

2

Case studies

This chapter of the guide is designed to illustrate the **opportunities** and **challenges** of employing talented, marginalised young adults.

It draws primarily on an **employment** initiative called **Street Elite** to examine the experiences of a group of young adults during their first few weeks, months and years at work.

The Street Elite initiative is aimed at both women and men aged 18–24, though 70% of participants are currently male. Vulnerable young women can be harder to **engage** because of a mixture of caring responsibilities, motherhood and a tendency to be less visible ‘on the streets’.

This chapter is based on a series of interviews conducted with young adults and their managers in the Berkeley Group. It begins by **examining** the highs, the lows and the considerations for both parties. It then looks at some of the **issues** and **behaviours** you might encounter, and ends with three case studies which demonstrate just how different each **individual journey** can be. These case studies are primarily young men because that reflects where we have had most experience so far with the programme.

On one level, you will encounter people who have difficult outside influences and little or no experience in a working environment. But you will also find people with a huge amount of **ability**, who can be a source of **innovation**, **inspiration** and **insight**.

All you need to do is flex your business and enable your staff to make the most of this talent pool.

About Street Elite

Since 2012, Street Elite has worked with over 300 young adults from estates across London.

The initiative uses sport and mentoring to motivate young people who are currently not in education, employment or training (NEET). It offers intensive support to young people often living on the edge of gangs and crime, helping them gain the confidence and skills to get a job or go on to further education.

So far, after five years,

74% of participants have successfully moved into education, training or employment, having delivered regular coaching sessions on housing estates across London



The programme is delivered through a partnership between the Change Foundation and the Berkeley Foundation; a small youth charity and a foundation run by a FTSE 100 business, working together with councils, funders and other employers.

You can find out more, including a recent five year evaluation by Oxford Brookes University, at www.street-elite.org.

The benefits you may experience...

A young adult's perspective

Acting as role models and inspiring other young people

"Leading the way and acting as a role model. We can help branch out to the younger generation and help connect on a more personal level."

"I think we bring a bit of **youthfulness** and a willing to please mind-set. We bring a **fresh energy** to the job."

Street Elite graduate

Strong communication skills

"Since I've joined my office I have broken down a lot of communication issues between the different departments. I make the office a fun and better place to work by simply being myself and using my abilities of good communication and adaptability."

Loyal employees

"We are far more likely to repay the opportunity given by the business with loyalty to the business."

Strong digital skills

"We're good with technology. I implement new methods of reaching out and advertising in the business."

A chance to change someone's life

"I think everyone should be given a chance to see what talent they have got or what they are willing to do to show they can progress in life by trying, rather than being judged by their past."



A manager's perspective

“I have been able to use our Street Elite candidates as **role models to encourage others with career progression doubts.** When you look at their backgrounds and how they have improved, not only with work skills but their overall confidence, it gives others a lift to **aspire to better themselves.**”

Manager of young person

Breaking down preconceptions

“Most people were sceptical over how individuals from a less fortunate background could grow and develop into a role of responsibility and add real value to a team. Our guys have proved how they have matured, grown and progressed in their roles.”

Candidates who are loyal and dedicated

“The candidates were loyal and had grit to work hard.”

It's rewarding

“It's fulfilling when they are prepared to make the effort and show commitment.”

Creating a culture of helping and developing others

“Having a Street Elite apprentice on site has brought the best out in people as everyone tries to help them in one way or another. I have seen managers spending time with them on site, showing them how things work. They include them in the site life and general camaraderie to make them feel part of our team.”

Recruits with a real hunger to learn

“The ambition and willingness to learn I have seen from him is something to be proud of.”

The highs...

A young adult's perspective

“Berkeley was the first company
not to judge a book by its cover.”

Street Elite graduate

Seeing a positive change in themselves

“Everything about me has changed.
The way I talk to people, approach people,
I got a timetable of my day or weekly thing.
I organise myself. You do different things.”

Sharing constructive messages with the community

“I can tell my friends working is the way,
it's the way you progress up. It doesn't
matter what you do, you gotta work to
progress up, it's not gonna come to you
straight away.”

Building relationships

“Seeing my colleagues is the best part of
my day. Everyone is open. No one
is scared, they're a bubbly bunch.”

Learning with other people

“We are a team here so even
if myself and others have
a different view on things
we come together and
develop a solution that
suits everyone.”

“Every morning I was always
determined to come in. I was
always **excited** and didn't know
what to expect.”

Street Elite graduate



A manager's perspective

Watching someone progress

"He's gone from a boy to a man. He's a different person. He's come out of his shell and impressed the team."

Seeing colleagues rally around them

"A lot of the older family guys tried to take them under their wing, tell them about what they're doing and where they're going."

Taking on someone who is grateful and eager to learn

"He was full of confidence, very polite, extremely grateful for the opportunity. To a point where I had to tell him to stop thanking me. He was desperate to get more responsibility."

Breaking down preconceived ideas and investing in others

"At first there was a reluctance. They were unsure of what they were going to get and how the guys would apply themselves. Since taking them on it's reaffirmed how they are actually very keen to be offered a job and prepared to throw in their heart and soul. They know it's part of our culture."

Having a positive impact on the community

"It's changed his life and with his very first pay cheque he bought his family a take away to say thanks for putting up with him and supporting him when he wasn't equipping himself the best he could."



"He was full of confidence, very polite, extremely grateful for the opportunity."

Manager of young person

The lows...

A young adult's perspective

Adjusting to traditional working hours

"I've been late a couple of times. They've been on to me about that. It happens. It's my fault. I'm late."

Disagreements with colleagues

"Little arguments. I done something wrong and he wasn't really too happy."

Challenging the patience of team members

"First day everyone was cool and asking for help was easy. Now they give me more stuff to do. When I ask nobody wants to help. They tell you to look it up. They get annoyed. There are days when I think why the hell am I coming in?"

Being disciplined

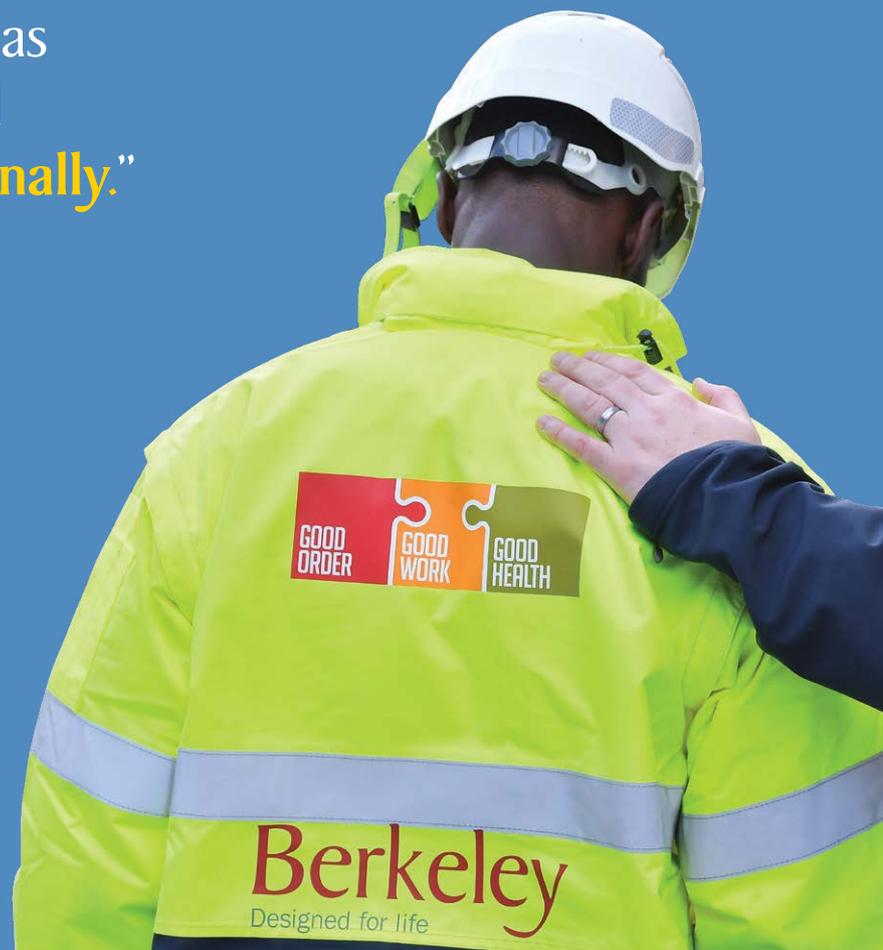
"When they put trust in you but you don't perform they can be harsh. You can get a bollocking. It can put you down for the whole day."

Understanding the breadth of the business and how it works

"You don't see how much you need to learn until it's put on a plate. I learned how to read drawings but then I'm asked for another thing. It's daunting. You start asking yourself will I ever understand? How will I progress?"

"I was slightly **anxious**. I felt like I didn't fit in as **everyone looked and spoke very professionally.**"

Street Elite graduate



A manager's perspective

“She wasn't very engaging but this of course comes from being **shy** and **worried about doing anything wrong.**”

Manager of young person

Challenges with literacy and exams

“He failed his construction skills test three or four times. He hasn't got the natural ability.”

Outside influences

“He was forever getting into fights outside of work.”

Family problems

“He had issues with the police and with his ex partner's daughter. There were issues about access to his child. We supported him fully with time off. He said there was something he was 'caught up in.'”

Aggressive behaviour

“He was renowned as the leader of the pack. He was very boisterous, alpha male. He was used to being in charge and leading a group of people. He tried to do that here but it was a different environment. It blew up a couple of times.”

Staff attitudes

“Colleagues said 'I don't want to work with this guy.' There were staff concerns about personal safety and behaviour.”

Lack of interest

“She wasn't very engaging but this of course comes from being shy and worried about doing anything wrong. She isn't confident with the computers or phones or dealing with monies.”

Cultural differences

“He had an altercation with the Project Manager to do with the fact that he kept leaving the site to go to pray at the local mosque.”



The biggest challenges...

A young adult's perspective

“Being told what to do was hard for me as growing up there was no authority.”

Street Elite graduate

Business jargon

“Construction is a completely different language. The first meeting I sat in I didn't understand 90% of things.”

A sense of unfairness about career progression

“I was thinking why am I not moving up? I didn't realise why was I never getting promoted. If I don't go nowhere, I'm just gonna quit.”

Adjusting behaviour and language

“They told me to be polite. It's a working environment. I have to speak to people in a professional manner.”

The working environment

“I'd never worn a suit. I didn't know I could have coffee whenever I wanted to.”

“Initially he was too **unconfident** to pick up the phone.”

Manager of young person

A manager's perspective

Keeping them engaged and motivated

"There was no self-drive or discipline without our undivided attention."

Sense of self entitlement to quick promotion

"He thought he deserved to be made Site Manager after a few months."

Mental health issues

"She didn't come in because she was too anxious about travelling alone."

Colleagues' reactions

"Overcoming the idea that they haven't got talent because of where they come from."

Playing on mobiles

"A lot of external distractions which tended to come through his iPhone. He was big on Instagram. All his gang mates tended to use it."

Ties with gangs and old friends

"Reading between the lines his banding within the gang was quite considerable."

Lack of confidence

"Initially he was too unconfident to pick up the phone."



Case studies



Month 1
Completes a two week placement and receives positive feedback.

Month 2
Offered a 6 month contract with the Berkeley Group as a Trainee Site Manager.

Month 7
Keeps leaving site to pray without telling his Line Manager. The misunderstanding leads to a disagreement which is resolved by the Project Director. He is then moved to a site which is nearer the mosque he attends.

Usman Smooth journey

Month 1
Completes a two week placement and receives positive feedback.

Month 2
Offered a 6 month contract with the Berkeley Group.

Month 12
Put on a rotation programme where he spends time with each subcontractor to learn about each trade in the construction industry.

Owen Ultimately successful

Month 1
Completes a two week placement and receives positive feedback.

Month 2
Offered a 6 month contract with the Berkeley Group.

Month 3
His line manager has difficulties with him and asks his old coach to get in touch.

Month 14
Brings a knife into work and shows it to a colleague who reports it.

Month 15
Arrested after getting into a fight on his way to work.

Joshua A struggle

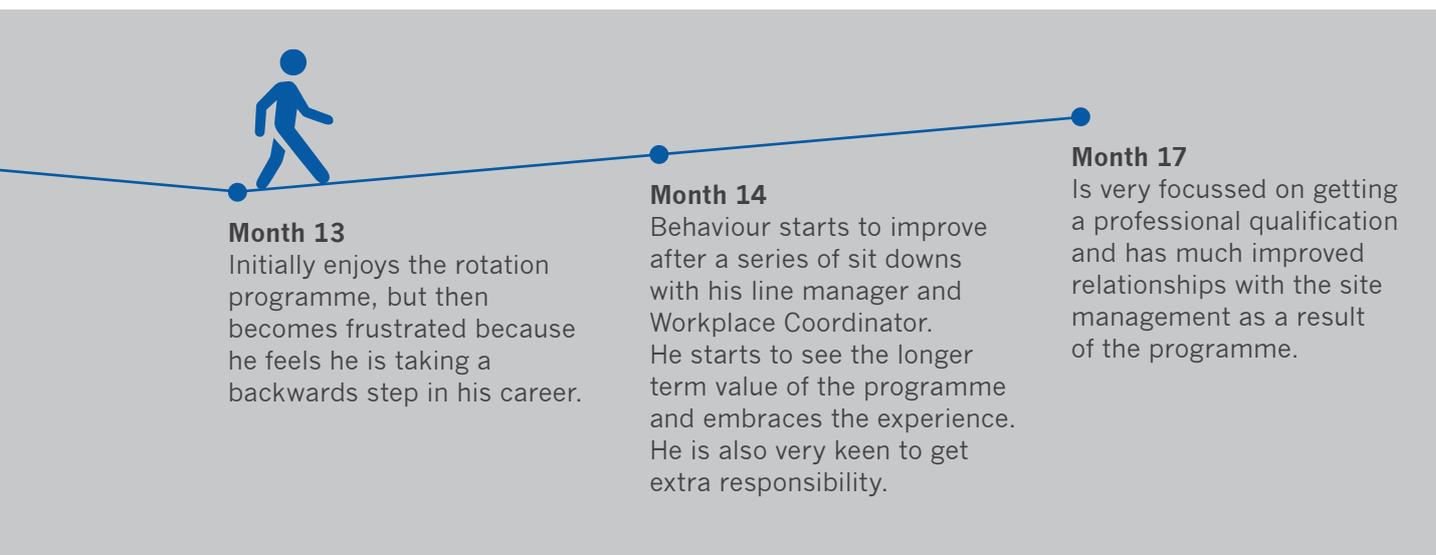


Month 32
 Completes a sky dive and raises £1,260 for the Foundation.

Month 40
 Given responsibility for letting his first electrics package.

Month 50
 Promoted to Assistant Site Manager.

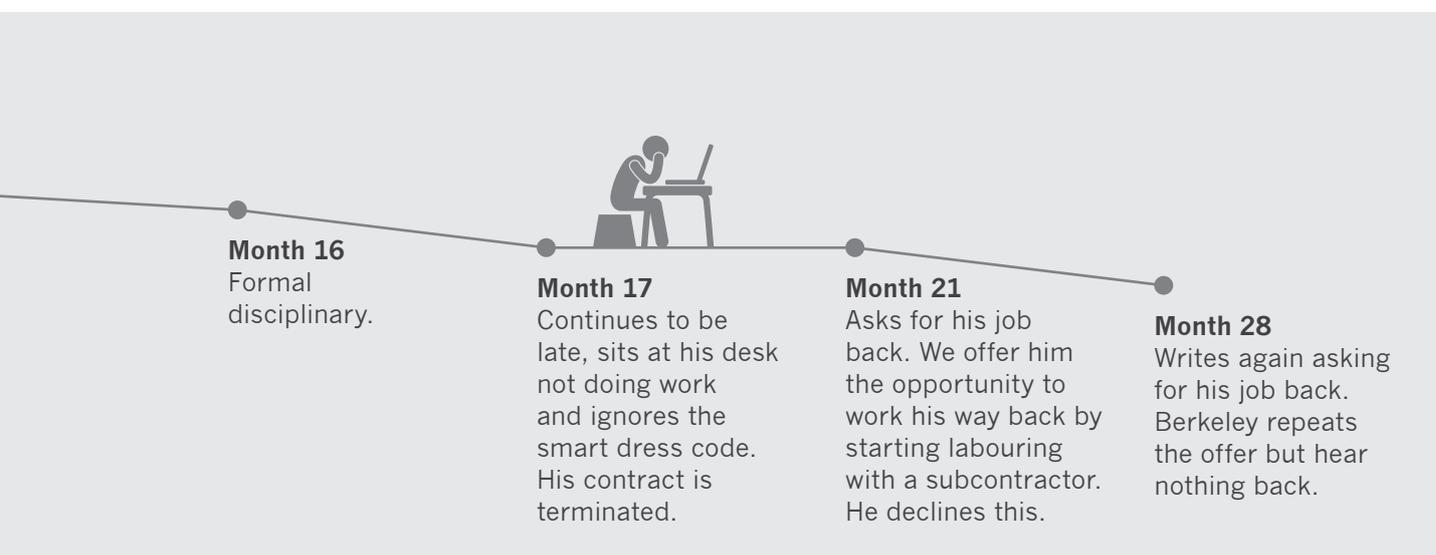
Month 54
 Wins an award for helping to champion other apprentices.



Month 13
 Initially enjoys the rotation programme, but then becomes frustrated because he feels he is taking a backwards step in his career.

Month 14
 Behaviour starts to improve after a series of sit downs with his line manager and Workplace Coordinator. He starts to see the longer term value of the programme and embraces the experience. He is also very keen to get extra responsibility.

Month 17
 Is very focussed on getting a professional qualification and has much improved relationships with the site management as a result of the programme.



Month 16
 Formal disciplinary.

Month 17
 Continues to be late, sits at his desk not doing work and ignores the smart dress code. His contract is terminated.

Month 21
 Asks for his job back. We offer him the opportunity to work his way back by starting labouring with a subcontractor. He declines this.

Month 28
 Writes again asking for his job back. Berkeley repeats the offer but hear nothing back.

Expectations and realities...

Expectations

"I thought it was going to be all matey like being around all my friends all my time. I was naive about what it would be like."

"I was thinking would I get on with everyone? I felt a bit odd. Everything would be new to me. I thought it would be very corporate."

"I thought the working environment would be a lot more serious. I thought it was a big company and I was surprised the project team was not that big when I started."

"I was expecting it to be very difficult working with people who initially didn't want to work with a kid from 'Street Elite'"

Realities

"It's work, you have to adapt your behaviour to each person. You have to change. I've learned you've got to be committed, show enthusiasm and be organised. But be who you are you at the same time."

"When you're inside it's different. You realise just how much goes on. I've learned how to build a house. I started from scratch but I've now got a construction background. It's built my confidence."

"I have learned a lot generally about construction and also how to work in an office - email etiquette, how to be productive and prioritise work."

"It's been the complete opposite. I have realised there is still hope, I have learnt to never give up."

The kinds of behaviour you might encounter...

Every individual you take on will be different, but you may experience a different combination of the below characteristics.

Enthusiastic Fixation with prestige
Shy Lack of interest Polite Humble
Poor academic skills Too much time on mobile
Overly grateful Bad timekeeping