticeship journey.
- **Align and contribute** to Scotland's **Young Persons Guarantee**, 5 pledges:
  1. Prepare young people for the world of work
  2. Help all young people to achieve their potential - engaging with and opening opportunities to young people who face barriers to work.
  3. Invest in a skilled workforce - Creating work-based learning, training and upskilling opportunities for young people.
  4. Create jobs and apprenticeships
  5. Create an inclusive and fair workplace - Ensuring a working environment which supports all young people and provides fair work.
- **Create a sustainable training and apprenticeship model** that will serve young people, SP&C and the sector.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/2020-21>

- Ensure strategy outcomes are **measurable** so that continuous monitoring and improvements can be made when and where necessary.

With these considerations in mind, and as a starting point, SP&C felt passionately about the need to understand the root cause of the apprenticeship drop-out rate, and so, through the creation of a Project Team (named Youthalytical) we would conduct research, with young people at the very heart of the engagement activity.

The Youthalytical Project will:

- bring young people together and engage them with mentors, businesses, the Third Sector, and training opportunities
- help design the environment that will support the apprentices, disadvantaged young people, and those facing barriers to work, as part of SP&C's goal to become a Technology Hub for the community
- contribute to SP&C's long-term vision of helping more young people to reach their potential, by supporting them at the earliest possible stage into training, education and ultimately employment

The objectives of the Youthalytical project were to get young people involved in the consultation of:

- what they would want from an apprenticeship programme:
  - technical, employability and life skills
  - what support they might need
  - what environment will be most conducive to their learning and development,
  - how to encourage and engage them in self-awareness (understanding their own values, goals, emotions etc)
  - how to encourage and engage them in team, citizenship and social structures
  - how to encourage and engage them in innovation and adaptability processes
- and how we can reach and engage young people – so that they have the opportunity to engage with the apprenticeship programme and/or other aspects of SP&C's planned school to employment on-ramp services.

To ensure the project outcomes are authentic, relevant and credible, the Youthalytical Team would consist entirely of Young people. The young Team would be mentored and supported by a number of professionals and stakeholders who work within and closely with SP&C. The young team would be tasked with engaging other young people in the research, ensuring research participants had previous experience of a work placement, apprenticeship and/or internship, and therefore have the ability to draw on real life experiences of the world of work. We will now look at SP&C's key stakeholders, who will have an interest in the research carried out by the Youthalytical team:

## Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Needs
Young People	The transition from school into the world of work is a challenging time for young people. The Young Persons Guarantee recognises that employers must do more to provide young people with engaging, rewarding, and effective employability opportunities.
SP&C and the Board	With youth employment a key element of SP&C's social impact strategy, it is important to fully understand what is needed and how SP&C's long-term strategy can be shaped in a way that enables and sustains their social goals.
Funding Agencies	As a new Social Enterprise, SP&C very much appreciates the support of funding organisations who recognise the impact that SP&C can make in the Young Employability space
Wider Education & Recruitment Agencies	Educationalists are increasingly looking to employers to support qualification-based learning with practical, work-based experience to fully prepare young people for long lasting, rewarding careers. Educationalists will be keen to understand what SP&C can offer, to complement and enhance their own programmes.
Employers	The youth employability remit is ever changing and evolving, and every piece of research work completed by employers will be of interest to others, in aid of remaining relevant, effective and in line with current practice. SP&C's research into the issue of Apprenticeship drop-out rates, will be of particular interest to other employers.

For SP&C, the authenticity and credibility of the research is hugely important and will serve as a legacy project that will continue to shape and challenge the way the organisation engages within the Youth employability space. It was therefore important to the vision and value of the research that the Youthalytical Team consistent of young people who had experience the world of work in some way, and to that end, the Youthalytical Project Team members are:

### The Youthalytical Project Host, Facilitators and Members

**Host** – Ian Gray, CEO of Social Print & Copy who's career started as an Apprentice Mechanical Engineer & Tool fitter. Ian became a copier engineer on completion of his apprenticeship, rising through the ranks, progressing through management technical positions before moving into sales and senior management positions in the print/document related industries.

**Project Facilitator** - Sam Forsberg – ActionCOACH Business Coach and strategic planning consultant works with businesses and social enterprises to help them create sustainable growth – financially and operationally – through their people, processes and passion. Sam is also a member of her local Career Ready Advisory Board (Fife).

**Project Facilitator** - Mhairi Prendergast – Central Scotland Manager for Career Ready, social mobility charity that engages young people with the world of work through mentorship and Internships. Mhairi is also a SP&C Board Member

**Project Guest Facilitator** – Mo Gill – HR and Employment Law Specialist, Director of HR Dept, with over 30 years’ experience across the private, public and voluntary sector.

**Project Member** - Abigail Waugh (24) – Current SP&C employee and Board Member. Abigail graduated from University of West Scotland with a BA in Law and Business. Abigail is also an adult leader and in Training with girl guiding Scotland.

**Project Member** - James Hunter (19) – James is working with Barbados and has a full-time placement at Telford College in business administration, James has experienced previous apprenticeship roles.

**Project Member** - Steven Dodds (19) – Steven is currently completing his apprenticeship People Know How and has been able to offer great insight to his experiences of his journey.

**Project Member** - Hussain Raza (20) – Is currently in his apprenticeship role with Edinburgh City Council and offered great insight to Analytics within the group

**Project Member - Connor Doig** – S6 Student from Beath High School, Fife. Current student on the Career Ready Program, of which consists of a 4-week, full time, Paid internship.

When the Youthalytical Project Team was established, the two-phased programme created to support the young Team was launched:

## Research Plan & Methodology

### Phase 1

Before the Youthalytical Project Team could get started with the research, it was first necessary to prepare and up-skill them, and to help them understand the importance and value of:

- SP&C’s vision, values and long-term social strategy
- Teamwork, and their role within the team
- How to manage a project to conclusion
- How to conduct research and Analyse data
- How to engage with a variety of people in the community
- How to make recommendations and write a report

Phase 1 of the project was therefore a 6 day, in person programme that consisted of the following sessions:

**Day 1** – Introduction: Get to know SP&C, the Project Brief and ‘How to Manage a Project’

**Day 2** – Self-Management tools & Build your Network

**Day 3** – Research & Data Collection, and Research Analysis

**Day 4** – Team Dynamics & Your Role

**Day 5** – The Apprenticeship Roadmap & Measuring and monitoring

**Day 6** – Project Plan & Survey Creation

Each day would be structured and start with a reflection of the previous day, capturing key learnings, with a relevant link to the day ahead and the tasks and activities that would follow. Within these 6 days, the Team were introduced to various third sector business leaders, with whom they could network, also having a chance to engage with and use various self-management and project management tools, such as professional Mind Mapping software.

This 6-day programme prepared the young Team to transition to Phase 2 of the project, providing them with the right knowledge, tools and resources. To be confident that this 6 day programme had been successful in its attempts to upskill and prepare the team, they completed an opinion survey designed by the programme facilitators. Key findings were:

- 4 of the 5 team members rated the overall programme as Excellent/Very Good, with 1 member rating the overall programme between OK/Good.
- All team members rated the opportunity to network with third sector leaders as Excellent/Good
- 3 of the 5 team members felt that Phase 1 of the project helped prepare them in some way for the world of work.
- All team members indicated that they were:
  - Very much made to feel welcome
  - Very much made to feel valued as a Team Member
  - Very much listened to
  - Very much clear on what the project needs to deliver
  - Very much clear on how they can contribute to the project outcomes

The whole Team also indicated that they believe that the project to create a new blueprint for Apprenticeships was necessary.

## Phase 2

The second phase of the project required the team to remotely create and manage:

- A detail and structured project Plan and timeline of activities
- Surveys for Young People and a Distribution Plan
- A Project Report that would include recommendations for SP&C

Phase 2 took place virtually over Teams, on a weekly basis for a number of months over the autumn and winter period of 2021. Each meeting would be scheduled to run for 60-90 minutes, with each week focused on completing actions, as aligned with the project plan.

Week 1 & 2	Create, pilot and approve the surveys
Week 3	Distribute survey as per the distribution plan
Week 4 – 8	Review incoming data from surveys – Survey deadline/closing date was extended twice to make allowances for challenges connecting with young people due to prelim period, festive break and covid disruption.
Week 9 and ongoing	Analyse data and write report and recommendations

## The Research

SP&C feel passionate about the need to understand and address the root cause of the recently reported, national apprenticeship drop-out rate, and in doing so are focused on creating a sustainable blueprint for an SP&C Employability Programme that would be appealing to young people, dynamic in its offering and delivery, and effective in its outcomes.

The Youthalytical Project will:

- Make recommendations that will contribute to the design and delivery of SP&Cs SVQ and Non-SVQ based employability programmes. The recommendations will guide SP&C in their creation of multiple training and upskilling offerings, most notable, their Apprenticeship programmes.
- contribute to SP&C's long-term vision of helping more young people to reach their potential, by supporting them at the earliest possible stage into training, education and ultimately employment

## The Sample Group

To understand the national Apprenticeship drop-out rate, it was agreed that this research would engage directly with young people who had in some way, experienced all or in part, an Apprenticeship, Internship and/or work placement.

Therefore, the sample group would be young people between the age of 16-24. Participants could still be at school, or have left, but they must have some experience with the world of work through programmes such as Apprenticeships, Internship or work placements.

## Type of Research

While setting the criteria for the Sample Group, the Project Team understood that in order to gather rich, authentic and measurable data about a group of young people's very different and personal experiences, it would be necessary to design OPEN and CLOSED questions. There would be a need to get a sense of the **collective**, and a need to get a sense of **individual**, personal experiences.

The Team also understood that to increase the chance of people completing the survey, it would be necessary to make the survey easy to understand, simple and quick to complete and yet open, to enable perspective.

The project Team were also very aware, that to create recommendations, it would be helpful to provide participants with an open/free text option to articulate their answers and provide more detail. These would also, helpfully, serve as direct narratives and quotes.

The Youthalytical Team therefore agreed that a blend of quantitative and qualitative research would be needed.

The final survey can be viewed in **Appendix 1**

## Statement of Limitations

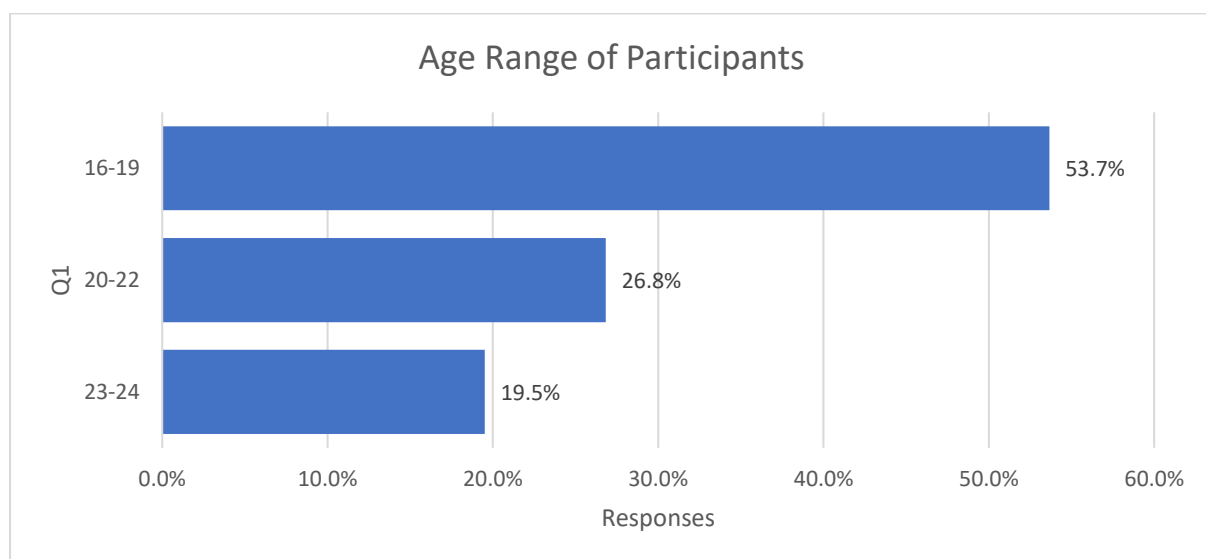
The key challenge experienced throughout the course of the project was the access to a large enough pool of young people who met the participant criteria, of having experience of the world of work in some way. With many young people busy with school, prelims/exams, meeting college deadlines, all very close to the Festive break etc. the team found the need to extend the submission deadline twice.

The extended deadline did provide the team with time to collect survey submissions from 41 participants, which was still a bit shy of the 50 minimum being aimed for.

## Findings

SP&C Youthalytical project looked for the opinions from young people about their work place experiences. Our goal was to understand the thoughts of young people about what makes a workplace experience supportive and engaging, and what might be missing, or could be improved. The Youthalytical team will incorporate these opinions into their recommendations for the blueprint of an apprenticeship training model to be adopted by SP&C.

We were aiming for at least 50 responses, but a combination of timing (exam period) and Covid meant that access to young people was harder to achieve. 41 responses were received from young people (~50:50 paper-based, to online form).



Participants were asked whether they had participated in an apprenticeship, work placement or volunteering programme (paid or unpaid) including part or full-time employment, with **80.5%** saying yes, 19.5% saying no.

Those who responded yes were asked some additional questions:

How long were you in a work placement/apprenticeship/volunteering for? **75%** of respondents had worked for **more than 2 months** (47% for more than 6 months), with only 9% having worked less than 3 weeks.

**82%** of participants said they would recommend the experience to others. 15% of participants said they were unsure, citing boredom and stress as some of the reasons why. These respondents were all 16-19 year olds, and all said they learned something. No recruitment process was used in these cases suggesting a potential mismatch of fit.

Some descriptions of their experience included:

*Being able to learn what it's like to be in a working environment. I was still at school at this point so had a mix of school work and general work so it was good having to learn to deal with them both.*



*Very enjoyable and comfortable environment, helped to form and maintain a routine, gained important skills and made contacts, wonderful staff to work for/with.*

*I like the amount of freedom I had when doing a task I was given. Given a task and was checking every now and then to make sure everything was fine. Also answered any questions I had and went into detail if I didn't understand at first.*

**66%** of respondents said they would consider paid work to be the next stage in their career, with only 15% suggesting an Apprenticeship or Internship might be considered, and only 15% suggesting Higher Education might be.

**79%** of respondents said their highest level of qualification obtained was a Nat 4/Nat 5 or Higher/Advanced Higher, with only 5 respondents having a Bachelor Degree or higher. This could be in part explained by the lower number of young people over the age of 19 who completed the survey.

**89%** of respondents said they learned something from the experience, with only 8% (3 of 36) those who had relevant experience saying they did not learn anything from it. Most skills described were technical/job related (18), with communications (6) and team (3) skills also mentioned.

When asked to describe what their experience was like, respondents mentioned a few things more frequently than others: **skills/learning, enjoyable, and insights.**

When asked about the recruitment process (What did you like/dislike about it, and what would you change?), respondents mentioned a few things more frequently than others: **personal/friendly, simple/straightforward and easy/good/smooth being positive experiences; and less paperwork, better interviews and better communication being areas for improvement suggested.**

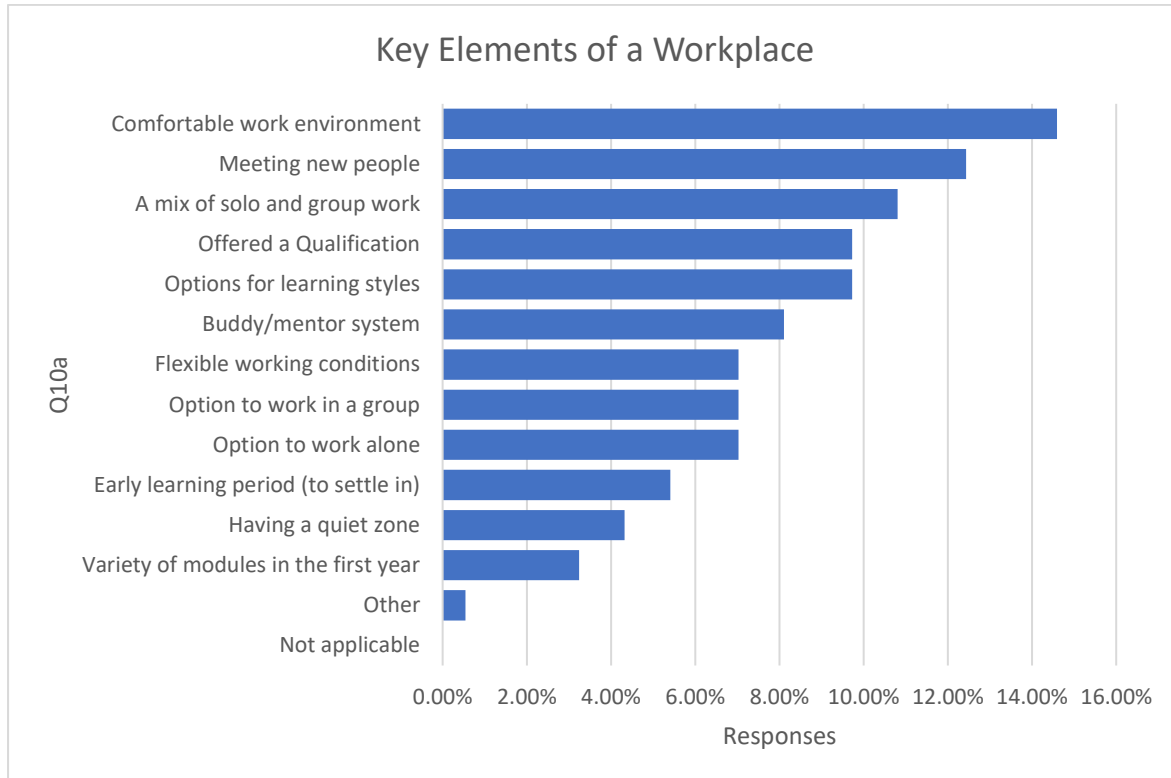
The focus of the project was to gather insights on what young people consider the key elements of an ideal apprenticeship, work placement or volunteering opportunity to be. Whilst 4 participants didn't respond (paper-based, so couldn't enforce a mandatory question), on average the respondents selected 4.5 of the 13 offered options that included:

- Offered a Qualification
- Comfortable work environment
- Flexible working conditions
- Variety of modules in the first year
- Buddy/mentor system
- Early learning period (to settle in)
- Options for learning styles
- Having a quiet zone
- Option to work in a group
- Option to work alone
- A mix of solo and group work
- Meeting new people
- Other

3 elements were identified as being most selected, with **comfortable work environment** leading the way, followed by **meeting new people** and **a mix of group and solo work.**

Surprisingly, variety of modules in the first year scored lowest (and variety was only mentioned once in the descriptions of experiences) – which was one of the elements SP&C was considering building into their apprenticeships – though this could be in part due to the wording of the question.

Having a quiet zone also scored lower than hypothesised, reflecting the repeated mentions of people, teams and friendly approaches in descriptions of what was good.



Overall, workplace experiences provided new skills even if the recruitment or experiences were not all entirely positive.

Additional surveys were designed by the young Team for Educators and Employers to gather their feedback and opinions on effective apprenticeships, but the limited responses (4 and 7 respectively) render them less relevant for the project.

## Recommendations & Conclusion

Further research into what a “comfortable work environment” looks like or is made up of, for young people, would help to inform some of the plans for SP&C’s apprenticeship programme.

Young people tend to appreciate a friendly, slightly less formal approach, which allows them to interact with other people, learn new skills and have a mixture of working alone and with others. It may be less about variety of modules/topics as a variety of ways of engaging with their learning environment and people around them.

Anecdotally, it is important to be aware of the different individual styles and team dynamics, in order to give each young person the opportunity to contribute and feel heard. This is particularly important where a young person is introverted, lacking confidence or uncertain about their role, or where there are more extrovert or take-charge styles around them.

Ensuring there are opportunities for the young person to be one-on-one with someone who will draw them out and give them the space to speak is important alongside any group or team working. This was evident during the facilitated networking session with the Chief Execs, where even the quietest members of the Team really came out of their shells when the Chief Execs wanted to know more about them, their experiences/opinions and their goals. [~10 min sessions pairing a Chief Exec with a young person, and an SP&C employee, to share personal experiences and stories].

Making the recruitment process easy (friendly, straightforward, simple) is important to encourage young people to apply for the opportunity and ensuring good communication throughout the journey will help keep them engaged.

Equally, some level of recruitment process to ensure a good fit between the young person, the organisation and the role is important to help minimise boredom and stress due to the nature of the work.

And whilst variety is not necessarily a high priority for young people, being bored will diminish the positive impact of their experience.

Again anecdotally, phase 2 of the project experienced less engagement and contribution from the young people, and it was much harder to support their involvement virtually than it had been face to face during phase 1. This reflects the experiences of young people in Career Ready's mentoring programme whose internships during the pandemic were largely online/virtual and lacked some of the richness that these experiences usually had in an on-site facility.

The experience is much less engaging, supportive and valuable to a young person at this early stage in their working life when guidance, meeting new people and learning new skills is involved. Whilst 'hybrid' models may be poised as the new workplace normal, and the pandemic is not completely behind us, remote working is not recommended for the formative and foundational apprenticeship experiences in order to give the young people the best start to their working careers.

With limited to no experience, it is difficult for a young person to assess and know what opportunity is right for them at the early stages of their engagement with the world of work. If a role differs from their (albeit loose) expectations, proves to be boring, stressful or lacking in support, then it is likely that the young person will disengage rather than speak up for what they would like to experience differently or what would support them sufficiently.

This may contribute to the relatively high drop-out rates of apprenticeships, alongside other influencing factors. From an employers' perspective, better clarity, communication and support can help a young person to adjust to the world of work and allow for adjustments to help them find ways to remain engaged – getting the most out of the experience for both the young person and the employer organisation.

It may be worth looking at what can be achieved through shorter apprenticeship terms, rather than a fixed 2 year programme, that could potentially contribute to an overall qualification the way 'units' of study contribute to the attainment of a degree. It is also worth considering whether there is a place for shorter 6 month opportunities that provide a taster for young people before they commit to longer-term training/careers.

The recent criticism by the National Audit Office (NAO) of the UK Government's Kickstart Scheme suggest that there was little monitoring by government to check that the jobs it funded were of good

quality, with young staff offered training and support, and that they were offered to the right people; which mirrors the overall experiences of the young people surveyed and anecdotal evidence.

In conclusion, whilst the desire and commitment to provide opportunities for young people in accordance with the Scottish Government's Young Persons Guarantee is high, it is critical that these are well-structured and well-supported opportunities in order to maximise their effectiveness, rather than just spaces created for young people that find them thrown into the deep-end or left to self-direct before they are capable of doing so within the new context of their working career.

Far more time, energy and support than expected may be needed to ease the young people into the organisation, their role and the understanding of the value they can provide, and draw the best out of them.

## Appendix 1 – Survey distributed to Young People

### \*Youthalytical Survey on Work Place Experiences\*

Welcome!



Social Print and Copy CIC are piloting our Youthalytical project and are looking for opinions from young people about their work place experiences. Our goal is to understand the thoughts of young people about what makes a work place experience supportive and engaging, and what might be missing or could be improved. The Youthalytical team will incorporate these opinions into their recommendations for the blueprint of an apprenticeship training model to be adopted by SP&C.

*This survey is for young people aged between 16-24. Please allow approx. 5 minutes to complete. DEADLINE for completing this survey is Wednesday 8th December.*

1. Please select your age range: *We are looking for responses from young people aged between 16 - 24.*

16-19 years old
  20-22 years old
  23-24 years old

2. Have you participated in an apprenticeship, work placement or volunteering programme (paid or unpaid)? Part or full-time employment also count. *If no, you'll be taken to Q6.*

Yes
  No

3. How long were you in a work placement/apprenticeship/volunteering for? *(paid or unpaid)*

0 - 3 weeks
  4 - 8 weeks
  2-6 months
  more than 6 months

4. Please describe what your experience was like: *What did you like or not like about the experience?*

*What stood out?*

5. Would you recommend the work place experience you had to other young people? *(The specific work placement, internship, volunteering or apprenticeship you took part in)*

Yes
  No
  Unsure

6. What is the highest level of qualification you have obtained?\*

National 4s (Nat 4s)
  National 5s (Nat 5s)
  Highers
  Advanced Highers
  HNC
  HND
  Bachelors Degree
  Masters
  PhD

7. What would you consider to be the next stage in your career?

Work (paid)
  Apprenticeship/Internship
  Higher/Further education
  Volunteering (unpaid)
  Other

8. What did you like/dislike about the Recruitment Process for your work placement, and what would you change about it? *(The application, interview and selection process)*

9. Did you learn any new skills during your apprenticeship/work placement/volunteering?

Yes  No

10.a. Of the following, which do you consider the key elements of an ideal apprenticeship, work placement or volunteering? \* *Select all that apply:*

Offered a qualification  Comfortable work environment  Flexible working conditions (i.e. virtual or physical)  Variety of modules in the first year  A buddy/ mentor system  Early learning period (to settle in)  Options for learning styles  Having a quiet zone  The option to work in a group  The option to work alone  A mix of solo and group work  Meeting new people  Not Applicable  Other

11. Would you like to receive a copy of the recommendations/report from this survey and project? \*

Yes  No

**If yes, please provide your email address:** *Your email will only be used for the purpose of sharing the recommendations/report with you.*

Thank you for taking the time to respond and support this project. *This survey has been created by the Youthalytical team at Social Print and Copy CIC, Edinburgh. Your responses will be analysed anonymously, and if you choose to provide your email it will only be used for the purposes of sending you the recommendations/report. If you have any questions or want more information, please get in touch by email: [claire@socialprintandcopy.org](mailto:claire@socialprintandcopy.org).*