

# talent-hub

By



Enterprise  
Nation



employmenthero

## Unlocking talent for growth

**Empowering small businesses  
to hire confidently in 2025  
and beyond**

Enterprise Nation | 2025 report



talent-hub

# Contents

- 04 Talent Hub: Unlocking access to opportunity
- 06 The hiring landscape in 2025
- 08 Partner Insight: Powered by Employment Hero
- 12 The bigger picture: Skills, support and SME resilience
- 15 The road ahead: Enterprise Nation's vision for talent & youth innovation
- 17 Contact us

talent-hub



# Foreword

By Polly Dhaliwal, COO, Enterprise Nation

We are at a critical moment for the UK economy, and small businesses will be central to its future. They generate local jobs, inject innovation and deliver key community services while driving regional economies. But behind every business is a founder trying to make good decisions, and one of the most important is who to bring on board.

At Enterprise Nation, we speak with thousands of founders each year. We hear their ambitions, but also their challenges. For many, hiring feels like a leap into the unknown: unclear processes, perceived risk and little tailored support, particularly for those with fewer than 10 employees.

This is why we launched **Talent Hub** – to demystify and simplify hiring for micro businesses with no HR department and a relentless to-do list. With the support of partners like Employment Hero, our goal was simple: to offer practical, free and timely guidance to help small firms grow their teams with confidence.

Small businesses don't have the luxury of an HR department, 75% told us a lack of adequate training resources was the biggest barrier to recruiting and retaining staff and a quarter said finding candidates with the right skills was a big problem.

What started as a pilot has become a national resource, with over 13,000 businesses engaging through the Talent Hub in just nine months. From live sessions and toolkits to stories from founders who've made their first hire, we've seen firsthand the impact that clear guidance, practical support and real-world examples can have.

But there's more to do. The hiring landscape is evolving rapidly, shaped by AI, hybrid work, and job roles that didn't exist just five years ago like TikTok Live presenters and remote enablement officers. At the same time, young people are telling us they feel disconnected from career pathways and opportunities. The link between talent and enterprise must be strengthened.

This report shares what we've learned, and what we believe comes next. If we want an inclusive economy built for the future, we must back the smallest firms to succeed. That means supporting every founder to build a team, and help ensure every generation feels they have a role to play in the UK's growth story.

Let's build a workforce where everyone can thrive.



## Talent Hub: Unlocking access to opportunity

Talent Hub launched in October 2024 in partnership with Employment Hero and Unibeez.

It was designed as a practical destination for micro and small businesses to get trusted support on hiring, offering webinars, events, a downloadable guide, blog content, and access to tools from our partners.

It was created in response to our community's need for clear, confidence-building support on growing a team.

### Talent Hub at a glance

  
**Top sectors**  
Tech and apps  
and business  
services

  
**Top roles**  
Part-time,  
apprentice,  
intern

  
**73%**  
start-ups

  
**13,552**  
hub views

  
**69,314**  
resource views

  
**27,119**  
social media  
impressions

Since launch, the hub has attracted over **13,000 business visitors** and seen strong engagement across resources and channels, with a particularly high uptake in creative and retail sectors, and strong interest in part-time and early-career roles.



### Business sentiment summary



**Over half**

have hired before, but  
only 33% are confident  
doing it again



**A third**

currently looking to hire,  
23% unsure



**Barriers**

lack of confidence,  
unclear process,  
concerns about cost

**3 in 4**

cited a lack of training  
resources as the main  
barrier to recruiting  
and retaining staff



**50%**

said existing staff skills in  
managing and training  
new employees was  
moderate



**25%**

said existing staff skills in  
managing and training  
new employees was  
minimal

**A quarter**

said they offer  
mentoring



1 in 5 said they had no  
training opportunities for  
new candidates



"We didn't know where to start with apprentices - Talent Hub demystified the process."

**Jesse Genet, CEO and co-founder of Lumi**

## The hiring landscape in 2025

Hiring is shifting and small businesses need to adapt. According to ONS data (May 2025), unemployment sits at **4.3%**, with underemployment and skills mismatch still high among people aged 18 to 24.

AI and automation are reshaping roles, particularly in admin, customer service, and marketing. This has created an urgent need for small businesses to understand the **new jobs on offer** and how to tap into emerging skills.

### Growth vs decline 2025<sup>1</sup>

#### Growing demand

- ↑ Artificial intelligence engineer
- ↑ Environment Officer
- ↑ Community manager
- ↑ Field application engineer

#### Falling demand

- ↓ Software developer/programmer
- ↓ Entry-level admin roles
- ↓ Bank worker and postal worker
- ↓ Data entry clerk

This snapshot of job roles shows a clear shift: demand is growing for digitally fluent and specialised roles like AI engineers and community managers, while traditional admin and clerical roles are in decline. For small businesses, this means hiring strategies must adapt, prioritising digital skills, offering flexible pathways, and tapping into new talent pools to stay competitive.

#### Sources:

1. [LinkedIn Jobs on the Rise](#), [ONS Labour Trends](#), [Employment Hero](#)



**"I need a TikTok Live presenter"** – [Secret Halo](#) run by Lizzie Heyes, which is now recruiting for a Tik Tok live stream presenter, was one of the first of a new breed of UK businesses that sell via TikTok Shop live streaming.

The 39-year-old, a former fashion and homewares buyer, launched her own business in 2015 and sells via online digital commerce and marketplaces like Etsy and Not on the High Street, as well as TikTok.

But she feels TikTok is taking off and she's looking to take on her first employee.

Lizzie said: "TikTok Live streaming is taking off! I'm literally writing the job description. Originally, I advertised it to the University of Essex students on the marketing degree – but it's actually really hard to find people with presenting, live streaming and selling skills. It's a very specific niche role because you've got to be able to sell and present the brand live."

"So, I'm now looking for someone with experience and a track record."

"TikTok Live streaming is taking off! It's actually really hard to find people with presenting, live streaming and selling skills. It's a very specific niche role because you've got to be able to sell and present the brand live."

Lizzie Heyes,  
Founder of Secret Halo

Today's 'hot jobs' reflect creativity, tech-savviness, and digital fluency, skills that young people increasingly possess, and small businesses increasingly need.

The Colchester-based founder sells a range of sterling silver jewellery inspired by celestial ancient symbology as well as magical and mystical giftware. She took on a unit at the city's Innovation Centre and wants to work with an assistant to increase the use of her curated backdrops in her new unit.

"I knew I needed a physical base to do live streaming from and went ahead last year and took on a space, knowing that eventually I would have other presenters not just myself. It wouldn't work if they had to come to my home to do it," Lizzie added.

"I could take on affiliates to do the live streaming from other parts remotely, but I wanted to keep it in house just so I can control how the product and the brand is presented."

But she also said while she was nervous about the rising cost of employment, she also felt employing someone was a risk she needed to take. "I hope I will be able to see a direct correlation between what they'll be able to offer me by going live and getting sales. It's a no brainer. I need to do it."





## Partner insight: Powered by Employment Hero

Our partners at Employment Hero shared compelling research on how small businesses can stay ahead by integrating smart tools, including AI. But the findings go far beyond technology. Drawing on insights from over 2,000 business leaders and employees, the report reframes the UK's long-standing "productivity puzzle," highlighting the real-world challenges holding SMEs back, from lost time on admin to a growing skills gap and a disconnect between employers and employees. It's a wake-up call and a blueprint, showing how giving SMEs the right tools, clarity, and support can unlock growth and value every day. Their report found:

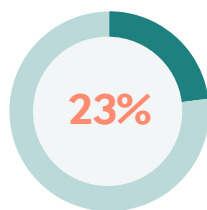
- businesses that implemented AI were **50% more likely to feel prepared** for the future
- weekly AI tool users are **23% more likely** to say they're having impact at work

This aligns with what we're hearing from founders: it's not just about hiring, it's about making work **work**.

### AI & the future of work<sup>2</sup>



Businesses that have implemented AI are 50% more likely to feel prepared for the next 2–3 years ahead.



People who use AI tools or apps at least weekly are 23% more likely to say they're making an impact at work.

"Finding interns through Talent Hub gave us the confidence to trial new roles."

**Hera London**, luxury skincare brand founder

"Accessing HR advice through the Hub helped us formalise contracts for the first time."

**Ruby Red**, hair and beauty entrepreneur

### Rise of no-code tools means more DIY hiring and systems

#### Sources:

2. [Employment Hero, Work That Works Report](#)



Partner insight:  
Powered by Employment Hero

Small businesses are adapting quickly; trialling AI tools, building no-code systems, and testing new roles through platforms like Talent Hub. But this risks being stifled by national programmes that still assume a level of scale or capacity many micro firms simply don't have.

For example, government-funded Skills Bootcamps require even the smallest firms to co-fund 10% of training costs, a threshold that may suit larger employers but deters those with fewer than 10 staff.<sup>3</sup> This creates a real risk: that the most agile firms are locked out of the very skills support needed to compete.

Our Talent Hub data shows that one in three small firms is actively looking to hire, yet barriers around confidence, clarity and cost remain persistent. These businesses are not short on ambition, they're short on fit-for-purpose support.

### Youth perspectives: What young people are saying

Youth employment policy in the UK has long focused on young people aged 16 to 24. But behind the statistics are real stories of ambition, anxiety, and frustration.

The scale of youth disengagement is stark:

- **12.5% of UK youth** (around 923,000) are currently NEET – Not in Education, Employment, or Training (January to March 2025)<sup>4</sup>
- **14.3% of young people** aged 16 to 24 were unemployed in February to April 2025 – a rise of 0.7 percentage points year-on-year<sup>5</sup>
- Almost **40% of NEET** youth have been disengaged for over 12 months, with mental health cited as a major factor<sup>6</sup>

Through the Talent Hub programme, Enterprise Nation convened roundtables with young people, education providers, employers and policy leaders to explore solutions for bridging the youth employment gap. These conversations added essential human insights to the broader data.



#### Sources:

3. [Department of Education](#)  
 4. [jrf.org.uk/ons.gov.uk](#)  
 5. [commonslibrary.parliament.uk](#)  
 6. [jrf.org.uk/ons.gov.uk](#)

**What we heard:**

One such [discussion](#), held in partnership with Employment Hero and the Careers & Enterprise Company, revealed that many young people feel uninformed about their options. One participant described how limited guidance on apprenticeships at college left her reliant on her brother's experience to navigate her career path.

Balancing a four-day workweek with one day of university study, she praised her employer's support, but stressed the need for stronger preparation and flexibility.

**A generation ready to act:**

Enterprise Nation's research shows that **62% of people aged 18 to 30 plan to start a business** in the near future. These are young people with ambition, but who lack clear, inclusive pathways to employment or entrepreneurship.

**Frustration is rising:**

Research highlights widespread frustration and disenfranchisement among young people:

- 60% believe the job market is inaccessible to them<sup>7</sup>
- 85% of employers recognise their responsibility to support youth workforce entry<sup>8</sup>
- 46% of young people feel uncertain about their career options – a doubling since 2018<sup>9</sup>

"We are letting future generations down... nearly 1 million young people not working or studying is a scandal." – FT Editorial<sup>10</sup>

**What young people say they need<sup>11</sup>:**

- More inclusive hiring practices (27%)
- Employers to listen and adapt (26%)
- Stronger mental health and work support (26%)

**Sources:**

7. <https://www.ukyouth.org/2024/>

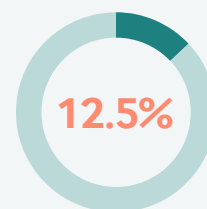
8. <https://www.ukyouth.org/2024/>

9. <https://www.educationandemployers.org>

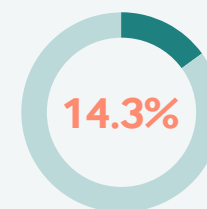
10. [FT.com](#)

11. [World Economic Forum's "Future of Jobs Report 2025"](#)

12. [World Economic Forum's "Future of Jobs Report 2025"](#)

**Highlighting youth voices**

NEET rate



Youth unemployment



Percentage point  
change year on year



feel job market inaccessible



lack career clarity

**Youth and early career trends<sup>12</sup>:**

- Employers value soft skills most: communication, curiosity, resilience.
- Youth entering the job market will require reskilling every three to five years.
- 57% of companies plan to invest in youth skills training – but need support to make it happen.

The data is clear: young people want to work, and many want to build businesses of their own. But current support structures too often assume they've already found their footing. Programmes like Talent Hub can help close that gap, by offering real-world exposure, practical support, and routes into both employment and entrepreneurship.

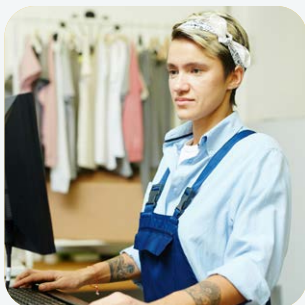


## The bigger picture: Skills, support and SME resilience

The UK's workforce is evolving rapidly, and small businesses must not be left behind. As demand for high-skilled, tech-enabled roles grows, ensuring micro and small firms can keep pace is essential for inclusive growth and a bright economic future. The UK government has already laid key foundations through initiatives such as:

- **Plan for Change** – a cross-departmental pledge to kickstart economic growth
- **Skills for Jobs White Paper** – empowering employers to shape technical training and address local demand
- **Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs)** – helping regions align supply and demand across sectors with local employers
- **Apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps, and T Levels** – driving entry-level upskilling across ages and backgrounds
- **Digital Skills Council & AI Skills Taskforce (2024)** – supporting national AI-readiness and lifelong learning

Despite these national schemes, micro and small businesses, which make up **95% of UK firms**, often fall through the cracks due to restrictive eligibility, low awareness, or lack of dedicated support.



Aaron Yeo, commercial manager,  
Airmec Essential Services

The bigger picture:  
Skills, support and SME resilience

"We plan to increase headcount  
by 10% to 15%"

### Airmec Essential Services

Aaron Yeo, commercial manager at Bristol-based Airmec Essential Services, a leading provider of air, fire safety and water hygiene solutions, said the company is experiencing significant growth, driven by increased building regulations and the need to ensure compliance across aging building stock.

The company, which specialises in fire damper testing and compliance solutions, currently employs 52 staff and plans to increase its headcount by 10% to 15% over the next 12 months. With a five-year strategy to double turnover, Airmec is capitalising on growing government investment in public sector buildings.

He said: "We do a lot of work for the public sector, and the government is increasing capital expenditure, particularly in prisons.

"Fire safety has become a top priority with the release of the Building Safety Act 2022, with authorities ensuring that their buildings meet the highest compliance standards.

"This demand is creating substantial growth opportunities for us, enabling us to expand our workforce."

The company is also looking to bring some outsourced services in-house, further increasing the need for qualified staff.

"This shift allows us to recruit individuals with specialist expertise in the fire safety sector. By strengthening our team, we can offer a full turnkey solution to our customers."



## Enterprise Nation supports over 145,000 businesses across the UK

We hear directly from founders navigating the hiring and skills landscape. From access to HR advice to connections to early-career talent, we help micro firms make their first hires with confidence. Based on what small businesses have told us through the Talent Hub, the next phase of workforce reform must address four pressing gaps:



**Ensure government-backed employment and skills programmes actively include firms with no more than 10 employees** (the most underserved segment despite making up 95% of UK businesses)



**Help small businesses adopt digital and AI tools** – through targeted advice, simplified tech grants, and awareness campaigns, so small businesses can confidently adopt tools that streamline hiring, upskilling, and operations



**Champion youth entrepreneurship** – back the 62% of young people who say they want to start a business, by integrating entrepreneurship pathways into youth employment support



**Support mental health and flexible working practices for young hires** – by embedding these principles in SME guidance and hiring schemes, as called for by young workers in recent reports (WEF, Employment Hero)



"This coming year... will be another forecasted breakout year for us. To hit some of those numbers, we need to fulfil the demand that we're going to create for ourselves – and that means taking on some new employees."

**Wis Jantarasorn**, commercial director, Voxblock

## The road ahead: Enterprise Nation's vision for talent and youth innovation

Enterprise Nation supports over 145,000 small businesses and speaks daily to founders navigating workforce and hiring challenges. From that experience, we see a growing appetite among employers and young people alike for more inclusive, flexible, and entrepreneurial career pathways.

To meet this demand, Enterprise Nation is exploring how we can expand and evolve our impact through:

- 1. Launching a Youth Entrepreneurship Track:** giving young people aged 16 to 25 the tools, training, and mentoring to turn side hustles into sustainable businesses
- 2. Building Talent Discovery Tools** using our platform to better connect skills to opportunity across the small business economy
- 3. Partnering with employers** working with purpose-led employers to promote flexible, entry-level roles that reflect what young people are looking for today

We believe every small business has the potential to hire, and every young person deserves the opportunity to thrive. With the right support, we can make that vision a reality.

This report reflects the urgent need to better support small businesses with hiring and talent retention. Through Talent Hub, we've not only provided support, but laid the foundation for more inclusive, dynamic and digitally enabled hiring practices. The data is clear: young people want to work, small businesses want to hire, and Enterprise Nation is committed to being the bridge between them.

We look forward to working with government, employers, and young people to shape a more inclusive and prosperous workforce for all.







## Contact us

For media, partnership or programme enquiries, please contact:

Email: [hello@enterprisenation.com](mailto:hello@enterprisenation.com)

Web: [www.enterprisenation.com](http://www.enterprisenation.com)

Social: [!\[\]\(d66ff64371a51729ac8c1cdaa685ba6f\_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(0f31ebba7abcd47777e178db26f29705\_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(63ea948177b1bcc486b2b76d20d5fb69\_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(886f7dced1265a6d438eca0881817b40\_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(bb381b56be27580041e232a6cbb04464\_img.jpg\)](#)

## Voices of progress: Stories from Enterprise Nation members

Talent Hub was designed to support businesses of every size, stage and ambition. Here's what some of our members had to say:

"We're now advertising our first graduate role thanks to Talent Hub's support."

**Khamisi** – natural cosmetics brand

"We didn't know where to start with apprentices – Talent Hub demystified the process."

**Lumi** – nail startup for pros

"Finding interns through Talent Hub gave us the confidence to trial new roles."

**Hera London** – skincare brand

"Accessing HR advice through the Hub helped us formalise contracts for the first time."

**Ruby Red** – hair and beauty brand

These stories reflect just a small snapshot of the impact Talent Hub is already having. The common theme? Business owners want to grow. They just need the right support.

  
talent-hub

By  Enterprise  
Nation

 employmenthero