

Flourishing Futures

Interim Report Findings

January 2022- September 2023



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We want to ensure our borough is alive with opportunity for our talented young people and we are committed to supporting them in every way we can to find good quality, secure work.

This peer-led research project will provide invaluable insight into the obstacles young people face when seeking employment in Brent and equip organisations from across the borough with the knowledge and understanding to tackle these challenges head on.

Councillor Shama Tatler, Cabinet Member for Planning,
Regeneration and Growth at Brent Council

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Introduction from Maxine

Flourishing Futures is a peer research led project. The report presented here is the interim findings into the issues and experiences of young people growing up in Brent. It has been written with the findings of eleven peer researchers and four youth board members. The report is the culmination of almost a year's work which started through conversations with young people across three of the largest estates in Brent, Chalkhill, Stonebridge and Church End. The purpose of the research is to explore with young people the barriers faced in their journey into employment.

The partnership is focusing on these areas on Brent because they are priority neighbourhoods for Statutory services, Employment Services, Health Services, Education, Police and Community Safety. These areas have the highest concentration of young people with Black African or Black Caribbean heritage. They are young people who are more likely to be long term unemployed than in other parts of the borough. These areas represent high pockets of deprivation within the borough. Populations in the areas have an above average number of Job Seekers Allowance and residents with no qualifications.

Existing employment support models have remained the same for decades and do not adequately lead to sustainable outcomes for young people experiencing long term unemployment. The model is broadly the same: refer, assess, support, training, employment. They often have the same eligibility criteria - 'not in work' or 'not supported by another programme'.

A recurring theme when speaking to young people is the need for joined up employment support and information on what is available to young people.

Working with Youth Futures Foundation's Project Lead, Relationship Manager, Renaisi, Ipsos and grantees of the Connected Futures Fund has allowed the Flourishing Futures Partnership to draw on a wealth of research expertise and What Works Centre insights, to inform the work undertaken.

Our vision is of a borough where all young people have access to quality jobs. This includes:

- Equal employment opportunities for young people facing discrimination or disadvantage.
- Fewer young people outside the labour market or in insecure work
- Improved progression pathways for young people



Summary

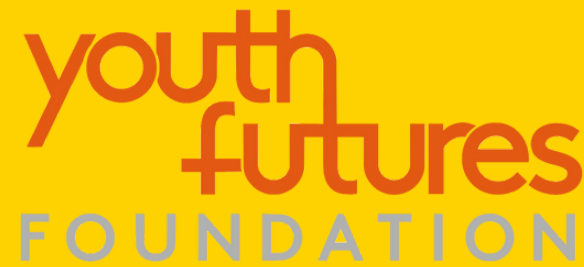
Flourishing Futures research covered a wide range of topics about young people and employment. These topics—from flexibility, mental health, and financial status to discrimination based on ethnicity and gender—are all important considerations in today's job market, especially for young people who are just starting their careers or working part-time while studying.

We have witnessed through interviews with young people that attitudes towards younger workers need to change. A shift in perception will lead to a more inclusive environment where young people are considered for their skills, enthusiasm, and fresh perspectives rather than being underestimated because of their age.

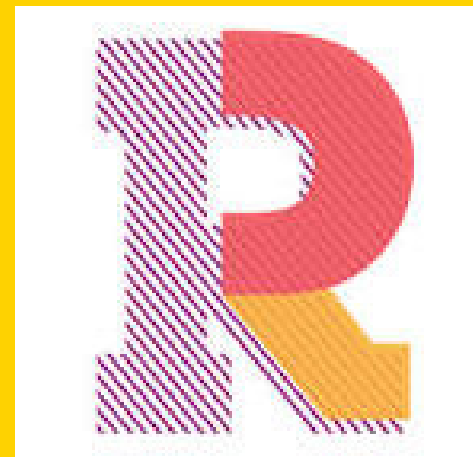
The need for better mental health understanding and support in the workplace is another crucial issue that has been highlighted. Open conversations and a supportive environment can make a significant difference in employee well-being, which in turn positively impacts productivity and workplace culture.

Our exploration of these themes has made for a compelling case for systems change, especially given the current changes in the employment landscape and the unique challenges that young people face.

Recognising our support system



Our primary funder, without whose support this research wouldn't have been possible. Young Brent Foundation as the Lead organisation applied to the Connected Futures Fund to carry out this project. "We want to fund work that builds connections, aligns incentives and fills gaps so that young people facing disadvantage receive support. We also want to remove barriers in the way that support is currently provided, for example through anti-discriminatory or trauma-informed approaches".



Renaishi is a social enterprise committed to improving places for the people who live in and use them. They are the appointed Learning Partner and have supported the project through training around methodologies, systems mapping, coaching and advice.



Joining in the later stages of the project to offer support to both peer researchers and Turning Mayhem to Magic's conference planning team, Pinnacle Group's Business Mentors have complemented the skills of the team in bringing to life the story and insights of Flourishing Futures.

Diagnosing the problem



**Exploring
barriers to
employment
in Brent**

Figures from Stone and Hirsch (2019) paint a bleak picture for Brent. With two out of every five children living in poverty, there's an immediate call to action. Such high child poverty rates can have long-term societal implications, including reduced educational attainment, mental and physical health issues, and perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

The fact that 25% of local residents in Brent have no qualifications is alarming. Education is often directly linked to employment opportunities and earning potential. By addressing the educational barriers, Brent can improve its employment rate and subsequently reduce child poverty.

Over a fifth of the working age population in of Brent are economically inactive. This is being driven by increases in long term and temporary sick and 'discouraged' workers. It's evident that the current systems aren't efficiently integrating people into the workforce.

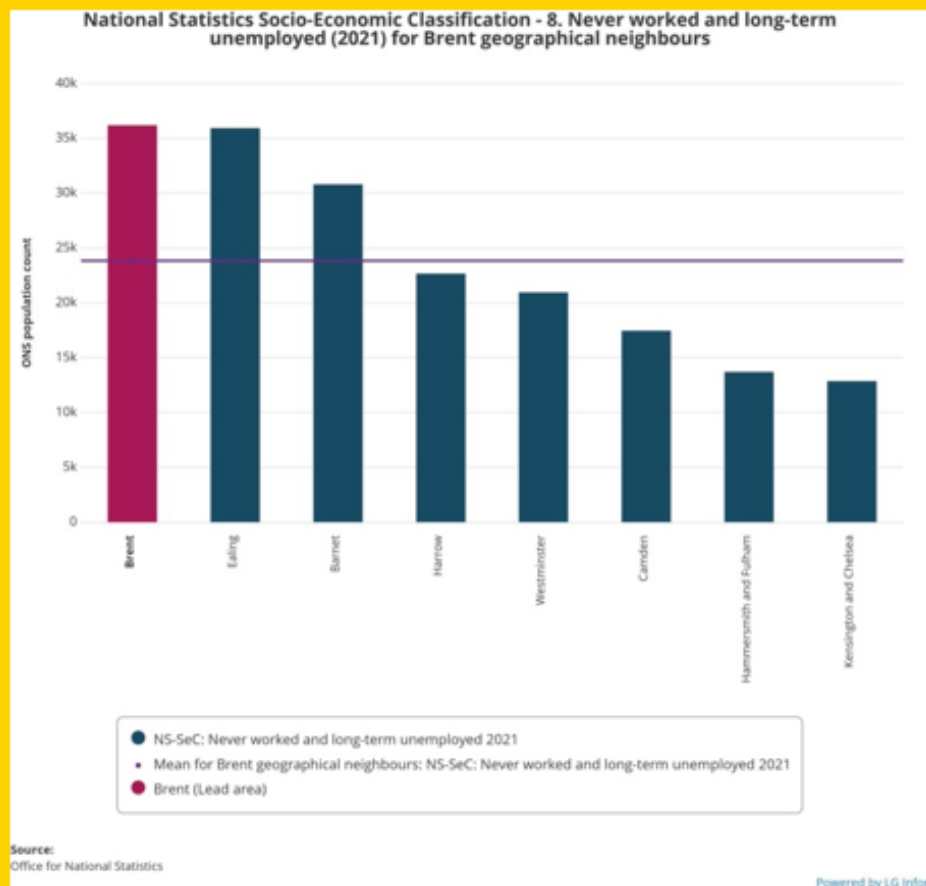
Addressing barriers to employment could reduce the dependency on welfare systems, freeing up resources for other community initiatives and boosting the local economy.

Poverty and unemployment are often associated with higher crime rates. By improving employment opportunities, crime rates can potentially be reduced.

The next generation in Brent could get trapped in the same cycle of poverty and unemployment if immediate actions are not taken.

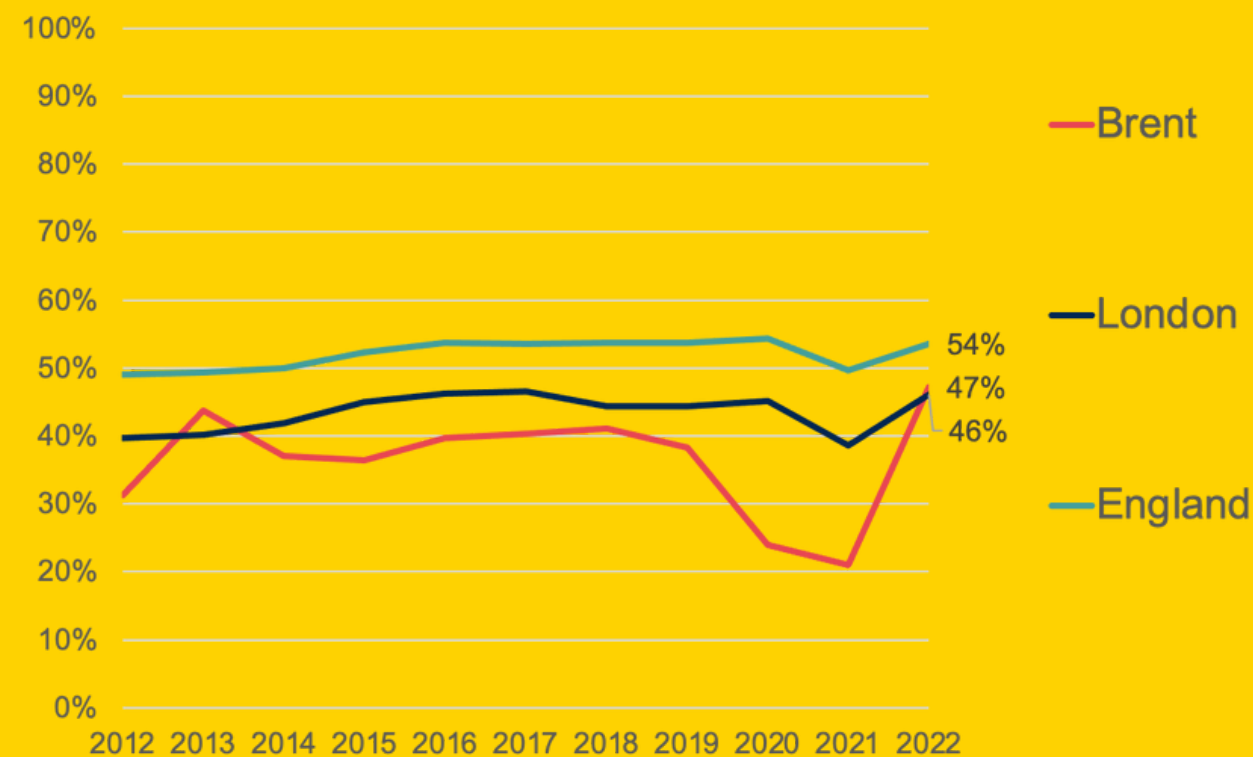
With a large segment of the population relying on benefits, there's a strain on public resources which could be better utilised elsewhere.

Continued unemployment and the associated financial struggles can lead to exacerbated mental health issues, increasing the burden on healthcare services.

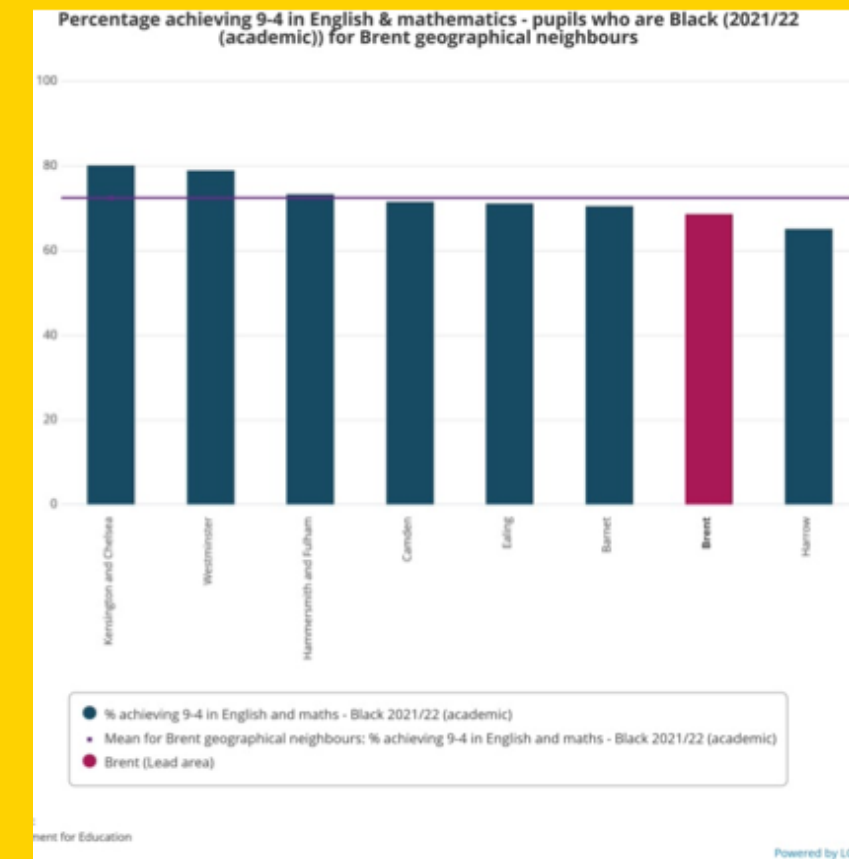


Never worked & Long term unemployed 2021. Brent at just over 35% of the population.

Youth employment rate (16-24), 2012-2022



The youth employment rate in Brent is in line with London as a whole but lower than across England



Pupils who are from a Black heritage background in Brent achieve lower grades than neighbouring boroughs with 76% achieving grade 9-4 in English and Maths

We identified causes not just the symptoms

Systems Mapping

“What are the issues driving inequality in employment outcomes for young people in Brent”?

The workshop brought together the perspectives of range of stakeholders in the youth employment system to build a picture of the system that young people have to navigate in accessing employment in Brent.





Research Partnership



Project Leads

- 1 Saba Yazdani - MTVH
- 2 Zorka Keszthelyi - YBF
- 3 Megan Wright - Spark!
- 4 Julie Costley- Hyde
- 5 Jim Jessop - Brent Council
- 6 Michaela Cockayne - Peabody

Project Board Members

Our priority was to recruit young people who live in Chalkhill, Stonebridge and Church End. In addition young people had to live, work or study in Brent. The age range was 16-25 years old and able to commit approx 10 hours a month on the project. Youth board members also carried out the role of peer researchers.



Peer Researchers

The recruitment of peer researchers isn't just a win for the Flourishing Futures Partnership. It's a win for the community of Brent. Seeing such a robust response from our young community members gives us hope for a more inclusive and progressive future.

Ownership and Leadership



Young People

Project Board & Peer Researchers

Anna Entsir

Medofo Prempeh

Mohammed Al-nashi

Jessica Boamah

Peer Researchers

Fatima Boutarfa

Sarah Titong

Yvonne Ogbonna

Ayan Abdi

Fahan Hashi

Vanessa Nankya

Nikola Kovecevic

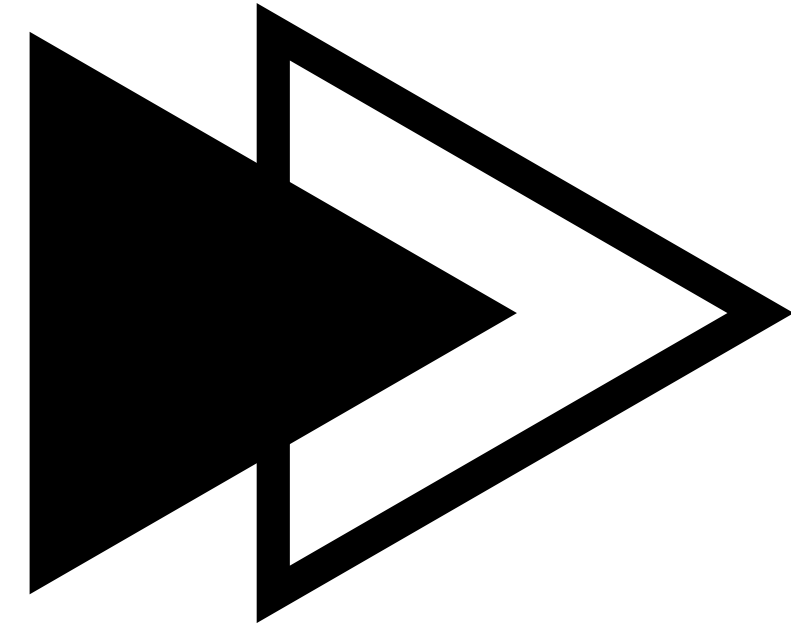
Halliyah White

Mariana de Souza Hoff

Taysha Miller

The purpose of this research project is to explore and understand the challenges and inequalities young people face in the employment system in Brent. The research aimed to involve local stakeholders and young people in the process of identifying problems, evaluating existing systems, and brainstorming solutions.

The Connected Futures Learning Partner, Renaisi have been critical to the development of the research by providing a range of support to the partnership and peer researchers.

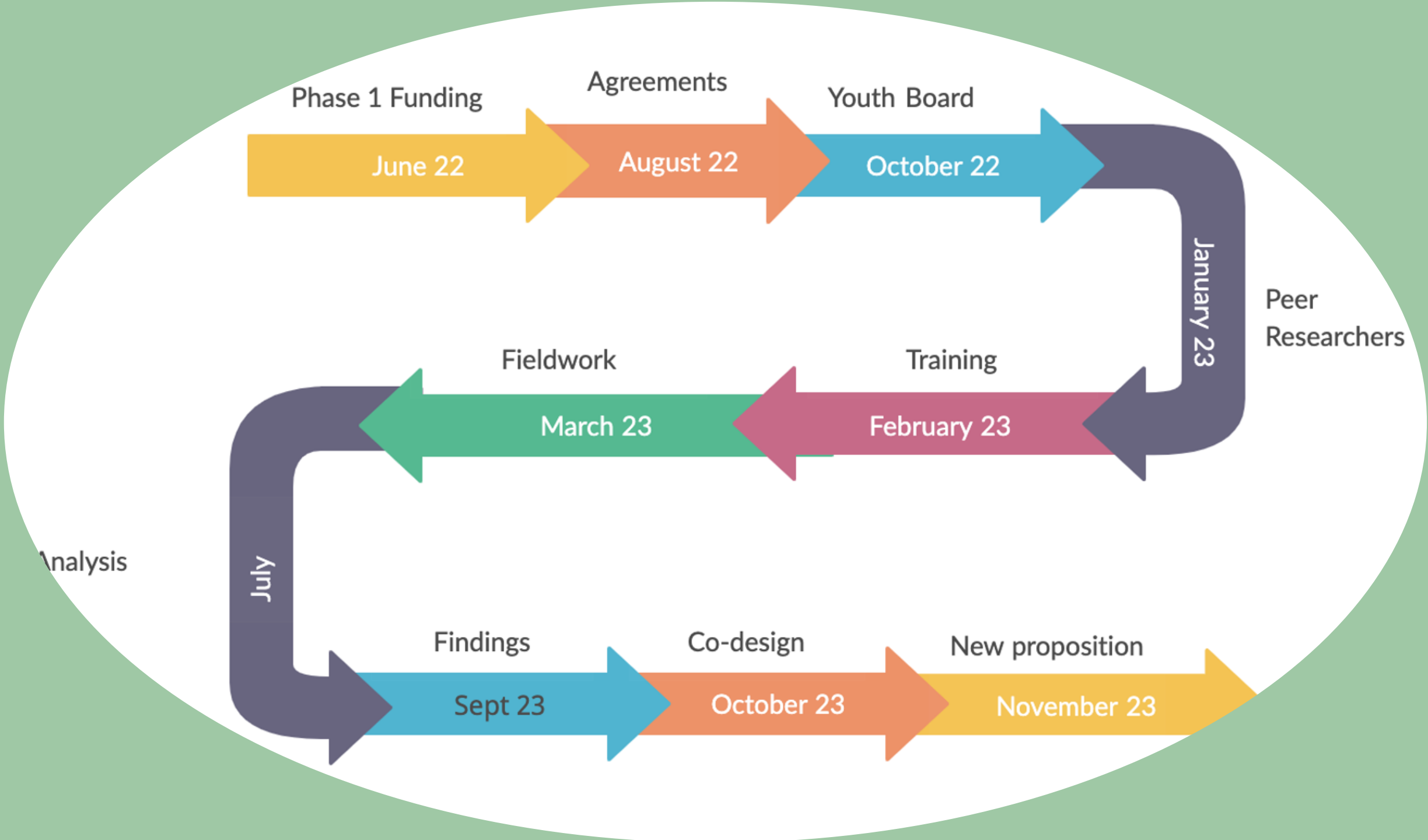


- **Informal support** including regular calls to touch base and provide coaching and advice
- **Formal support** including direct research, analysis, training around methodologies, framework and tool development
- **Core support** including systems mapping, data walk workshops (collaborative sense making), theory of change workshops, workshops with evaluators

Methodology

- 10 min online survey (150 yp)
- 20 min interviews (100 yp)
- Focus group with 6-7 organisations (including employers)
- Monthly workshops (15 yp)
- 3 Stakeholder Events

Timeline of Flourishing Futures



Research Design

What do we want to explore

Each peer researcher identified questions they want to ask young people about employment

Identify Key Questions

What do we think we know

Peer researchers wrote 5 reasons they think contribute to unfair access to employment

Understand perceived employment inequalities

Who will we need to speak to

Different stakeholder groups that impact the themes

Identify stakeholders that have an impact on employment inequalities

How will we build engagement

Who is not listening to young people. Who do peer researchers interact with

Engagement strategy

Two day training lifted the lid on the types of research and also the ethics, consent and process needed to be put in place around young people as peer researchers.



Training delivered by Renaisi on the importance of ethics in research



Two workshops to understand consent and delve into research approaches



Additional training on Safeguarding to ensure peer researchers knew what to do if a disclosure was made during an interview

Data Collection

Peer researchers developed the questions and designed the survey

INTERVIEWS - 100 interviews carried out with young people. Dictaphones recorded the interviews and were uploaded to Otter Ai

FOCUS GROUPS - Parents, Youth Workers, Employment Support, Careers Advisors and Employers

SURVEYS - Carried out with employers and young people. 200 completed survey's captured experiences and perceptions

WORKSHOPS - Convening stakeholders to review insights and gather ideas

Data Analysis

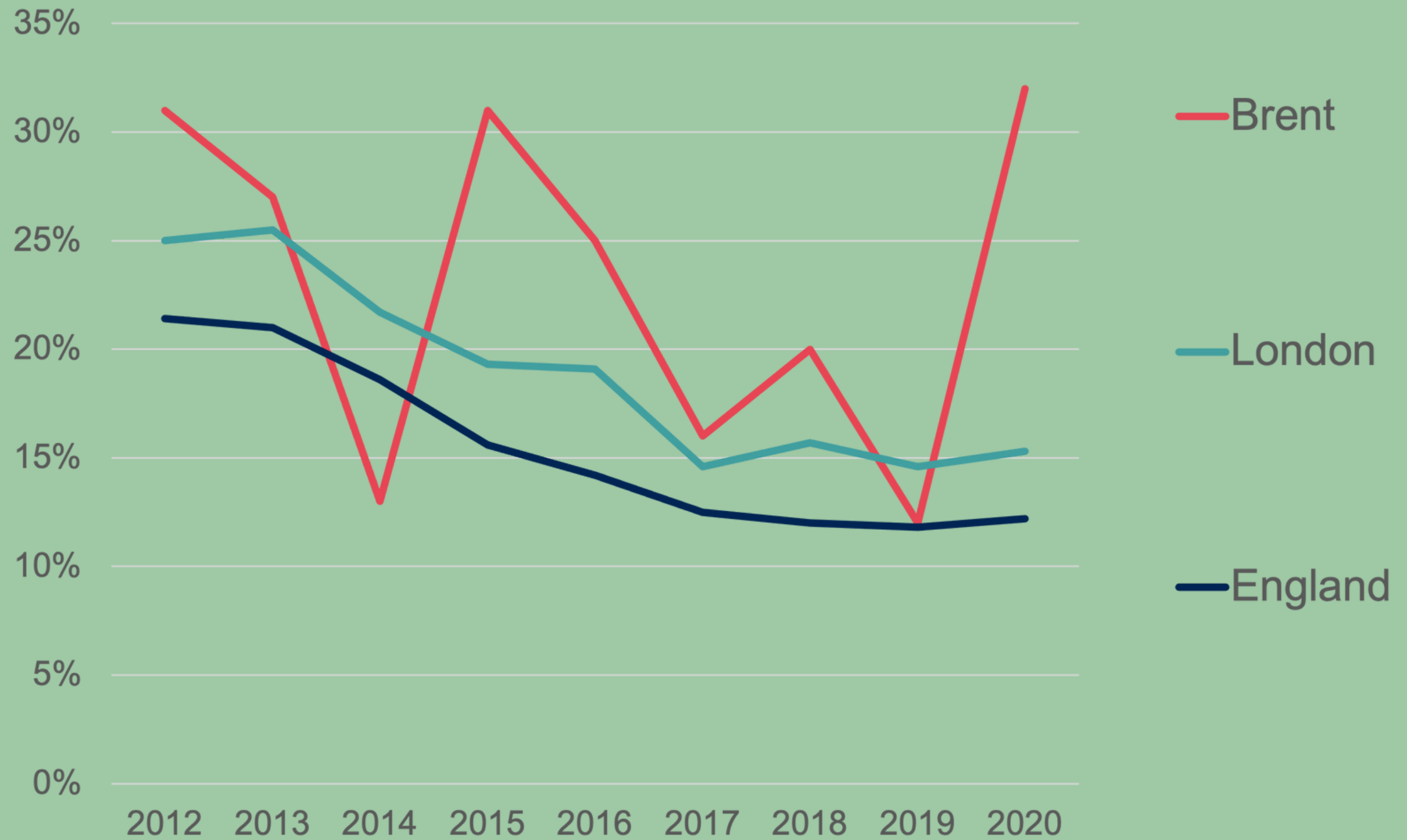
A weekend residential to code and analyse 100 transcript and 132 survey responses.

Coding and analysis of 32 employer responses and 2 focus groups.



Trends in Brent

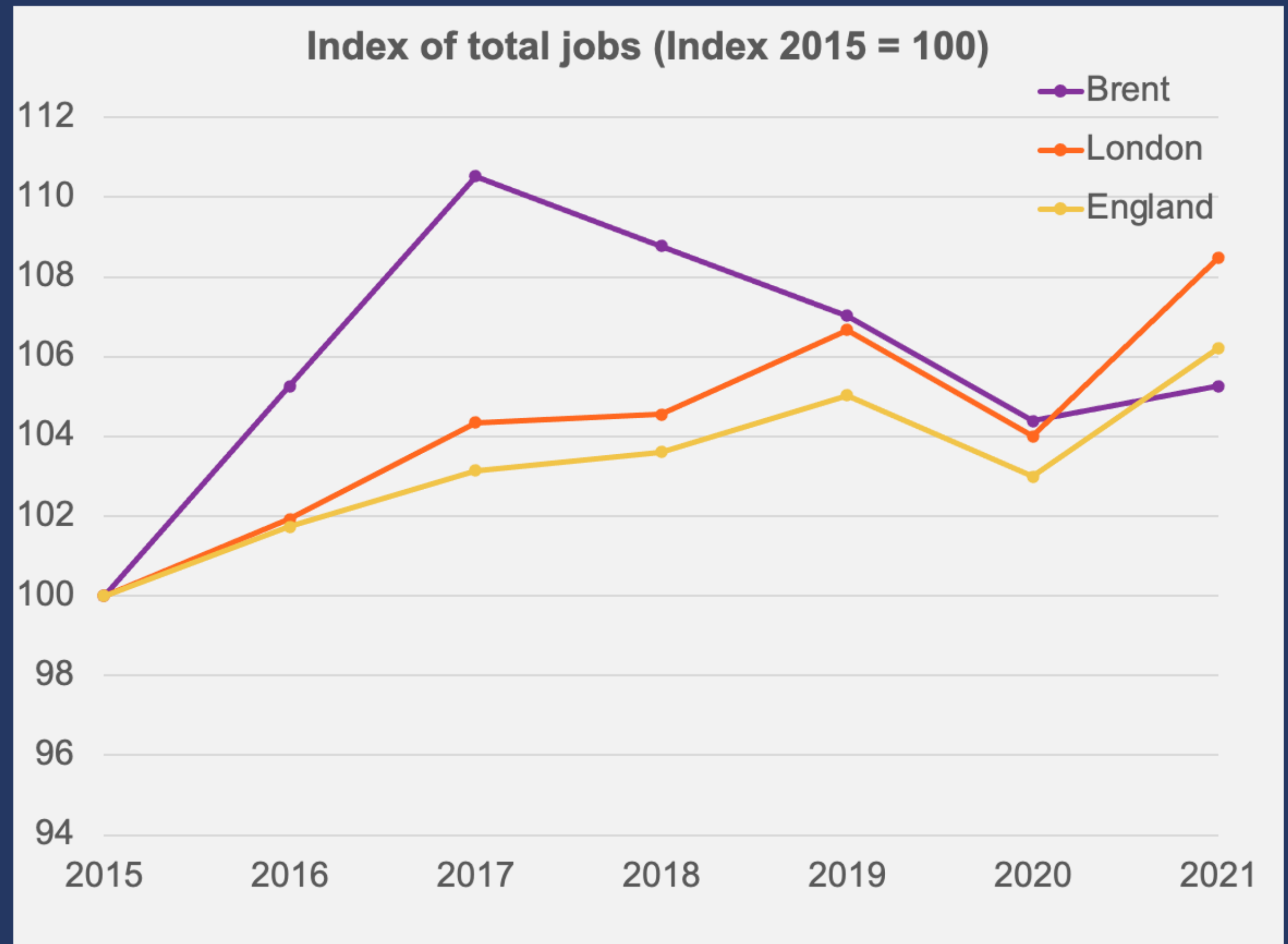
Youth unemployment rate (16-24), 2012-2022



Jobs in Brent



- In 2021, there were **120,000 jobs** in Brent – 5% more than in 2015
- A quarter of all jobs in Brent (25%) were in Stonebridge, Harlesden and Barnhill
- Jobs in Brent accounted for 2.2% of all jobs in London in 2021 and 0.5% of all jobs in England
- There was a decline in jobs in Brent between 2017 and 2020, but this downward trend appears to have reversed in the most recent year for which data is available (2021)
- Job density in Brent is relatively low, with 0.63 jobs for every person of working age (16-64) compared to 1.02 in London and 0.85 in GB

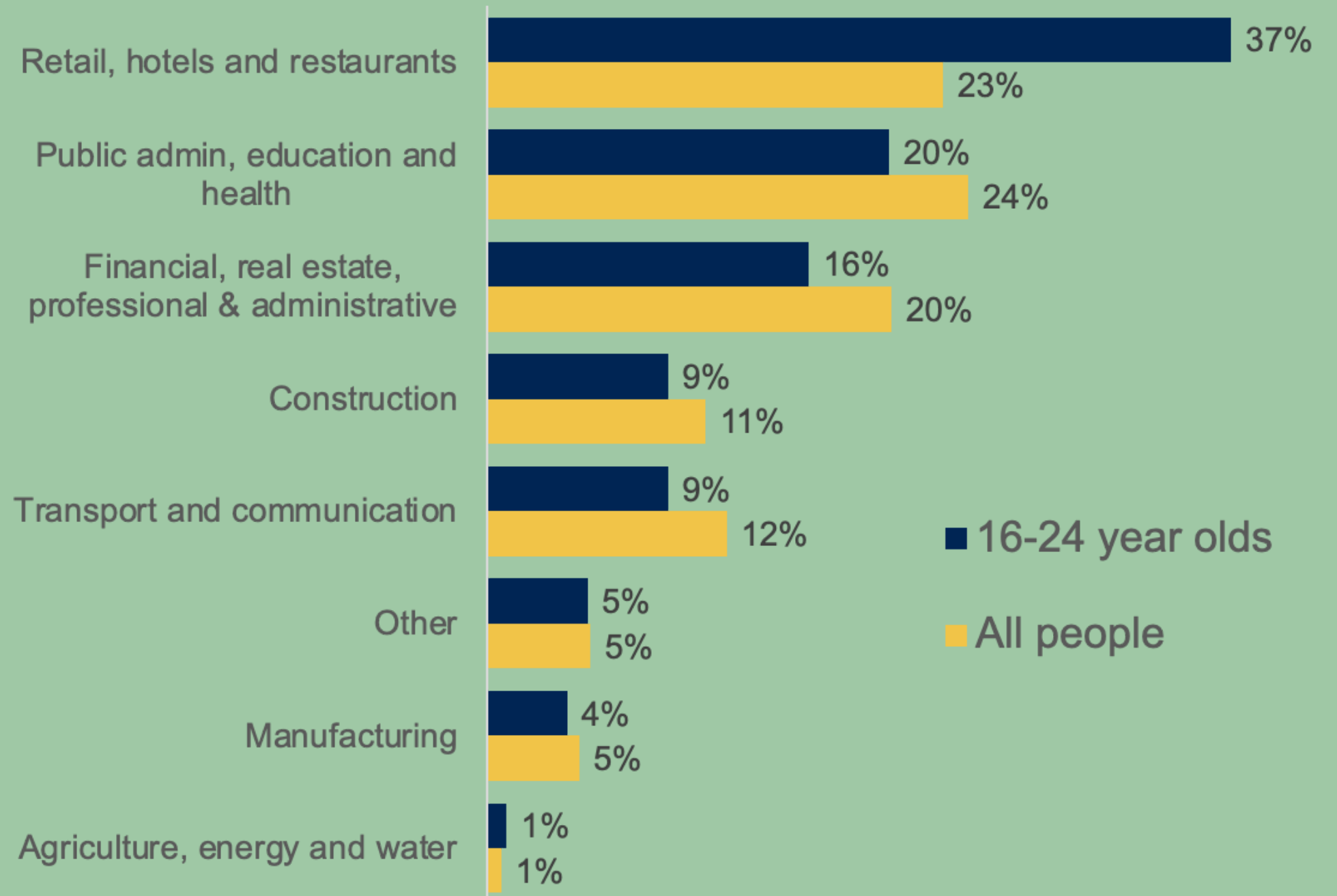


Business Register and Employment Survey (accessed via NOMIS)

Industry of YP in Brent who are in employment

- More than one in every three young people in employment in Brent work in the **retail and hospitality** industries – the most popular employing industry for this age group
- This is followed by **public services**, which includes administration, education and health
- Young people in Brent are slightly less likely to work in **financial or professional services** when compared to all people in work
- Young people are also **less likely** to work in construction and transport

Employment by industry, 2021

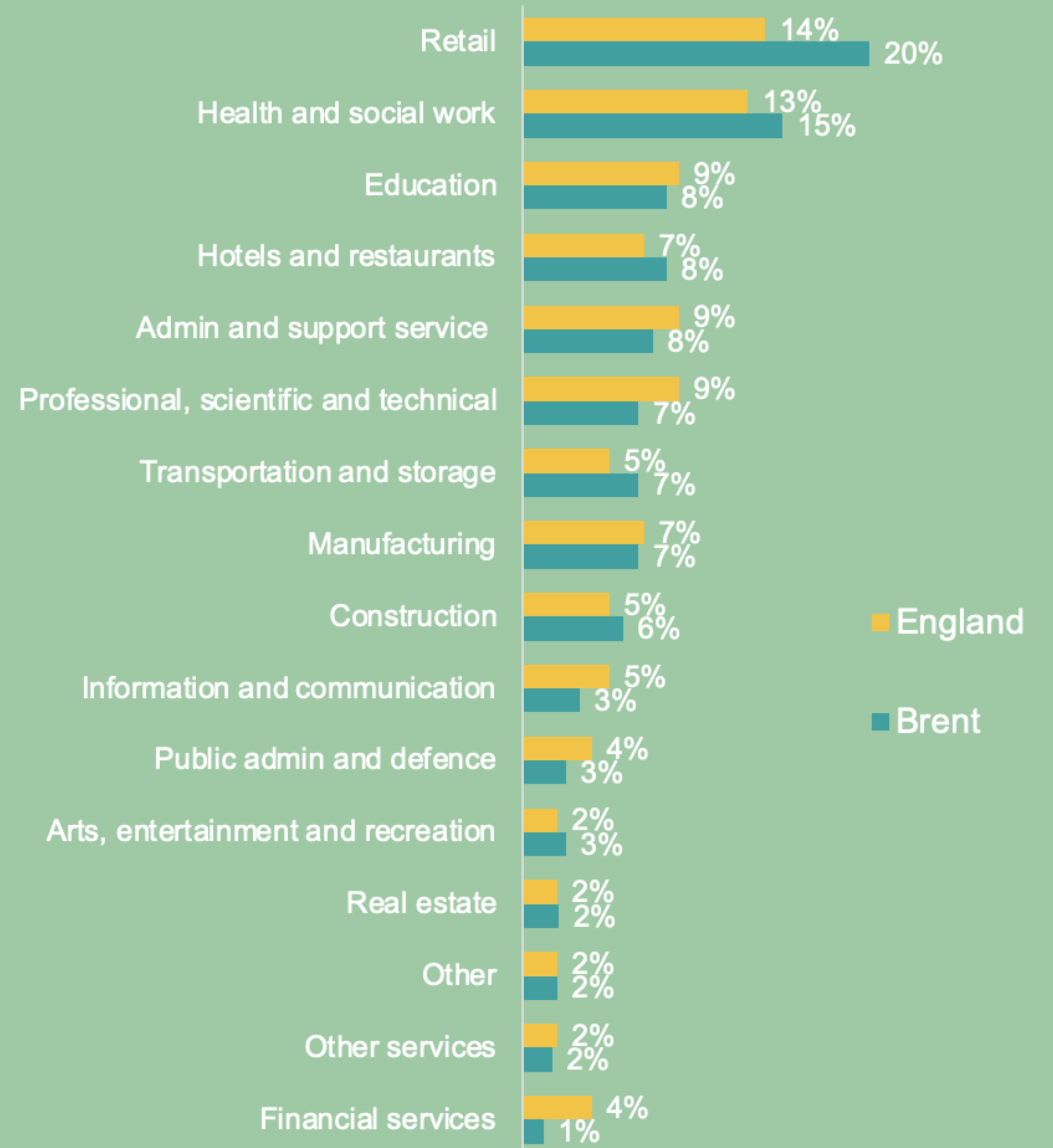


Industrial structure

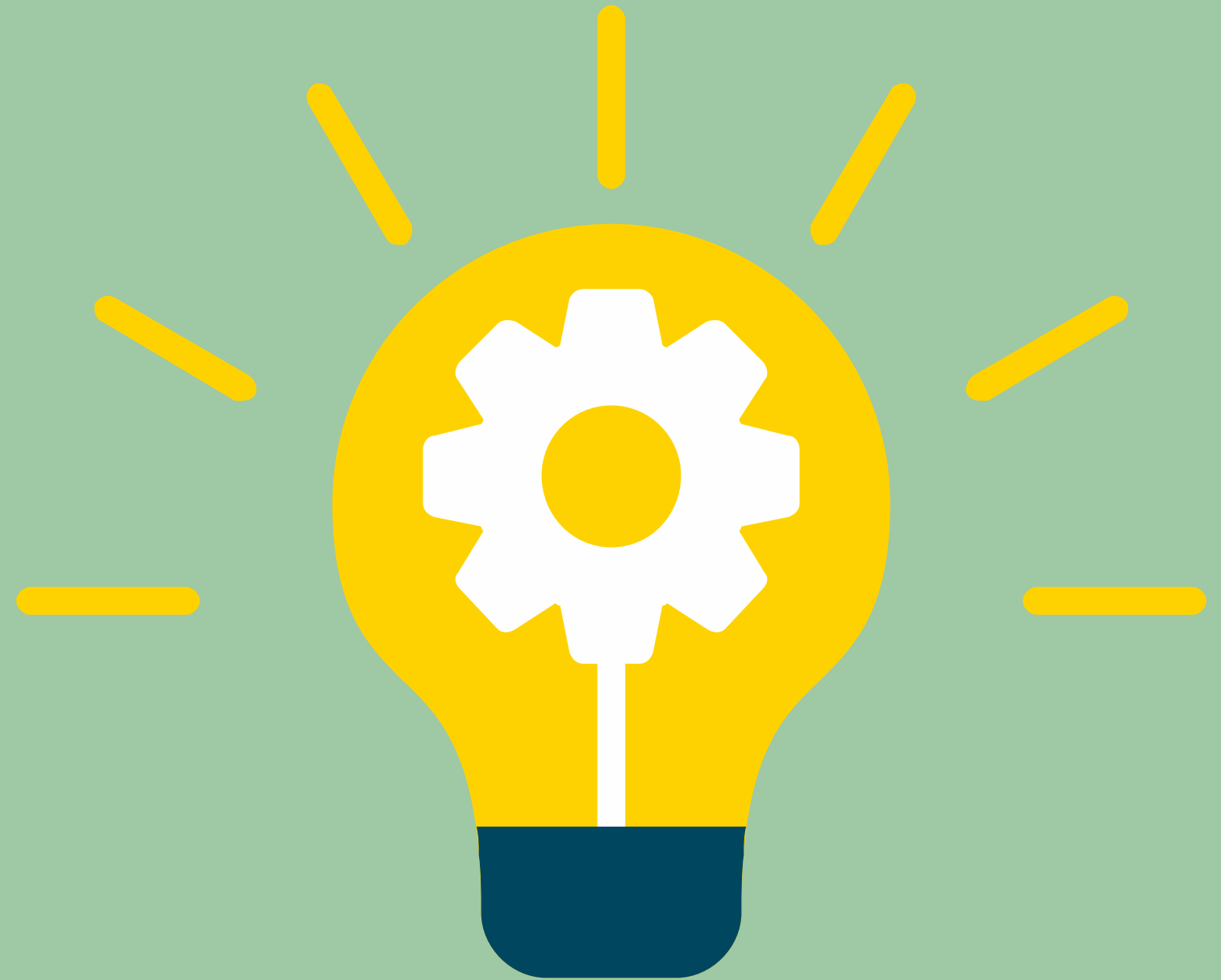
The largest employing industries in Brent are retail, health and social care and education.

- **Retail** accounts for one in every five jobs in Brent (20%), higher than the equivalent figure of 14% for England
- Brent is also more dependent on the **health and social care sector** for jobs relative to the national average
- There are **slightly higher concentrations of jobs** in hotels and restaurants, transport and construction in Brent relative to England
- Brent has **fewer jobs** in professional services, IT, financial services and public services compared to England as a whole

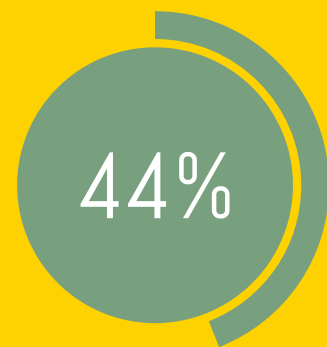
Jobs by sector (2021)



Findings



Insights from the Survey



would like to work in Brent



There is support around employment available in my area

When asked how often starting their own business had been discussed while they were in education **47.4%** said never.

When asked if anyone in education had ever spoken about where to access employment support **60.9%** said never.

80% of young people go to parents, family members, siblings and teachers for careers advice.

150 survey respondents*

37% had never experienced a visit from an employer at school

19.8% have once

23.5% have twice

9.9% have four times

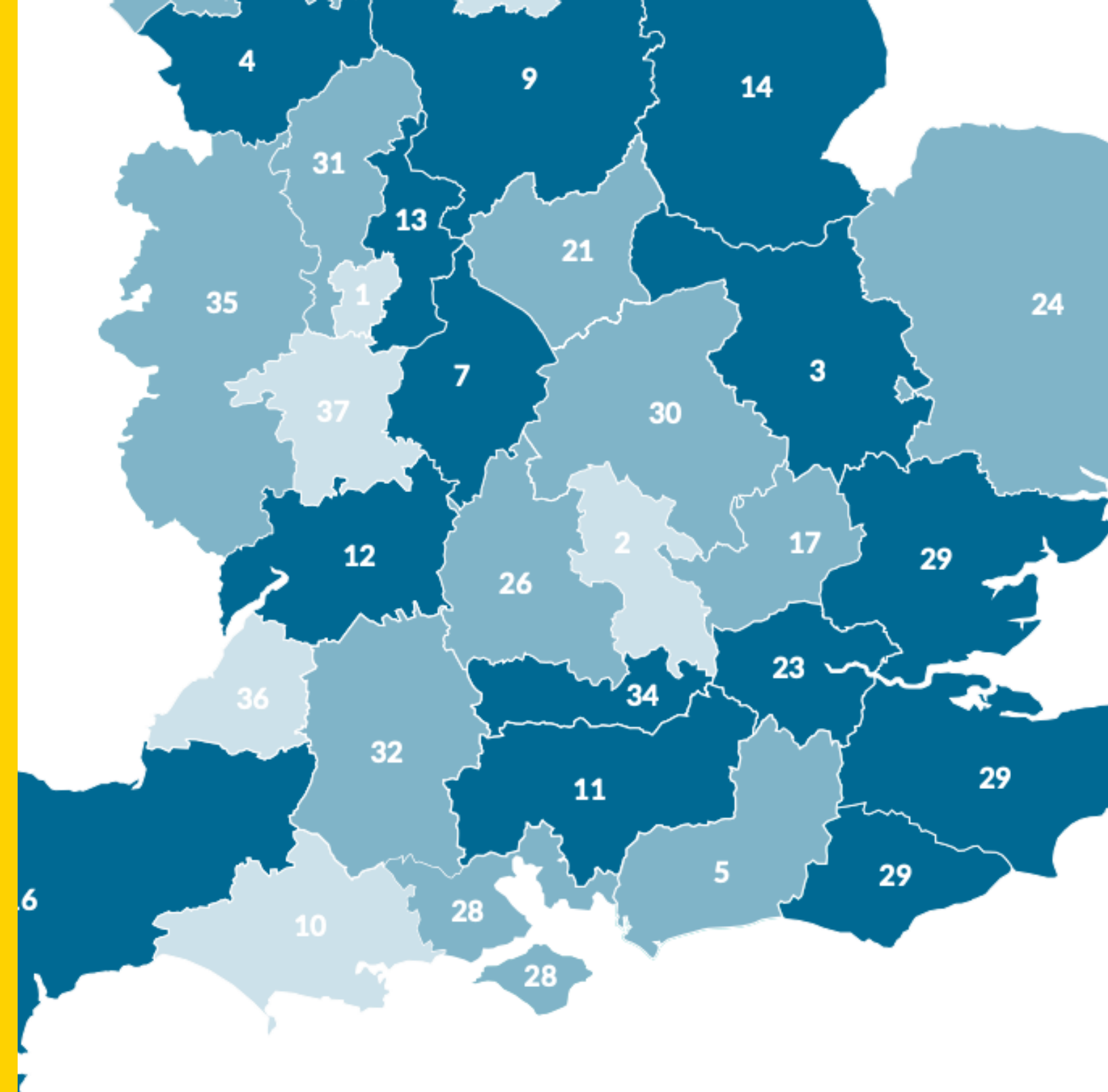


Employer encounters have been found to have a positive impact on longer-term career outcomes including engagement with employment and wages.

Young people who did four or more activities during secondary school were less likely to be NEET during their 20s.

Closing the gap, Careers and Enterprise Company

This map shows the proportion of young people in each Local Employment Partnership who are missing out on employer encounters.



Number 23 - London identified as large gap missing out

Small gap
(1-14% missing)

Medium gap
(15-18% missing)

Large gap
(9-25% missing)

Critical challenges in the employment system

Wage Discrimination

17%

**of those interviewed
mentioned wages**

This can have long term impact for marginalised groups, contributing to a cycle of poverty and economic disparity.

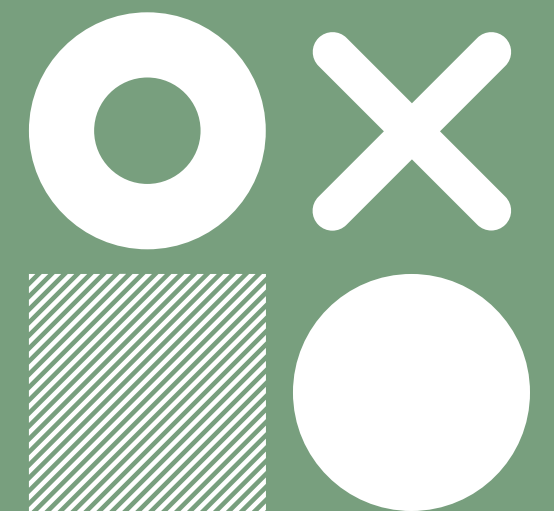
Interviewee

"Yeah, so one of my friends she's Pakistani. She got paid like significantly less than someone else who was like a year older than her. But that person was like 17, both in the same job and she was 16. So the employer said, Oh, it's just because of like, your age and stuff, but it was like a difference of like, seven pounds. So it's like, yeah, she'd be paid like six pounds an hour and the other person will be paid like £15 ,£16 pounds. So yeah, and it was like the other person was white. And she obviously wasn't and then the same thing happened to one of my friends who's from Ghana. But the exact same thing basically."



Lack of Awareness and Education

Young people, especially those who are entering the workforce for the first time, may not be fully aware of their rights or the wage laws applicable to them.



Racial Discrimination

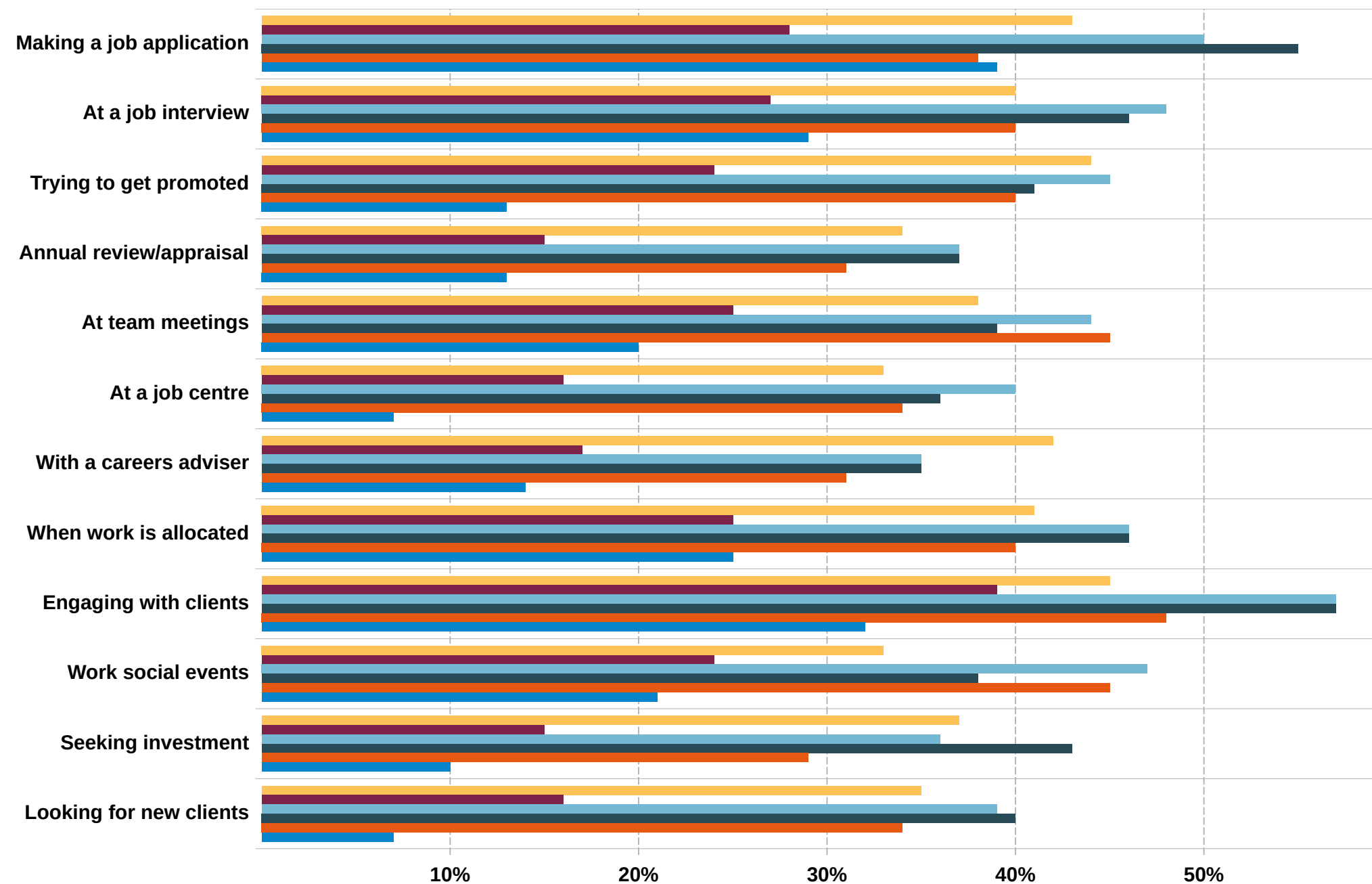
**80% are worried about
barriers to do with ethnicity**

“ I think it's just old school racism. And also people want to see people who look like them all of the time. So I think it's one of those situations where employers are like, I can just see my skin and only hire white people.”

In the Flourishing Futures research of 80% of young people who were interviewed described an experience of direct and/or indirect racial discrimination

Youth Futures commissioned to an independent survey of 2,296 ethnic minority young people, seven in 10 (71%) have experienced some form of workplace discrimination. Almost half (46%) of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds have experienced discrimination when dealing with customers or clients at work, while two in five have experienced it when applying for a job (37%) and/or at a job interview (36%).

Young people from ethnic minority backgrounds worry about how their ethnicity will impact their experience of the workplace



Key:

White

Asian/Asian British

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

Middle Eastern

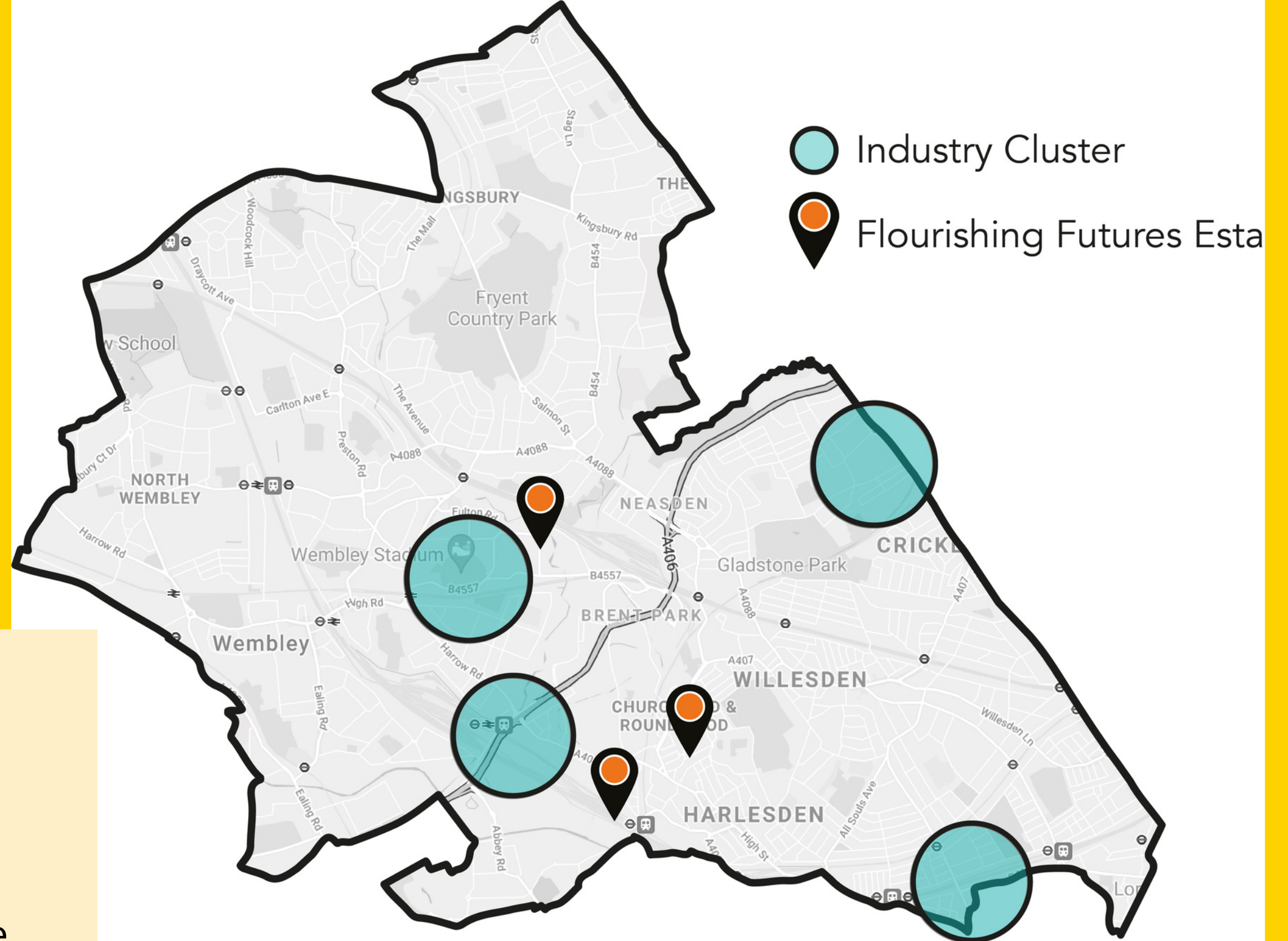
Mixed Multiple

Other

Unexpected Discoveries



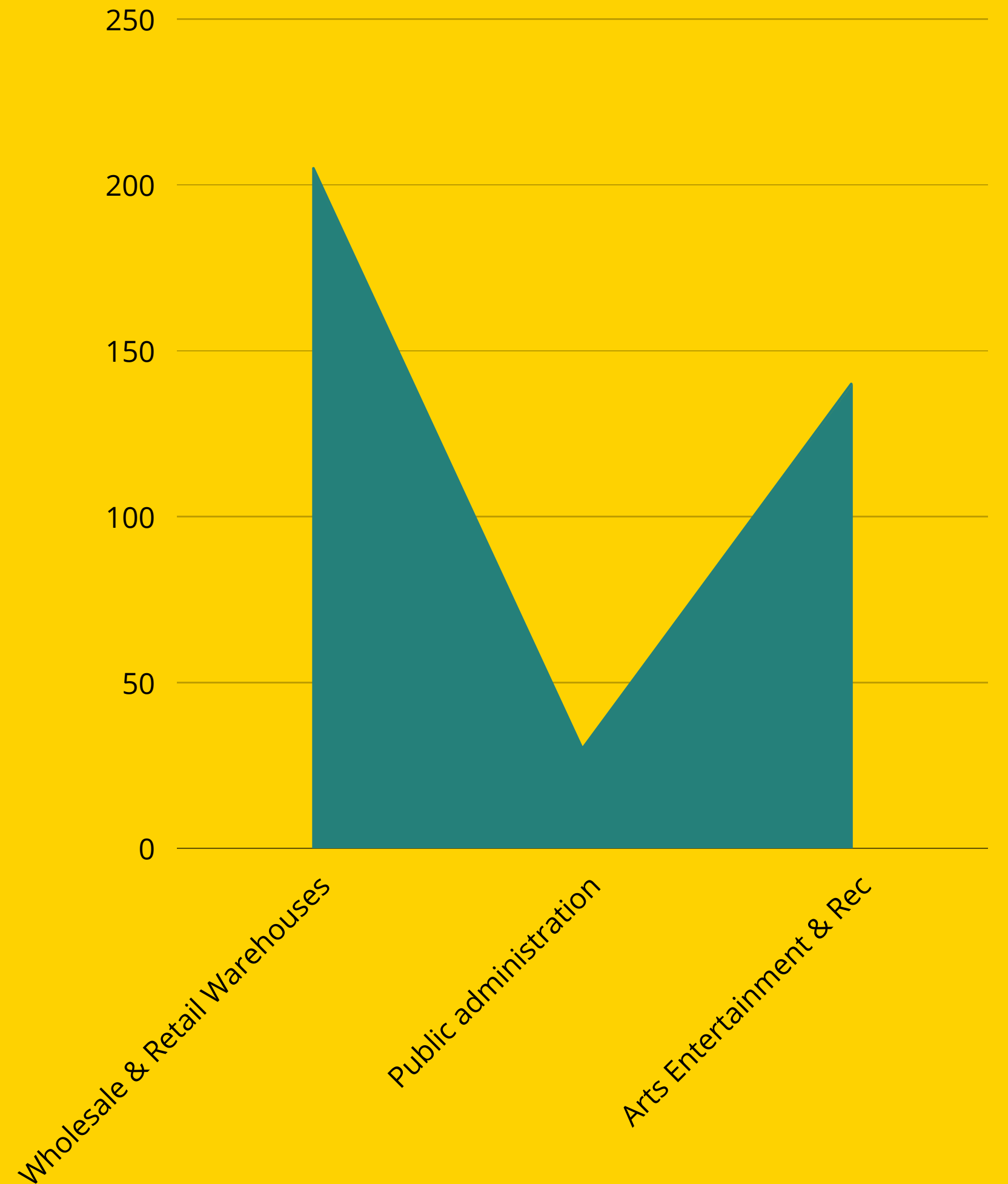
Three of Brent's largest estates that have high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity are located close to the largest employing industries



Business Clusters

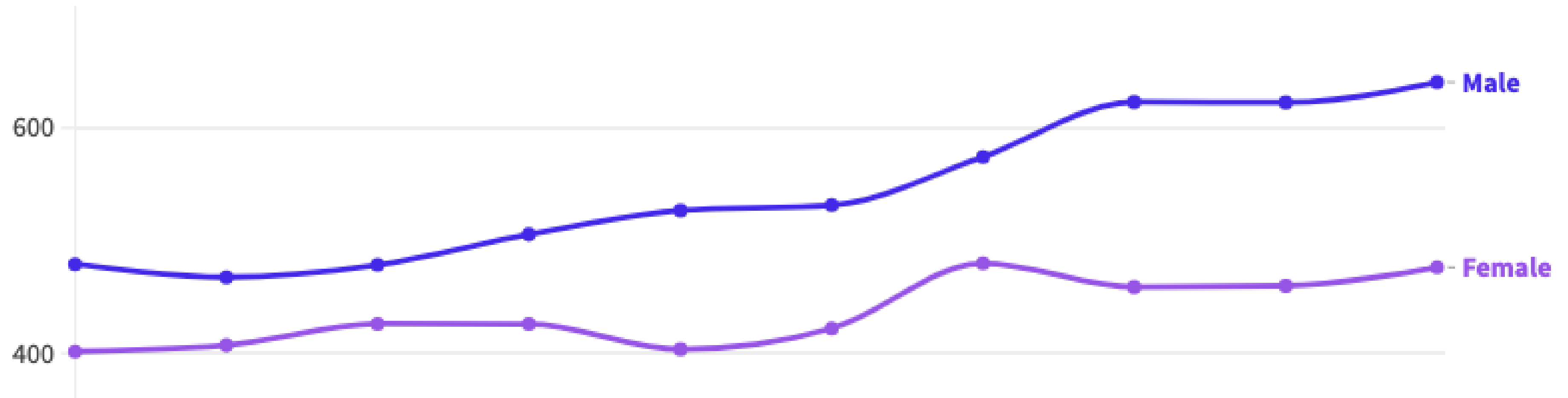
A business cluster can be defined as a geographic concentration of related businesses in a particular field. Business clusters are known to increase competition and productivity

- In close proximity to areas of deprivation
- Business turnover dominated by wholesale sector
- Raising questions of opportunity for young people



Brent - annual survey of earnings

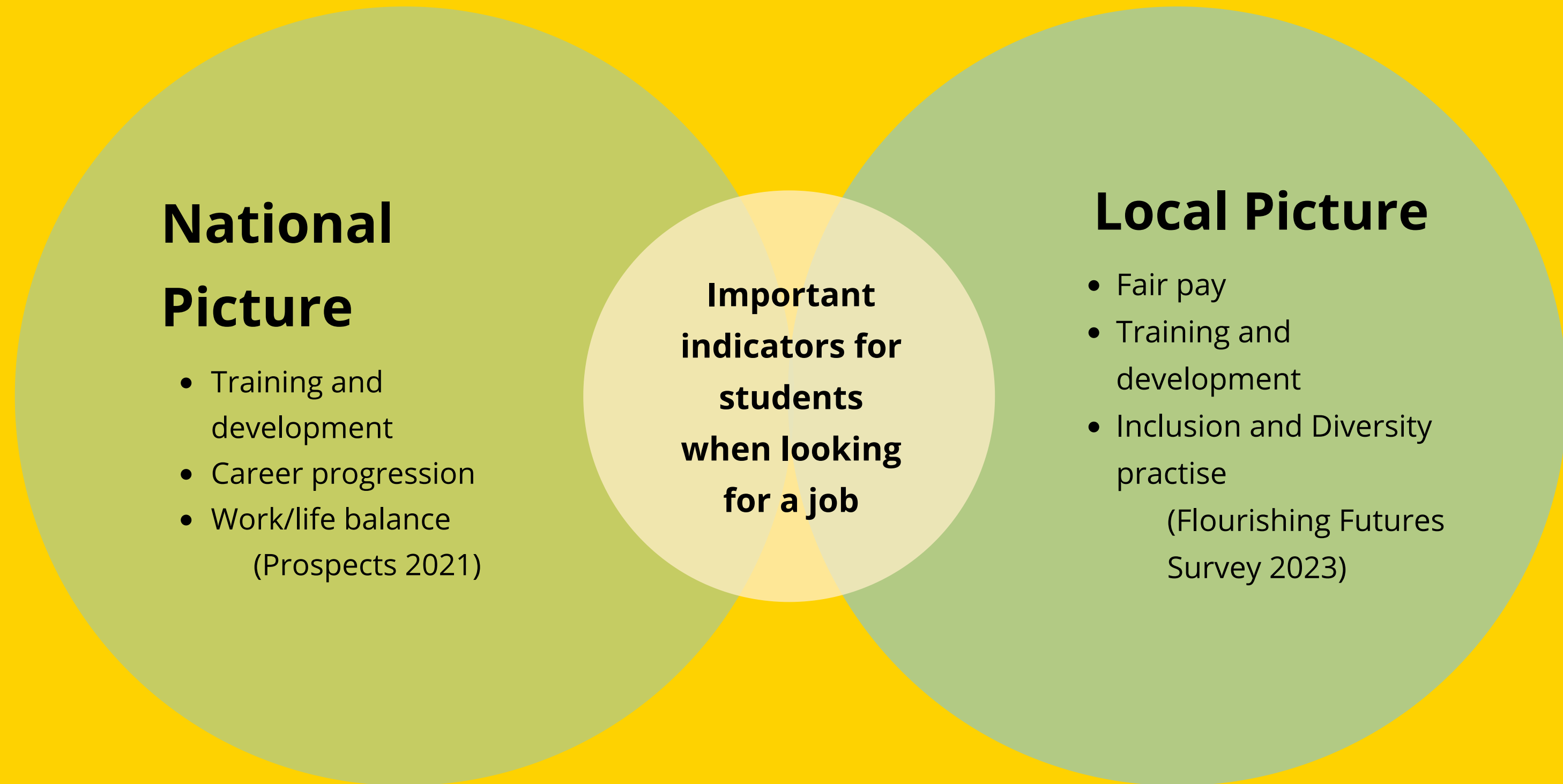
Weekly pay gross



Women in full time employment earn what men were earning ten years ago

Priority indicators for choosing an employer

Flourishing Futures Survey Response



Experiences of Young People



Why did you apply for the role of a peer researcher?

As a peer researcher, being able to bring a unique perspective and insight to the research process, and being able to help identify important issues and questions that may not have been considered by more traditional researchers, is something which I want to help achieve.

Additionally, being a peer researcher can be a fulfilling and empowering experience, as I am able to contribute to the development of new knowledge and insights, and would be able to help make a positive impact on my local and wider community.

Personal Journey's

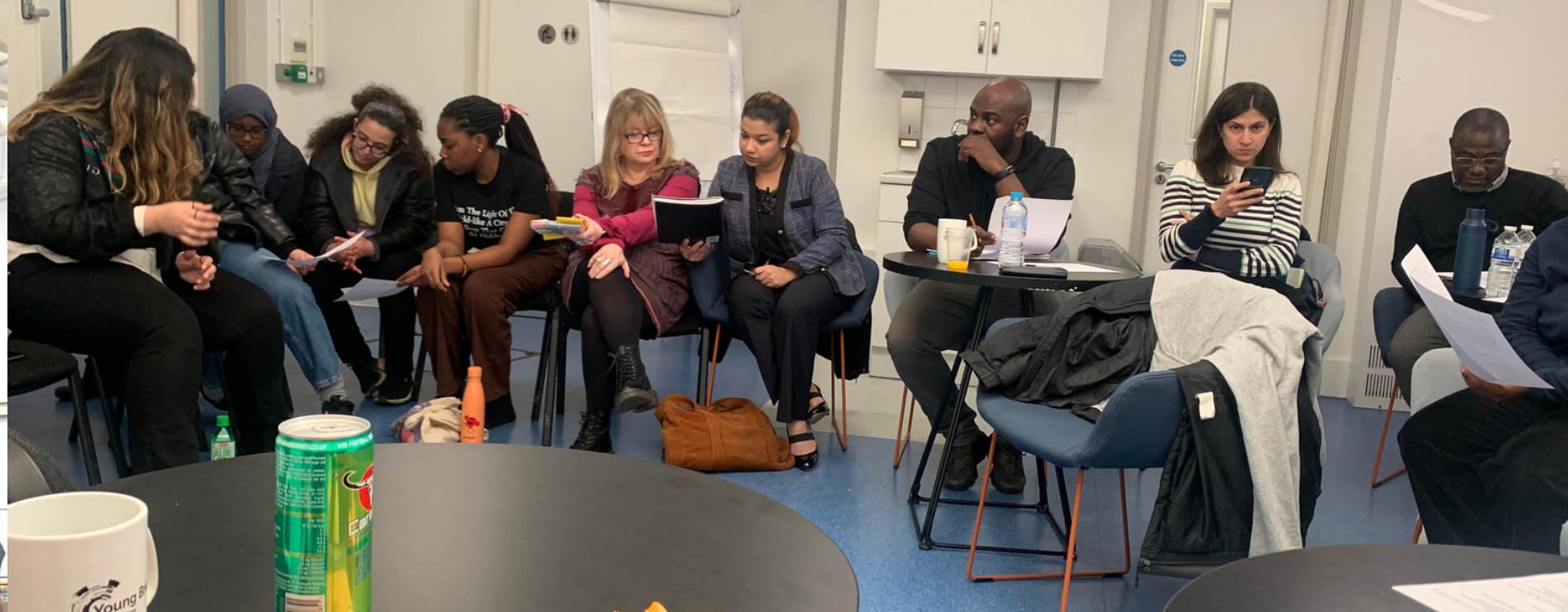
“

I was literally talking about this to Jess and Anna, whenever I was asked to speak in front of people, I would cry, I would want to break down into tears, like, anytime I would be asked to like read anything I'd like it was just horrendous. I feel like being able to, like, enrich myself, like within and to talk to a room full of people has really helped me.

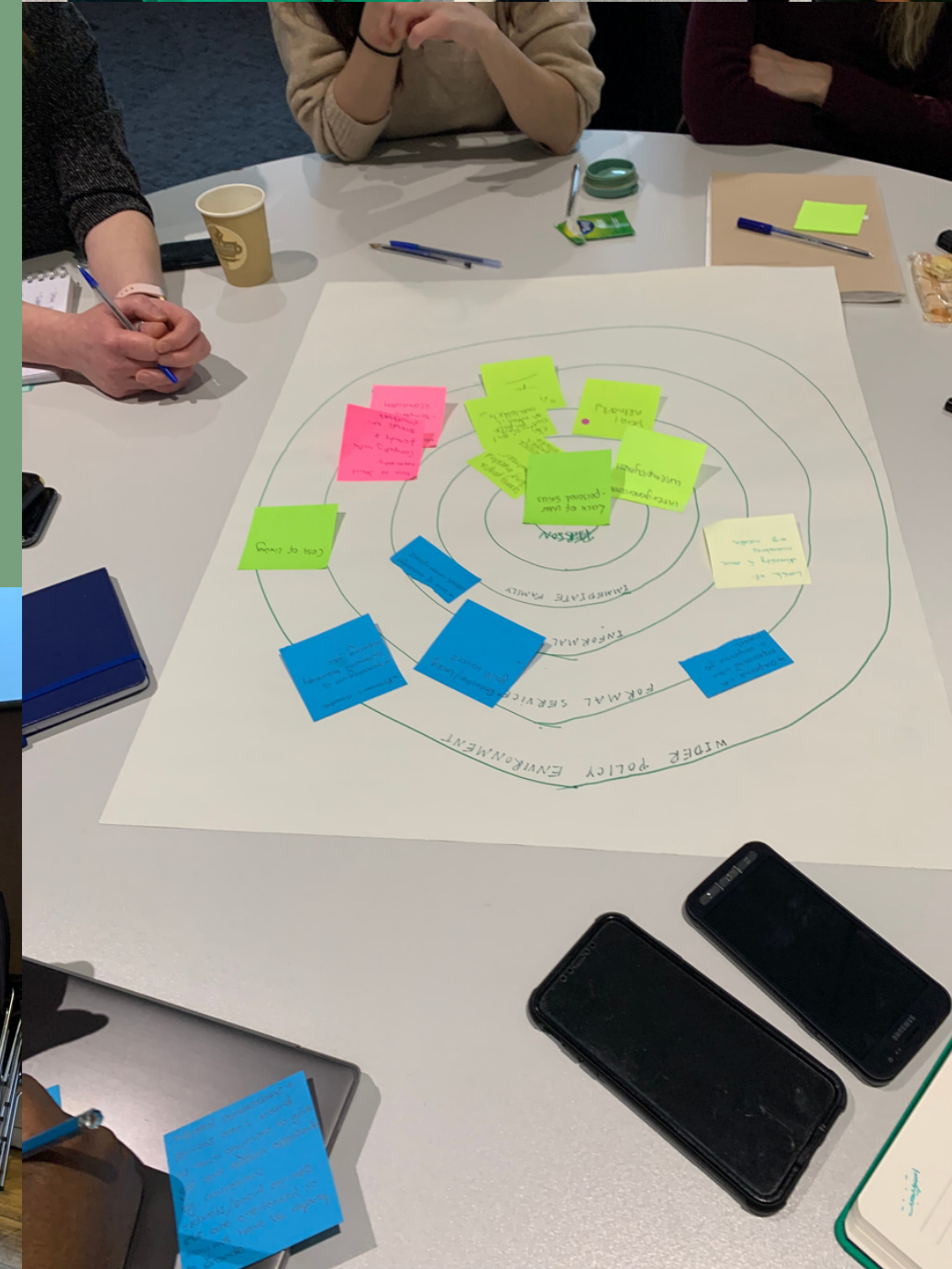
I feel like we have received respect, that we kind of feel like we are equal and that we are colleagues, I feel like honestly that that's been like the most amazing thing. I feel like it's given me standards. So, the next job that I get ,whatever type of employment it is, I know that I'm supposed to be respected and I'm supposed to feel responsible in my role.

I'd say like a lot of people's differing opinions on like certain topics such as like, gender discrimination, and racial discrimination, because like, I was thinking that everyone would have like one aligned view or opinion on it, but everyone had like very different opinions, like, not believing in gender discrimination, for example, or like not believing in racial discrimination, which is kind of shocking, but it's like, you know, there are people out there like that. So, I thought that was something I can look into more.

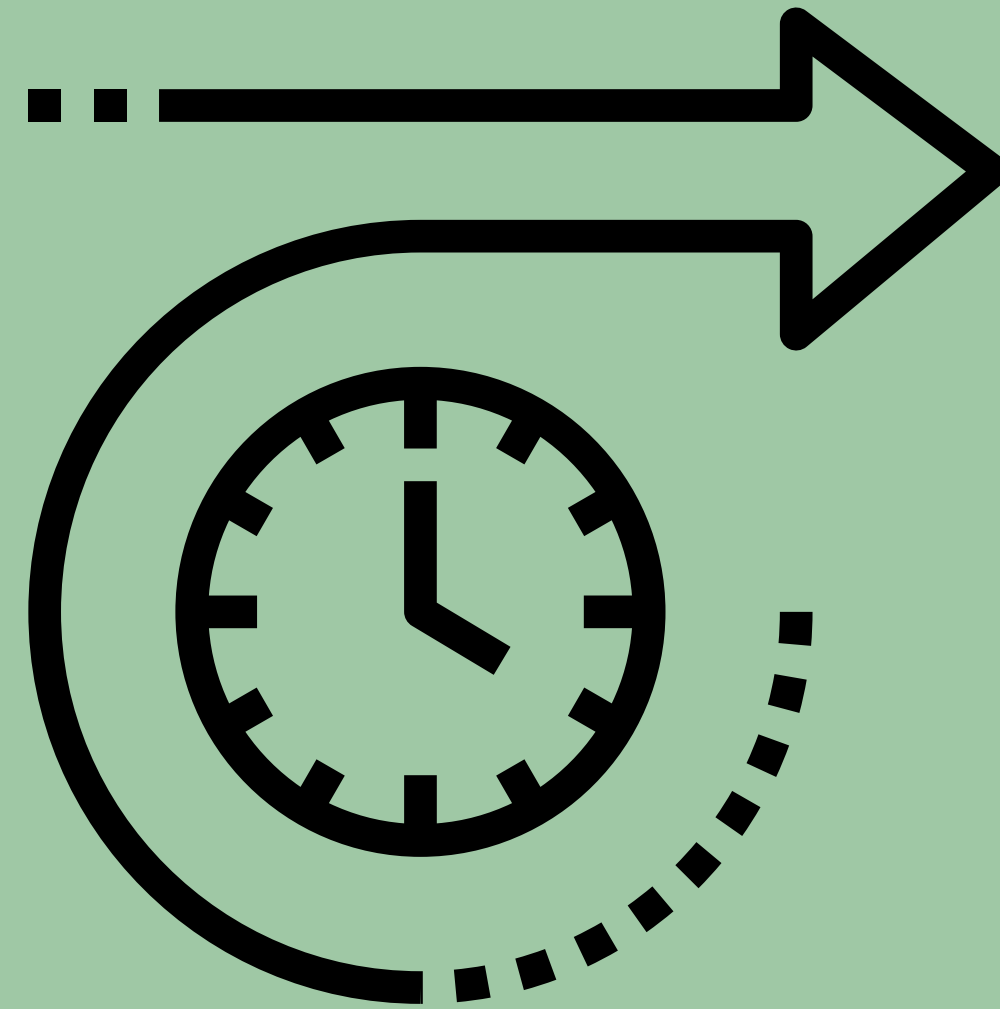




Commitment and Collaboration



Future Plans



Fixed points and possible destinations

01 October 2023

Event - Connected Futures
clarify the problem we want to focus on

02 Explore pay and aspirations

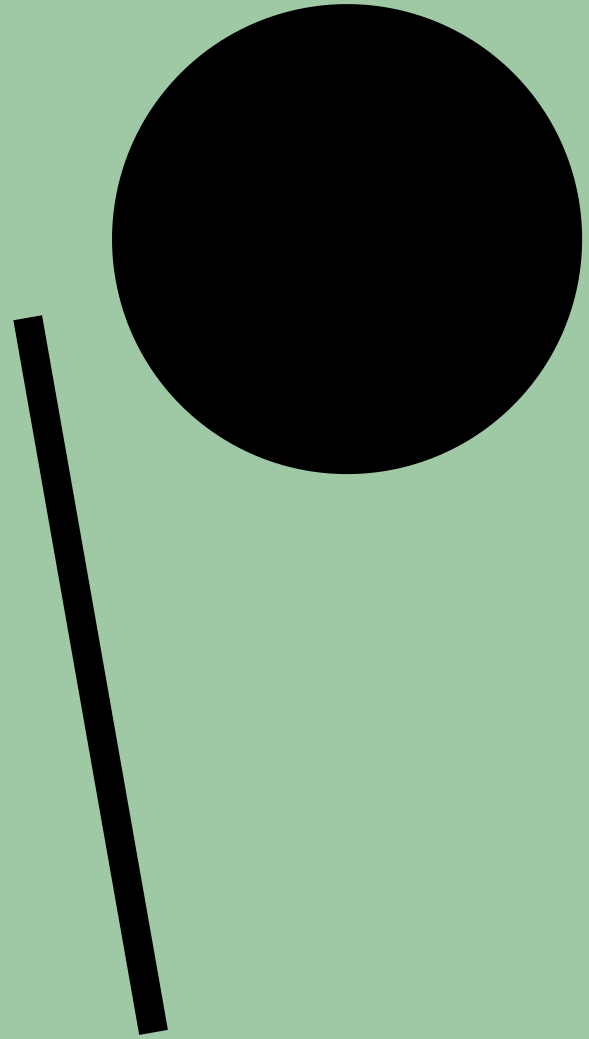
Does the gender pay gap impact young womens aspiration

03 Explore issues with employers

Connect with employers in Wholesale & Retail

04 Development and Testing

Looking at testing out ideas we think will make a difference



Acknowledgements

Heartfelt thank you to all the amazing partners, colleagues, supporters, collaborators who have helped in bringing these findings to light

Spark Charity

Megan Wright
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Paniz Juwandoon

Young People

Medofo Prempeh
Anna Entsir
Jessica Boamah
Mohammed Al-nashi
Ayan Abdi
Taysha Miller
Sarah Titong
Yvonne Ogbonna
Mariana De Sousa Hoff
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Fahan Hashi
Vanessa Nankya
Nikola Kovacevic
Fatima Boutarfa

Young Brent Foundation

Zorka Keszthelyi
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Brent Council

Jim Jessop
Elizabeth Rojas
Vanessa Owusu

Hyde

Julie Costley
Hanna Adeyinka
Nick di Paolo

Renaisi

Kezia Jackson-Harman

MTVH

Saba Yazdani
Sarah Willis

Peabody

Rhys Evans
Michaela Cockayne

Youth Futures Foundation

Michael Duncombe
Dan Jones

Brent Supported Interns Programme


Priyal Khimani
Rashmi De Silva

Pinnacle Group

Rob Forrester
Linda Etheridge

Join In The conversation

THE BRENT TENT



Flourishing Futures Brent
Flourishing Futures Brent | 7 followers on LinkedIn. #Inclusive employment#BreakingEmploymentBarriers | Welcome to the official LinkedIn page of the Flourishing Futures Initiative in Brent! We are dedicated to understanding, addressing, and...

[in linkedin](#)



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Appendices

✓ Flourishing Futures Survey.

✓ Youth Futures Foundation - Rapid survey.

✓ Focus Group Recordings

✓ Employer Survey.
