

Facilities Management from A to Z

Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard
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Youth Employment

Unemployment among young people in the UK is a serious issue and as one of the largest employment sectors the Facilities industry can make an important contribution towards reducing the problem. In September 2013, the number of people between 18 and 24 who were not in education, employment or training (known as NEETs) was 1.07 million which is 14% of that group of the population; by comparison in the Netherlands the same figure is just 4%.

The Government has a clear responsibility for addressing youth unemployment and successive administrations have introduced different initiatives to do so through the benefit and education systems and through employer incentives. However, employers also have an important role in addressing youth unemployment through their choice of who they employ and how they go about their recruitment and the experience young people gain from their interaction with potential employers can be life-changing.

There are some good arguments in favour of employing young people. For example, organisations with a strong culture like the fact that they have fewer ingrained influences from previous experience and are accustomed to the learning process. From a financial perspective, it is almost certainly cheaper to recruit a young person and provide them with training in a particular skill than to recruit a worker who already possesses it.

As FM becomes more technologically oriented many potential employers in the facilities sector like the idea that younger recruits are more digitally literate, enthusiastic about change and embrace flexibility and change. For some employers taking on young people is viewed as part of their wider Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agenda. Providing employment opportunities for young people can raise the profile of a business or brand and allow organisations to increase their levels of community engagement

There are however a number of barriers to employment which young people face which are linked to way in which employer's recruit and to employers' perceptions of young workers. For example, the increasing use of informal recruitment practices involving networks that young people do not have access to and what are often unnecessary demands for qualifications and experience in recruitment.

The resolution to these issues lies with the employers who should make efforts to make their recruitment activities much more youth friendly, limiting their use of informal recruitment methods and making their jobs as widely accessible as possible making particular use of jobs websites on the internet. Facilities Managers should evaluate their recruitment processes, and in particular the use of qualifications only asking for them when really necessary.

Offering work experience and making use of apprenticeship schemes are also great opportunities to get young people into the workplace. Facilities clients might consider using their procurement power to influence their facilities service providers to participate more in these initiatives. The future success of the facilities service industry and the FM profession depend on a healthy influx of new young people.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has details of government initiatives and incentives to support youth employment on their website at www.dwp.gov.uk/youth-contract