

TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer:

So, first question that I wanted to ask, is at what point in your life did you look for work for the first time?

Speaker 2:

As soon as I got my national insurance. I got it a little bit before my 16th birthday. So, it was like a couple months before I just got sent it early and I actually got a job in the High Street like in the marketplace just down there.

Interviewer:

And did you always know that you wanted to start working as soon as you could?

Speaker 2:

Yeah. Yeah. I feel like I'm really independent. Like I just really wanted a job, and I've had a job since. Now I feel like because I'm so used to it, I can't not have a job. Like I need to have my own source of income.

Interviewer:

Anyone else want to share?

Speaker 1:

Yeah, I'm the complete opposite. I only started like working like 6 months ago. And that's right before I started uni. Like fortunately for me, I didn't feel the need to work because I was more focusing on my education and everything. But now I have a job and I'm grateful for that.

Speaker 3:

So, like I've been working with my dad like since I was young, just like helping him out and stuff because he has his own business. And then I feel like there's a difference between having income coming in and then just working for the experience. So, I started doing more experienced work and still getting paid when I was in sixth form. And then when I turned 18, I had a full time. Well, not a full-time job, part time job, but I would basically work any day except the days I'm going to uni. I would even work sometimes after uni so I think I would do both. I would still try to have other places where I go to get the experience and if I get paid, that's good thing as well. But if not, it's fine. So you can just be more independent and have like a good saving.

Speaker 4:

So, mine was similar. I started [an] unofficial job working for Dad at the age of 14. I started helping him out around then, and then at 16 is when I got my first job. Basically, instantly the moment I got my NI number I was like, OK time to apply to jobs and then after that I've been basically all over the place. I think I've only had a really small gap. The idea of not working doesn't fit with me so.

Interviewer:

And how about you? When did you first start working or first start thinking about work?

Speaker 5:

I got my first job when I was 16, working in a National Trust cafe [redacted]. So yeah, same as you guys, 16. As soon as got my National Insurance number. You want that part time job on a Saturday to earn some money don't you?

Interviewer:

And on that note, what does it mean to you to work as a young person? Maybe some of you will have had a bit of support from parents or guardians, so if you did have the choice at that point when you were 16, what did that mean to you?

Speaker 2:

It made me feel really like responsible at the time, like I felt really proud to have a job. I felt like I was taking a big step forward. 16 is such a prime time. I think you've just finished your GCSE's or you're doing your GCSE's. It's Year 11 so many things are changing and thinking about your A levels and what you want to possibly do for uni. Getting a job at that time feels like just going along with that flow of there being big changes in your life.

I was really happy to have had a job. And like I said, I haven't not had a job since.

Interviewer:

Does anyone want to add to that?

Speaker 3:

I feel like when you have your first job as well, you are so hard working. I remember [in] my first job, I was trying to get as many shifts as I can work all the time. And also, they do say that having a job kind of shifts your mind so you're not thinking about the things that you're at home worried about. Instead, you're just utilising your time and you're working and earning money on the way. So that's one good thing. And I would say now at this point as well, becoming independent and then having the opportunity to also like help out your parents in like a way that you didn't think you could like for example say like buying a house, contributing to that, that would be like one of the major steps that you're doing. You just feel more important in your family as well. I don't think they look at you like you're earning money; they look at you as like a responsible, independent person. So, I feel like having the ability to do that is very special, I would say for them as well.

Interviewer:

If you have stuff to add. Just, yeah, feel free to add at any time.

And in terms of looking for work. Could I just check – did everyone say they're at uni? What year are you in?

Speaker 4:

2nd year.

Speaker 3:

I'm going to go into 3rd.

Speaker 2:

Going into first year.

Speaker 1:

Going into going into second year.

Interviewer:

Thinking about that Post University transition into whatever may come afterwards, whether that's taking on an apprenticeship, doing further training, starting to work. How do you envision that process? Do you think it's something that will come easily, or is it something you're worried about?

Speaker 1:

I think it's completely different. I know I want to be in education as long as possible. Like after I finish my undergrad, I want to go straight to do my masters. So, I'm looking for unpaid experiences because I kind of need, the work experience and the internships and stuff. I'm not really thinking about getting like a full time job yet because it's not really my priority at the moment.

Interviewer:

Thank you. Anyone else want to share?

Speaker 4:

I'm the total opposite, I think, since COVID times, when everyone was in lockdown. The Internet, all this idea of online businesses, all these buzzwords, they shot up. So I started looking into it because it was really appealing at that moment. So I think coming up to 2 1/2 to 3 years now, I've been working on my own thing as well. So I already know that once uni is over, I've already got something that I've built up for a long time. It's more than enough to keep me steady for a few years. And if I can go full time on it, then obviously I don't have to be reliant on something else or dependent on someone else giving me a job.

Interviewer:

It's interesting what you say about COVID and how that made people reimagine what work can be like. Do you think that self-employment and entrepreneurship is something that is more appealing nowadays?

Speaker 3:

I would say so because you start and like you don't know where you're gonna be. Cause I started something two years ago and now it's really kicking off it just works. Obviously you need to put a lot of time in it to make it work better and for you to earn more money but like you said once you finish uni, you can focus on that a bit more and then you have something. Obviously, we all want to have, like, really good graduate jobs once we graduate but if you have something before that, you're not gonna be as stressed as someone who just graduated and doesn't have anything even if you have experience. I think having your own thing is really important because it gives you something that you can just rely on. It's just a little bit helpful. I know a lot of people don't know where to start and stuff. But I feel like once you put your foot down and you're like, 'I'm gonna start doing this' and then just work on it, it can really work out and you see the results at the end so.

Interviewer:

And that sense of security – is that something that is important to you?

Speaker 4:

I would disagree. I think it's a sense of uncertainty. Because you don't know if you're going to fail or you're going to succeed, especially in the beginning. I remember when I started, I'd just finished

GCSE's, summer holidays don't know what I was doing. I was feeling just give it a go. I remember for 6-7 months, literally nothing, not getting any clients, no income, nothing. To some people that drives them forward because it gives them discipline and motivation to actually do something rather than just sit back.

Interviewer:

Do you think that the world of traditional work, is easily accessible to you? Do you know how to navigate that?

Speaker 2:

I think it's difficult. I think in the area we live in, it's very competitive, think there's a lot of young people and it's not always easy to find a job in the sector you'd like. Like ideally, I would like to have a part time job in like a pharmacy or something like that, but it's been so difficult for me to find so I've settled with something else. But [overall] I don't think it's difficult to find a job. I think there are job opportunities and I also think it's subjective to the person. I think everybody has different experiences and so many different places are looking for different things so it's very selective to the situation.

Speaker 1:

I think it's about there being jobs available and more about you being at the stage where they can give you the job. For example, because I wanna go into the legal field, a lot of the jobs I wanna apply for require me to be in second year or to have graduated. So all of the experiences I get have to be non-related but I have to be able to write about how I can transfer the skills. So at the moment I'm working at a cafe and I can say how I gain communication skills and things like that and they would still look at that as a good job to have because it's transferable skills. So whilst in the sectors you might want to work in, it's difficult, I don't think that's really stopping me from looking at other sectors to work in.

Interviewer:

And if you think about the career that you're going to go into in a few years' time, do you think that that's something you would see yourself staying in for the long term or do you see yourself moving career?

Speaker 1:

I think I might stay in it forever. I put so much time and dedication into it because it does require a lot of training to become a lawyer, you need to do your bar exams, the two year training, it's a lot of commitment. For me because I put so much in, leaving that sector would feel like I'm abandoning something I've wanted for a long time, but if it doesn't work out, I'm not gonna force myself to stay there, obviously not. But I'm not really gonna give up on it, if that makes sense.

Speaker 4:

I'd say short to mid term into the future, you can somewhat predict what you wanna do. Once it gets to like 20 years, then it's like you don't know what's gonna happen. That is really long into the future. Literally anything can happen at that time. So, I mean, it really depends on your own mindset, what you know you want to do, or if you have different interests or hobbies. For example, I'm interested in sales and marketing [but] maybe in 20 years' time, I've had enough of it. I'm going bald and I want to change up – anything can happen at that point.

Speaker 2:

I'm yeah, I think I'm also really big on uncertainty in that, I don't know what's going to happen. I think things change quickly and I'm very open to changing what career I go into. At this current moment in time, I don't know exactly what job I want to do and I'm still open to new ideas. And I'm doing a Biomed degree and I think that field is very broad and the skills you gain from the degree are very applicable within the biology field so I'm just gonna see what happens. I guess, like, just go with the flow.

Speaker 3:

I would just say I'd be open to move around, but I do have a passion for what I want to do and I specifically want to do digital marketing. So I feel like gathering up all the experience just to get into it and want to stay in it for a while, but again I've heard of other people's experiences and they always move around. Whether they wanna work in marketing, but end up going into sales or HR, you can always move around and they end up loving it as well. But I feel like because I have a passion for it, I do want to try it out and have some experience in it before [leaving].

Interviewer:

And how important is it to you that your passions align with your career? Some people have their passions and that is their career. But some people see their job as the way that they make money while keeping their passions separate. What are your thoughts on that?

Speaker 1:

I think for me, my passion and my career are two different things and I don't really want to monetize my passion because it's like something I do in my free time. I'm very much into like film and movies and directing specifically. Maybe in the future if I change my mind, I might go into it but I don't really think I am ever gonna pursue a career in it. I like watching TV or like going to the cinema a lot, learning about it. And I see that as two different things. While with my career I don't mind gaining money for me.

Interviewer:

How do you think it changes your perspective on a passion when you're monetizing it or when it coincides with what you're doing?

Speaker 1:

Career-wise I think it puts a lot more pressure on you to enjoy it because you kind of lose purpose to gain money from it.

Speaker 2:

Yeah, I really agree. I think my passion and my career are two separate things, but I also have an interest in a wide variety of things and I've just picked what I think is most secure in the future to monetise. I have an interest in fashion and music, but I don't think I would ever pursue it unless the opportunity came around where it would work out. But the security of pursuing biology and having a good job, a well paying job is more important for me.

Speaker 5:

Can I ask a question? If someone said "we could offer you a well paying job in music profession", would you jump on that opportunity or would you prefer to stay here?

Speaker 2:

Yeah, I don't know. I think I'm scared. I think that's what it is. But I also really enjoy biology and I feel like if I didn't do anything related to that, I would also feel like I'm letting myself down in a way.

Interviewer:

Yeah. And do you think that the world of work will look very different by [2050], and if so, how do you think it will look? How different will it be?

Speaker 4:

I think I think with the way everything is moving now where everything is becoming a lot more digital. The focus on media, social media, IT, AI – I think the traditional way of getting into a career is slowly dying down. There's a clear separation between going through education, getting a job, sticking to that career or going an unpredicted way where you have no idea what's going to happen. I think the difference is going to be a lot more common. You could see on social media, just scrolling you see this person saying, "oh, you should do this, you can earn money this way" and another person saying, "no, you should do this". But I think it also depends on your upbringing in a way, especially in the early years. Yeah, I think pathways is going to be a really big thing. I'm excited to see what the younger generation coming up is gonna be like.

Speaker 5:

Lots of AI and digital nomads I think that would be a much bigger thing going forward.

Interviewer:

And how about in person interactions and jobs that involve interacting with people. Do you think that those will increase or decrease in popularity? Will they be desirable?

Speaker 2:

I feel like it's getting harder to get into jobs like that, but there's a group of jobs that will always stay the same or somewhat be there like charity, catering, hotels, airport work, amusement parks, Legoland, Thorpe Park. Things like that will always be similar. Like my mum used to tell me about how she used to work at McDonald's and when I was 16 I got a job in a tea place. Jobs like that are always social and always hiring new employees. That will always be available for like upcoming generations. I don't think that's gonna change.

Speaker 3:

They always want someone with experience though, because if you're applying for a specific role, they require you to have the experience, get you trained, and then have you start working. But as soon as you decide to leave, instantly the job vacancy's out there and they hire new people. So that that part of work will always remain the same, I think. But more important interactions like what we're doing right now might be more remote and might just be from home. It's not necessary that you have to come in to the office. But with the hospitality and retail [that won't happen], unless they start cutting down and making everything fully digital like Amazon stores where you just go inside and there's no staff workers and you just [collect] your Amazon and then you go.

Interviewer:

In terms of your personal careers and plans for the future, do you see yourself (work-wise) staying in Hounslow or in the surrounding areas like West London? Or do you have plans to move elsewhere? And if so, why?

Speaker 1:

I want to go abroad once I'm done because I wanna work in politics and afterwards I'm done with my Masters. For legal there's all kind of transferable stuff. Yeah. And so I don't want to stay in the UK, just gonna move around and travel as much as I can.

Interviewer:

And what gives you the desire?

Speaker 1:

I think because I really like learning about other people's cultures and languages, and if it means that I can live in a different country and work there and do that then [I'd like to do that].

Speaker 4:

Yeah, definitely don't see myself staying. Stay in London, definitely. I think to some extent staying where you grew up does limit you in some way in terms of the people you're around, the experiences you have. I think in terms of location, if you do move, it opens up a whole new world. Like the experience in London, Birmingham is totally different. The way you work will be similar but the people you interact with is going to be totally different. You can miss it, your childhood place, but in my opinion I definitely see myself moving.

Speaker 2:

I think life is built on experiences. I think it's important [to travel]. You can always come back, Hounslow's not going anywhere. I think it's important to at least move away for a little bit and to have those new experiences. Me personally, I definitely want to move away from Hounslow. I couldn't tell you where or doing what though, I haven't made it that far through the thought process. So we'll see what happens there. I'm really excited for it.

Speaker 3:

I think I would like to live where I am living. Not exactly where I'm living, obviously have my own house and everything, but I think it's always gonna be in the same area, because my family's here. I want to be near my family. But I want my work to be somewhere more in central London, where there's like the bigger companies like Canary Wharf for example. For travelling, I would want that to be different. I don't want to travel to work. I want to travel, to have fun. It would be fun if you have like brand support or your company pays you to go [somewhere] to do things, I think that would be more exciting than just completely moving to a different country to start something. If you get the opportunity and your company sends you there to do something, that would be more exciting. But in terms of staying, I'd just do it where my house is. I don't think I'd want to move to a whole new country or [elsewhere] in London.

Interviewer:

And do you see the world of work or the job market in Hounslow as being desirable for young people right now? Do you think that will change in the future?

Speaker 2:

I think it's become more desirable. Like even though like I'm only 19, I've still seen the change within Hounslow over the last few years in terms of the amount of jobs and the type of jobs. Like over the last few years, they've built the Cineworld, they're making the JD bigger, they've got that Popeyes, the flip out. They've opened hobble down Heath, there's so many job opportunities there.

[For] those kids who have just got their NI number, fresh out of year 11 and going into 6th form, part time jobs have become more available.

Interviewer:

Anyone else want to share thoughts?

Speaker 4:

I think the views of young people in terms of staying in the local area, specifically speaking about Hounslow, I think they are definitely looking in the short term way. They don't see themselves working in Hounslow specifically when they're like 25. That idea of a corporate high rise building office job working in Central London is definitely more desirable to them.

It's just wearing, going in the suit. Really tall building. Got security there. Social media has definitely glamorised that as well. Especially with the increase of apprenticeships, you always see someone. Yesterday I saw so many people that are apprenticeship content creators releasing their apprenticeship trackers and talking about 6 different companies [releasing] their apprenticeships like JP Morgan. So, I think that idea of going into a corporate job is definitely a lot more desirable rather than staying in Hounslow.

Interviewer:

Anyone agree or disagree with that?

Speaker 2:

When you asked the question, I only thought of it in the perspective of part time jobs. I did not even think about the idea of having a full time job, a corporate job in Hounslow. Those two just don't fit in the same sentence in my brain.

Interviewer:

I'm curious to hear from your experiences of education. Do you feel that the education that you've received has equipped you for the world of work. And if not, what do you think was missing?

Speaker 2:

I think in Hounslow, all of the secondary schools, are very diverse. I think that's a guarantee. And I think that brings on this sense of children [being] forced to pick up communication skills. I think a lot of the children in this Borough pick up that skill of meeting new people and communicating to people outside of their culture or just people that are different. I think my secondary school in particular really pushed this thing where you should do extracurriculars or workshops and you should sign up for this and you should go and join this zoom call. We had certain teachers that would always push that so subjective to the child, if you went and did that, you picked up those applicable skills. But some didn't.

Speaker 3:

I agree because we did have a teacher who'd have work experience opportunities put onto Google Classroom. Again, it's subjective to the student who decides to actually apply. You can just [think], I'm only gonna do if my friend does it. But if you want to do it and you want some experience, you go out and you apply to as many things as you can. And also we had this session in sixth form – it'd be the last period and we would have a session where we had to work in groups to gain teamwork skills and group leader [skills]. You're working on a project and you have to come up with your own idea and then present at the end of those two weeks. And then the classmates judge your idea and what you came up with. I think I think that really helped.

It was pretty good because we had to work with different people each time as well. Some of the times you get to choose your group, sometimes you get put into groups. And it's really cool talking to these people that maybe you never really communicate with because they're not in the same class as you or something like that.

Speaker 1:

I think for us they brought in people to gain insight. And they did post opportunities for things, they encouraged us to sign up to things especially when we had PSHE we would sit down and apply to stuff. I remember we had a week where we had to do work experience so they made sure that everyone found work experience to do. That was a good way, they used the initiative to [help] us to gain experience and skills.

Speaker 4:

So with my experience, this also was the way I found out about Spark, is in my film class and during A levels, we had a Media company come in and give us a course which then led to some of us getting work experience there. I didn't really have a mindset of something to specialise in like medicine, law, finance. I was never really like a massive education head. But in terms of the social aspect of going to school secondary and A levels, it's definitely helped me a lot in terms of interacting with other people. Going out there, meeting new people, has definitely helped me in the way I present myself, the way other people see me.

Interviewer:

When you look at the data on a local level, a lot more 16 to 24 year olds are claiming Universal Credit now than before the pandemic. Does this resonate with your experiences? Do you feel that more young people are in need of financial support?

Speaker 4:

I think compared to the expenses of everything going up, the need for money has also gone up. The biggest comparison you can do is definitely housing. 50 years ago you needed about a few years worth of salary, saved up to [buy a house]. Now you probably need like 30 years worth of salary saved up. Especially in London, it's basically impossible to get a house on an average wage. I was looking at a study on what your average salary needs to be in different major cities in the UK to afford a house. In Loughborough, it was around 40,000, in London it was 127,000, which is extortionate. So, my question is always why is it in London that it's like this, but in other cities it doesn't have a massive effect. Their salaries might be a little bit lower, but it's not majorly lower where they only need a salary of 40,000 to afford a house. The average salary is around 35,000, but you still need 127,000 to get a house – the comparison doesn't make sense.

Interviewer:

Yeah, you're completely right that there is a big disparity there.

Speaker 4:

I would like to add on a previous question. Because the future of expenses and basic living has gone up and is going up, I think the desirability of going into self-employment or starting something on the side or having multiple sources of income is definitely a lot more attractive because people are starting to understand that having one job, working 9:00 to 5:00, coming home is not enough. It's physically not enough to actually [meet] your basic requirements.

I was talking to my uncle some time ago and when he first moved to the UK for business, the way he would work is totally different to the way he's working now in terms of the hours he would spend. But

after many years of being here and settling down, [you'd think] he would be working less on average, but actually he's working a lot more on average just to [live].

Interviewer:

Overall, does discussion around affordability and work make you feel optimistic, pessimistic, or neutral about what the world of work might look or feel like in future?

Speaker 2:

I think I feel anxious when I think about my career and the world of work and jobs. Not even just thinking about my career once I've finished uni. Like we were talking about 16 to 24 year olds most 18 to 24 year olds are in uni and the expenses that come from [that] are a lot and it's difficult for an 18 year old to manage. I feel like it's getting more difficult with travel expenses, food expenses, even university expenses. I'm moving to a big city [Birmingham]. I'm anxious that there isn't going to be a job there for me. There's gonna be God knows how many uni students moving there, will I be able to find a job? That's all I can think.

Speaker 1:

Just slightly anxious as well and a bit pessimistic. Especially due to how competitive every everything is, and the fact that everything is becoming so much more expensive. You have to think outside the box of the ways that you could manage while looking for jobs. Because I want to stay in education as much as possible, you think of how do I fund that plus getting the experience. You have to constantly be on it when it comes to the way that you make money, so that makes me a bit anxious.

Interviewer:

My follow-up question from that is what do you think could be done by organisations locally, to support not just yourselves but your other young people, in making their way through that pipeline?

Speaker 1:

For younger people like people who are less than my age, providing more unpaid work experience is good because a lot of these younger kids, can't really apply because they don't have any experience themselves. So it minimises their ability to get the jobs that they want to look for and be able to get paid for it. Work experience has become so hard – you have to go looking for it because companies don't always make it known that they have something.

Speaker 5:

I think your point about companies offering work experience is a really, really great point. I think so many young people really struggle to find work experience. That's the biggest thing that young people say that they need access to – work experience. And it's so hard to find.

Speaker 4:

I think we need a lot more support available for people in general. As someone who has come from a first generation family in the UK I never had a sibling or like immediate family to ask for support. So I was always going out to my cousins or my uncles and aunts. Yes, you can go to your parents, but their life experience is going to be totally different to yours. Yes, there is definitely a lot of support out there. You just need to find it, and there [could] be more. There was a lot of people telling me there is support, but when I would look for it I can't find it.

There's [also] this stigma in asking for help. There's something hidden that people don't talk about. They think asking for help shows you're weak or you don't know what you're doing, but I disagree.

Asking for help and getting help from other people is probably the biggest thing you can do for yourself. [That is] definitely something corporations, councils, businesses can definitely work on.

Speaker 5:

I do think a lot of young people don't know where or how to ask for help.

Speaker 4:

Now in school we would have career advisors and financial advisors, for people living by themselves or in care, but safeguarding stuff you can't really discuss during those meetings, so they would usually just give like a generalised advice. I think in terms of that support, mental health [and] work can be combined where you go to one place [to] ask for help and the young person is protected where if they do open up, if they do discuss personal stuff, they feel safe.

Speaker 3:

I think the Council should provide more help regularly, but I think it's also up to us to ask for it because we won't be able to receive anything unless we ask and I think we should learn asking from being at school. So [if you ask] teachers, I don't think they'll ever say no. I think they'll be always down to help. And now, at my university, the career team is pretty good, but not many people know about it because they're too busy studying or, doing whatever they're doing. I think the careers people are so important because they help you with your CV's, they help you with looking for work experience, they give you the opportunities. So I think if we start doing [that] as young people – asking for help, we will learn how to ask help from people who can help us long term.

Interviewer:

And how do you think local authorities, schools, etc. can better support people in the future, especially young people who don't have the confidence or assertiveness to make that first step?

Speaker 3:

That's a skill that you kind of have to learn because being confident just doesn't just come by itself. Throughout the years, you end up learning it somehow. But I think with those children who can't ask for help, they do get a little bit of help somehow through [organisations like] Spark!. Teachers notice [when kids don't want to put in effort] and they do realise that if a kid is struggling, and then I think they do help.

Speaker 5:

That programme we talk about is the AP provision programme so that's Council funding those programmes. And so what you're saying is that [we] need to fund more of those programmes that provide support for those young people, who don't have the confidence.

Interviewer:

And when you think about your career goals, what do you think is the biggest factor that can or will help you to achieve those over the next 25 years?

Speaker 4:

I think for me it's just doing it. So like being proactive, like I have to be doing something. If I'm sitting at home like my mind shuts off. I know definitely one day I'm gonna turn 40 and I'll be so burnt out, but that's a future problem.

Speaker 3:

I agree with him because [even while] I'm at the cinema, I'm on LinkedIn trying to search marketing internships. I think social media is good and bad. Like sometimes I see people do marketing apprenticeships [and that encourages me to] search those internships. If I go to go to a company and learn more about it, whether it's paid or not, you're getting the experience. Obviously I have my own thing that I do I home as well, but I also do work in hospitality. I don't want to do that role anymore. But I know if I get these roles and if I get to work in such companies, it will help me in the future. And obviously one day we're gonna be burnt out, but at least we'll have what we want at the end of the day. So I guess it's all worth it. And then if you if you have all that money, you can obviously then enjoy your life.

Speaker 2:

I think for me right now, my biggest worries are like passing my exams and stuff because I kind of can't move on unless I do that and also getting, like the internships and doing that. Other than that, I don't think there's anything really stopping me from getting into my career. I think the most important thing for me within myself at this point in time is just to give everything ahead of me 100%. I'm a very big one, step part-time person and I just want to see what happens.