THE PERFECT POSTCODE?

The Nascent Project

A review of job opportunities for young people in Bunhill
Giving unemployed young people a hope and a future.

“Historically the Bunhill Ward at the southern tip of Islington, and its neighbouring wards, has been populated by low - medium income families with a density of social housing and strong generational ties. Although there is still a significant level of social housing in the ward compared to other London boroughs, the last fifteen years has seen an influx of new residents from a higher socio-economic bracket. This is coupled with the emergence of the East London Hub known as Tech City pivoted around Old Street which has led to a resurgent, and almost unrecognisable, location that is growing in wealth as well as gaining an international status. The increased economic growth is bringing new businesses, along with job opportunities.

However, there is widespread concern that regeneration is not affecting positive change for all. Redevelopment must be geared towards achieving a better living and working environment for all members of the community; and especially children and young people who live in the immediate vicinity.

This review considers the needs, aspirations and views of local Bunhill Ward young people. It aims to identify their experience and challenges in finding local employment. It also seeks to recommend new approaches that create bridges to employability and sustainable lifelines for local residents.

With local expertise gained over forty years, City YMCA London and The Drum Youth Hub is located right in the heart of this community and has the experience to listen to and interpret the needs of vulnerable local young people. We have been delighted to deliver this piece of work for the Bunhill Ward Councillors. The report presents our experience and insight, making recommendations that will meet local needs and enhance the lives of some of the communities most vulnerable young people.”

Gillian Bowen, Chief Executive at City YMCA London
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Executive Summary

Many businesses strive to have a footprint in the best locations in the world. In London there are major high streets that large commercial companies vie to locate some level of presence. This is also true for businesses that seek to place head offices in prime locations to present a global credible image. But what happens to those people who already live in a newly developed sought-after postcode? Does this vast social and economic change in their area make a difference to their life, opportunities, aspirations and outcomes? Does a person’s ‘brand’ increase with their postcode if they are from a lower socio-economic background?

City YMCA London and the Drum Youth Work Hub’s Nascent Project Review seeks to determine what can be done to understand and create pathways to local jobs for local people, especially those from lower-income families and those with no formal qualifications or academic competencies. It seeks to ensure that all local young people have access to employment, careers and life aspirations.

This review gathers the views and opinions of young people in the Bunhill Ward, especially those with a link to the ward through residency and using local services. Although the review identified that finding employment in the current climate does seem more accessible for young people, due to social media platforms and the use of mobile phone technology, additional support and resources are needed to aim towards creating an equitable playing field for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and/or no academic qualifications.

Identified resources included:

- Wi-Fi affordability a problem in some low-income households - resulting in the need to create more access free local Wi-Fi for young people;
- Actively developing links, and building relationships, between local young people and potential employers;
- Creating entrepreneurial programmes that steer young people from the lure of underground economies - in favour of legitimate forms of self-employment and entrepreneurialism;

The report recommends:

1. Community Connectivity Scheme - linking young people and local businesses through charity sector youth programmes;
2. Specialist IT detached youth work team - focused on technology driven approaches to supporting young people into self-employment and entrepreneurialism.
GLOSSARY

**City YMCA London**
A youth charity working across central and east London boroughs with a specialism in interventions for vulnerable and hard-to-reach young people and tailored accommodation services for homeless young people.

**Detached Youth Work**
Engaging young people where they choose to meet; be it a public park, retail-park or an urban housing estate, and working with them to an agreed outcome.

**Dr Sam Friedman**

**Dr Louise Ashley**
Royal Holloway University

**Elite occupations**
Considered as law, medicine, engineering, journalism and specialist IT employment.

**Entry level jobs**
A job that generally requires little skill and knowledge and is generally of a low pay. These jobs may require physical strength or some on-site training. Recent graduates from high school or college usually take entry-level positions.

**Erasmus**
The Erasmus programme (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) is an EU funded programme that organises student exchanges.

**GCSE**s
The British educational qualifications which schoolchildren take when they are fifteen or sixteen years old. GCSE is an abbreviation for 'General Certificate of Secondary Education'.

**Good Jobs Campaign**
A programme created by Citizens UK in response to the growing skills gap and increasing issues of social mobility with a project based on the east side of the Old Street Roundabout.

**Impetus**
A private equity foundation that transforms the lives of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds by ensuring they get the right support to succeed in school, in work and in life. April 2019 report.

**LandAid House**
A new building offering 146 beds for homeless young people located in Errol Street, Islington.

**Martha Crawford**
A Living Wage Foundation individual previously based at Citizen UKs Good Jobs Campaign.

**Nascent**
Definition: Just coming into existence and beginning to display signs of future potential.

**NEET**
People who are not in education, employment or training.

**Rap music (British genre)**
A genre of electronic music that emerged in London in the early 2000s. and includes styles of UK garage and jungle.
music, and draws influences from [Jamaican] dancehall, ragga and [American] hip hop. Rapping is a significant element of grime, and lyrics often revolve around gritty depictions of urban life.

Soapbox

Islington Councils commission provision offering music, technology, dance and creativity for young people aged 13 upwards based on Old Street.

South Islington Employment Cluster

An independent group that brings together stakeholders in the area of employment.

T Levels

A new level of qualification to be introduced to schools in September 2020. T Levels will follow GCSEs and will be equivalent to three A Levels. T Levels will offer students a mixture of classroom learning and ‘on-the-job’ experience gained through an industry placement of at least 45 days.

The Drum

City YMCA London’s Youth Work Hub offering expertise and experience in youth issues and interventions.

Trap Life

A ghetto place that if you stay there too long you get trapped. The people and circumstances bring you down:

“You make friends with someone they ask you for a ride to work. You get profiled and pulled over. Dude has drugs on him and sticks it in your glove box. Cops arrest both of you. Now you got a felony and can’t get financial aid to go to college. You end up working at the local McDonald’s. Now you trapped. Dude asks you for a ride to work because it’s the trap and doesn’t want to walk. You say no. He gets fired for being late. Now you got beef and get mugged by his homies [friends]. Now you scared to go outside so you don’t get mugged again. So, you stay in the house and it feels like you are trapped there. That’s the trap house. A lot of times people end up selling drugs in the trap house. They fortify it with armed people making little safe places in an otherwise dangerous area.”

Transferable Skills in the Workplace


Wesley’s Chapel and Leysian Mission

A local Church conducting an initial programme of support targeted to the local community who hosted a free conference in February 2019 entitled Employing Mind, Body and Spirit.
Overview

Over the last decade City YMCA London, The Drum Youth Work Hub and other youth focused services, have invested in supporting Islington young people through their transition from childhood to young adulthood. A key transitional component is their entry into employment.

During a European funded youth employability programme [Erasmus - EpDem 2016], it was identified that surveyed participants over the age of 40-years were more likely to have gained their first entry into employment through a personal contact - by word of mouth or through an existing relationship with a company i.e. parent/sibling/relative working at the firm and arranged work experience placement. However, the changing job market means that the pathways into entry level employment have changed. Technology has adjusted the job market across most industries bringing with it a higher level or industry specific educational requirement for entry level employment.

Many businesses strive to have a footprint in the best locations in the world. In London there are major high streets where large commercial companies vie to locate some level of presence. This is also true for businesses that seek to place head offices in prime locations to present a credible global image. But what happens to those people who already live in a newly developed sought-after postcode? Does this vast social and economic change in their area make a difference to their life, opportunities, aspirations and outcomes? Does a person’s ‘brand’ increase with their postcode if they are from a lower socio-economic background?

A recent Impetus Report looking at the impact on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds on their employment opportunities, April 2019, highlighted the following findings:

- London, compared to the North East of England, has a very small gap between disadvantaged youth and their better-off peers, driven by a low NEET rate for disadvantaged young people
- Young people with low qualifications are twice as likely to be NEET as those with 5 GCSE’s (29% vs 15%)
- Young people identified as coming from a disadvantaged background, especially those with low qualifications, are disproportionately likely to be NEET.

The theme of the research findings above are further explored in the work of Dr Sam Friedman who explains that jobs described as elite occupations [e.g. law, medicine,
engineering, journalism, specialist IT] traditionally recruit from people who come from a private education background. Dr Friedman’s research further explains that a young person coming from a disadvantaged and/or working-class background who has obtained a 1st class honours degree is 12 times less likely to secure an elite occupation role than a privately educated person with a 2:2 honours degree.

This year Dr Louise Ashley at the Royal Holloway University conducted a three-year study into what City recruiters are looking for when seeking new employees for their companies. The companies included in the research were all from elite occupations and situated within the City, in and around the Bunhill Ward.

Dr Ashley’s findings indicates that all the firms consulted on what type of employee they were seeking to attract spoke of something they described as ‘polished’, which includes:

- Accent
- Mannerisms
- Behaviour
- Dress

Dr Ashley surmised that:

“Because banking and other finance institutions tend to have client facing roles that are required to work with high net worth clients some companies fear that if they allow people to work for their organisation who don’t look and sound reassuringly expensive then this will undermine the status and prestige of the occupation or, perhaps, the organisation as well”

City Recruiters, Dr Ashley, BBC- How to Break into the Elite, July 2019

If this research is accurate, then it could be concluded that potential elite occupation employers may perceive Bunhill Ward residents from lower socio-economic backgrounds as lacking the ‘organisational fit’ or understanding of the unspoken ‘social codes’ required to effectively operate in these professions. The existence of these unwritten, unspoken social codes and cues need further exploration.

The majority of jobs in Bunhill Ward fall within the description of elite occupations, so even the brightest working-class young person living in the area has a less than 5% chance of securing a job on his/her doorstep - even with the required qualifications. It is then also reasonable to suggest that a young person from a working-class background with no formal qualifications has an even smaller margin of job opportunities in the ward.
Review Objectives

The Nascent Review team seek to determine what can be done to understand and create pathways to local jobs for local people, especially those from lower-income families and those with no formal qualifications or academic competencies, and to ensure that all local young people have access to employment, careers and life aspirations.

This review gathers the views and opinions of young people in the Bunhill Ward, especially those with a link to the ward through residency and using local services.

We wanted to explore:

1. Do young people living in the Bunhill Ward ‘feel’ part of the environmental and aesthetic changes that have happened in their area?
2. Does the increase in companies moving into the area result in more job opportunities for local young people?
3. Does having a sought-after postcode place young people in a better position in terms of status, opportunities, lifestyle and wellbeing?

Nascent Project Aims

The Nascent Project delivery was developed through a series of meetings with the identified consultants, members of City YMCA London’s senior management, and young people at The Drum Youth Work Hub from the identified age range of the review.

To streamline the review capabilities within the timeframe and resources, the project team agreed to focus on two core age groups:

- 16 to 18-year olds as a ‘future’ planning measure to capture the potential training and employment needs if any projects were commissioned following this review;
- 19 to 25-year olds that have been/or are currently unemployed, to gain a lived experience of what issues they faced during unemployment, how they approached job seeking and what they think could have supported them during this period.

These industries were identified as the key local employers

- IT
- Self-employment/entrepreneurship
- Hospitality
- Charity sector
- Retail
- Law firms
The review will provide a snapshot of real-time data that can be used as the baseline to design an employment programme that provides young people with the format to achieve goals through building incremental steps. The consultation and review process include Digital, Social and Human/Physical platforms [within safeguarding regulations] to capture as many localised and wider views as possible.

The Project Team

The Nascent Project team was selected from community consultants and local staff with a prior knowledge or professional relationship with young people living in the Bunhill ward. The intent was to maximise the potential reach of the review, as well as gain insights from previous and current employment programmes to determine impact/success.

One of the key principles for using youth consultants who had previous experience of delivering youth programme in Islington as part of the Nascent Project was to increase the pool of critical knowledge within the team.

A local university student, also from our review core age group, was recruited to assist with research and gathering data plus providing event management for any activities associated with the project.

An independent review was commission from Wesley’s Chapel and Leysian Mission whose Community Worker further enhanced the knowledge captured in the report from their work in the local community.

Methodology

The Nascent Project team devised a 3-tier strategy to maximise the potential of meeting young people in the ward:

1. **A detached youth work approach** - was used as a tested means to gathering authentic grassroots information from young people within their own environment during periods of time that were appropriate to them. This model was further enhanced by using peer to peer consultation through the younger members of the Nascent Project Team.
   a. Conducted a series of walkabouts of the ward to assess current employment availability and new services; also, to gauge the best times and locations where local young people would be socialising or moving around the area;
   b. The youth consultants visited local youth provision Soapbox to gain further current knowledge on local need and issues;
c. The youth consultants were accompanied on the first walkabout by the consultant responsible for scoping out local businesses to determine new staff recruitment methods including how vacancies are advertised;

d. Using the information gathered, the youth consultants conducted four location specific walkabouts spanning a four-hour period for each session; on different days, and weeks and at different times of the day.

e. Identified the need to seek views of NEET young people through more in-depth interviews with young people that fit the following criteria:
   - Aged 16 - 25 years
   - Were non-academic
   - Not in education, employment or training

2. Secondary research - desk and previous delivery of services - TV documentaries and radio programmes relating to youth employability.

   a. Data was gathered on the varying employment programmes that have been delivered in Islington. However, the review team decided not to include questions about any local employment programmes that the young people had participated in. Prior experience of working with young people indicated that some of them had been on a vast number of employment programmes as part of JSA schemes and did not view them as useful.

   b. It was also deemed necessary to include the expertise and prior knowledge of the local area and to include anecdotal and observational evidence from the project team using case studies.

3. Employer approach - door knocking, emails & telephone research - informal conversations based on ten questions developed by the project team with a focus on understanding recruitment approaches and perceptions of reliable staff.

Any information and views gathered:

- The only personal and non-identifiable data that participants were asked for were their age, employment status and whether they live in the Bunhill ward;
- Did not require the young person to provide any further personal data that could identify them in any way.
- All the views used in the report have been anonymised in line with GDPR best practice.
Entry Level Employment

For the purpose of this report the review has focused around potential entry level jobs available for young people within the Bunhill Ward.

Our use of the work provides an outline of entry level employment that encompasses a broad range of unskilled/skilled and unqualified/qualified roles that can be carried out by someone who has no prior work experience, or someone seeking temporary employment.

Although this review is primarily steering towards identifying the needs of young people living in the Bunhill Ward, who are unemployed or/and have no academic qualifications, the project team has scanned a wide range of youth employment research conducted in the UK.

In a paper published in 2013 by The Work Foundation - International Lessons: Youth Unemployment in the global context, the report highlights that:

*Young people can face a difficult transition from education to work. However, non-academic pathways between education and work are unclear and difficult to navigate. The shift to an economy based on service work, and growing competition for low wage service employment, makes it hard for young people to gain a ‘soft landing’ in the labour market.*


Changing Educational Curriculum

Current central government thinking is steering towards reviewing the traditional educational curriculum to determine if it is fit for future business needs. Some thinking indicates that it would be better to seek the guidance and expertise of industries and business to re-design the education curriculum to ensure that young people are better equipped to meet the needs of future employers.

The fast-moving pace of technology means that traditional entry level jobs - factory production line workers, till operators, mechanics and other labouring type work - are being replaced by machines that can produce products faster and, sometimes, of a higher quality - for much cheaper costs.

T Levels are being introduced in 2020 to narrow the gap or skills deficit between future job opportunities and skilled workers. They will require students to so 55 days work experience though no training is currently in place to support employers to deal with
issues such as anxiety which are on the increase. Although this qualification potentially
bridges skills gaps over the coming decade, it does not meet the needs of young people
that have already completed school, or those that are not geared towards academia. It
may be necessary for other employment support services to critically review what other
measures could be put in place to up-skill young people aged 18 - 25yrs that do not have
any formal qualifications or work experience.

Review Limitations
- The project review team were not able to fully drill down and access current postcode
data for the Bunhill Ward within the scope of the review. Access to lower and middle-
layer super output area data is required to carry out a more forensic analysis of the
ward.
- Within the next six months City YMCA London will be opening LandAid House and there
will therefore be an influx of new [majority] non-working young people moving into
the ward from April 2020; so, it would be beneficial to explore the local jobs market in
preparation for this change.
- It is common human behaviour to present negative views when asked to provide
feedback or opinions within a consultation format - especially if the participants are
not known to the staff. It must be stressed that none of the participants were
prompted or guided in anyway throughout the consultation process. The approach used
was a conversational technique in which the researcher does not give his/or her views
throughout the discussion.
- The project team conducted several area walkabouts to identify young people to
participate in the review consultation because they were not visible in the area; however,
the way in which young people socialise has changed and shifted over the
years. Some theories suggest that this has been heavily influenced by sections of the
Antisocial Behaviour Act regarding the powers to disperse groups of more than two
people. Some argue that the use of this law has resulted in young people being
secluded to their homes to counteract these new laws.
- Of course, issues are complex, and this report does not seek to note or address them in
full. The changing environment that could result from Brexit is also difficult to assess
should there be any marked reduction in the work force from other countries, especially
across the entrainment and hospitality sectors.
Review: Young People

Young Peoples’ Response

Over a period of four weeks in June 2019 the project review team were able to consult over 40 young people across various locations in the ward, as well as surrounding areas to maximise the reach of feedback. The identified areas were strategically targeted through prior research of the ward, consulting with members of staff and young people at The Drum Youth Work Hub, Soapbox, as well as using local knowledge of the youth consultants in the project team. The project team conducted reviews at different times of the day and evening.

Some of the team’s recorded feedback also included:
- Many young people were not visibly out in the area during weekday mornings and early afternoons. It was concluded that school aged young people may attend schools in and around Islington, and therefore more likely to have friendship groups outside of the ward.
- Those young people that did frequent the area in the early evening were more likely to be over 18 years and congregated behind the Toffee Park area. When approached by the youth consultants they were slightly hesitant at first, but once they read the information provided, they were happy to provide unsolicited views.

Good Entry Level Employment?

When the young people were asked about what they think ‘good entry level’ employment opportunities are, a range of expectations and beliefs were cited by participants:
- Good co-workers and managers; and interaction with customers
- Good pay
- Lots of flexibility and part time hours
- Career progression

When asked how they would know that they were ready to work, some of the responses included:
- You can fully commit to a 9-5pm job;
- Wanting to work and prepared to start a structured job;
- When you have the time and want to work.
The consultation conversation moved into a debate about Zero Hours contracts. Some of the young people had previous experience of working in this type of contract agreement and preferred it because it allowed them a certain level of flexibility to pursue other interests and educational and career options. Overall, it was expressed that these types of contracts were more likely to be with stores such as Tesco and Argos, but some of the young people stated that they are more interested in working at higher profile brand stores, such as Selfridges, JD Sport or Zara, and they did not mind earning less or working flexible hours because they viewed these companies as ones that ‘fit’ their own personal brand. They also liked that they could receive employee discounts on products they want to buy for their own personal use.

Recruitment

Most of the young people, even those of 16 - 18 years, had a current CV and viewed having a CV as a necessity for securing employment in the current climate. Although Islington has delivered several employment programmes that include support with CV writing, a large percentage of the young people had chosen to get CV support from a member of their family, usually a female e.g. sister, aunt or mother. Their explanation for going to a member of their family was based on them feeling less vulnerable to talk about some of the areas of development, for example, that they have dyslexia, or feeling safe to talk freely about their career aspirations.

Those young people that did not have a CV were:
- Going into further education and did not think they needed a CV during that phase;
- Did not have any work experience to place on a CV including volunteering;
- Are self-employed and receive new work roles through word of mouth recommendations and ‘advertising’ on Instagram.

According to the feedback taken from young people aged 16 - 25 years there are a range of pathways into all entry level jobs.

Pathways mentioned:
- Online applications
- Agency
- Recruitment events
- Apprenticeships
- Internships
- Prince's Trust - potential entrepreneurial pathway
The perspective of some of the young people consulted within the Bunhill Ward highlighted that they perceive barriers to employment for them in their local area and that they don’t fit in with the new environment:

‘There aren’t any jobs for us in this area, why would I want to work here when no-one wants us. All of these buildings that you see around here don’t have jobs for people like me.’

19yr old male Bunhill resident

The consultation with groups of young people also highlighted that it has now become a preference for young people to look at self-employment as a viable employment option; however, some of the conversation focused around young people feeling compelled/drawn towards underground economy activities such as selling drugs:

‘I am not in employment, but I am looking to get a job in the plumbing industry and previously worked in labouring. However, if I had my way I would just stay in the trap’ (drugs and gang lifestyle).

23yr old male - Bunhill resident

Instagram and Twitter are also commonly used by young people in innovative ways to attract potential employers. For example, Instagram has given many individuals the pathway into having a career based on the number of ‘likes’ received. Social media platforms are now being regularly used by young people to post short videos of themselves ‘outing’ their skills and requesting employers to contact them with any internship, apprenticeship or job opportunities.

This type of social media job advertising was expressed by a young person as a way for him to grow his business as a Personal Trainer; the popularity gained through this has contributed to his present success and increased the recommendations made by his clients to their immediate networks.

‘I use Social media to put myself out there, so my work is mostly dependent on word of mouth through clients’.

23yr old male - Bunhill resident.

The last questions in the review aimed to seek the views of young people in relation to what type of work they think they will be doing in 10 years’ time? Some of the responses were:

‘I think jobs will be inclusive and women, especially black women, will have better opportunities as many people are talking about this topic now’.
‘There will be more skilled workers in the future’.

‘Currently they just move everyone out to “Cunch” (countryside) so I don’t know what it will be like in the future. Young people aren’t helped in this area unless its outside of the area’

‘I think it will be similar to now not much will change’.

During one of the project discussions following a detached session as part of the youth consultation process the issue was raised of the number of young people that live within the borough that are experiencing hidden levels of deprivation - but they do not wish to disclose this within their own friendship groups. The type of issues that some young people living in low income households are experiencing include:

- Living in full, or over, capacity homes - having to share bedrooms or use other areas of the home to seek privacy i.e. hallways, bathrooms, living spaces being turned into bedrooms to increase capacity.
- Limited or no access to regular Wi-Fi networks and up to date technology in the home; reliant on school and college equipment, but this is lacking for those young people not in education, employment or training;
- Young people having to seek employment to contribute to household expenses, which can result in them not following their passion or placing their career aspirations on hold for the sake of the family.
- Due to lack of family income, some young people are more susceptible to the consistent pressures of crime as a means for their survival and the survival of their family. The reluctance or resistance to such pressures is not only exhausting for many young people, it can be extremely dangerous. Those young people that do not succumb to the pressures from local street gangs will often become the target of violence that can be extended to younger members of the family and parents.

In the light of this knowledge it is imperative that a whole-person approach is implemented when considering best practise examples of career support strategies for marginalised young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds. An example of this is:

CASE STUDY

Angela lives at home with her mother and three younger siblings in a two-bedroom flat in one of the South Islington wards. Having completed school, she has been trying to secure employment within a customer service role for over four months with no success. She is informed about joining an agency to increase her chances
of securing temporary roles within hospitality. The recruitment process is all online and she passes the first test and is then offered an online interview. Angela is nervous about going to a public space to conduct the interview because she does not feel confident in speaking, so she chooses to take the interview from her bedroom. In preparation for the interview she realises that she cannot close her bedroom door because it is so badly damaged, and she doesn’t want the interviewer to see this. Her option to leave the bedroom door open results in her young siblings running up and down the hallway when she is being interviewed and her mother walking past wearing a towel.

Islington Young women (19 years old)

This is a real-life situation that was disclosed to a member of the Nascent Project team by a young person living in Islington.

Trap Life - Does it exist in London?

A gateway into the reality of life for some disaffected young people has often been expressed through the art of grime music. The success of grime music in Britain appears to stem from its cross-sectional inclusion of class and youth culture; however, the roots of this music are strongly placed within BAME young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The rap influences of this music have also brought with it terminology and social thinking from under-deprived parts of USA - one of them being the ‘trap life phenomena’

Nobody wants to live in the trap.

You can take a man out the trap but can't take what the trap did out of the man.

by Ghetto translator March 21, 2017

There is some thinking that associates grime music, and the related genre of Drill music, with drug dealing and the increase in knife crime within youth culture [Ben Beaumont-Thomas - The Guardian: April 2018] Although this proposed correlation between grime/drill and crime has not been empirically evidenced thus far, it is necessary to include this influential aspect of youth culture when reviewing young people and their economic status and potential. Some young people now view the music industry as a viable and obtainable exit from ‘trap life’ and there are several accomplished [and wealthy] grime artists that are evidence of this. One of the apparent factors of the success of this music genre is the entrepreneurial prowess needed to succeed [Dr Joy White - Urban Music and Entrepreneurship: Beats, Rhymes and Young People’s Enterprise; & The Business of Grime]
Analysis

Finding employment in the current climate does seem more accessible for young people, due to social media platforms and the use of mobile phone technology. The increased use of LinkedIn and Instagram as a legitimate platform of ‘selling’ skills, personal brand and services is very familiar to young people; as are the pitfalls of improper use of social media - such as employers checking Twitter and Instagram accounts of applicants as part of the recruitment process.

However, the gap between local employment opportunities filled by local young people could be based on the area being evaluated. In areas that have a steady volume of unskilled entry level jobs - retail, customer services, cleaning and basic hospitality - job opportunities are generally open to skilled/qualified/unskilled/unqualified applicants. In this scenario, dependent on the current demand, an unqualified worker with previous work experience could fair better than a qualified worker with no prior work experience.

Based on the job opportunities arising in the Bunhill Ward, the playing field may be a more complex arena for an unqualified or unskilled worker to navigate when the type of jobs available are taken into consideration. As previously mentioned in this report, many of the jobs in the ward are considered to fall within elite occupations, which immediately eliminates job opportunities for any young person with no academic qualifications.

No evidenced requirement for CV writing programmes

The current technologically based recruitment process described above is very different to the journey from unemployment to employment over the last 10 years. A typical method used previously to acquire an unskilled entry level job would have been through delivering a CV by hand to local employers directly or by responding to job adverts displayed in shop windows and newsagents. However, some of the larger corporations are using online screening surveys before CVs are even requested. Although CVs are still generally required, young people must also complete an additional hurdle of clearance. This shift in recruitment can make seeking employment even more daunting.

When considering the data gathered regarding CVs it is interesting that many of the participants chose to get support from a female member of their family, even though there is an array of CV writing support functions within all the employability programmes delivered across the borough. The young people seem more comfortable getting support and guidance from someone they had built a long-term trusted relationship with, as opposed to a stranger.
Wi-Fi Access Affordability

As a professional youth consultant who has experienced employability issues during different periods as a young adult, and now adult life, there has been a rapid change in how job opportunities are advertised and the overall recruitment process. The introduction of technology-based recruitment platforms such as job apps, recruitment websites, social media and online applications and tests require a young person to, at the bare minimum, have frequent access to a mobile phone, computer, Wi-Fi connection and email address. In some of the households of the young people that participated in the review, it was clear from their comments that they came from lower-income families, and some were from families that had experienced generational unemployment; this would make it more difficult for those families to continuously afford reliable broadband in their homes and have the financial capability to purchase phone package deals that offer sufficient data usage for consistent use.

Wider Career Options

A further observation during the consultation process was the number of young people that were thinking in an entrepreneurial way about their future. Some of the young people thought this was a more sustainable employment option and had already started ‘selling’ their services and products online. However, what became apparent was that some of them lacked basic business knowledge and acumen to sufficiently develop their ideas into a viable business option.

Although there are several business support services in operation for young people across the capital, Princes Trust being the most prevalent, consideration must be given to the social and emotional skills required for any employment opportunity - even self-employment/entrepreneurship. Whichever career option young people choose to pursue they must still have the six identified social and emotional capabilities required to be an effective employee:

1. self-awareness
2. resilience
3. drive
4. self-assurance
5. receptiveness
6. informed analysis

Martha Crawford’s work on the Hackney side of the Old Street Roundabout identified that one of the key issues young people experience entering these work cultures was not enough time had been spent on socialising skills to ensure that they were able to deal with the workplace cultures. It worked where there was “lock in” and they had somebody they could personally relate to that had a decision-making role and a personal story of coming...
from the right sort of background. This worked best when it was somebody outside the corporate and social responsibility sectors.

When reviewing the businesses developing in the Bunhill ward and surrounding areas it cannot be ignored that a significant percentage of these new developments are co-working hubs designed to house self-employed/entrepreneurs, which is in direct response to the evolving gig economy and the reduction in the number of ‘job for life’ careers. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the Gig Economy as:

A labour market characterised by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs.

Co-working spaces provide freelance workers and entrepreneurs with an office environment through a membership scheme. A sliding scale of services are offered as part of the membership fee and schemes start from around £40 per day per desk. Members are often offered additional monthly business support through online learning programmes, webinars, seminars and conferences. Many of these workspaces have multiple locations across London, England and some even have global membership schemes for their international clients.

For local young people to join a co-working facility at the initial stage of their career development would be expensive and quite daunting. Also, some young people may feel intimidated or unwelcome.

Self-employment, freelancing and entrepreneurship are career options that could increase job opportunities for young people from a range of backgrounds, and especially support those young people that are not academically driven. The use of technology has also led to micro-businesses and niche sellers being exposed to global markets. Young self-starters may need business support not only in product and service development, but also areas such as tax laws and currency exchange rates.
Review: Local Employers

Lead Employer Consultant: Anna Hart

Context

The eastern part of Bunhill ward is recognised as a hive of innovation and creativity by many sectors with recent arrivals including Adobe, Turner and MullenLowe. Its uniqueness is not linked to the radical dissenter connections or the potential of the current local community, but to a critical mass of like-minded companies and competitors that were first drawn to the area for its city-edge spaciousness and 90’s cool. This was somewhere to be seen that has become somewhere to be. The increased economic growth is bringing new businesses, along with job opportunities. However, there is widespread concern that regeneration is not affecting positive change for all members of the community.

*Our new home in London Tech City - the offices are located on the ‘Silicon Roundabout’ in London’s Tech City, a hive of innovation and the third-largest technology cluster in the world after San Francisco and New York City.*

Adobe blog 08.01.17 accessed 28.06.19

*This is an exciting move which will put us at the heart of a vibrant and creative community which shares our values of enterprise and innovation.*

Turner press release (Turner includes Warner, CNN, TNT, Cartoon Network) 11.12.17 accessed 28.06.19

*MullenLowe London is set to move to an old carpet factory in Shoreditch by the end of the year, leaving South Kensington.*

MullenLowe blog 16.06.19 accessed 28.06.19

Alongside tech and media there is a thriving hospitality scene with independent and chain businesses, and some retail, mostly long-established high-street names - e.g. Argos, Coop, M&S, Waitrose, Rymans, Travel Lodge. On the City border there is a strong presence of international legal firms.

Employers’ response

Twenty-seven local employers were approached either through door knocking or telephone, with follow up in person and by email. Fifteen employers responded, with
thirteen agreeing to engage fully with the research, eleven in face-to-face conversation. The respondents were in the main from retail and hospitality, with tech companies proving more difficult to engage within the project deadline. In all but one case the conversations were with managers responsible with some aspect of recruitment.

**Good entry level worker**

From tech and advertising to retail and hospitality, the employer sample shared a common view on a ‘good worker’ at entry level:

*Seeking committed individuals with strong people skills - qualities sought included reliable, good aura, happy, passionate about wanting to work, keen, willing, good interpersonal skills, diplomatic, flexibility, good personality, honesty, genuine, active, people orientated, adaptability, versatility, someone that is trainable, loyal, organised, enthusiastic, hard-working, works well with others, passionate’*

Employers are not asking for specific experience at entry level - instead they seek:

*Switched on people able to have a conversation ready to interact with people…. mature enough to work in an office environment with little supervision…. people who show a keenness to learn and develop and ideally a passion for the industry… everything else we can train - speed can be trained….*

A recent Nesta report commissioned by the City of London Corporation and completed in January 2019 also identified from a survey of 101 UK employers 12 transferrable skills rated by employers:

- Oral communication/presentation
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Initiative
- Problem solving
- Organisational ability
- Adaptability/flexibility
- Independent working/autonomy
- Written communication
- Critical thinking
- Resilience
- Creativity
- Analysis and evaluation skills

The report identified the employers found it challenging to accurately assess transferable skills using traditional recruitment processes, considered that interviews were still a helpful way to gather evidence of oral communication skills in particular and favoured recruitment processes that involves a task such as a problem solving exercise.
Recruitment

Tech companies and larger companies are today recruiting via company websites and through apps - JobsToday, INDEED, Reed, Total Jobs, Coffee Board were all mentioned. Local recruitment processes are frequently being transferred to head offices - for example Waitrose centralised their recruitment earlier this year. Some hospitality and retail businesses, mostly the smaller independents, still recruit through ads on windows/doors, individuals coming in with CV’s and word of mouth. A coffee shop manager commented that he can recognise a potential employee within the minute of someone coming into the shop to ask if there are jobs.

CV’s are still used by most of the sample companies, sometimes in addition to online application forms. They are used as:

‘A guide for interviews to talk through passions, interests, any other work, volunteering experience’ and as ‘something to browse through’.

Most young people working at entry level in the sample companies, particularly in hospitality and retail sectors, are working part-time to support their studies in college and university. Several employers also expressed a sense that young people did not recognise their sector as offering progression - e.g. Argos, Travel Lodge. These circumstances have perhaps acerbated a sense of exclusion from young people who traditionally might have taken these entry level jobs leading to career employment.

Our sample showed that in large buildings facilities, security front of house and cleaning are often outsourced (for example in the local Derwent complexes) with contracts frequently changing between different national suppliers. This system results in a further disconnect between the location of employment and the potential employee. Managers in these roles did however emphasise that security and facilities workers are often TUPEd from contract to contract so that people could be in the same building for decades.

Analysis

The question of ‘Local’

Most employers, both large and small companies across sectors “Did not recognise ‘local’ as Bunhill or a residential community within walking distance” rather as ‘Islington’ or ‘east London’. Three of the businesses sampled recognised the ‘flexibility’ offered by being close to work particularly those who rely on shift workers, for example Travel Lodge. Most employers were unsure about how the local authority might support them to employ locally - however, there were suggestions including a local online jobs board ‘We are
hiring’, that the local authority could be a conduit for work placements and internships (Prince’s Trust, Arsenal and Inspire were all mentioned as having provided access to employees).

People skills still required
There was a widespread belief that people skills will be needed in an increasingly automated society, particularly in security, sales and hospitality roles:

You will always need the human to solve the problem.... robots don’t have interpersonal skills.... we need people for fire, floods or when anything goes wrong... we still need to eat, we still need to make, we still need to work - without that we are not human beings... human interaction can’t be replaced, people will still need/want to get out and relax.... meeting and greeting, no-one can take away service and personality.

There was no evidence that anyone can imagine what the jobs will be in five years’ time that we do not already have, let alone twenty years’ time.

Young People offer an understanding of the new paradigm
Who has an imagination for the future? Are employers recognising that local young people might offer valuable understandings and innovative reimagining of late capitalism, technology and work. The local entry level worker has grown up with technology and a resultant rapid physical and social change of their neighbourhood. Many of these young people might not have thrived in formal academic pathways, however, they have an embodied understanding of the complexities at the core of a global city - an understanding that is commonly interpreted as disadvantage rather than an asset by themselves, employers and society.

The motivation that you find in Tech City is inspiring, and I like being part of the start-up gang culture.

Kristo Kaarmann, Transferwise, East London Tech City: The Standout Startups Since 2008 Accessed 28.06.19

No empathy with the local unemployed
It appears that many employers are unaware of the circumstance of the ward and that there is a community of disadvantaged young people who feel excluded from the employment ‘gang’. There is clearly a potential in highlighting the presence of a diverse hyperlocal residential community to employers, particularly the young people, and the
value that they offer through closeness to work and their lived experience of London and current society.

There is a need for increased accessibility to a greater range of different and more socioeconomically diverse abilities and experiences.

An advertising company

There is a perceived value in employing young people there is a will that can be harnessed. The significance of young people’s contribution is recognised.

There will always be 18+ entry level roles due to the demands of creative industries, the need for fresh, relevant ideas and innovation.

We would love to give them a job if local young people approached them with the right attitude’.

A hospitality employer

Even if they might not currently recognise how they themselves could support local young people:

Employers across sectors expressed a desire to support young people to find pathways to achieving their potential - everyone deserves a chance.

Employers want to be innovative and many have compelling CSR commitments - maybe they can be supported to see the potential in those who feel left behind and unheard, and to develop innovative recruitment and entry level employee support.
Review Conclusion

“Look at that building over there, do you think they want someone like me working there!”

At the start of the review process the Nascent Project team posed three questions as the framework in which to broach this complex and subjective matter. The questions were selected following much deliberation to identify the most effective and efficient way of gathering unsolicited views of local young people, without steering or influencing their comments and thinking. Below is a critical analysis in response to these questions surmised from the information gathered through the consultation processes and analysing related secondary data.

1. **Do young people living in the Bunhill Ward ‘feel’ part of the environmental and aesthetic changes that have happened in their area?**

Several of the comments made by young participants appear to indicate a ‘them and us’ perception. Young people commented that they did not think the new businesses in the area would welcome anyone that looked like them or that they were being visibly encouraged to seek employment in these businesses. It is noted through the employer consultation that one of the large food stores in the area does not advertise vacancies in the window of the business because all the recruitment is done through central office. Although local chains do place adverts in the windows, some young people did not make inquiries as these were establishments that they did not use in their general day to day activities i.e. bespoke coffee houses and high-end retailers. It is reasonable to conclude that many local young people are not in a financial position to afford some of the new products and services in the area, and subsequently cannot build relationships with new local employers and their customer base.

It is significant that local young people use local provisions, including The Drum Youth Work Hub, City YMCA London, Soapbox and Unlimited. However, we heard our participants’ express that they had outgrown location-based youth offers and indicated their need for interventions that provided more virtual, arms-length approaches, which would encourage them to feel more in control of their career aspirations.

Although a more in-depth research process might provide empirical evidence of whether young people ‘feel’ included in the changes that have occurred in their local area, it can be concluded from the comments collated that some young people are
feeling excluded and ‘unwelcome’ in the Bunhill Ward. Whether this outcome stems from an intentional approach by newcomers to the area is unknown; however, it is essential that strategies are put in place to ensure that the perceptions do not widen into a ‘them and us’ situation. Creating community inclusion within an area that has a daily high influx of commuters and workers, coupled with the changing demographic of the area, will need a concentrated effort to ensure that the voices of the few [but extremely significant] are still shaping the area.

2. **Does the increase in companies moving into the area result in more job opportunities for local young people?**

Secondary research gathered highlighted that several key industries within the Bunhill Ward fall within the description of ‘elite occupations’ - law firms, IT, design, banking. At the initial stage of this review it was decided that more focus would be placed on identifying the potential local employment opportunities for unskilled/unqualified young people because many employability schemes with an emphasis on youth employment are steered towards academic pathways. The review has scratched at the surface of what is available for young people who do not want to pursue an academic pathway into employment. As explained previously in this report, there is empirical evidence that a large percentage of jobs in Bunhill Ward fall within the description of elite occupations, which can place young people from working class backgrounds at a disadvantage because even the brightest working-class young person living in the area has a less than 10% chance of securing a job on his/her doorstep - even with the required qualifications. For those local young people without qualification the outcome of securing employment with an elite employer is virtually impossible.

In contrast, although the IT industry makes up a majority of the companies in the East London Hub in Old Street, there are a growing number of bars, restaurants, hotels, private members clubs and other leisure firms locating in the area that will all be seeking to secure staff in a range of roles. It is anticipated that these types of casual working roles will provide a consistent stream of entry level employment for local young people, but empirical evidence suggests that some of the employers may still require a level of academic qualifications for these unskilled jobs based on the industry. This will benefit those local young people with academic credentials, especially those that highlighted their need for casual employment whilst pursuing and building platforms for their desired career aspirations.

The relevance of CVs in today’s recruitment process was a key traditional method of employment that the Nascent Project Team thought it was necessary to include and
explore. Although CVs are still widely used within the recruitment process, varying industries require a more modern format and approach to creating a CV. Through the extensive capabilities of technology CVs have evolved from paper and font formats to more creative communications combining and linking with a range of other social media platforms, To not only inform the employer of the candidates previous experience, knowledge and skills in the required field of expertise - but also to highlight the candidate’s ability to use technology that is now included in the mainstream of an employee’s skill set for most industries. For example, short film CVs, checking the number of Instagram and Twitter followers that the candidate may have. All the young people that took part in the review were proficient in using social media for personal use and building brand identities. However, it is noted that young people may need further support in developing more sophisticated knowledge of the potential legal consequences of using social media, for example copyright infringements and banned material.

A further observational conclusion drawn from the review is that those young people that were not academically qualified or driven, showed zeal and natural abilities in entrepreneurial or self-employment capabilities i.e. self-starter, confident. In a growing economy with access to global markets through good social media marketing campaigns there is potential to exploit these attributes. However, additional support may be needed to ensure young entrepreneurs have the right level of self-confidence and sustainable resilience to achieve their goals.

The lure of the underground economy?

It must be noted that some of the feedback from young people hinted towards the lure of the underground economy of selling illegal drugs and other profit-making criminal activities as a way of earning a living. Although none of the participants directly stated that they were involved in any type of criminal activity, during the impromptu street consultations some young people stated that they have friends and relatives that have been successfully ‘recruited’ into gangs to distribute and sell drugs. Young people explained that these ‘opportunities’ to make money were very alluring for many young people as a way of having an income. Young people as young as primary school age are approached by these gangs, and the offers of money, clothes/trainers and other material items are very tempting to those young people that come from families that cannot afford such items. Also, within some households this additional income could increase the lifestyle for the whole family.
However, although the work of Steven Levitt & Stephen Dubner [*Freakonomics* 2005 - *Why do all drug dealers live with their mothers?*] is a study based in America over a decade ago, the economic theory concluded in this social research can still be applied when assessing the sustainability of drug dealing as a long-term career option:

- most street level drug dealers live with their mothers because they do not have sufficient regular earnings to maintain their own cost of living expenses.
- ‘easy’ entry into the market making it more competitive and drives the cost of the product down.
- the average earnings of a street level drug dealer will fall below the minimum wage because of the number of hours that a drug dealer has to be on call, as well as the percentage they have to pay to the supplier; they may also have to share the takings with a large number of other street dealers within the gang.
- the risks associated with selling drugs can include life threatening circumstances such as violence and threats from other drug dealers/gangs, drug addiction and other health conditions.
- Drug dealers do not receive holiday pay or sickness benefits, which means they must commit to their ‘work’ all year round.

Building effective employability programmes that can offer young people living in areas that have these additional social and economic pressures is paramount to diverting them from these illegal career options. The myths associated with drug dealing as a financially viable occupation must be challenged and dispelled using statistical data and empirical evidence.

Alternative career options must be presented to young people that provide a holistic approach to their lives as community citizens. Finance is always a key component for young people when considering job opportunities. It is reasonable to surmise that the average cost of living in London for a young person living at home could be calculated at £17,000 [based on the London Living Wage index]. With this in mind, it is critical to deliver programmes that present self-employment and entrepreneurship as viable, legitimate, career pathways for those young people that do not want to pursue an academic pathway into employment.
3. Do young people think that having a sought-after postcode places them in a better position in terms of status, opportunities, lifestyle and wellbeing?

The Nascent Project Team chose to pose this question to drill further down into the overall life experiences of young people living in an affluent and sought after area. As a borough, large sections of Islington have increased in property prices, lifestyle and business growth.

This neighbourhood is developing as a place whose invitation is to the outsider - to work, to live, to play. Overlooked connections between young people and their neighbourhood can be nurtured to support the needs, talents and aspirations of young people, and build bridges to employability. The Nascent Project Review findings can assist in influencing strategies that specifically align local young people with local job opportunities.
Nascent Recommendations

The developments in technology over the last two decades has resulted in a consistent evolvement of change in people’s lifestyles, activities, knowledge and awareness of global issues. When this is coupled with the aesthetic, economic, environmental and political changes occurring in London and across the country, it is reasonable to suggest that young people living in the Bunhill Ward have a lived experience of how quickly their environment can change and the impact this can have; at a time when they too are transitioning to the next developmental phase of their life.

But with change comes uncertainty. We recommend two radical interventions for Bunhill to re-establish a sense of belonging for disadvantaged young people in their neighbourhood and in their city. These employment support services must be robust, innovative, and technologically relevant in order to install the six capabilities that employers find essential for any successful employee: self-awareness, resilience, drive, self-assurance, receptiveness and informed.

1. A community connectivity scheme

Bunhill Ward young people could be supported in using the local services and other outlets in the area. Many of them do not have the financial means to patronise local coffee houses, restaurants and bars in the area; and small independent grocery stores have been replaced by large chain stores such as Waitrose and Sainsbury’s. There is little opportunity for young people to build relationships with future employers at these outlets, and some young people can feel unwelcome or intimidated. The community connectivity scheme would seek to encourage local businesses to offer free Wi-Fi access to young people that had signed up to the Community Connectivity Scheme via local voluntary organisations. Young people would receive reward points for participating in various workshops and activities and the reward points would be exchanged for access to free Wi-Fi at participating businesses.

This scheme would:

- build bridges between local young people and local employers
- provide additional access to free Wi-Fi for young people
- enabling young people to feel welcomed and invited to the vibrant workspaces and venues of Bunhill
- allow local employers to access the knowledge and talents of local young people
- with desirable branding aligning with the vibrant local
Other potential components of the scheme would include:

- induction programme for young people members
- free use of Wi-Fi in foyers and offices for members
- co-working entrepreneurial space
- employers’ mentoring scheme
- Local online board/app with real time vacancy and employment news
- volunteering and work placement opportunities with local employers

2. A specialist detached youth work team

The development phase for this change process would need a specialist detached youth work team to establish the necessary links with Bunhill young people aged 16yrs 1-24yrs that are not engaging with any local youth provision, or those at risk/vulnerable to criminal engagement. This approach would require a consistent engagement strategy spanning at least three years in duration. The first year of delivery would focus on building relationships with local young people and local businesses and services. The detached youth team would be knowledgeable and trained in technology, as well as experienced in building employability programmes. It would require the detached youth work team to work closely with existing Islington services to ensure a ‘whole person’ bespoke outcome to the delivery model.

The aims of the project would be to:
- Polishing the skills of a young person
- Provide an arm’s length youth intervention for those young people who have outgrown location-based services
- Find and gain the trust of Bunhill young people currently unemployed and support their transition
- Provide access to opportunity, for staff to contact offices and establish relationships with employers to create awareness of local talent and to make use of the strengths other local third sector organisations.
- Establish a three-year programme to provide the significant levels of engagement needed to fully support the overall development needs of the individual
- Create street seminars to ‘demonstrate how street tech can work for you’ in private spaces, coffee shops opening access in a supported way
- Recruit a specialist youth work team that has tested knowledge in technology and training and can work with unskilled and unqualified young people
- Provide a ‘front door’ space where young people know how to connect with the team and connect to services

Other potential components:
- bespoke support with entrepreneurial aspirations including growth markets of street food and social media services coaching scheme to steer vulnerable young people from the underground economy
- supported visits to cultural and creative events across London.