**Joseph Rowntree Foundation Press Release**

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A job in itself: the thankless task for young unemployed people looking for work

As the monthly unemployment statistics are published today, a new report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) highlights the task faced by young unemployed people looking for work.

With more than one million 16 to 24-year-olds unemployed ahead of the latest figures, JRF looked at the challenges facing young people in one of the toughest jobs markets in decades. The research found vacancies closed to candidates within days, and in some cases, hours.

In three UK cities, one with a weak supply of jobs, one with a better supply and one in-between, researchers sent 2,000 job applications from fictional candidates with at least five good GCSEs and relevant work experience to 667 real vacancies (sales assistants, cleaners, office administrators and kitchen hands).

Even in the stronger job market, there were 24 unemployed people chasing each retail vacancy available through Jobcentre Plus, and 50 for each office vacancy. In the weaker job market area, the figures were 66 and 44 respectively.

A 22-year-old man in the medium job market described taking his CV into a shop:

“The other worker who wasn’t a manager threw it in the bin, because people are trying to protect their own jobs…it’s dog-eat-dog at the moment”.

The study, by researchers at University of York, University of Warwick and London School of Economics, also found:

* Over two-thirds of applications (69%) received no response at all.
* 78% of the jobs applied for paid under £7 an hour, while 54% offered the minimum wage. Just 24% of the vacancies offered full-time, daytime work.
* In the weak labour market, 10 jobseekers chased every job compared to five jobseekers in the strong one.
* Jobseekers who do not have high-speed internet at home are at a substantial disadvantage and can only search for jobs sporadically, rather than the daily basis that is required.
* Applications sent a week after jobs were first advertised were half as likely to receive positive responses as those sent in the first three days.
* The research found there was strong evidence that good-quality applicants from neighbourhoods with poor reputations were not more likely to be rejected by employers.
* However, employers expressed a preference for local candidates with easy journeys to work. One employer remarked:

“*Someone who is an hour’s journey away is going to be no use to me”.*

Transport proved a big barrier for young people, with applicants reliant on public transport severely hindered. While current policy requires jobseekers to look further afield (up to 90 minutes’ away), it does not necessarily succeed in getting more people into work. Young people were willing to consider jobs at such distance, but the research found it puts jobseekers into competition with others who are closer.

The report suggests jobseekers would benefit from extra intelligence and local knowledge from their Jobcentre Plus advisers about employers’ recruitment and selection practices to enable better targeting of applications.

However, even with this support, applying for entry-level work in the current climate is a thankless task for many young unemployed people, particularly if they live in weak job market areas.

Young people had responded to repeat rejection by volunteering, improving their qualifications and turning to friendship networks to enhance their job search.

Chris Goulden, Head of Poverty at JRF, said: “It’s important we have measures that provide more full-time, decent-paying jobs that can ensure work pays. A lack of success in the jobs market saps confidence, demotivates and leaves a scar across a generation of young people, while part-time, low-pay work traps people in poverty.

“On the day the latest unemployment statistics are released, this report makes for grim reading for young people. The intense competition shows the main problem is more fundamental - a major shortage of jobs.”

Report co-author Prof Becky Tunstall, University of York, said: “Many jobseekers are prepared to take any job, but it’s hard to make work pay when many jobs offer short hours and low pay. Applicants face huge barriers when they take account of costs such as travel and childcare.”

Co-author Prof Anne Green, University of Warwick, added: “This research provides evidence that employers are not discriminating according to postcode and provides helpful advice for young jobseekers to make sure their qualifications and CVs are good, and to apply for jobs as soon as they are advertised.”

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Notes to Editors

1. The full report and findings: *The challenges for disadvantaged young people seeking work* by researchers from the London School of Economics, the University of York and the University of Warwick, is available to download for free from [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)
2. The report is based on research carried out in 2010–11 and focusses on three contrasting urban labour markets in England and Wales, one of them a relatively low-unemployment area (referred to as ‘the strong local labour market’), one with very high unemployment (the ‘weak local labour market’) and one in between (the ‘medium local labour market’).
3. Researchers created personas of fictional young people aged 22 to 24 who lived in the case study local labour markets and were seeking work that required limited education and skills. These personas were used to make applications to real job vacancies (advertised on the Jobcentre Plus website) that require limited education and skills such sales assistants, security guards, cleaners and office administrators.
4. Between August 2010 and June 2011 researchers made three applications to each of 667 real jobs in the three local labour markets, a total of 2,001 applications, and recorded the results.
5. The research also involved interviews with employers and labour market intermediaries (such as jobseekers’ advisors) and young people with limited education and skills from the three local labour markets who were looking for work, or had been doing so recently.
6. JRF is an endowed foundation funding a UK-wide research and development programme. JRHT is a registered housing association and provider of care services, with over 2,500 homes in York and north-east England. The two have a commitment to reduce poverty, and if possible, end it. JRF and JRHT work together to help achieve social justice for people and places in poverty by:

* **searching** out the underlying causes of poverty and disadvantage, and identify solutions – through research and learning from experience.
* **demonstrating** solutions – developing and running services, managing land and buildings, and supporting innovation.
* **influencing** positive and lasting change – publishing and promoting evidence, and bringing people together to share ideas.

1. JRF is on Twitter. Keep up to date with news and comments at [www.twitter.com/jrf\_uk](http://www.twitter.com/jrf_uk)
2. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust are completely separate from the other two Trusts set up by Joseph Rowntree in 1904; the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) and the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd (JRRT). Further information about each organisation can be found at [www.josephrowntree.org](http://www.josephrowntree.org).

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