

Young People's Perceptions of the Aged & Disability Sectors

Regional Development Australia Illawarra, with funding from the NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet, commissioned some focus group work to explore the perceptions of young people towards the Aged and Disability sectors.

The following report summarises the feedback received from these studies.

Some of the issues identified include:

Aged Care

- Experience has a significant influence on attitude to Aged Care.
 - Perception is positive if they know someone who works in Aged Care,
 - Perception is more negative if the experience is limited to visiting Aged Care sites.
- There is a highly medicalised view of the sector, with limited expectations of the types of roles available.
- Perception of the sector tends to be limited to nursing homes rather than retirement villas or at-home care.
- Media reports are influencing negative perceptions of the sector.
- Participants could not recall hearing about this sector at school from career counsellors, etc.
- The biggest turn-off with the sector is not the “poo-factor” but rather the prospect of developing a relationship with people who will decline and/or die.
- Strange behaviour of some residents was also a deterrent.
- The prospect of getting wisdom/life experience from older people was identified as a positive.

Opportunities

- The report recommends Aged Care facilities consider the experience of visiting children and to incorporate this into site design.
- The report recommends efforts be undertaken to demystify the ageing process, including dementia, and how to interact with older people with these issues.

Disability

- Stereotypes of people with disabilities negatively affected perceptions of the sector.
- Perception of the Disability sector is influenced to some extent by experience.
 - People who know someone with a disability have a more positive view of the sector are more willing to consider working in it.
- There was a medicalised view of the sector, and some confusion with the aged care sector.
- Participants had a narrow understanding of the term “disability”. Many who thought they didn't know anyone with a disability later realised that they did.
- Participants were unaware of the variety of skills and roles available in this sector.
- There is a belief that this sector can provide a stable job and good money.

Opportunities

- The report recommends efforts be undertaken to demystify disability stereotypes, and giving young people the skills to cope with uncomfortable situations.

It was also reported that participants expressed a general concern with obtaining stable employment due to casualisation of the workforce.

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“Millennials: their career aspirations and views on working in the Aged Care and Disability sectors”

A qualitative study of young people aged 15 -22 in three locations

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Executive Summary

This study was commissioned by Regional Development Australia to explore:

1. how young people perceive the disability and Aged Care sectors.
2. the career needs and aspirations of young people.

Three focus groups were conducted among the convenience sample of the young people attending the current NEXTGEN Digital Project.

24 young people took part in the focus groups in three locations, Nowra, Dapto and Wollongong. The sample was skewed male with 19 males and 5 females aged 15- 22 taking part.

Although, the young people were atypical of some young people in that they all have barriers to work including mental health, poor school attendance, no qualifications or disability, they had skills which made them good subjects for the focus groups, they had good to very good communication skills, good comprehension of the questions, high intelligence, good teamwork skills.

The participants were also slightly older than the primary target group of years 7, 8 who would be aged 12-14. However, the median age was 16.

Only two participants had ever had paid work before and so some of the questions around ideal work conditions were entirely hypothetical for them and not based on personal experience.

Aged Care main themes

Overwhelmingly, the participants' view of Aged Care was formed by their lived experience. Many had visited relatives in Aged Care at some stage in their

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childhood. Unprompted their only form of Aged Care mentioned was nursing homes, when prompted some remembered retirement villas and none thought of at home care.

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Their view of Aged Care was predominantly negative with a highly medicalised view of Aged Care. In the past nursing home and even retirement villages have not considered the experience of the visiting young and so their experience is of an unwelcoming hospital environment with the added distress of seeing their loved ones deteriorate and die. The rooms were seen as small, the nursing homes under resourced in staff, and often the other resident's behaviour, unexplained to the young person was bewildering. They would not like to go there themselves when they grew old unless they absolutely had to.

This viewpoint is markedly different if the young person knows someone who works in Aged Care. These participants had a far more positive view of Aged Care and mention the caring staff in particular, and the fact that it is "a good job". More positive attitudes were displayed by those who had visited a retirement village. Two participants had visited a retirement villa and remarked on how nice it was. One participant's mother works in at home care and "likes it". When prompted about what would be positive about working in Aged Care they mentioned relationships and wisdom from older people. They also could conceptualise that it was just a new home when you needed it, but did seem to think you "needed to be able to afford it".

However, the negatives outweighed the positives when discussing working in the sector, with them believing that you had to be a very caring person to work in Aged Care and emotionally robust as they found it depressing – "it is not the poo

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factor” – it was the fact that you would develop a relationship and die – or that they are not the person they used to be.

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Others were influenced negatively by media. Mentioning under resourcing, and danger to patients through foul play. This is not surprising as in the last year or so there has been widespread reports of fire, staff murdering patients and influenza deaths. This study was not able to ascertain exactly what media they were drawing from and this may be worth further study.

The Aged Care industry was not generally viewed as having a good reputation. Participants reported feeling frustrated it was under resourced and “you would be prevented from doing what you really wanted to do to help the person.” Small rooms came up a couple of times.

All participants said they would research the company’s reputation on line, particularly reviews.

None of the participants could recall being told about careers in the Aged Care industry at school or through any other channel. Because of their medicalised viewpoint they believed jobs like doctors, nurses were the main jobs. Some could recall hospitality and taking people on trips.

All were surprised when jobs in IT, AI or marketing were mentioned. They had not considered that they or any other jobs outside a hospital setting could be jobs in the Aged Care sector.

They thought if they were interested in a job in Aged Care, they would start by contacting a relative or friend who worked in the industry.

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Disabilities main themes

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The lived experience with disabilities was not quite as strong in forming their view as with Aged Care groups. Stereotypes of people with disabilities played a part.

However, if they did have a lived experience with people with disabilities it reinforced stereotypes and so issues such as behaviour, violence, were mentioned.

Again, they had a somewhat medicalised view of disabilities. And showed some confusion between Disability and Aged Care sectors.

In one Focus Group only one person identified as knowing a person with disabilities. When prompted, around half the group realised they knew someone with a disability – when the definition included mental health – e.g. “I’ve got a brother with Asperger’s” and “I know someone with borderline personality disorder – affects relationships”.

However, as in Aged Care, any personal contact with people who work in the industry caused positive reactions.

Participants were unaware of the skills and variety of jobs available beyond lower level caring. But believed that the sector could provide a stable job and good money. Stability and good money are two things they are looking for.

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Career aspirations

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Most struggled to say what they wanted in a job because they haven't had one. They seemed to want independence, and stability in employment. They are very aware of new casual economy and it makes them anxious. Would rather have a stable job.

They really understood the caring nature of both the Aged Care and Disability industries.

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Recommendations

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Awareness campaigns

1. Undertake long term social media campaign addressing the issues outlined in this research, connecting young people to the lives of people who work in or are helped by the sector, de medicalise sector, educate around aging and disability, highlighting wide variety of jobs needed by the sectors and showing the future of the sector
2. Age Care and Disability should be completely separate campaigns due to confusion about the two in young people's minds.
3. Conduct further research with a more balanced male/female skew and a younger target age from the general school population. To further drill down where their opinions are being formed other than in the lived experience, e.g. which media exactly.

Mid to longer term

1. Consider the experience of visiting children in Aged Care design.
2. Connect young people with people in the industry who are positive role models , school visits etc
3. Connect young people with older people and the Aged Care industry through meaningful and creative school programs such as the "Your Story Matters" project at Sarah Claydon Milton or the virtual reality program in Victoria
4. Educate school career advisors on the diverse roles in Aged Care and Disability and the pathways to get there.
5. Educate young people about the Ability in DisAbility and expose them to real life situations and disabled people in a monitored environment.

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6. Be aware of the maturity and readiness of the young person to cope with a person with disability or dementia.
7. Demystify disability stereotypes, give young people the skills to cope in uncomfortable situations – e.g. like a mental health first aid type exposure.
8. Demystify the aging process, including dementia and how to interact with older people with these issues. (Even adult relatives are not necessarily given this help in the Aged Care setting – personal experience).
9. Connect young people with Careers Pathway Options Online platform that young people can engage with and explore for options in a career in Aged Care and Disabilities. We believe this already exists (similar was Career Hunter app) and there are skills websites such as skillsroad.com.au but the Careers Pathway Online should outline the array of careers – jobs available now – and education and training pathways to get there. Sponsored positions included - where the position is offered with training provided concurrently by the employer.
10. Ensure schools careers advisors, TAFE NSW, Industry, Job Actives, Disability services and other relevant groups are aware of and partner with the Careers Pathway Platform.

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Methodology

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Due to time and budget constraints the focus groups used a convenience sample of young people enrolled in the NEXTGEN Digital Program in three locations, Nowra, Dapto and Wollongong.

The young people were aged 15- 22, with the median age being 16. There was a male skew as NEXTGEN attracts students interested in IT.

	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Girl</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>						<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Boy</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>19</i>

These students are still unclear about career choices and only two students in the sample group have a had a paid job, again this is skewed compared to the general population of their age as NEXTGEN digital is a funded program for young people with barriers to work - such as disadvantage, mental health or other disabilities. This did influence the answers to the questions about jobs and paid work as most had no real-life experience to make a judgement – they were imagining what they would like in a workplace.

However, respondents demonstrated good employability skills including:

- Good verbal communication, in some cases at an elevated level with an ability to analyse what they were saying and explain why they had come to that conclusion.
- Comprehension – participants could respond well to questions.
- Teamwork – the groups were supportive of each other with teamwork skills apparent during the focus groups.

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- Assertiveness- some participants needed to be promoted to contribute but had no problem doing so when asked and then continued to participate.
- Realism – an understanding of the need to earn money.

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Aged Care responses in more detail

What does Aged Care mean to you?

Aged Care facilities, (e.g. Nursing Homes)

Nursing Homes, nurses, gardens and poorly staffed environments.

Have had families that have been working in nursing homes. General stigma.

“My parents and their parents were in those facilities. Pretty much like moving to a new house. Where someone gets to a point where they need care of someone else.” My grandparents.

“I had an Aunty that worked in an Aged Care sector. She was told to lie, and told to relieve their patients – drug cocktail,”

“I think the negative aspect comes with elderly care. That’s where the negative thing comes in because by that point they are deteriorating in – either mental or physical,”

“I don’t think negative of it. When you are older and your kids can’t look after you and you have the money to go to a Nursing Home. My great grandmother went – and she could care for herself,”

Old people do go there to die.

It’s more as a new home at a certain age.

I don’t have that much opinion about it. Me personally wouldn’t want to go there while I was well.

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- I like the idea.
- Like the hospitality for them.
- All of it – the fact that they help the old people that can't help themselves.
- I'd care for old people.

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What is your personal experience with Aged Care (e.g. have you ever visited a relative at a retirement home?)

The one I went to was really nice – in Sydney.

The other one felt like an escape.

Like a retirement home.

Retirement home – as opposed to nursing home.

Inasmuch in Sussex, both together. My Aunt she has just retired and has a Villa – when you get older they move you into homes for your ability to take care of yourself. My great grandmother before she died, she was in one that was small and needed help with everyone.

- My Mum used to work in Aged Care.
- My grandfather lived in a retirement village.
- It was a very different experience – somewhat sad. The deterioration so rapidly. Someone so close to my heart.
- Very welcoming – the staff, everyone else there seemed to love him. Even though they were all old, they all seemed to get along. I liked it.
- Mum worked for IRT. Changed the sheets, shower.
- Good experience. Nice environment, old people need help.

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- My Nan used to work there. Warrigal. Nan did same. Nan said it was a good job, nice people. I visited there – I was there a lot. It was nice, they seemed to care for the old people.

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What do you think it would be like to work in Aged Care?

Depressing.

My great grandmother before she died, she had this woman that would come and see her. How depressing – you knew that person when they could do everything – and then she couldn't and died.

My mum works in Aged Care. She goes to people's houses – it is a caring. I think it is nice – I don't think it is depressing.

Be interesting, because one – I would have a lot of people saying why don't you get a real job – I worked hard – why can't you do the same.

I don't see that.

They recognise more when they walk in. Always happy to see you and want to hang out with you.

- Be fun for me, taking them outside, playing cards. Be fun. Karaoke. Do games, I could do that.
- Hospitality.
- Newspaper articles – some good, some not.
- Negative side – read about – hard to explain. Not very descriptive.
- Even photos with an ad, someone with a smile.
- Positive – from Mum. People in the retirement village that they like it.

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Do you think you'd ever work in Aged Care? Why or why not?

Maybe – to start off.

Depends what it is and I could do it – then I would do it.

Can't see myself. It does seem a bit depressing.

I feel like it is more of a revolving wheel, you meet someone and get attached to them and then they move on and you have to start the process again,

- I couldn't see myself doing it.
- I don't think I have enough hospitality. I would get tired.
- I could – but it would emotionally kill me. It's a lot – if anyone knew the person before – and you watch people deteriorate it is really really sad.
- I don't know.

What sort of people do you think work in Aged Care?

A myriad – people who want to get paid, people who care, people who want to know more about old people.

- Anyone.
- Very caring people.
- Takes really caring and strong hearted people.
- Parents – mothers – who are used to looking after people.

What do you think are some of the positive things about working in Aged Care?

Positive – Dedicated platform to have these people taken care of. There are no distractions.

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Could also be the opposite of what I said before. Working in Aged Care you can form attachments with people you are looking after. You come and see them every day you can really form a connection to them and help them with recovery.

Part of the community.

Making friendships – share an experience

Those in Aged Care what a lot of new kids are doing. Look back when they were young. Important for old people to know what young people are up to.

When you get chatting with people it could give you some knowledge – very wise.

Get large amount of life experience without having to spend the time doing it.

What do you think are some of the negative things about working in Aged Care?

Negative – lack of funding – feel helpless

Dodgy business practices.

I think it could also do with the state that the person is in. If you have been designated to look after an older person and they are in a bad state – their mind is all over the place. A lot of problems arise from that.

What sorts of jobs are in Aged Care?

- Nurse
- Doctor
- Psychiatrist
- Fitness Planner
- Chiropractor

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- Physician
- Chemist
- Nutritionist
- Cleaner
- Hospitality
- Chef
- Take out on trips
- Security
- Administration staff
- When I think Aged Care – I don't think of their aged – I think of the caring professions.

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If you wanted to get a job in Aged Care – do you know where to go?

- I have connections with physios.
- Talk to Mum (who worked in Aged Care).

Having a guide or mentor to support you in a new role

Yes, to start off – help you get into it.

Show you the ropes.

You might want a refresher – technology updates.

How this place does things differently to another place.

Being part of a growing industry

Wouldn't want to be in an industry that is shrinking.

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Another thing – if you enter a company at the right time – while it is rising in the ranks – it could be a really special time to be part of that company – be there for its triumphant stages.

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Disability responses in detail

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What does Disability mean to you?

More than just old people. Old people's homes. Mentally.

Education. Schools. Special ed.

Physical disabilities.

Disabled people.

Do you personally know anyone who is disabled?

Don't know how it happened. Quite difficult life for them. Can't walk with two legs.

My brother has Asperger's. Not as mentally developed as he could be at his age. He is not in any special class.

Any physical disability – no one knew anyone –

Personality disorders – I know someone with borderline personality disorder. Affects relationships – really distant at times.

Have you ever visited a group that works with disabled persons?

No.

In primary school – a special needs class. Some kids were pretty good and others need more support – harder to get to work.

I didn't enjoy it – too young – in Primary School. A bit overwhelming.

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Taught about disabilities. Had education on disabilities.

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Disabled kids might have behaviour issues that non-disabled kids might not have and get scared off.

I have not met anyone with a disability

I don't know anyone and have never visited anyone.

It's good that people work with disabled people.

No other contact with mental disabilities.

Mental health – one person in class – pop had dementia.

What do you think it would be like to work in the Disability sector?

Getting work enrichment.

People caring for them – caring people.

Not too much of a hassle – pretty easy going. More positives than negatives.

Interacting with the people.

Getting to know them.

Making new friends.

My Mum used to work as a carer. Help people shower. Mum liked it and got paid good.

Work – no deadlines, no pressure.

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Maybe mechanic work – something I've seen, so just mentioned it.

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A friend's Mum works in Disability. Some of her co-workers are awful people – they are the ones that make it awful. The disability people are good.

My Mum's friend takes care of elderly people with disabilities. Clients are nice and have cool pets. She enjoys it – and for the money.

My Nan used to go and cook for them. She is a commercial cook. A lot of people – around 100. It's pretty good, she liked it.

What do you think are some of the positive things about working in Disability?

- good pay
- meeting people and talking to them
- feel like what it feels like for them.
- social interaction
- really generous person who works
- pretty calm job

What do you think are some of the negative things about working in Disability?

- the poo stuff – having to clean up after them.
- helping them shower – personal boundaries. My Mum had to help this guy who was very sensitive – hot shower.
- people's escaping ability

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- if some patients might be inappropriate with the carers – sexual.
- quite slow
- mean employees (other)
- patients can be violent
- stressful
- Aged Care – build up a relationship – and die

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What sorts of jobs are in Disability?

- Cleaning
- Security
- Cashier
- Medical
- Check-ups – medication
- Health care
- Driving and taking people out
- Nursing
- Entertainers
- Personal support worker

Reputation

Pretty important. If they had a bad reputation I wouldn't work for them at all.

Sometimes if you work for a stingy company – be a chip on your shoulder you couldn't get it off.

Look on line for their reputation.

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Three different categories –

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- Higher reputation people. Easy to go for.
- Low reputation – probably don't want to go anywhere near them.
- Others – don't have much of a reputation – because they have flown under the radar – you can get good experience. You may have to look a little further to find it. It could end up being more fulfilling and providing – than some of the bigger ones.
- How is the business reputation going to affect you as a worker – dentist who works on patients – under anaesthetics – might abuse people.
- Look up
- Review – people's reviews – internet.
- Feedback sheets

Comments from other people

Shouldn't really matter what the reputation is?

What about ethical things?

I wouldn't want to work for a bad reputation.

I don't care about the question.

Google, customer satisfaction, employee reviews.

Reviews, other employee opinions.

Look online. There are job review websites.

Look up a business – former employees will give a rating.

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What do they want in a job

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Do you know what career you'd like to have when you finish school/studies?

- Megatronic engineer.
- Game development.
- Film maker.
- Design and interfaces. Visual.
- Films.
- Musician. Part of the audio-visual dynamic.
- Business industry.
- My dream job would be an Entertainer. Online entertainment. Making comedy videos.
- Electronics or service (Navy). Electrician – trained through Navy.
- Test driver for cars.
- Drone operator
- Job with computers.
- Stability
- Enjoyment
- Great work colleagues
- Money

Dream jobs –

- IT you tube, streamer (video games)
- Wedding photographer or graphic designer
- Game designer, competitive gamer
- IT or palaeontology

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- IT or computer industry –
- Concept artists for games or movies
- Somewhere in IT, graphic designer, you tuber, actor or entertainer
- Stream live competitive gamer (streamer) graphic designer, biology
- Something to do with art, comics, illustration, art and game development or IT.

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General Questions.

What are the most important things you'd want in a job?

- Money
- Clear objective – like to know exactly what they want me to do, why I am doing it, when it needs to be done.
- A sense of fulfilment. I did something today – whether it contributed to myself or society.
- A simple job
- My end goal would be working for myself. My own business, working for myself.
- Flexibility.
- Inside work.
- Mostly inside work.
- On my own
- With people – as long as they know what they are doing.
- In a big company – more resources.
- Stability
- Stability and flexibility
- Good connections – with higher ups. Good communication.

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What are the essential things you'd need from a job?

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- Flexible working hours
- Opportunities to learn, train and grow
- Having a variety of activities
- Be good to have one
- Learn new skills
- Be in a routine. To get somewhere in life.
- Working with computers.

What things could you live without in a job, but would be nice to have?

- If you didn't have a job - and you didn't need a job – what would you do?
- Make videos
- Good pay
- Good work environment
- Reachable – can get to the work. Pretty important to be able to get to your workplace.
- Dream Job
- Freelance
- Build anything in your backyard and play – Giant Clam throwers.
- Multiple things to do. Streaming, you tubing, physically building computers.
- Play video games all day.
- Focus on personal skills – like learning an instrument. Sit at home all day and play your instrument and post it somewhere – even if you are not very good.

What things in a job would make you leave and look for something else?

- Didn't share my view.

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- Had an argument and didn't work out.
- If I couldn't do the work anymore.

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Which of the following words/phrases are important to you personally in a career

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1 = not important. 10 = really important. Please note this was a verbal exercise and not all respondents replied to each question.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Connecting with others	6%		16%		10%	10%	28%	10%	10%	10%
Making a difference			5%	10%	5%	15%	25%	15%	5%	20%
Being given an opportunity to learn, train and grow				8%		8%	25%	8%	8%	43%
Having a variety of activities		8%			8%	8%	30%	23%	15%	8%
Reputation of Company			9%				18%	9%	46%	18%
Being part of a team	8%			15%	23%	15%	8%		8%	23%
<i>Helping others be "all that they can be"</i>			7%	7%		23%	16%	7%		40%
<i>Having a guide or mentor to support you in a new role</i>					17%	8%		25%	42%	8%
<i>Being part of a growing industry</i>		7%	7%		16%	7%	16%	7%	24%	16%
<i>Flexible working hours</i>	7%			7%	16%	16%	7%		16%	31%

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Additional comments

Making a difference

- Whatever I end up doing – just to do what I want to do – without the pressure of making a difference,
- The real question – is ARE you able to make a difference,
- Is different, safe, positive

Family friendly conditions

- Very important.
- Viewing people who work there as individuals with actual problems.
- Good for an employer to let their employees off when there is something important.
- If someone has a sick pet, good for an employer to have a bit of sympathy and let them off for a day or so.
- An employer can't be too – it may seem that important – but in the long run it is not that important.

Having a variety of activities

Please note that some of these participants have anxiety which would explain the need for routine.

- Yes

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- No – you'll get better at it every time.
- You want a bit of consistency in a job.
- Don't get bored or stale.

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Being part of a team

Please note that some participants are socially anxious and this reflects in their scores

Flexible working hours

- I'm fine with a set time that I can't really negotiate,
- As long as you have time to sleep.
- Being given opportunities to learn, train and grow.
- Yes, important.
- Elements of a job that help you learn

That'sgood

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