



Wednesday 8th July

EARLY CAREERS AND SKILLS

EQUIPPING THE WORKFORCE FOR WHAT'S NEXT

WELCOME

Gillian Pillans

Research Director

Thank you to our research partners



BPP

LYCEUM EDUCATION GROUP

The Oxford Group

by City & Guilds

DEFINING EARLY CAREERS

The broad range of pathways through which people enter and begin their working lives

Independent report

Young people and work: interim report

Updated 19 June 2026

Contents

Foreword

Introduction: The review

Chapter 1: who are the UK's NEET young people?

Chapter 2: in their own words

Chapter 3: the youth economy – how the labour market produces detachment

Chapter 4: education and skills – the faltering foundation

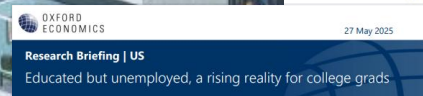
Chapter 5: health – configured for treatment, not participation

Foreword

One million lives.

Nearly one million young people aged 16 to 24 in the United Kingdom are not in education, employment or training. One in 8 young people. And rising. Behind the statistics lie individual lives: aspirations thwarted, opportunities lost, futures placed on hold.

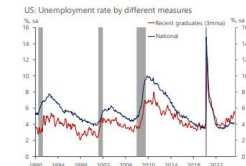
Numbers on that scale should command national attention in their own right. Too often they haven't. The NEET rate has barely crept below 10% in 25 years. What should have been treated as an urgent national crisis has been absorbed into the background noise of public life.



- Higher unemployment among recent college graduates is primarily a function of a structural shift in hiring in the tech sector amid strong labor supply growth. While some of it is related to a normalization after the post-pandemic surge, there are signs that entry-level positions are being displaced by artificial intelligence at higher rates.
- Since mid-2023, 85% of the rise in the unemployment rate is concentrated in new market entrants who can't find work. Despite uncertain employment prospects, recent college graduates remain undeterred, as labor force participation rates haven't noticeably declined. This will keep unemployment higher until demand and supply are better aligned.
- Underemployment rates for college graduates and employment in positions that don't require a college degree remain steady, signaling that graduates aren't shifting their job searches. Although permanent layoffs for this cohort have risen, they remain relatively low and in line with the broader labor market, which remains healthy.
- Higher recent college graduate unemployment will add to the Federal Reserve's concerns of a slowing economy, weakening labor market, and accelerating inflation. However, it doesn't warrant a change to our forecast for rates to remain on hold until December.

The post-pandemic labor market has displayed remarkable strength, on balance, but recent college graduates, or those aged 22 to 27 who attained a bachelor's degree or higher (Chart 1), have not fared as well. We estimate this segment accounts for 75ps, or 12% of the GDP rise in the national unemployment rate since mid-2023, contributing more than twice its 5% share of the total labor force.

Chart 1: The new graduate reality



Source: Oxford Economics/SPNS

The persistent rise in the recent graduate unemployment rate toward 6% raises concerns of the strength of the broader labor market. While we do expect the impact of tariffs, higher inflation, and weaker demand to lead to reduced business hiring and outright layoffs in the months ahead, our research shows that the rising unemployment is primarily driven by a hiring slowdown in technology along with increasing college

Matthew Martin - Senior US Economist - mmartin@oxfordeconomics.com

Canaries in the Coal Mine? Six Facts about the Recent Employment Effects of Artificial Intelligence

Erik Brynjolfsson*, Bharat Chandar†, Ruyu Chen‡§¶

November 13, 2025

Abstract

Using high-frequency administrative data from ADP, we document six facts characterizing labor market shifts following the widespread adoption of generative AI. Early-career workers (5) in AI-exposed occupations experienced 16% relative employment declines, controlled for primarily via employment rather than compensation, with employment changes concentrated in occupations where AI automates rather than augments labor. Results are reinforcing technology firms and occupations that are remotable. These six facts provide large-scale evidence consistent with generative AI disproportionately impacting entry-level of the American labor market.

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§David Autor, Sarah Bana, Eric Bergman, Nick Bloom, Cody Cook, Chris Ferman, Joshua Gans, Kristina Langer, Fei-Fei Li, Frank Li, Omesh Mahajan, Jixin Pei, Daniel Rock, Brad Rowe, Phil Wang, and participants at the Stanford Digital Economy Lab workshop for helpful feedback. We thank DP for access to the data and the Stanford Digital Economy Lab for financial support. All errors

are our own. <https://digitaleconomy.stanford.edu/publications/canaries-in-the-coal-mine/>

A silhouette of a signpost with multiple directional arrows against a sunset background. The signpost is a central vertical pole with several horizontal arrows pointing in different directions. The background is a gradient of colors from light blue at the top to dark purple at the bottom, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The text is centered over the signpost.

A CRITICAL JUNCTURE FOR EARLY CAREERS

The Context for Early Careers

Nicki Hay MBE

Board Member, Skills England and Director of Apprenticeship Strategy and Policy, BPP

Gillian Pillans

Research Director, CRF

Emma Pollard

Principal Research Fellow, Institute for Employment Studies

TABLE DISCUSSION QUESTION

INTRODUCE YOURSELVES AND THEN DISCUSS:

What challenges are you facing in achieving the expected outcomes of your early careers programmes?

AGENDA: WEDNESDAY 7th JULY

09.30	Arrival and Registration
10.00	<p>Panel: The Context for Early Careers Nicki Hay MBE, Board Member, Skills England, Director of Apprenticeship Strategy and Policy, BPP</p> <p>Emma Pollard, Principal Research Fellow, Institute for Employment Studies</p> <p>Gillian Pillans, CRF</p>
10.15	Table Discussion
10.35	Research Overview
10.50	What Employers are Reporting . Claire Tyler , Head of Insights, Institute of Student Employers
11.20	Break
11.40	The Expectation Gap . Emma O'Dell , Skills & Capability Director, BPP
12.05	Table Discussion: Supply Problem or Design Problem?
12.25	Research: CRF's Framework for Early Careers
12.40	<p>Fireside Chat: Reassessing the EC Strategy. Nicola Luke, Senior Manager Next Generation Strategy & Programmes, BT</p>
13.00	LUNCH

13.35	Table Discussion: Morning Review
13.45	Early Careers: The Severn Trent Approach . Kellie Emery , New Talent Lead, Severn Trent
14.10	Fireside Chat: Adapting to Changing Skill Demands . Laura Seiler , Talent and Reward Director - EMEAPAC, Norton Rose Fulbright
14.25	<p>Building Future Talent at Keyloop. Michelle Bury, Global Head of Talent Engagement & Development, Keyloop Desarai Govender-Deokumar, Global Learning & Development Manager, Keyloop</p>
14.50	Table Discussion: Your Early Careers Strategy
15.10	<p>Panel: Building Better Routes into Work James Robson, Director, Oxford University Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance (SKOPE), University of Oxford Gillian Pillans Emma Pollard</p>
15.30	Conclusion
15.35	CLOSE

Research Overview

Gillian Pillans

Research Director, CRF

COOLING NOT COLLAPSING

55% ↑ 23% → 19% ↓

EARLY CAREERS REMAINS A STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

Build a sustainable pipeline of future talent

Develop future leaders

Improve overall workforce diversity and inclusion

Fill immediate entry level or junior roles

Make effective use of apprenticeship levy or other funding

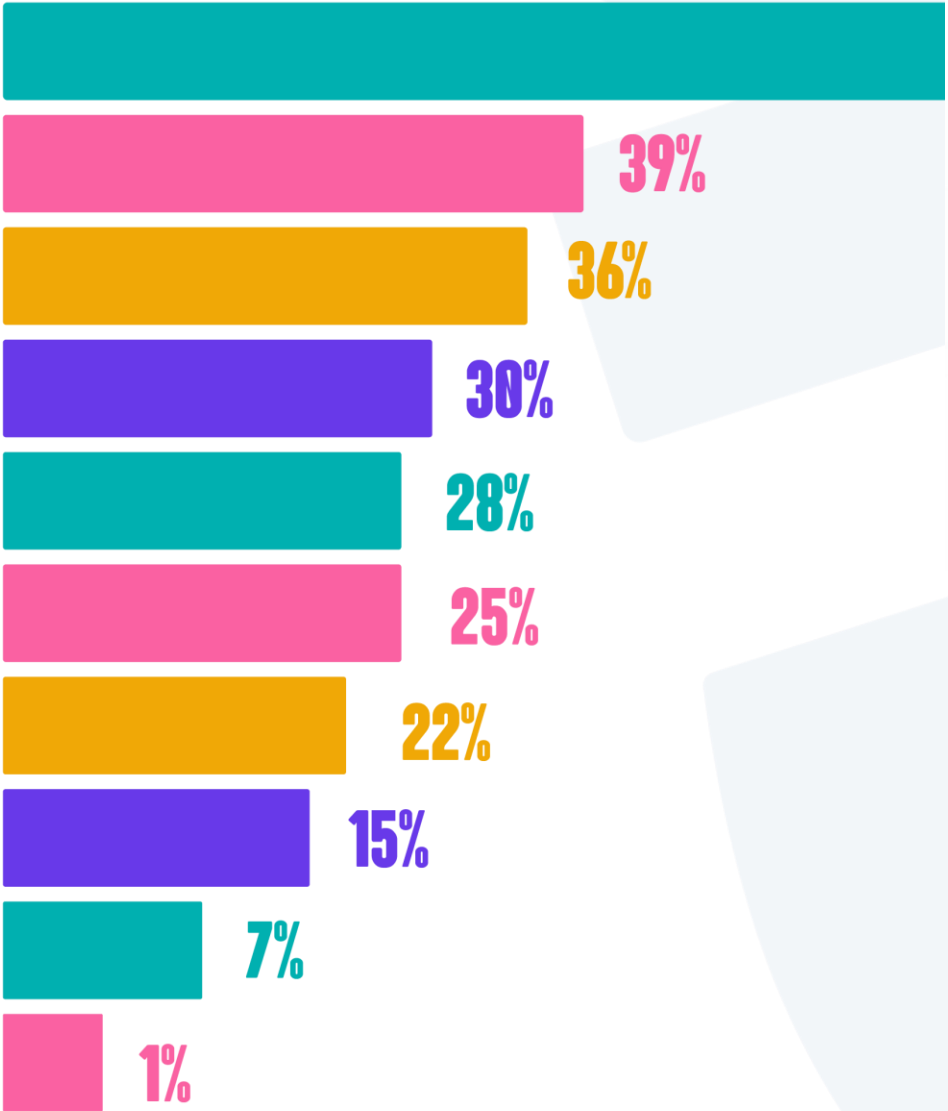
Achieve value for money by building talent internally rather than hiring externally

Support social mobility or community impact goals

Respond to specific skills shortages

Meet regulatory or policy requirements

Other (please specify)



70%

Build a sustainable pipeline of future talent

30%

Fill immediate entry-level or junior roles

HOW IS AI RESHAPING EARLY CAREERS?

How AI is changing work

74% Skills required are changing

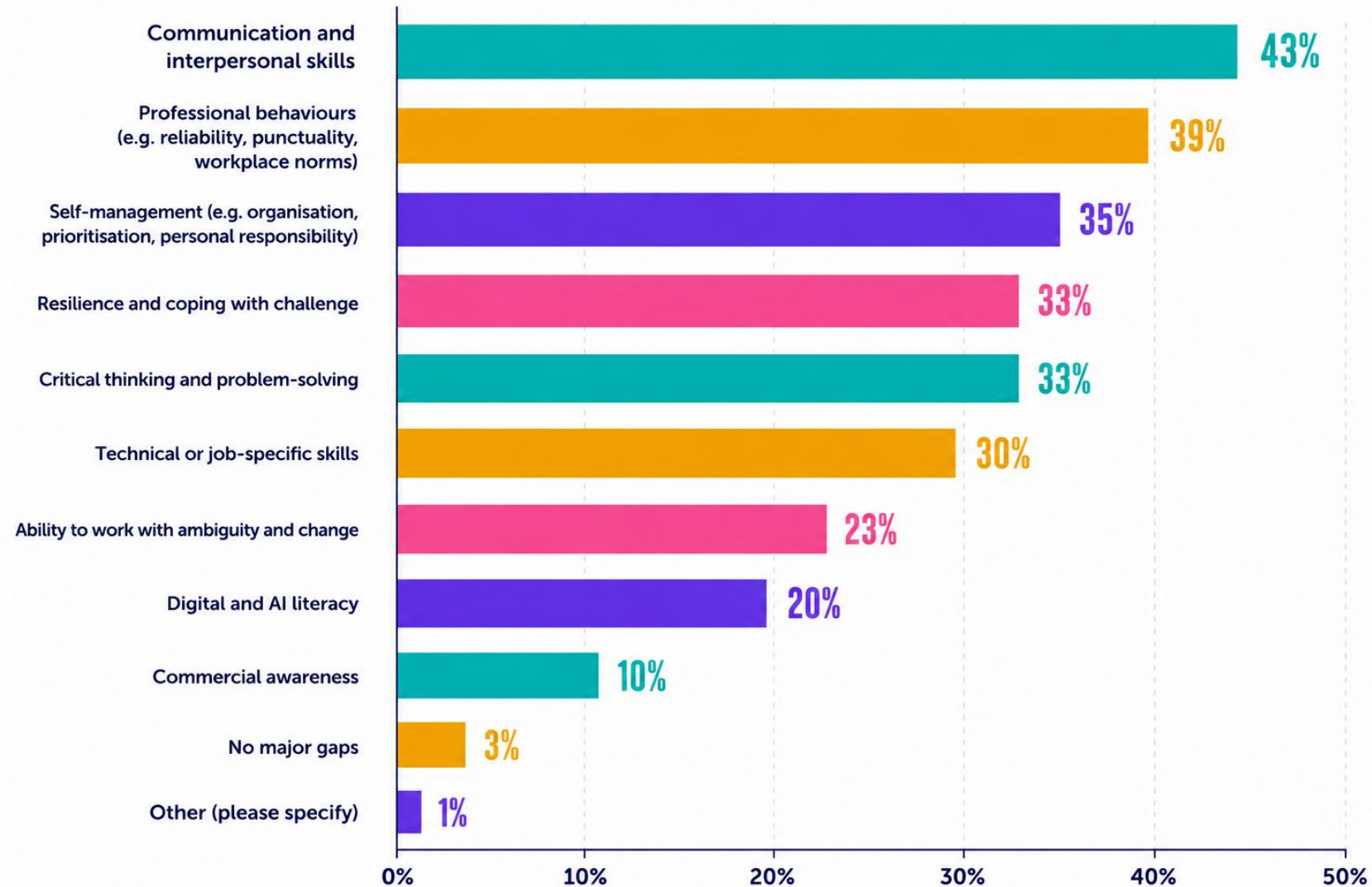
63% Routine learning opportunities are reducing

How employers are responding

64% Redesigning early careers roles

32% Expect no significant change

EMPLOYERS HAVING TO DO MORE TO SUPPORT THE TRANSITION TO WORK



EMPLOYERS HAVING TO DO MORE TO SUPPORT THE TRANSITION TO WORK

15%

Very well prepared

37%

Somewhat prepared

26%

Young people
accessed work
experience in the
last 12 months

(2025 Youth Voice Census)

BRIDGING THE PRE-EMPLOYMENT GAP

“If employers are not creating work experience or introducing young people to the world of work, who do they think are?”

Laura-Jane Rawlings, CEO,
Youth Employment UK

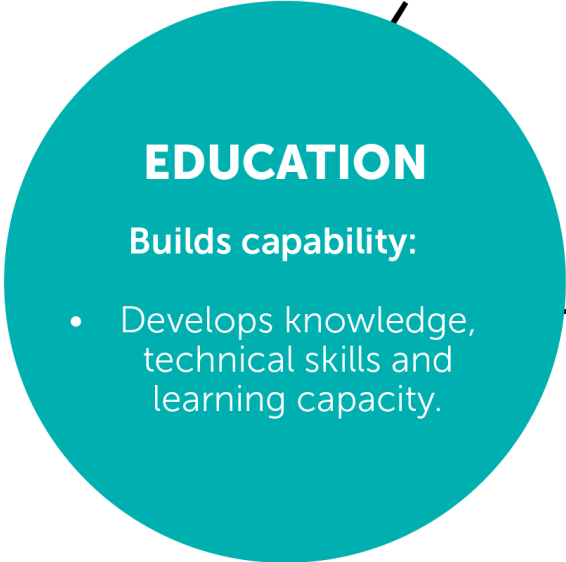
CONNECTING LEARNING WITH WORK

Education develops knowledge and technical capability, while employers provide the experience and workplace context that transform learning into work-ready capability.



CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR INVESTMENT

Government creates the conditions for employer investment, while employers provide the workplace needed to shape skills policy and workforce planning.



FUTURE WORKFORCE CAPABILITY



EMPLOYERS CANNOT SOLVE THIS ALONE

BUILDING CAPABILITY

Government creates the policy, funding and regulatory framework that enables education to develop the knowledge, skills and qualifications needed for future workforce capability.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Treat the early careers system as something to influence, not just navigate
- Use the collective voice where individual employer influence is limited
- Widen access to work experience
- Build two-way partnership with education providers around experience as well as curriculum

THE ASSUMPTIONS THAT UNDERPIN EARLY CAREERS ARE CHANGING

EMPLOYERS NEED TO BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT:

- The capabilities they are building
- The pathways they are designing to deliver them
- The support they provide for young people to develop them
- The outcomes they measure

Early Career Trends Employer Insights

Claire Tyler

Head of Insights, Institute of Student Employers

Early Careers Trends

Employer Insights



The headlines

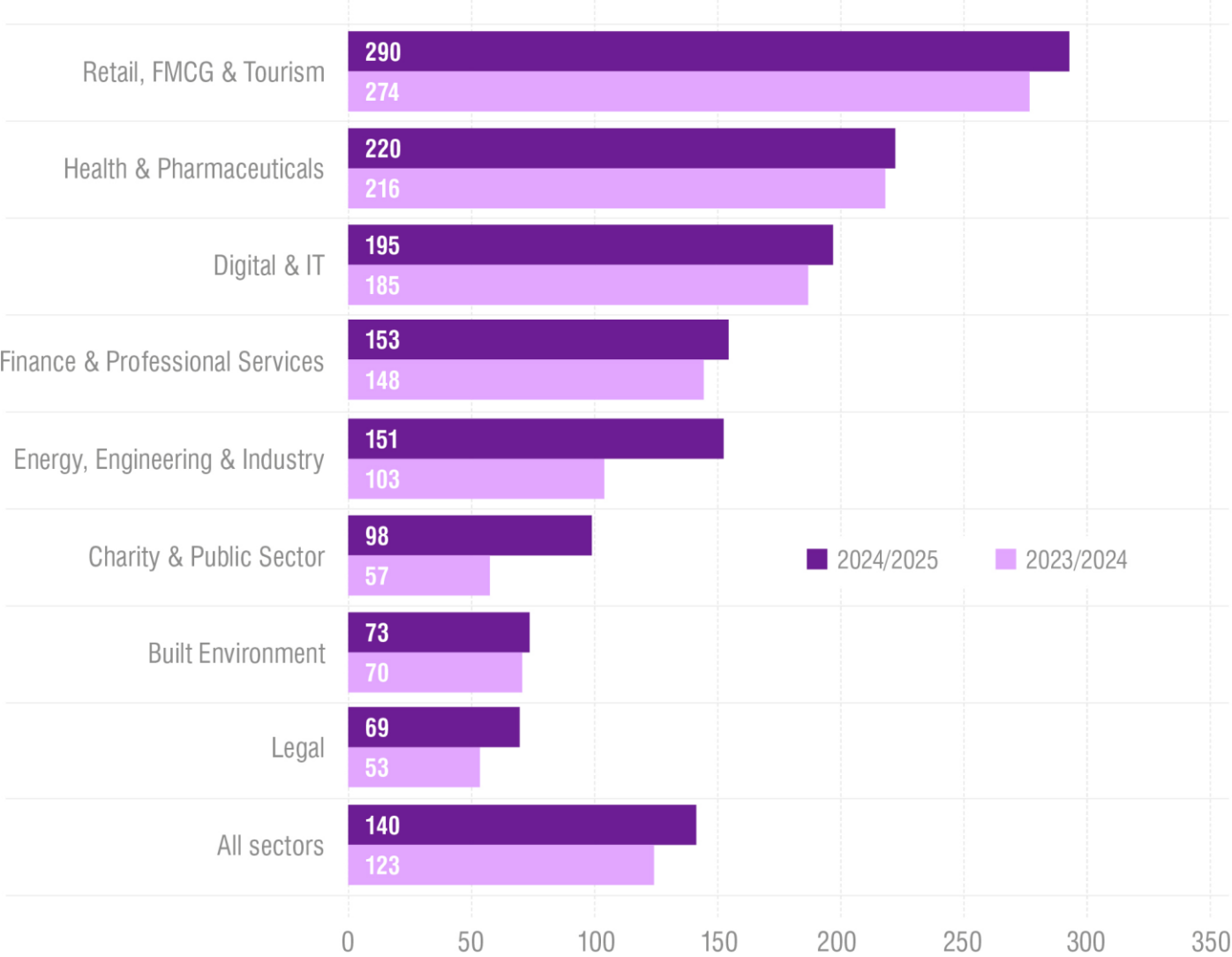
- Competition for early careers roles is at an **all-time high**
- AI is beginning to **reshape** early career roles and skill requirements
- Concerns about **candidate quality and readiness** are growing
- Development programmes remain **hybrid** but are shifting back towards **more time in the office** and face-to-face learning
- **Rising wellbeing needs** are shaping support strategies



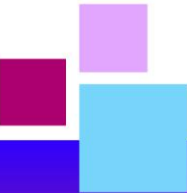
Competition for
early careers roles
is at an **all time high**



Graduate applications per vacancy

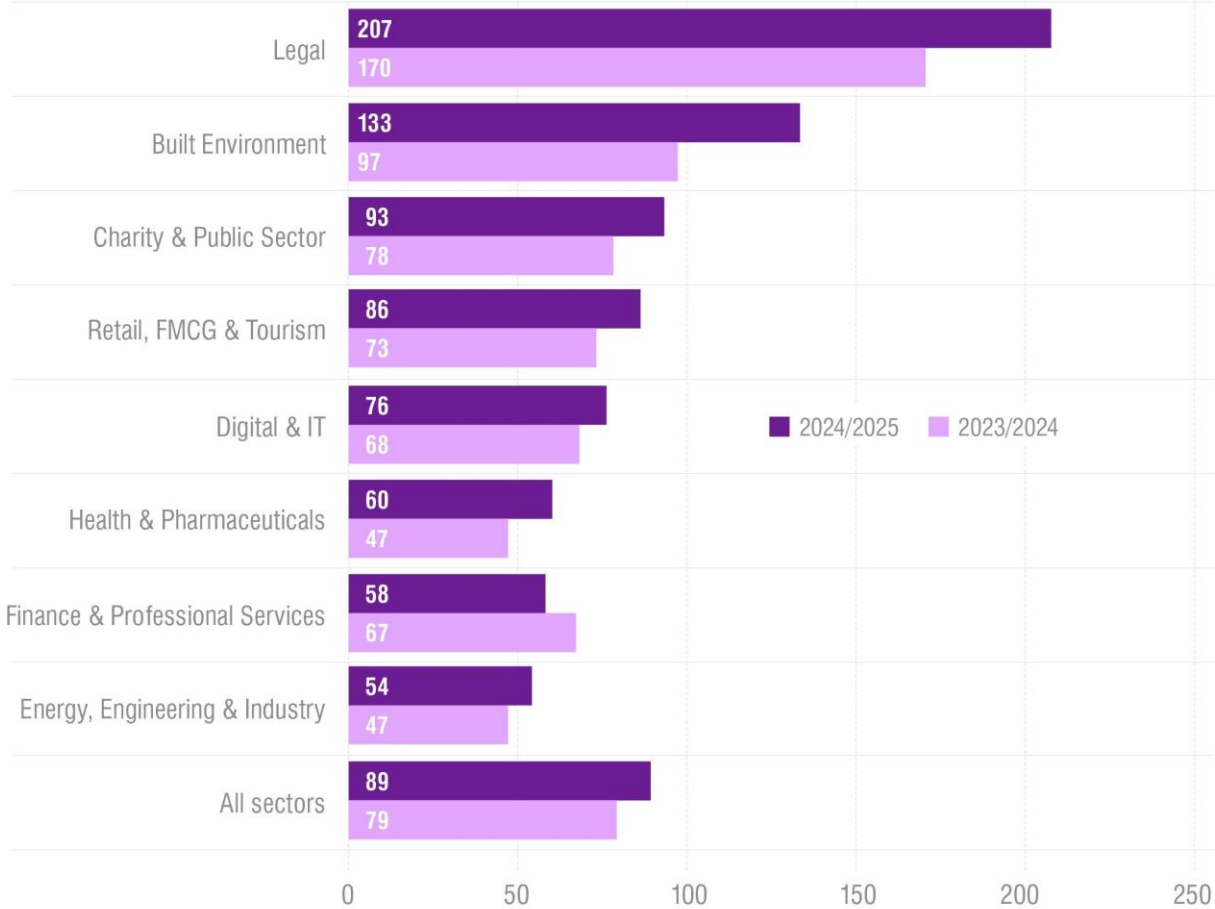


- Headline rate is at a record high of 140 applications per vacancy
- Like for like data from employers showed a 14% increase year-on-year (123 to 140)
- Graduate vacancies down 8% in 2025



School & college leaver applications per vacancy

- Employers averaged 89 applications per vacancy
- A **13% increase** compared to last year
- 40% of employers reported an increase in graduates applying for school and college leaver roles
- School and college leaver vacancies up 8% in 2025
- Apprentices playing a bigger role over time: 1.8 graduates to every apprentice hired in 2025, down from 2.3 in 2024 (amongst employers who hire both routes)



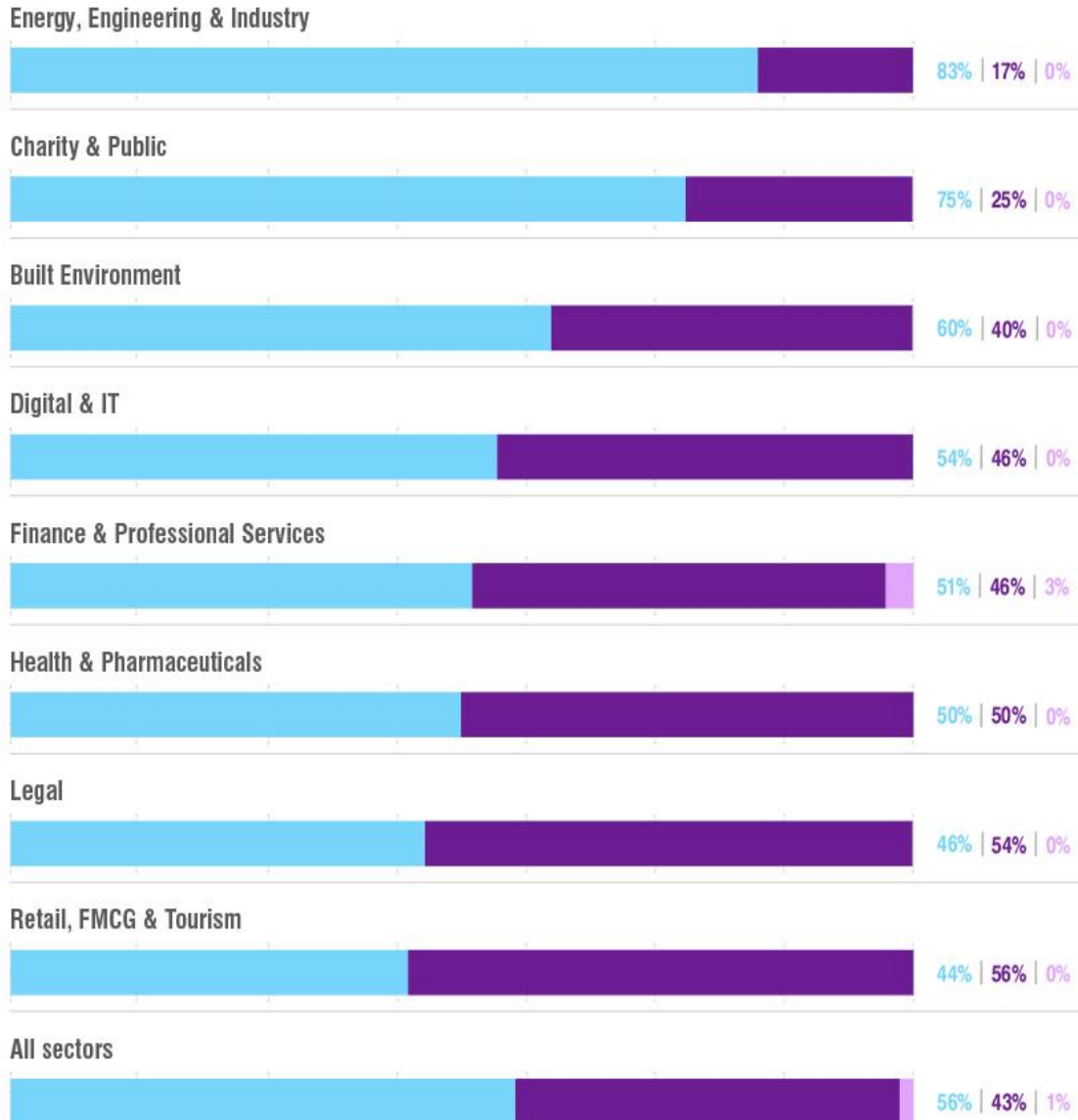
AI is beginning to reshape early career roles and skill requirements

54%

of employers are concerned about the future impact of automation and AI on new hires



Current impact of AI adoption on the tasks and responsibilities of entry-level roles
(121 respondents)

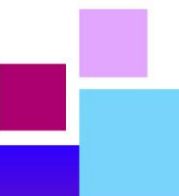


Roles are already changing due to AI

- 56% report **no changes** yet
- 43% of employers say roles have already **informally adapted** to AI

■ No changes yet
 ■ Yes - informal task evolution (roles adapted but not formally redesigned)

■ Yes - formal role redesign completed (job descriptions rewritten)



Expected changes to entry-level roles (next 3 years)



87%

of employers expect
some change to
entry level tasks and
responsibilities
due to AI

- 58% expect **minor** changes to entry level tasks and responsibilities in next three years
- 29% expect **significant** changes
 - Highest in:
 - Retail, FMCG and tourism (56%)
 - Legal (41%)
- 13% expect **no** changes
 - Highest in:
 - Built environment (30%)
 - Energy, Engineering & Industry (28%)



Proportion replaced or reshaped (next 3 years)

82%

of employers expect
no or a few (1-10%)
entry level jobs to
be replaced by AI

72%

of employers expect
fewer than a quarter
of entry level jobs to
be reshaped by AI



AI impact on skills

Which skills will become less important?

- 1 Routine administrative and clerical tasks
- 2 Basic research and information gathering
- 3 Manual data processing and basic analytical tasks
- 4 Drafting written content
- 5 Routine technical tasks, such as basic coding and script-based work

Which skills will become more important?

- 1 Critical thinking and judgement
- 2 AI literacy and the ability to work with AI tools
- 3 Communication and interpersonal skills
- 4 Adaptability, curiosity and continuous learning
- 5 Ethical awareness and governance



of employers rated graduates as below expectations for adaptability



Concerns about candidate quality and readiness are growing

42%

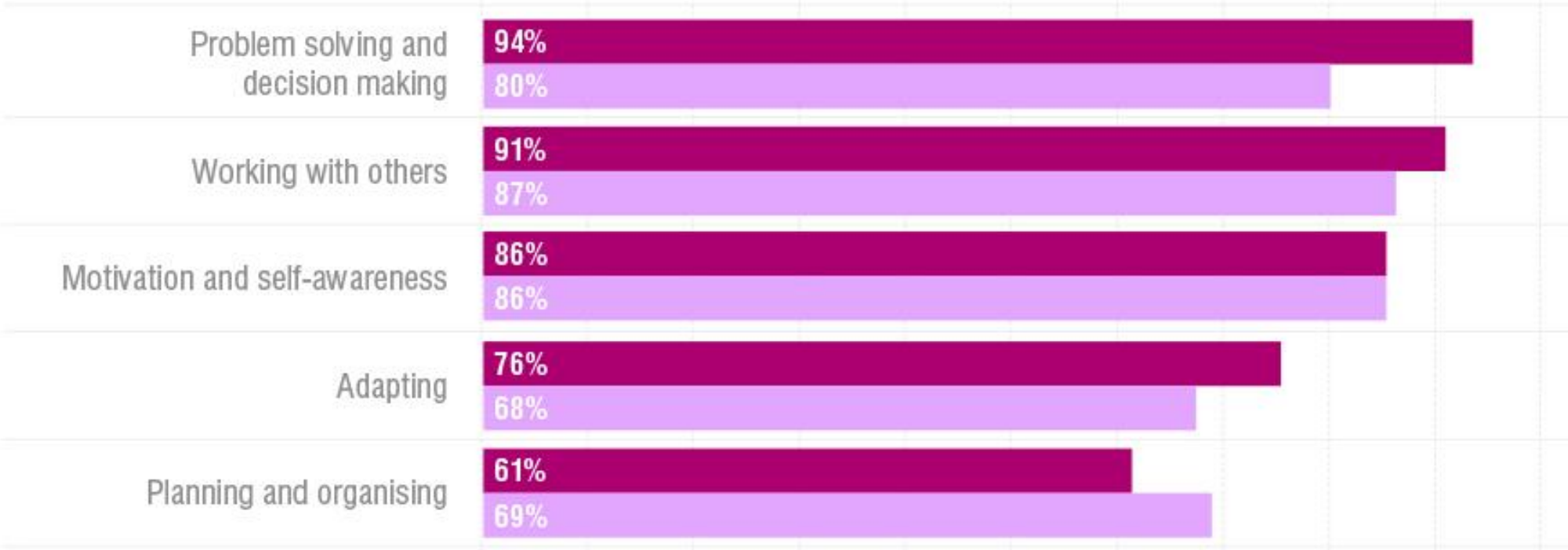
of employers are concerned about the quality of candidates in future



Which skills are employers recruiting for?

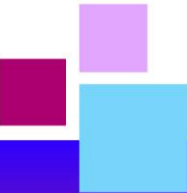
The proportion of respondents recruiting for different skills during the hiring process
(127 respondents for graduates; 97 respondents for school and college leavers)

■ Graduates
■ School and college leavers



67%

of employers are concerned that graduates use AI to misrepresent their abilities during recruitment



Adaptability is the largest readiness gap



of employers rated graduates as below expectations for adaptability

Graduates

- 35%** Adapting
- 32%** Motivation and self-awareness
- 32%** Awareness of wider context

School & college leavers

- 31%** Adapting
- 23%** Planning and organising
- 21%** Awareness of wider context



What is the most increased induction topic?

Changes in time allocated to early career induction topics

(129 respondents)

Professional conduct (transferring from education to the workplace)



Core transferable skills



Mental health and wellbeing



Organisation and sector information



Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)



Technical and analytical skills



of employers have increased the focus on professional conduct in inductions this year

- Increased
- About the same
- Decrease
- Did not cover this topic



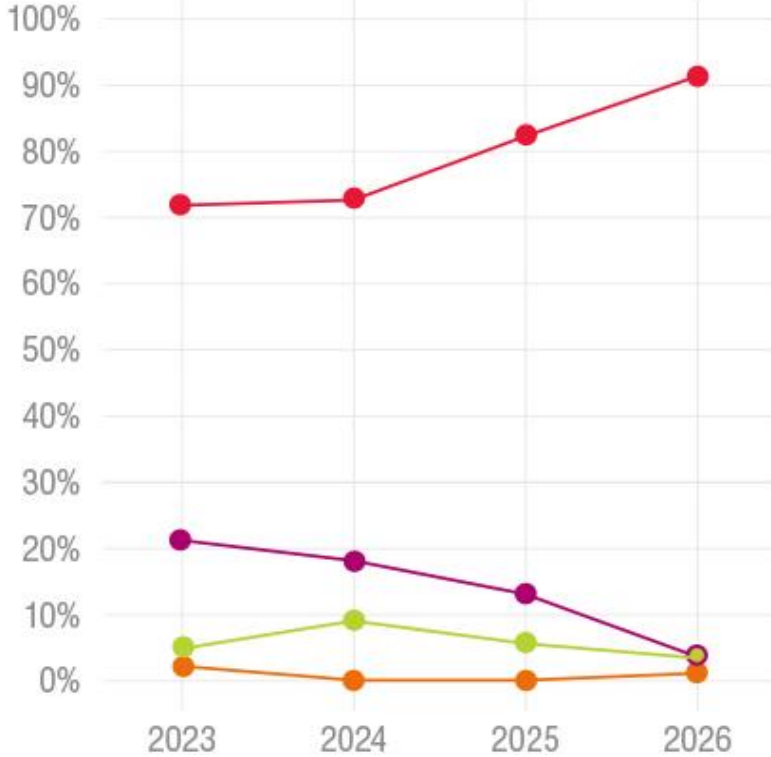
Development programmes remain hybrid but are shifting back towards more time in the office and face-to-face learning

19%

of employers are concerned about the future engagement and motivation of new hires



Graduates



	2023	2024	2025	2026
● Fully office/site based	5%	9%	6%	4%
● 1 or 2 days at home	72%	73%	82%	91%
● 3 or 4 days at home	21%	18%	13%	4%
● Fully home based	2%	0%	0%	1%

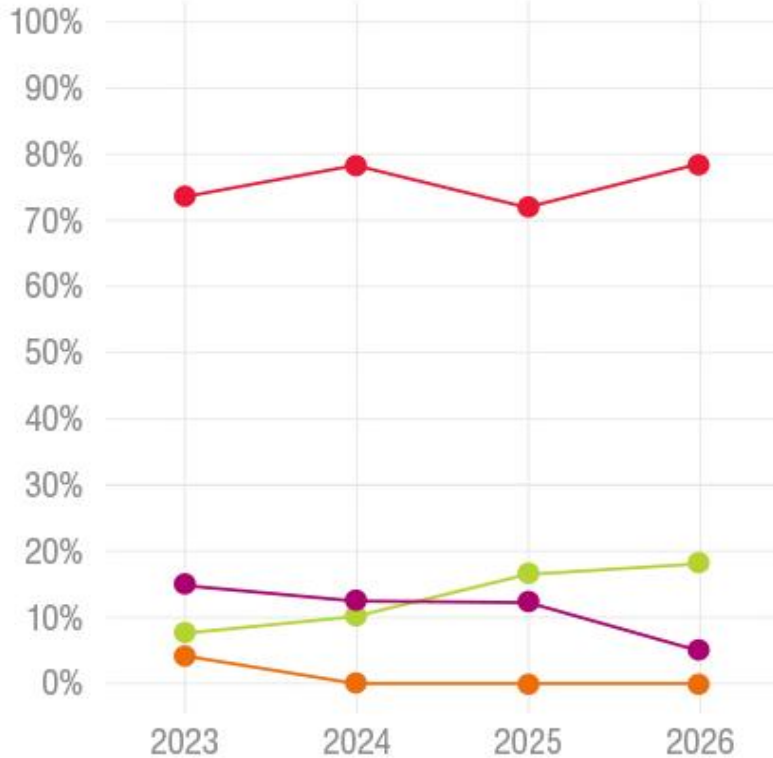
Hybrid working is shifting towards fewer days at home

Graduates

- 91% are working at home 1-2 days/week
 - Up from 72% in 2023
- 4% are working at home 3-4 days/week
 - Down from 21% in 2023



School and college leavers

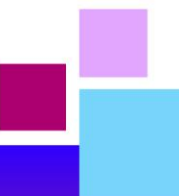


	2023	2024	2025	2026
Fully office/site based	8%	10%	16%	18%
1 or 2 days at home	74%	78%	72%	78%
3 or 4 days at home	15%	12%	12%	5%
Fully home based	4%	0%	0%	0%

Hybrid working is shifting towards fewer days at home

School and college leavers

- 78% are working at home 1-2 days/week
 - Up from 74% in 2023
- 18% are fully office/site based
 - Up from 8% in 2023
- 5% are working at home 3-4 days/week
 - Down from 15% in 2023



Continued shift towards face-to-face learning

Balance of delivery time

65% Face to face
25% Online
10% Coaching / mentoring

Over one-third of employers said new hires were more willing to attend the office or in-person training this year

Highest quality development approach

72% Face to face
(up from **47%** in 2024 and **67%** in 2025)

Time split on development programmes

77% On-the-job **23%** Structured learning



Classroom learning has increased in focus

Over
90%

of employers
use online or
classroom
learning for the
development of
new hires

8%

of employers find online
learning impactful
(down from 18% in 2022)

60%

of employers find
classroom learning
impactful
(up from 34% in 2022)



Rising wellbeing needs are shaping support strategies

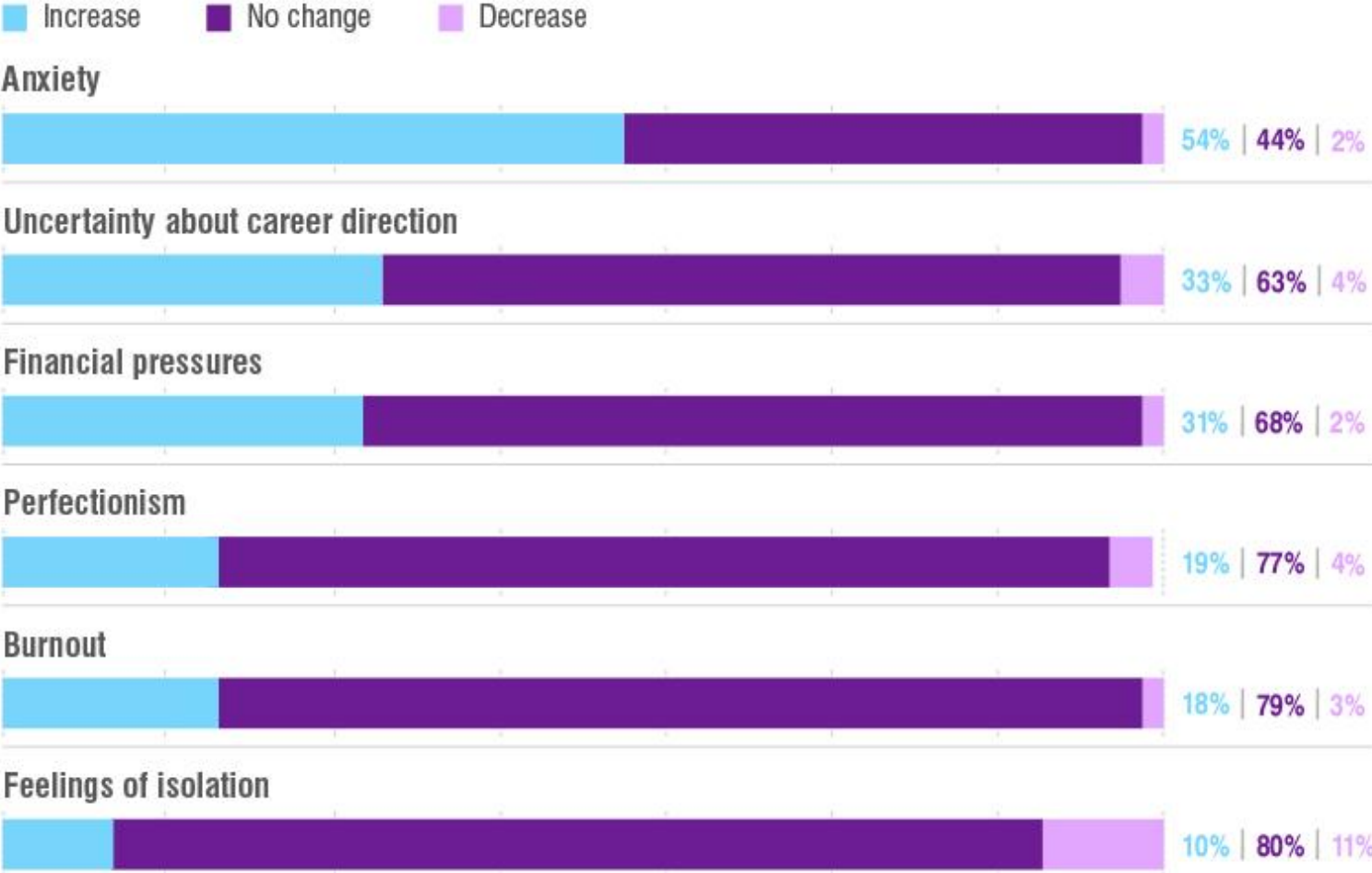
38%

of employers are concerned about future retention and manager capability to support new hires

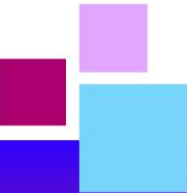


Mental health issues are increasing

Employer perceptions of changes in mental health and wellbeing challenges among new graduate hires (124 respondents)

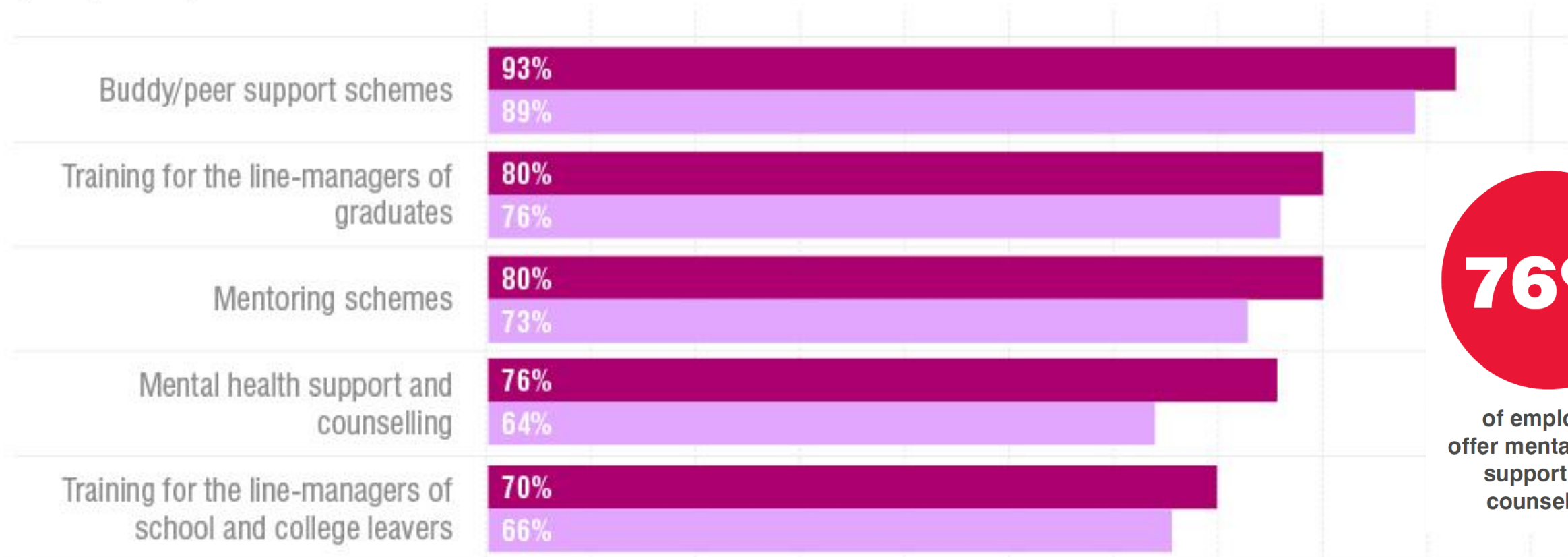


- **Half** of employers report increased anxiety amongst new hires
- A **third** report increased career uncertainty and financial pressures
- A **fifth** report increased perfectionism and burnout



Support for new hires

Support of early career hires (120 respondents) ■ Provided in 2025 ■ Found this effective



76%

of employers offer mental health support and counselling

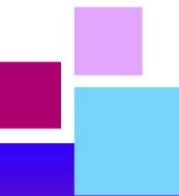


Final thoughts

- Early careers remains a critical talent pipeline - AI is changing *what* early career hires do, rather than *whether* they are hired.
- Adaptability, self-awareness, motivation and workplace readiness are now essential for success in an ever-changing world.
- More impactful in-person delivery is being prioritised to strengthen supervision, collaboration, workplace behaviours and support mental health and wellbeing challenges where they arise.







CRF Update

Melissa Bull

Commercial Director, CRF

Prof. Rob Briner

Associate Research Director, CRF

CRF'S INTEGRATED LEARNING OFFERING

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SELECTION DECISIONS**

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THE AI ERA**

**BEYOND VALUE STATEMENTS:
CREATING A HIGH-
PERFORMANCE CULTURE**

**COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN A
CHANGING WORLD**

**DRIVING PERFORMANCE
THROUGH TALENT**

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2025

**MOTIVATION AND
WORK
PERFORMANCE**

ASSESSING POTENTIAL

**BHAVIOUR CHANGE IN
ORGANISATIONS**

2026

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PERFORMANCE AT
WORK**

**UNDERSTANDING TEAMS
AND TEAM
EFFECTIVENESS**

**FEEDBACK AND WORK
PERFORMANCE**

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**PSYCHOLOGICAL
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LEARNING
INTERVENTIONS**

**ASSESSING JOB
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LEARNING OPEN PROGRAMME FUTURE-READY TALENT MANAGEMENT: ADAPTING APPROACHES TO A NEW REALITY

 17th – 19th November 2026  Online

The talent context has changed. Has your approach kept up?

Future-Ready Talent Management equips leaders to rethink talent strategy for a more volatile, cost-conscious and AI-enabled world. Through CRF research, case studies, expert input and peer discussion, participants will explore how to build more adaptive, business-aligned approaches to talent that improve outcomes for both people and the organisation.



Programme Leader
Professor Nick Kemsley

Who Should Attend?

Heads of Talent, Talent Partners, Talent Consultants, Senior HR Business Partners and senior generalists with a talent interest.

If you are working at talent strategy level, are actively involved with talent, and/or interact with senior business stakeholders across more than one people process area, this programme will inform, challenge and develop your talent thinking and practice.

Find out more about the programme
by scanning the QR code here





COFFEE BREAK – RETURN FOR 11.40

EARLY CAREERS AND SKILLS

EQUIPPING THE WORKFORCE FOR WHAT'S NEXT

The Expectation Gap

Emma O'Dell

Skills & Capability Director, BPP

The Expectation Gap:

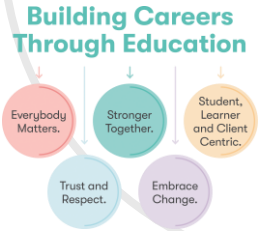
What it is, what it isn't, and why it matters



Emma O'Dell,
Skills & Capability Director, BPP

There are three forces, connected through one system.

The ISE data shows the trends. This shows how they interact. AI adoption, skills demand, and early careers are not separate problems.

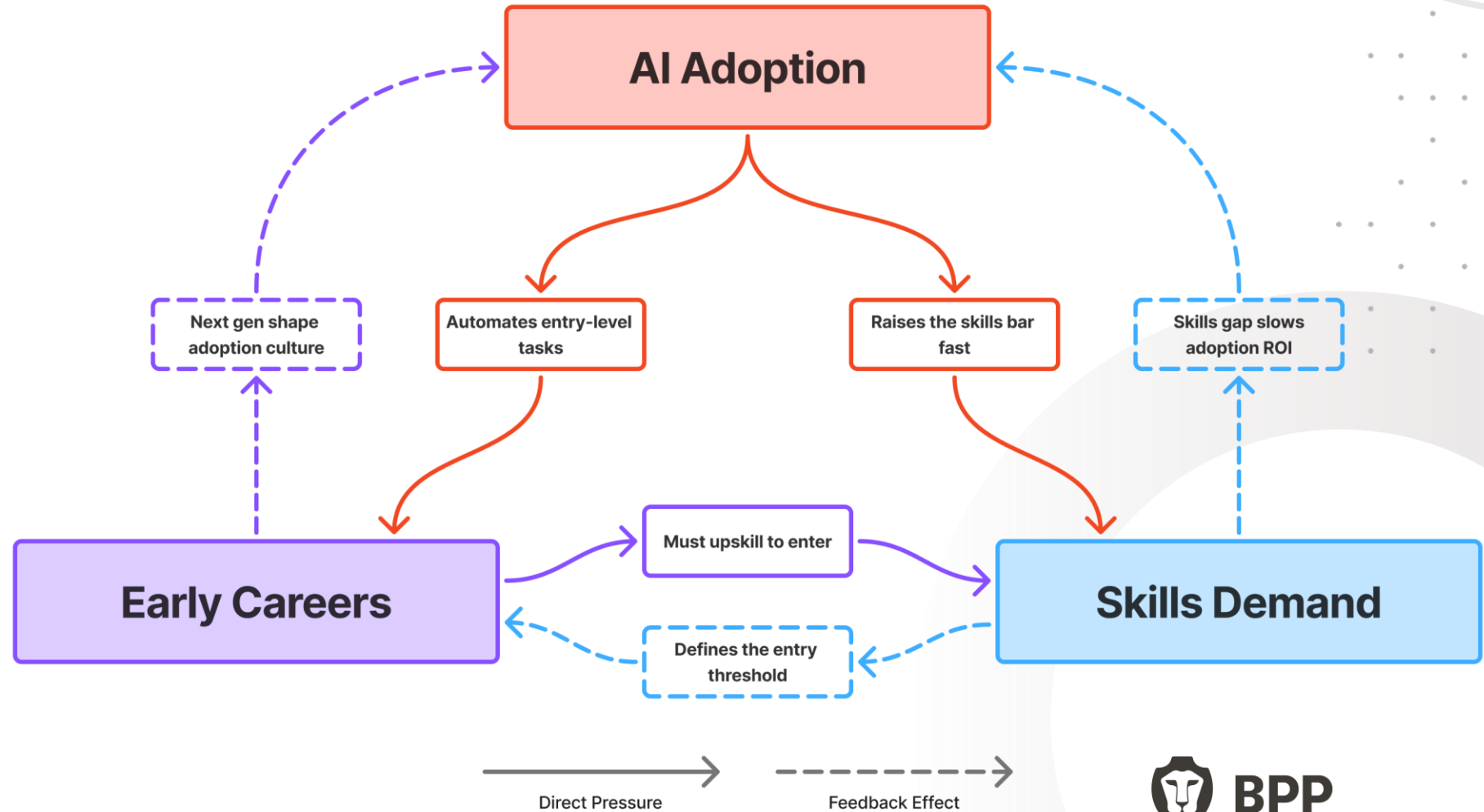


AI is **changing tasks and number** of entry level roles

Which **changes the skills** needed for higher order tasks

That **impacts the threshold** for early career entrants to upskill and enter the workplace

Which influences how successfully **AI is adopted**



AI adoption is raising the value of human capability.

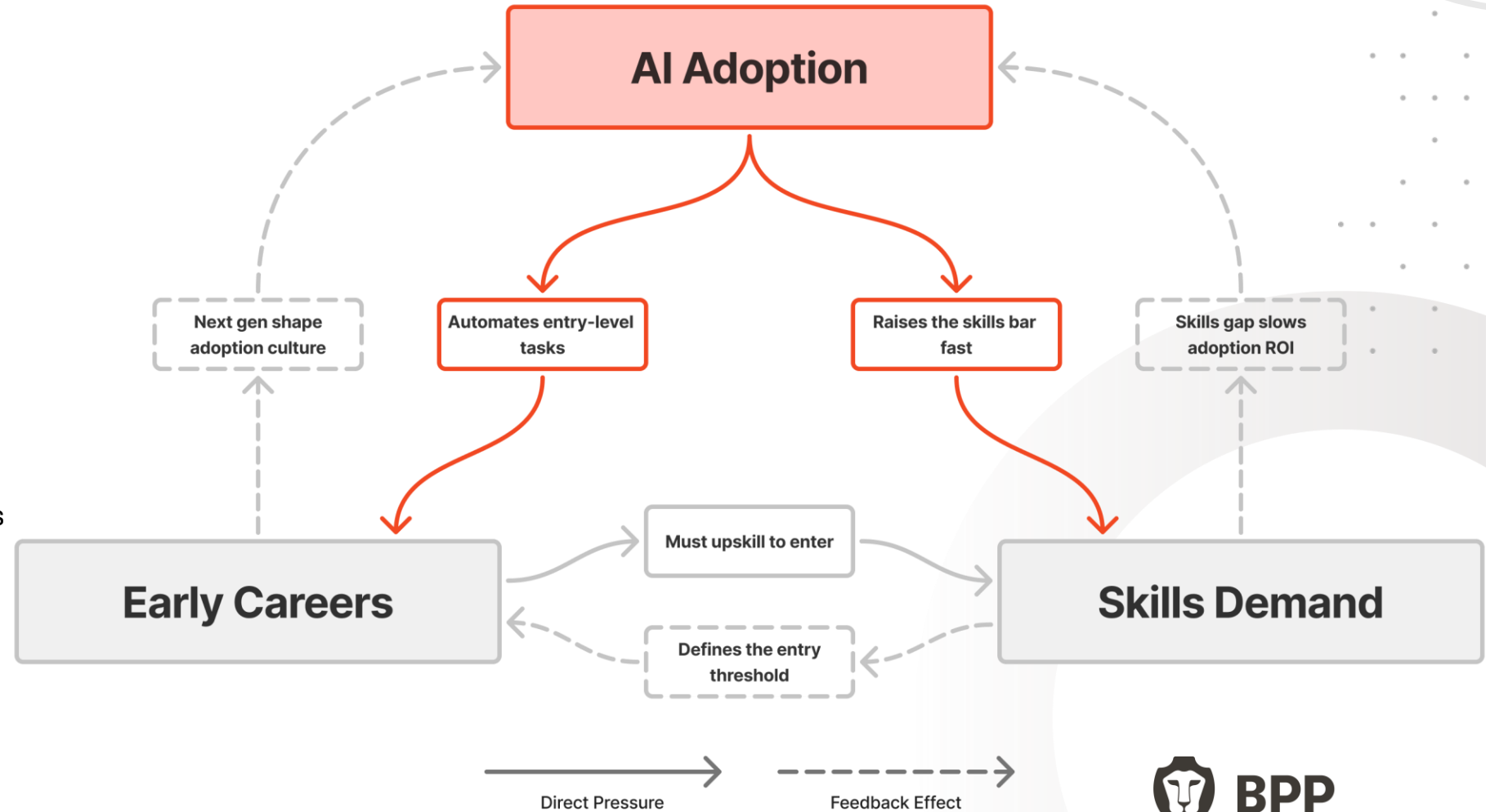
AI is causing a "seniorisation" of work.

Routine tasks are increasingly **automated**

Greater value is placed on **judgement, problem solving and communication**

22-year-olds are being expected to demonstrate **skills once developed later in a career**

Wage premium for AI-capable workers hit **34% (up 11%)** in 2025



Building Careers Through Education



And the pipeline of work ready candidates is narrowing.

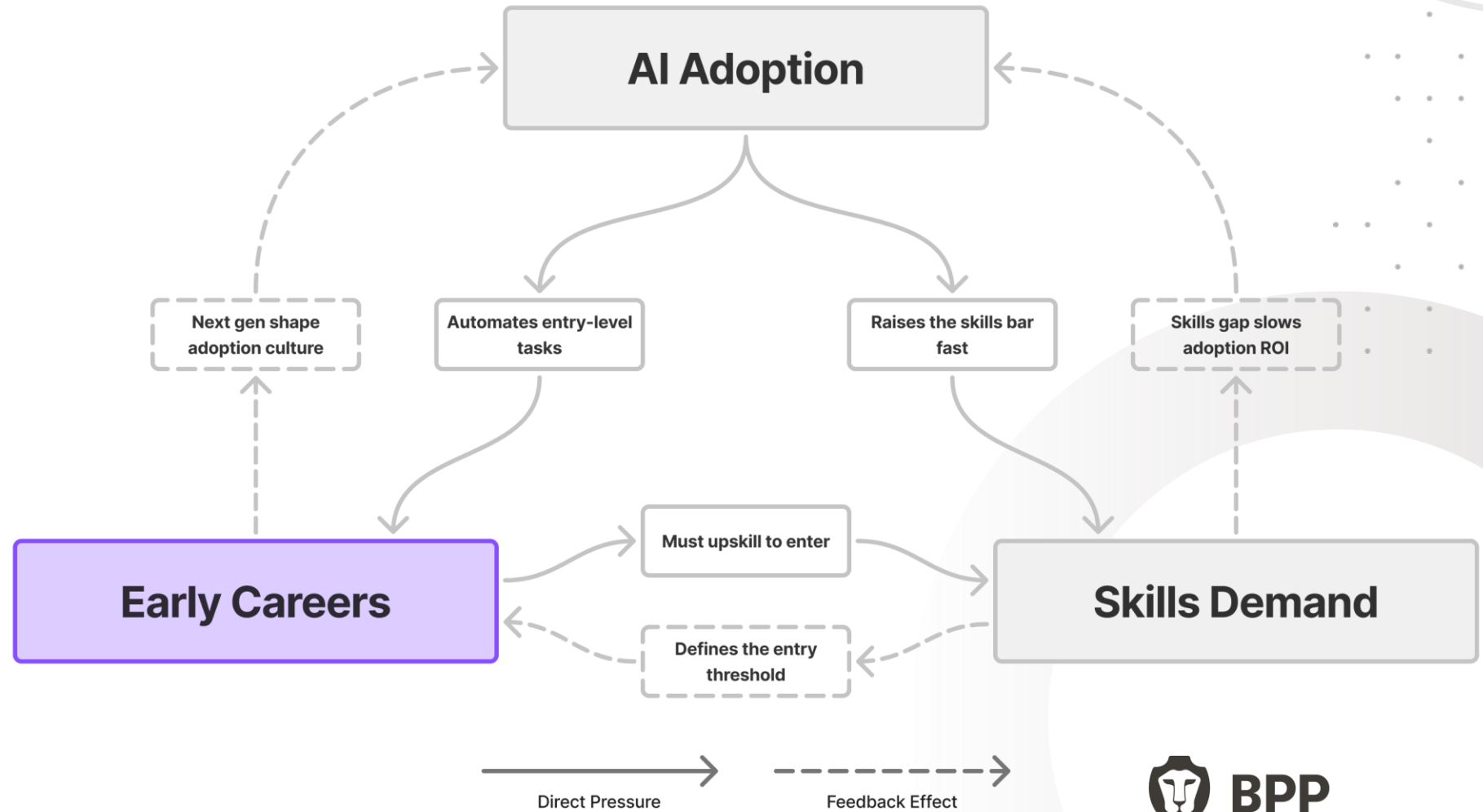
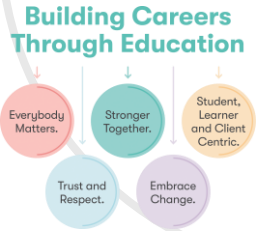
Young people are being asked to arrive more ready than any previous generation, for a set of roles that used to be where readiness was built.

19% of 16-to-17-year-olds are in part-time paid work today, down from 35% in 2006 (Young People and Work 2026)

40% decline in apprenticeship starts for young people over the past decade

Level 2 starts fell by **68%** (Young People and Work 2026)

62% of NEET young people have never had a paid job (Young People and Work 2026)



The national workforce pipeline is also over claimed.

Workforce plans are competing for the same finite talent pool.

1.8 million additional workers needed by 2035

24% growth across priority sectors

Shared priority occupations

Supply constraints

Education pipeline insufficient

Priority Sector	Expansion Demand	Expansion %	Priority Occupations	Shared Priority Occupations
Construction	493,000	26%	30	19
Creative Industries	416,000	27%	30	15
Digital & Technologies	239,000	27%	30	25
Prof & Business Services	116,000	9%	20	14
Adult Social Care	281,000	28%	5	0
Health	—	—	26	1
Financial Services	130,000	22%	10	6
Advanced Manufacturing	47,000	13%	25	19
Life Sciences	66,000	44%	31	28
Clean Energy	63,000	71%	31	28
Defence	53,000	58%	14	12

Building Careers Through Education



At the intersection of all of these...

...is an “**expectations gap**”:

A growing distance between employer expectations and the system's ability to develop people who can meet them.

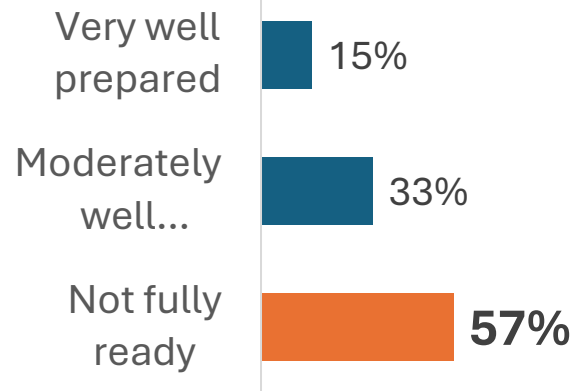
Building Careers Through Education



41%
believe

“The UK education system is preparing young talent well for the realities of today's workplace”

Most early career hires are not fully job ready



Skills gaps are now constraining hiring

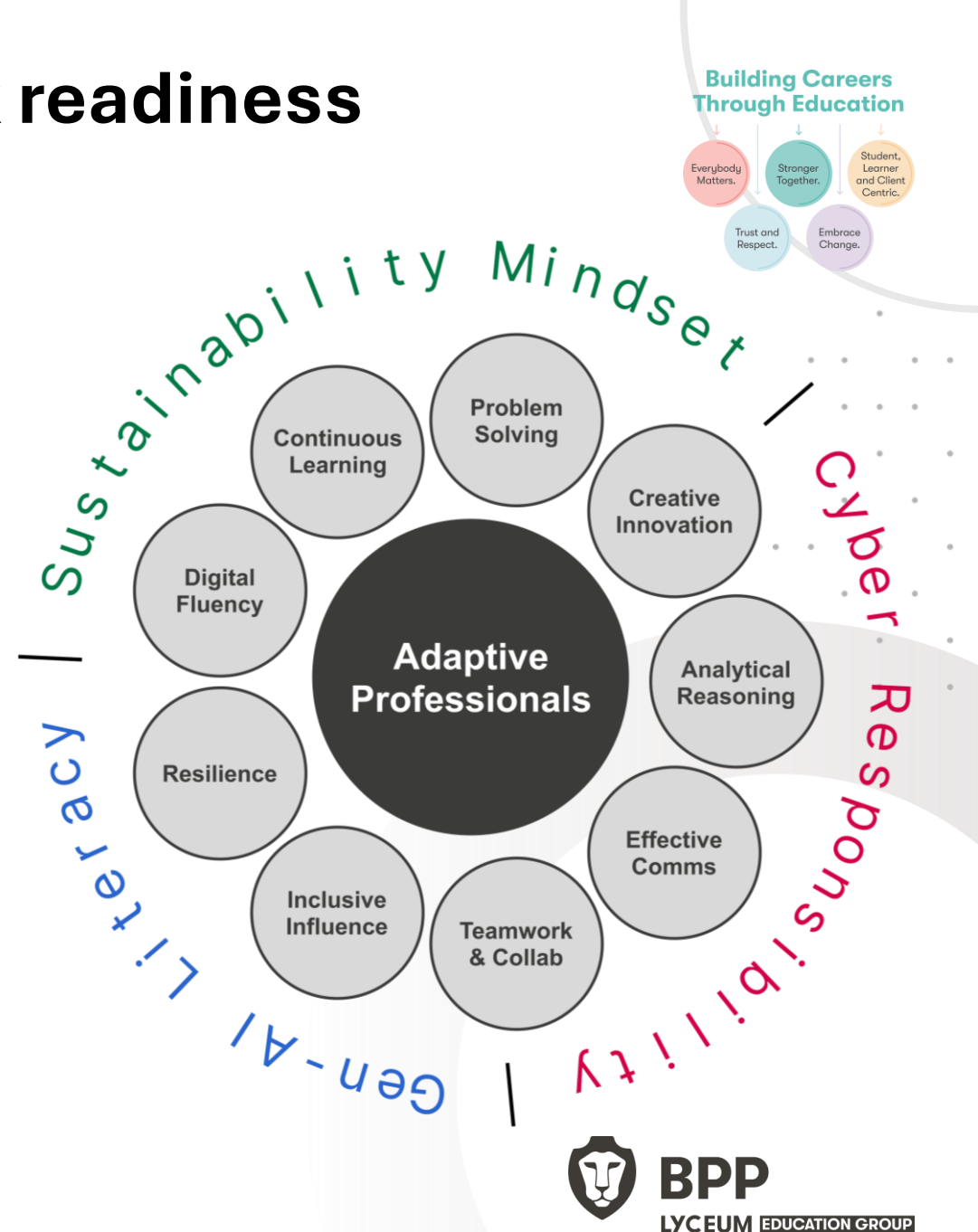
32%
say skills/readiness is a major barrier to expansion

So, organisations need to build work readiness more deliberately.

Adaptability is the biggest readiness gap.

9 core skills:

- **Problem Solving:** Navigate complex challenges with structured thinking
- **Creative Innovation:** Generate novel solutions and approaches
- **Analytical Reasoning:** Make sense of data and complexity
- **Effective Communication:** Influence, inform, and engage across contexts
- **Teamwork & Collaboration:** Work productively across boundaries
- **Inclusive Influence:** Build coalitions and bring diverse voices forward
- **Resilience & Adaptability:** Thrive through uncertainty and change
- **Digital Fluency:** Leverage technology effectively and responsibly
- **Continuous Learning:** Evolve capabilities constantly and systematically



Work readiness skills impact how AI will be applied.

The organisations that get the most value from AI will be those that develop the human skills needed to apply it with judgement, responsibility and commercial sense.

Building Careers
Through Education



Problem Solving

Framing the right questions for AI to help solve

Creative Innovation

Turning AI generated ideas into business value

Analytical Reasoning

Validating AI insights with context and judgement

Effective Communication

Translating AI outputs into action and influence

Teamwork & Collaboration

Building trust and relationships that AI cannot

Inclusive Influence

Ensuring AI works fairly for diverse groups

Resilience

Thriving as technology and roles evolve

Digital Fluency

Working effectively alongside AI and emerging technologies

Continuous Learning

Keeping skills current in a tech-changing world

Sustainability Mindset

Applying AI responsibly for long term value

Cyber Responsibility

Using AI securely, ethically and safely

Systems Thinking

Seeing connections across complex interconnected environments.



Employers need to create a pathways ecosystem.

Connect pathways across the whole talent lifecycle

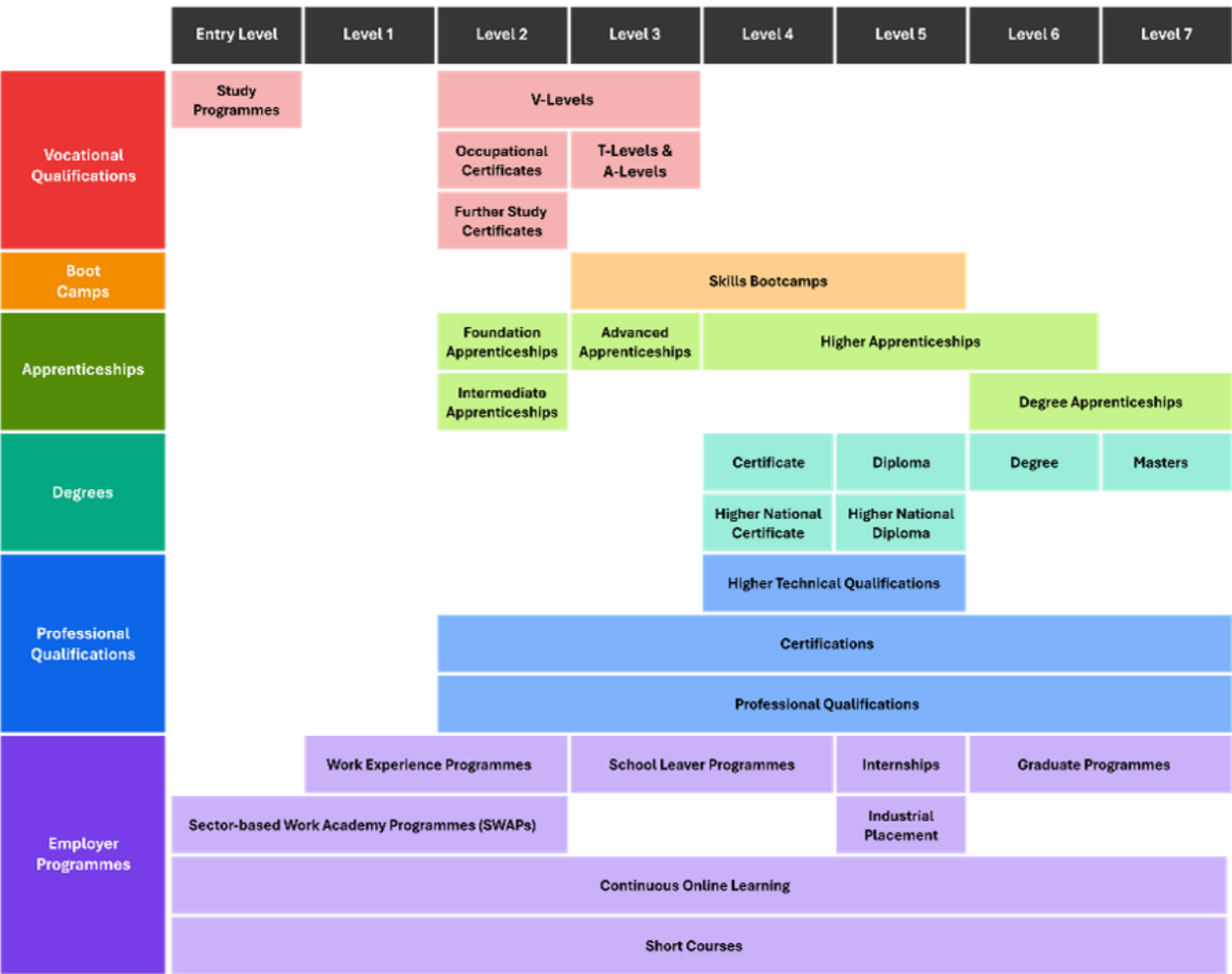
Established **education** routes

Direct **hiring** routes

Pre-hire pathways

Post-entry development routes

Relying on a single pathway is both a **pipeline and equity risk**



Developing adaptive professionals through multiple pathways has its benefits.

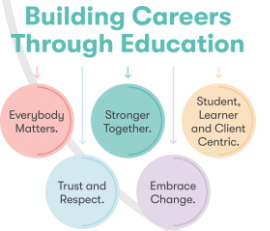
This creates entry routes, develops people with broader experiences who can learn, adapt and create value across different contexts.



INNOVATION CATALYSTS	BRIDGE BUILDERS	CHANGE NAVIGATORS	LEARNING ADVOCATES
<p>Fresh perspectives from diverse experiences</p> <p><i>Cross-pollinate ideas between domains</i></p>	<p>Translate between functions and teams</p> <p><i>Enable cross-functional collaboration</i></p>	<p>Resilient through transitions</p> <p><i>Guide others through uncertainty</i></p>	<p>Embody continuous development</p> <p><i>Model growth mindset behaviours</i></p>



AI, skills and early careers are part of a self reinforcing system.



Feedback effects make the challenge harder to solve over time.

Skills Demand → Early Careers:

Higher expectations raise the entry threshold and narrow pathways

Early Careers → AI

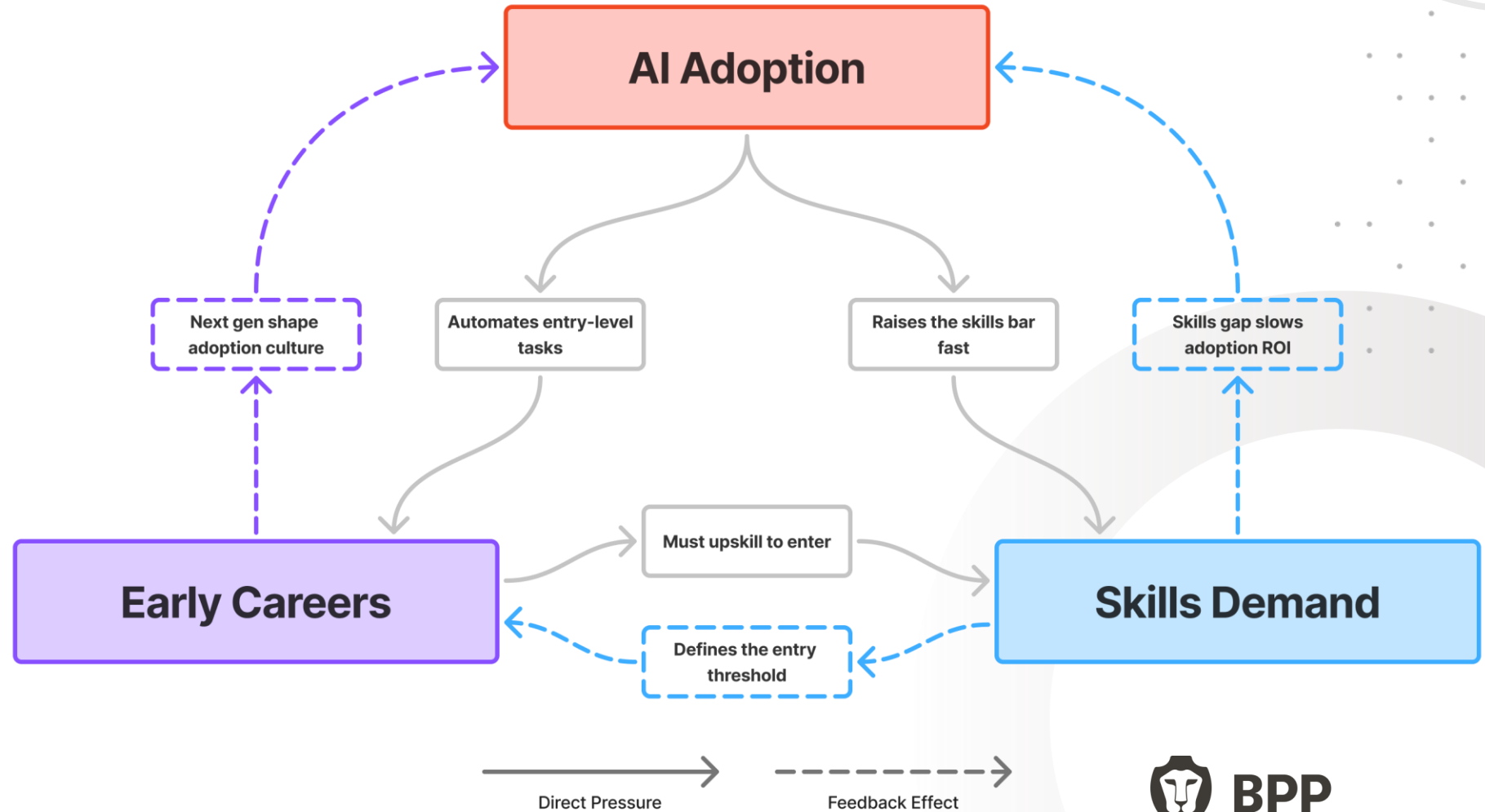
Adoption:

Narrower pathways reduce the flow of AI-ready talent into organisations

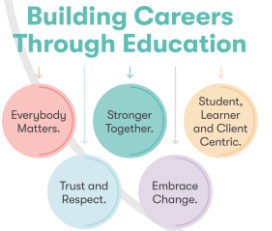
Skills Demand → AI

Adoption:

Capability gaps limit AI adoption and reduce return on investment



AI, skills and early careers are part of a self reinforcing system.



Feedback effects make the challenge harder to solve over time.

Skills Demand → Early Careers:

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Early Careers → AI

Adoption:

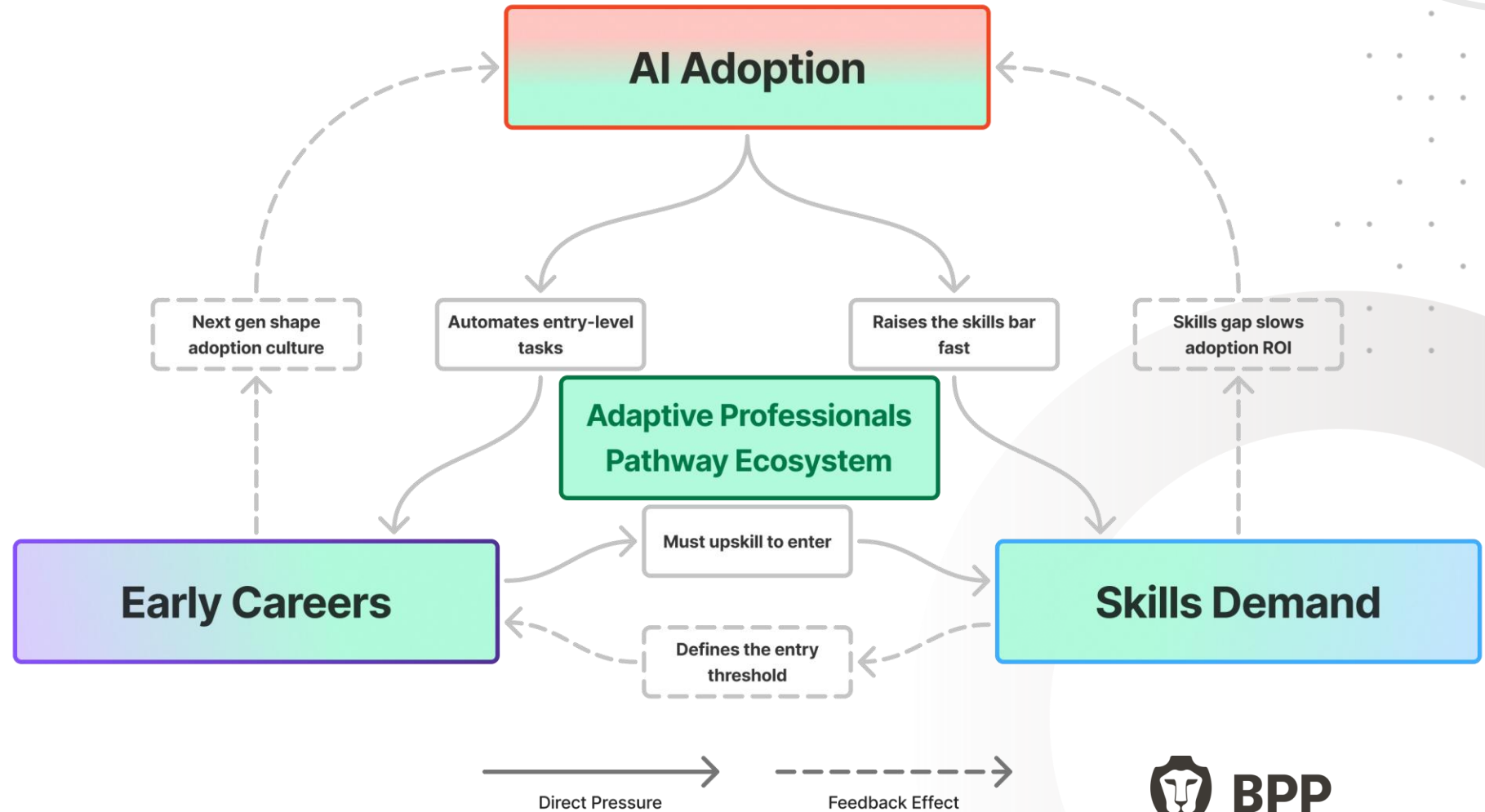
Narrower pathways reduce the flow of AI-ready talent into organisations

Skills Demand → AI

Adoption:

Capability gaps limit AI adoption and reduce return on investment

Building **adaptability** and offering multiple **pathways** are a strategic workforce issue



So, what you need to ask yourselves...

If early careers is now a capability system, employers need to design it deliberately.

Future capability

Are you building the capabilities you need in three to five years, or filling this year's vacancies?

Expectations

Is the bar you are setting based on what the role requires, or drifting upward in response to uncertainty?

Pathways

Do you have a portfolio of routes into work, or are you relying too heavily on one pathway?

Work readiness

Are you creating the conditions where adaptability, judgement and professional confidence can develop?

AI and judgement

Are you teaching people to use AI before you have taught them how to question, judge and apply it well?

Measurement

Do you know whether your early careers investment is creating human and tech capability, not just generating hires?

Building Careers
Through Education





BPP

LYCEUM EDUCATION GROUP

Contact us

UK Head Office

BPP, Aldine Place, 142-144 Uxbridge Road, London, W12 8AW

Hong Kong

Level 54 Hopewell Centre, 183 Queens Road East, Hong Kong

Malaysia

Unit 30-01, Level 30, Tower A, Vertical Business Suite, Avenue 3, Bangsar South,
No.8 Jalan Kerinchi, 59200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Singapore

80 Robinson Road #02-00, Singapore 068898

Table Discussion: Supply Problem or Design Problem?

On tables, discuss:

In your organisation, what is one early careers challenge you currently describe as a candidate, education or labour market problem? What would it look like if we treated it as a design problem?

To help you focus on the discussion, please pick one of the two top challenges from our poll this morning:

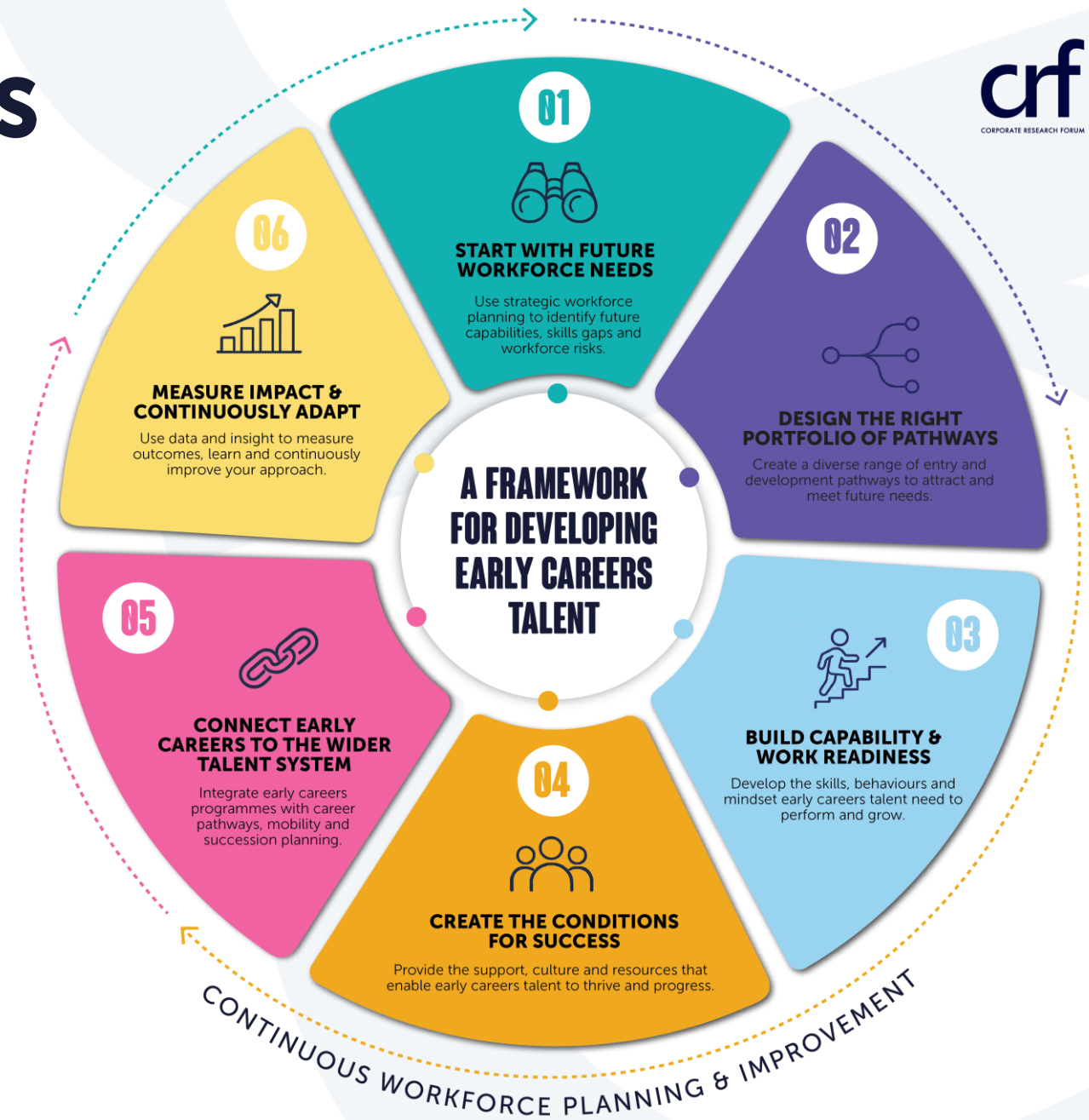
(10 minutes to discuss, 10 minutes to feedback)

CRF's Framework for Early Careers

Gillian Pillans

Research Director, CRF

CRF'S EARLY CAREERS FRAMEWORK



01



START WITH FUTURE WORKFORCE NEEDS

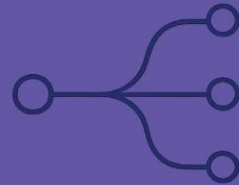
Use strategic workforce planning to identify future capabilities, skills gaps and workforce risks.

- What capabilities will be critical to future business success?
- Which capabilities need to be built vs. bought?
- Which capabilities can realistically be developed?



CORPORATE RESEARCH FORUM

02



DESIGN THE RIGHT PORTFOLIO OF PATHWAYS

Create a diverse range of entry and development pathways to attract and meet future needs.

	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
Vocational Qualifications	Study Programmes		V-Levels					
			Occupational Certificates	T-Levels & A-Levels				
			Further Study Certificates					
Boot Camps			Skills Bootcamps					
Apprenticeships			Foundation Apprenticeships	Advanced Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships			
			Intermediate Apprenticeships				Degree Apprenticeships	
Degrees					Certificate	Diploma	Degree	Masters
					Higher National Certificate	Higher National Diploma		
					Higher Technical Qualifications			
Professional Qualifications			Certifications					
			Professional Qualifications					
Employer Programmes			Work Experience Programmes	School Leaver Programmes	Internships	Graduate Programmes		
			Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs)		Industrial Placement			
			Continuous Online Learning					
			Short Courses					

03



BUILD CAPABILITY & WORK READINESS

Develop the skills, behaviours and mindset early careers talent need to perform and grow.

- From job-specific skills to capability-building

A photograph of a broken metal ladder leaning against a wall. The ladder is made of dark metal and has two rungs. The top rung is broken and hanging off to the side. The ladder is leaning against a dark, textured wall. The background is a light, overcast sky. The overall mood is one of despair and failure.

AI AND THE BROKEN CAREER LADDER

04



CREATE THE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Provide the support, culture and resources that enable early careers talent to thrive and progress.

- Line managers
- Mentoring
- Executive Sponsorship

05



CONNECT EARLY CAREERS TO THE WIDER TALENT SYSTEM

Integrate early careers programmes with career pathways, mobility and succession planning.

- What happens once the programme is completed?

06



MEASURE IMPACT & CONTINUOUSLY ADAPT

Use data and insight to measure outcomes, learn and continuously improve your approach.

- Business outcomes
- Capability outcomes
- Talent outcomes
- Inclusion outcomes

Fireside Chat: Reassessing the EC Strategy

Nicola Luke

Senior Manager Next Generation Strategy & Programmes, BT

LUNCH – RETURN FOR 13.35

EARLY CAREERS AND SKILLS

EQUIPPING THE WORKFORCE FOR WHAT'S NEXT

Early Careers: The Severn Trent Approach

Kellie Emery

New Talent Lead, Severn Trent Water

EARLY CAREERS: THE SEVERN TRENT APPROACH

Kellie Emery



WONDERFUL ON TAP



1,000,000

1,010,000

20%

33%

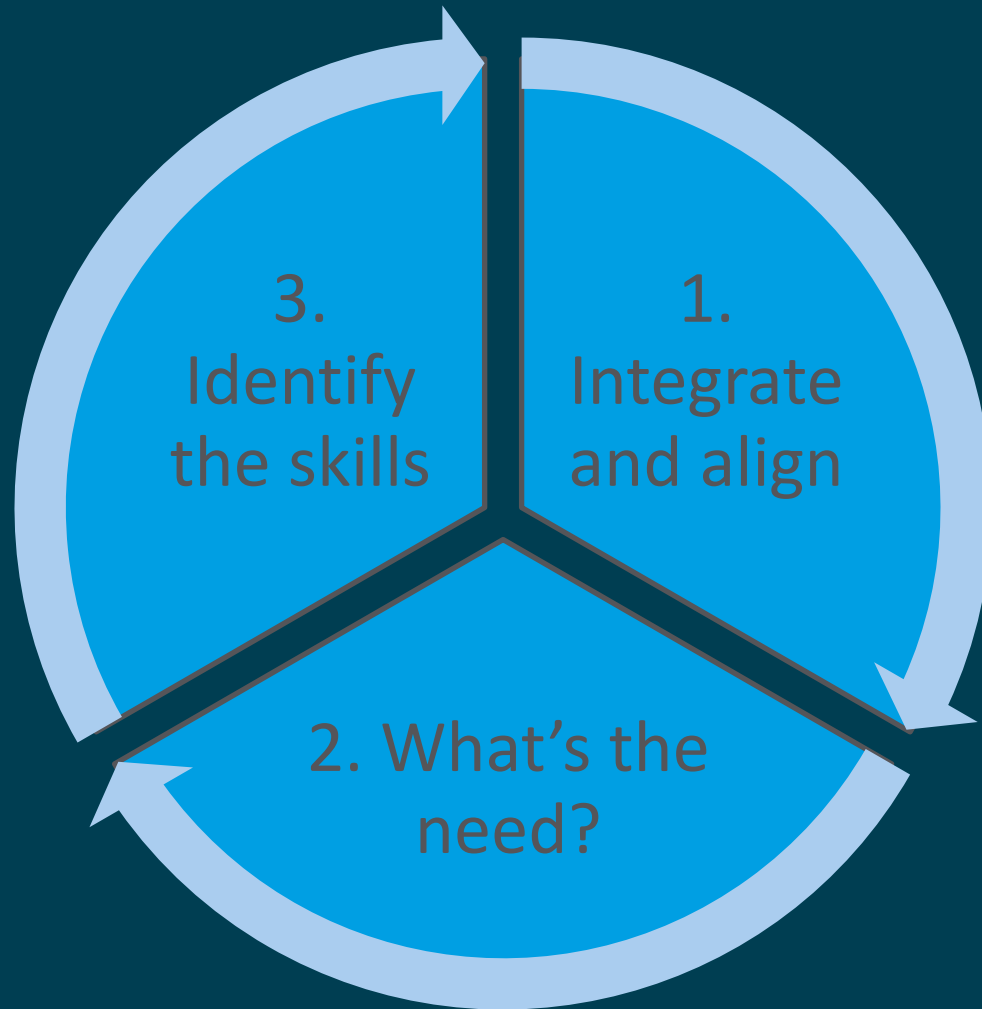
11



WONDERFUL ON TAP



STRATEGY TO PIPELINE



DESIGNING FUTURE CAPABILITY



BREAKING BARRIERS

2022

- Social Impact Strategy Launched *‘to help remove 100,000 people in our communities out of Water Poverty over 10 years’*

2023

- Reviewed our Schools Engagement Approach *Selected ‘Partner Schools’ with the most need, and commitment of 500 placements annually*

2024

- Co-founded the Midland Employer Alliance *Worked with 4 local businesses to pilot a 2-week work placement for Care Experienced young people*

2026

- Delivered over £15 million in Social Value to date *Having reached over 40,000 people so far*



ACCESSIBLE PATHWAYS

- Meeting people where they are
- Preparing for the world of work
 - Employability
 - Work Experience
- Partnerships

- Investing in programmes with intentional design
 - Apprenticeships
 - Graduates
 - Internships
 - Work Experience – Paid & Unpaid
 - Discovery Days
 - Big Boosts
 - Corporate Volunteering
 - Community Fund

11



THE ACADEMY

The Investment

£10m purpose-built facility on an existing treatment works site
Opened in 2020
130,000 visitors since opening

In House Provision

Ofsted accredited
Apprenticeships in Water, Waste and Leakage
We offer functional skills in Maths and English - 100% pass rate

The Facilities

Fully operational test rig
Modern learning facilities; interactive simulation screens, virtual reality
Inclusive facilities; wellbeing room, subsidised canteen



A person is watering a cluster of purple flowers with a green watering can. The water is captured in mid-air, creating a fine mist. The background is a blurred garden with green foliage and a person in a blue shirt. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

*START SOMEWHERE.
JUST DO SOMETHING.*

WONDERFUL ON TAP

SEVERN

TRENT

Fireside Chat: Adapting to Changing Skill Demands

Laura Seiler

Talent and Reward Director - EMEAPAC, Norton Rose Fulbright

Building Future Talent at Keyloop

Michelle Bury

Global Head of Talent Engagement & Development, Keyloop

Desarai Govender-Deokumar

Global Learning & Development Manager, Keyloop

Building Future Talent at Keyloop

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Global Head of Talent Engagement & Development

Desarai Govender-Deokumar

Global Learning & Development Manager



WHO WE ARE

Keyloop at a glance



90+

countries



2,700+

employees globally



**Automotive software for
dealerships and OEMs**



**Product led
company, with
legacy software**

Three streams, one ambition



Early Careers Development Programme

Structured development across skills, confidence and Our flagship initiative.

Global



Apprenticeships

Employer-led apprenticeship programmes across technical and business functions.

United Kingdom



Internships

University placement and project-based internships with strong conversion outcomes.

Spain & India

Why early careers? Why now?

Building a company people want to join and stay in

THE AMBITION

Be the company people choose because they know you'll invest in them

Shape capability from day one — in a Keyloop context, with Keyloop Keyloop values

Open pathways — leadership, product direction, deep

THE EVIDENCE

81%

India intern-to-permanent conversion rate



Those same hires are now leading AI adoption in our Infrastructure team.

Who is the programme for?

0–5

years' experience



High potential

Strong motivation to grow and develop



All functions

Engineering, product, commercial, operations and more



Global · Manager-nominated

Managers identify and put forward participants

Three pillars of high performance

The capabilities we develop



Lead self

Confidence & resilience

Working smarter, not just harder

Owning your own development



Deliver work

Project management

Commercial understanding

Prioritisation & execution



Influence others

Communication & storytelling

Presentation skills

Personal brand & visibility

*'Nobody should **care** more about your **CAREER** than you.'
than you.'*

McDonald's CEO Chris Kempczinsk

Curiosity first

We can teach skills. We can't teach teach curiosity.

Self-driven

We set the structure. You take ownership.

Organisational support

Remove barriers. Create opportunities.

Mentoring

We train participants to be good *mentees* first —not just recipients of mentoring.

How we bring it to life



Experience

Learning through doing. Real challenges, real stakes, applied directly directly in the day job.

LEARN BY DOING



Reflection

Structured time to think, and apply. Monthly reflections into the rhythm.

SLOW DOWN TO SPEED UP



Visibility

Access to senior leaders. Different perspectives. Q&A sessions that open doors.

SEE WHAT'S POSSIBLE

The participant journey

01



Induction

Expectations set.
Community built
from day one.

02



Workshops

Capability building
across the three
pillars.

03



Mentoring

Participant-led
relationships built to
last beyond the
programme.

04



Leader Q&As

Regular access to
senior leaders. Real
Real conversation,
honest answers.

05



Monthly reflection

Structured pause
connect learning
the day job.

06






Stretch opportunities

Apply everything.
Take on new
challenges beyond
the day job.

The role of managers

Talent selectors, not talent hoarders

WHAT WE ASKED OF MANAGERS

-  Nominate for potential
-  Release your best people
-  Be the bridge

WHAT WE'RE SEEING



WHAT PARTICIPANTS TELL US

Participant voice

NPS + 84

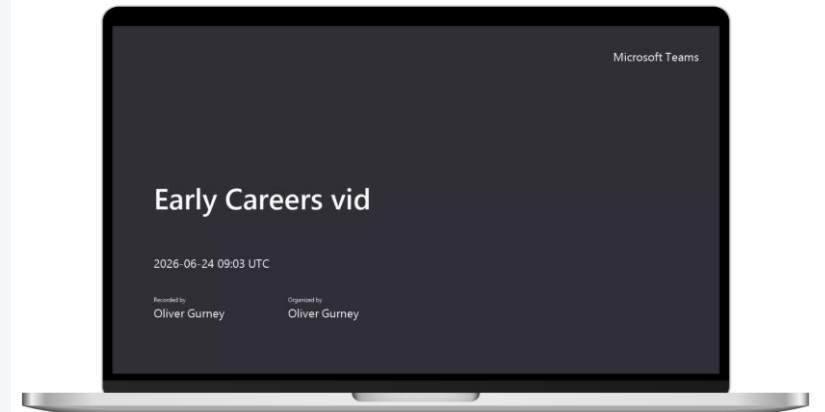
Net Promoter Score

"I didn't expect to build personal branding, project management, & communication skills as a software developer. I now work & think differently and am conscious when the old me would have been hesitant. I have more perspective, confidence, skills and a wealth of opportunities available. "

Teemu Sihvo – Software Developer - Finland

" Throughout the programme, I have developed both my professional and personal skills like communication, client engagement & understanding the commercial side of the business. The hands-on experience and continuous learning has been very valuable. The programme has had a positive impact on my journey and I am grateful for the experience and growth it has provided me."

Mohammad Qawwas – Key Business Development Executive - UAE



What the business is seeing



Pipeline

Stronger internal talent pools. Earlier readiness for stretch and promotion opportunities.



Performance

Managers describe the change as — in how people show up, and take ownership.



Retention

Participants are staying and stepping up. Early career hires are progressing into leadership and specialist roles.

29% of people who have completed or are currently on programme have moved roles or been promoted. (FY23-25)

EXAMPLE PROGRESSIONS

Online Agents - Chat Team Leader

Pre-Sales Manager – Regional OEM Manager

New Business Exec – Account Manager

MEASURING IMPACT: THE HONEST VIEW

ROI is not one number

The impact of early careers investment is multi-
and often long-term. Think of it as a set of indicators.

Our ROI model

01

Inputs

Cohort design
Facilitators & resources
Time investment



02

Outputs

Participation rates
Engagement & completion
Net Promoter Score



03

Outcomes

Skills development
Confidence & behaviour
Manager feedback



04

Impact

Progression & promotions
Performance uplift
Role mobility & retention

What we've learned

01

Impact takes time

Promotions don't happen overnight. Don't let impatient stakeholders declare failure before the cohort has had a chance to demonstrate it.

02

Early signals matter

Confidence, visibility, manager — these are leading indicators. them to build the case before you lagging data.

03

Stories and data,

Data tells the business what's happening. Stories tell it why it matters. matters. You need both to make the the case for continued investment.

What we'd do differently

1 Embed measurement from the start

1

Define your ROI framework before you launch — not after. Bolting it on later means missing the baseline data you need to prove

2 Connect earlier to succession and talent planning

2

The programme needs to sit inside the wider talent conversation from day one — not a parallel track that joins up later.

3 Design a more refined selection process from the outset

3

Design and implement a more structured, criteria-driven selection process from the outset to ensure the right talent is identified consistently and fairly.

What's next

Scaling impact at Keyloop



Scale

Grow cross-functionally. Connect the three streams — development programme, apprenticeships, and internships — into one coherent pipeline.



Consistency

Strengthen quality and experience across all markets. Link even more closely to business priorities and workforce planning.



Data

Build the longitudinal evidence
Track progression, performance
mobility over time to demonstrate
term ROI.

Reflection

help_o
outline

How are you measuring/ will you measure impact in your early careers

help_o
outline

What's been hardest/will be hard to prove to your
business?

help_o
outline

Where have you seen ROI land fastest?

Michelle Bury

Head of Talent Development and Engagement, Keyloop

Desarai Govender-Deokumar

Global Learning & Development Manager, Keyloop

Table Discussion: Your Early Careers Strategy

In threes or fours:

Pick one or two of the areas below for where you would make a shift in your approach - what would the shift be, and what do you need to do to achieve it?

1. Start with Future Workforce Needs
2. Design the Right Portfolio of Pathways
3. Build Capability and Work Readiness to Drive Performance
4. Create the Conditions for Success
5. Connect Early Careers to the Wider Talent System
6. Measure Impact and Continuously Adapt

(15 minutes discussion, 5 minutes feedback)

Panel: Building Better Routes into Work

Gillian Pillans

Research Director, CRF

Emma Pollard

Principal Research Fellow, Institute for Employment Studies

James Robson

Director, Oxford University Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance (SKOPE)

Final Thoughts

Gillian Pillans

Research Director, CRF



Wednesday 8th July

EARLY CAREERS AND SKILLS

EQUIPPING THE WORKFORCE FOR WHAT'S NEXT