



# Opening Doors:

Improving hospitality career perceptions  
among young people





# Foreword

The situation is clear, we've all seen the stats...

**More than 40% of hospitality businesses currently face skilled worker shortages<sup>1</sup>**

**Over the next 5 years, there will be a severe (potentially 13-14m) talent gap for positions that would be well suited for hospitality graduates<sup>2</sup>**

We need young people to be aware of the exciting and vibrant opportunities that exist within our sector, and we need this raising now. It's up to us in the industry to roll up our sleeves and get this incredibly important job done.

It's safe to say that we all carry a passion for this industry, we joined it for a reason and we want to see it succeed.

At Nestlé Professional we're committed to inspiring young people to get involved and progress within the industry. For the last 34 years we've been championing career progression within hospitality and foodservice through our Nestlé Professional Toque d'Or competition, reaching more than 10,000 student chefs and apprentices. We know that hospitality offers a rich and diverse range of roles, with exciting progression opportunities. So why aren't we seeing more young people wanting to make this innovative, fast-paced and exciting sector their chosen career path?

We've conducted nationwide research<sup>3</sup> to gain a clearer understanding of the challenges the hospitality industry is facing when it comes to recruiting young talent, and how we can all work together to overcome them.

We spoke directly to young people, asking those seeking careers what barriers were preventing them from choosing a future in hospitality, and those already in the sector to provide candid insights about their experiences thus far. We also spoke at length with leading experts from across the industry, asking what the sector could be doing better to inspire and engage young people; presenting hospitality as a long-term option from an early stage.

The results were sobering, but helped to uncover new ways for us to work together to address the situation. This report reveals the top-line findings, highlighting areas for improvement, and our recommendations for an industry-wide campaign, aimed at challenging negative stereotypes and making careers visible and viable to exciting new talent.



**Katya Simmons**  
Managing Director  
Nestlé Professional





# Careers: A young person's perspective

## Five key elements to meet young peoples needs:

1	a job with a good work-life balance
2	a job that makes it possible for me to save some money for the future, such as a deposit for a house
3	a job where people and customers treat each other with kindness and respect
4	a job where I feel respected and cared for (no bullying)
5	a job that allows me to progress and move upwards over time

When we asked 17-25 year olds what was most important to them from a career, work-life balance came top. Finances are still important, but not the main deciding factor.

## R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Work culture is also high on the agenda – taking third and fourth place - with respondents wanting to feel respected and cared for by the business as well as their colleagues and customers. Hospitality and foodservice don't have a great reputation in this respect, so it is key to address this with the promotion of businesses which are introducing and enacting initiatives that encourage a respectful culture.

## Moving on up

Fortunately, progression and mobility are in the top five – an area in which our industry excels in terms of diversity and rapid progression. But it doesn't look like we're shouting about this loudly enough to reach the ears of young career seekers. When asked whether they believed the hospitality and foodservice sector could deliver on these aspects, there was very low believability among younger generations. Providing clearer information on the opportunities available to key influencers, including schools, parents and careers advisors could help change the tide over time.

"Young people need greater visibility of the real breadth of exciting career options they can have, as well as the fast progression they can make within the industry. We need to be getting that information across – hearing from people in the industry who are excited about their career and can provide that aspirational quality."

Amanda McDade, National Head of Careers & Education, Springboard

# Achieving 'dream job' status: Seeing is believing

There are some notable key areas where the hospitality industry is falling short in convincing young people it can meet their career needs. Despite the importance of each of the following statements, our survey respondents reported low believability that the industry can deliver.

'I want a job...'

that makes it possible to save money for the future

where I can see a clear path to a good career

that provides benefits on top of a salary, ie. pension/health insurance

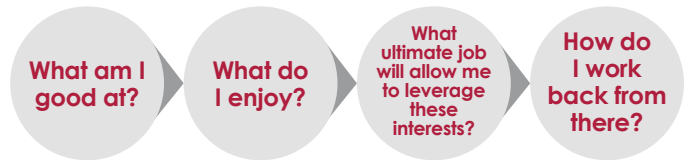
that will give me a salary of at least £30,000 within 5 years

with a flexible schedule that I can control

that will still pay me if I cannot work because I am sick (sick pay)

Our research revealed that the standard search process used by young people to identify their future career path is top down, i.e. they first decide on their ultimate destination job, before working backwards to ascertain how best to get there. To do this, they need to know what their dream job is.

Beyond the obvious occupations they're exposed to in daily life, young people sometimes find it hard to imagine which careers are a good fit for their personal interests. This makes their search process particularly narrow, blinding them to more diverse opportunities.



"You don't necessarily have to be cooking in a kitchen or serving the food or shaking a cocktail. There's media now, there's social platforms, there's so much to do. Breaking that boundary will make sure that this industry will become more successful."

Sophie Taylor, Chef de Partie, Gleneagles Townhouse and 2021 Toque d'Or winner FOH student

## Soft skills vs hard skills

Young people recognise that they can bring creativity, a work ethic and their values to a role within the industry. They expressed a strong desire to develop the soft side of their skill set as well, deeming it as more transferable to enable them to potentially switch roles as their career progresses. Confident speaking, leadership and problem solving were all regarded as being particularly useful – and something the hospitality sector can offer in spades!

"The basic technical skills for hospitality can be taught on the job, with the more advanced culinary, silver-service waiting, sommelier and mixology skills being taught through further off-the-job/apprenticeship programmes. More important to the industry looking for new recruits are the soft skills. These include customer service and people skills, a positive work attitude, resilience, confidence, without arrogance but, also good personal hygiene and appearance."

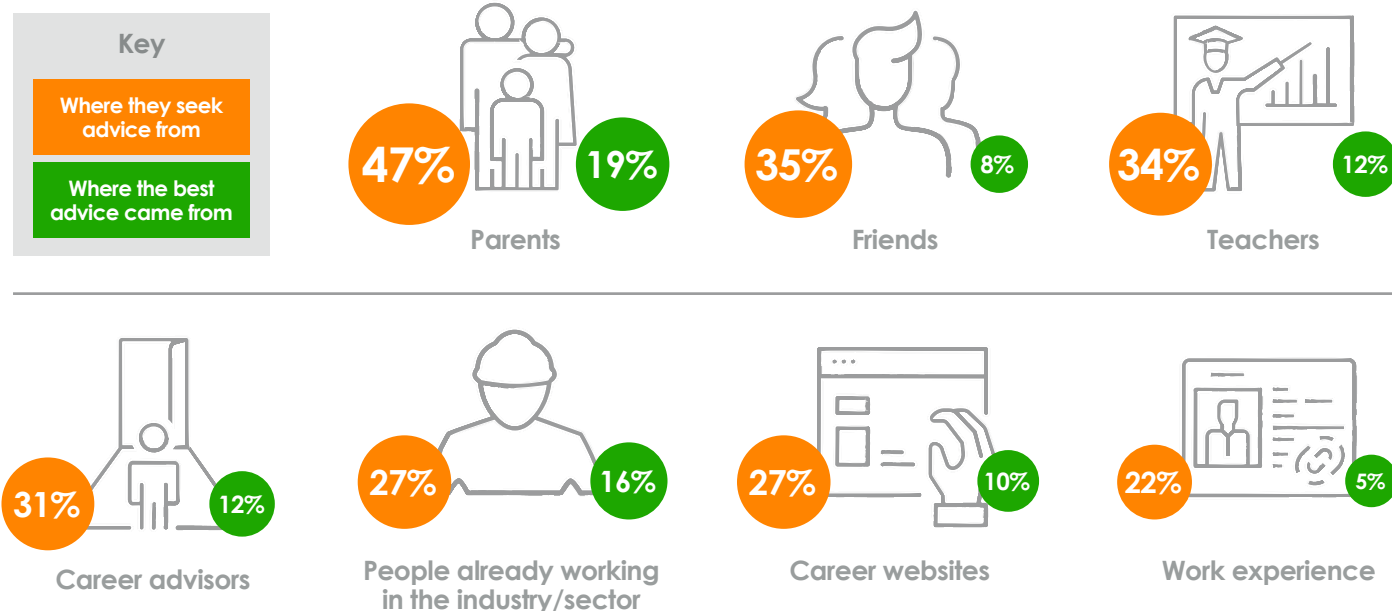
John Hyde CBE FII, Executive Chairman, HIT Training

"We need to make people realise that, yes, we are serving a plate of food, but again, it's the experience that you're learning and that is the key skill."

Sophie Taylor, Chef de Partie, Gleneagles Townhouse and 2021 Toque d'Or winner FOH student

# Careers: A young person's perspective

When choosing a career, young people seek advice from a number of important influencers.



## Parents know best

Almost a half of the young people we asked sought advice from their parents when choosing a career, and 19% valued their advice, indicating the pivotal role parents' opinions can play in these decisions.

"In my experience, parents/carers, friends, family, social media and those in an education environment (lecturers, teachers, careers services) are key influencers to encourage young people to go into a career in hospitality. Also, what they experience themselves when they visit hospitality establishments (lived experiences).

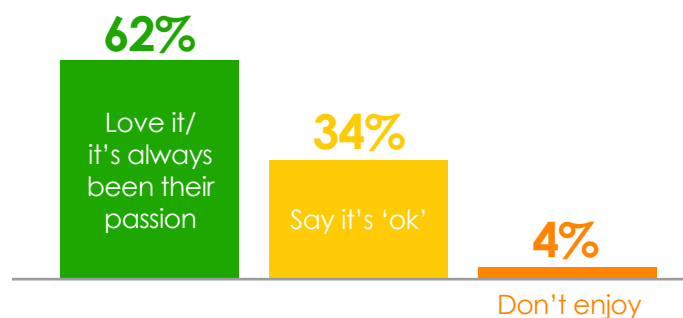
Some of these key influencers can be hit and miss as there are many outdated views of careers in hospitality. And it just depends on if these people have a current view of the industry, ways of working and the wide variety of really successful, fulfilling career opportunities we can provide to both academic and non-academic young people."

Gemma Raby, Resourcing Programme Manager, Whitbread

## Straight from the horse's mouth

More than 1 in 4 young people seek advice from people who are actually working in the industry, and value their advice above that of their teacher or careers advisor. An encouraging 62% of the young people working in the hospitality industry said they loved their role. This indicates an untapped resource within the industry of bright, young individuals who would be happy to get out there and inspire other young people, educating them on the benefits of working in hospitality.

## What young people in the industry say about their role



## Teachers talk sense

Teachers and career advisors were valuable sources of advice for roughly a third of our respondents. Interestingly, young people were more likely to ask friends for advice on career decisions, but valued their advice significantly less, suggesting that peers are regarded more as sounding boards than key influencers.

"There is a vitality and a vibrancy around our industry that we need to get across to young people and their influencers."

Amanda McDade, National Head of Careers & Education, Springboard





### Perception vs reality

Hospitality and foodservice roles are undoubtedly on the radar. In spite of this, the hospitality roles that young people would consider are quite limited.

## Hospitality roles considered by respondents



Waiter/Waitress



Bartender/Barista



Baker/Pastry Chef



Chef/Cook



Hotel Staff/Front of House/Reception



Restaurant/  
Bar Manager



Events Organiser



Food and Drink  
Influencer



Food and Drink Critic



Front of House



Hotel Staff -  
Management



Food Buyer



Food and Drink Writer



Trainer/Lecturer



Sommelier

"There seems to be a real disconnect between a young person's perception of hospitality and the exciting reality of a career within it. Young people will often think of roles that they've seen when they're out and about. So, if you ask them, what is hospitality? What does it look like? They might mention waiting staff or a chef, but they don't understand the real breadth of the exciting career options they can have."

Amanda McDade, National Head of Careers & Education, Springboard

### Creating role models

A small but engaged proportion of respondents reported that their dream roles were in hospitality. The most popular dream jobs were chefs, bartenders, baristas, and bakers – no doubt due to the prestige and credence given to these through high-profile industry competitions and TV shows.

High stress, long hours

Many respondents viewed hospitality as a short-term way to earn extra money. And even for those with industry experience, hospitality isn't viewed as a career choice.

"A lot of people in my age group at high school didn't know what they wanted to do. And it was very much, 'you must go to university', 'you must get a job', and if you suggested anything that was like performing arts or hospitality or being a chef or waiting staff, the response was always, 'oh, well, that's not a real job.'"

Sophie Taylor, Chef de Partie, Gleneagles Townhouse and 2021 Toque d'Or winner FOH student

When asked about their perceptions of the sector, respondents talked positively about teamwork and social aspects. However, they also regard it as hard work, challenging and stressful with long hours...

Females want flex

Females were more likely than males to consider the sector stressful and challenging, and less likely to be flexible with perks. This means employers may need to work harder to attract a diverse workforce.

Perceptions of hospitality

Positives	Negatives
<p>Respondents either had direct experience or knew of these through peers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Social environment</li><li>- Travel</li><li>- Meeting VIPs</li><li>- Seeing hard work come to fruition</li><li>- A chance to show talent</li><li>- Build communication skills and confidence</li><li>- Fulfilling role</li><li>- Hourly pay with tips</li></ul>	<p>Respondents had either directly experienced these or taken them from well-known industry opinions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Rude customers</li><li>- Job tasks – e.g. cleaning up dirty rooms</li><li>- Demanding deadlines – fast paced</li><li>- High-risk responsibilities – food poisoning</li><li>- Initial salary</li><li>- Physically demanding</li><li>- Covid risk</li><li>- Long hours</li></ul>

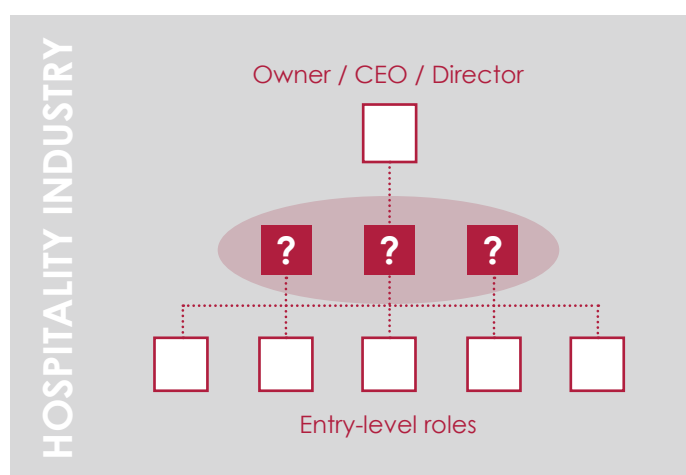
Embarrassing	Boring	Flexible	Perks	Happy
Equal Fun	CHALLENGING			Rewarding
Valued Modern	TEAMWORK			GOOD TRAINING
HARD WORK		SOCIAL		LONG HOURS
Low pay	STRESSFUL	DIVERSE		
Unskilled Bullying	Fulfilling Respected	COMPETITIVE		Exciting

## There is insufficient information and support...

Many young people felt their peers going to university had the most help, and that more could be done to help those on a different path to choose a career. This could indicate a lack of awareness of hospitality careers among teachers and careers advisors – hardly surprising given the de-prioritisation of food and drink on the educational curriculum over recent years.

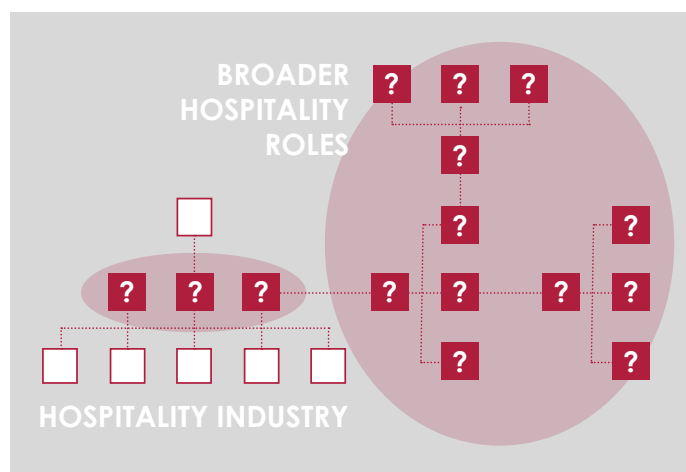
## No clear career pathway

Survey respondents could name entry-level roles and top-level senior roles but struggled in between. Without knowing their ultimate destination job, they are unable to search for a career using their standard process, so **their search process is hardwired to fail for hospitality careers.**



## You can't want a job that you don't know exists

The young people we spoke to found it difficult to imagine broader and more interconnected roles and responsibilities such as head office, suppliers or supply chain. This indicates a real need for the industry to raise awareness of the broad diversity of different jobs on offer.



"Hospitality offers a wide range of roles with different skills sets. It provides entry-level to managerial and corporate jobs. People will find great training opportunities and meritocratic career progression."

A booming hospitality workforce will create a fantastic hospitality experience for all, and a better society. We need to work collaboratively to deliver on this workforce strategy."

Kate Nicholls, CEO, UK Hospitality



"The hospitality sector needs to showcase career progression to teachers, schools and colleges as well as parents. More face-to-face time at career fairs plus industry talks on the different roles in hospitality from experts."

Molly Shaher, Chair, PACE





# What are the barriers to a career in hospitality?

There's a disconnect between young people's perceptions of the industry and its diversity and breadth of careers. As a result, several factors are preventing young people from considering hospitality as a career choice:



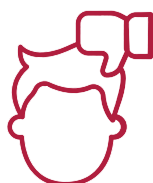
**Negative perceptions of the industry**



**Lack of understanding of the industry's benefits**



**Poor credibility at secondary school curriculum level, with low information to influencers as a compounding benefit**



**Negative industry experiences at entry level**

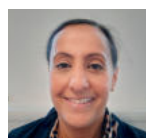


**Poor perceptions of job security and job confidence**



**Government changes to apprenticeship pathways cutting off the flow of young people towards this industry**

**We asked experts from across the industry for their recommendations on how best we can overcome these. We've summarised some of our key findings in the following pages.**



**Molly Shaher**

Chair of the Professional Association of Catering Education



**Claire Bosi**

Chief Editor and Co-Founder of Choose Hospitality



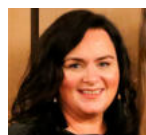
**Kate Nicholls**

CEO at UK Hospitality



**John Hyde** CBE FIH

Executive Chairman of HIT Training



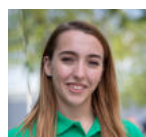
**Amanda McDade**

National Head of Careers & Education at The Springboard Charity



**Gemma Raby**

Resourcing Programme Manager at Whitbread



**Sophie Taylor**

Chef de Partie, Gleneagles Townhouse & 2021 Toque d'Or winner FOH student



**John Holden**

Lecturer, Cheshire College and Founder of Bridging the Skills Gap

# What can be done?

Experts agreed that our industry will get most traction by focusing on three key areas:

1	Addressing the knowledge gap
2	Making progression opportunities visible
3	Showcasing a positive culture and values

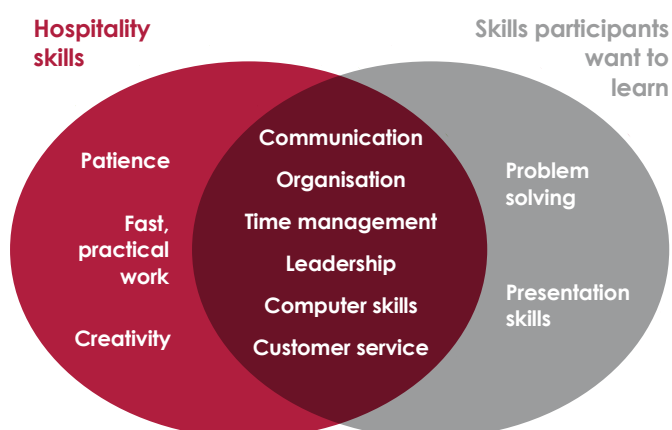
## Address the knowledge gap

Despite some negative perceptions, young people are still open to careers in hospitality. To entice them to try, more targeted and accurate information is essential - not just for young people, but also key influencers – parents, teachers and careers advisors. Alongside, there's an opportunity to increase exposure to people already working in the sector, improved advice through websites and providing better work experiences to promote the careers available.

To address information gaps highlighted in the research, experts recommended that the industry:

- improves information on roles and skills on offer
- focuses communication on how a hospitality career can fulfil the top five most important requirements
- is specific about financial rewards, talking in terms of salary or benefits i.e. pension and health insurance

With young people keen to develop transferable skills, the industry should also leverage the overlap of skills to increase the attractiveness of hospitality careers (as below).



## Increase visibility of career pathways

With young people largely unaware of the diverse opportunities and chances to progress, experts recommended the industry mobilise and showcase these at an earlier stage - to secondary school pupils, their parents and lecturers. Only through being exposed to this myriad of opportunities at an early age, can young people start incorporating these within their career plans.

Hospitality has a diverse range of careers, with valuable skills and exciting opportunities. It's important, therefore, that we communicate these more effectively to young people.

In particular, using the following messages:

- Previous experience is not required at entry level
- There is career progression
- You can develop soft skills as well as technical ones
- It can offer social life and travel
- Post-pandemic work culture has changed for the better
- There are motivating financial benefits

"That's something quite unique to our industry. It gives a young person the opportunity to come in to see a hotel environment and try out different roles to see what suits them. There are real opportunities for young people with the right attitude to build skills to be able to progress quite quickly into higher roles within the industry. This will help support them financially, which is really important to this generation."

Amanda McDade, National Head of Careers & Education at The Springboard Charity

## Be positive

The pandemic exacerbated barriers into the hospitality industry. Young people need reassurance post-pandemic that they will have a consistent career, there will be progression, and they won't be overworked.

There's a wealth of inspiring talent in the hospitality industry, and competitions like Nestlé Professional Toque d'Or and Springboard's Future Chef go a long way in raising awareness of this, while building confidence and skills for younger people. It's important we build on the enthusiasm of young aspirants, given the key role they play in influencing other young people into the industry.

"The hospitality industry is full of success stories of people who started at the entry level and got promoted or grew their own business to get to the top."

John Hyde CBE FIH, Executive Chairman, HIT Training





"It is of little surprise that recruiting people into hospitality has become something of a struggle. Historically, the sector faced many issues, in particular with pay and work/life balance. However, the new, emerging hospitality sector is very different to the one from decades ago.

In October 2021, we launched Choose Hospitality. A relevant and interesting programme of activities that offer an honest and meaningful insight into what, we all know, can be a rewarding, vibrant and exciting profession.

The reason we did this? Simply put, we know hospitality first-hand, from many angles - and we want to share the opportunities we have had with young people, their families and friends and those looking to career swap.

We do this over all media platforms, including working with our incredible ambassadors to get in front of students and tell them their own stories, face to face."

**Claire Bosi, Chief Editor and Co-Founder of Choose Hospitality**

"It is important we showcase the variety of roles available within the hospitality industry as well as the career pathways. The hospitality industry is a fun, rewarding and inspiring place to work and we need to make sure this is highlighted to students and their parents."

**John Holden, Lecturer, Cheshire College and Founder Bridging the Skills Gap**

The most successful hospitality role models are famous chefs or bakers. To provide inspiration while showcasing the diversity of opportunities, we should aim to promote a broader cross-section of role models, reflecting different industry roles.

**In addition to this, experts recommended:**

- Leveraging cultural factors that paint the industry in an exciting light, such as sustainability and celebrity chefs
- Employing recruitment mechanics that are currently working such as social media advertising, sharing success stories, offering glimpses behind the scenes, and industry taster days

## Tested and proven methods of engagement with young people

We asked experts to share with us mechanics that have worked well to engage young people.



**Webinars/online masterclasses**



**Personal interests**



**Celebrity influence**



**Success stories**



**Behind the scenes**



**Taster days**



# These findings indicate that hospitality is at a serious crossroads

Hospitality businesses are more than twice as likely as other industries to experience challenges filling vacancies<sup>1</sup> and 40% of hospitality businesses face skilled worker shortages<sup>2</sup>. But with young people and influencers misinformed or unaware of opportunities within the industry, we face an uphill struggle, encouraging them to join once they've chosen their career path.



Founded by



At Nestlé Professional, we decided it's time to join forces and mobilise our combined power as an industry. So, we've united with Choose Hospitality and Springboard CareerScope in order to showcase hospitality as an aspirational career choice for young people, by co-founding the Choose Hospitality Pledge.

With our founding partners, we're galvanising the hospitality industry in the UK to unite and help tackle the recruitment challenge together. We're calling on industry to sign up to the pledge as ambassadors and visit their local secondary schools. Ambassadors will be equipped with campaign toolkits and props to engage with schoolchildren and demonstrate the exciting opportunities that exist in our industry.

Working together we're certain we can tackle negative perceptions – with young people and their influencers. And we can shatter these stereotypes to make hospitality careers more visible and viable.

Let's do what we as an industry do best and join forces to make foodservice and hospitality careers a conscious choice among our younger generations and fill the impending talent gap with, well, talent!

**Make the Pledge!**



Choose Hospitality is an Industry-led campaign. By using real people in real-life positions, Choose Hospitality will help to encourage new, young talent into the sector and draw attention to the huge and exciting industry as a genuine career option for school leavers. The sector must be leading the way in promoting the benefits and revolutionising the profile of hospitality as a valuable and rewarding career choice.

*Choose Skills, Choose Friendship,  
Choose Opportunity, Choose Hospitality.*



CareerScope features everything you need to start or progress your career in hospitality, including useful information about the industry, practical careers advice, free skills training, financial and well-being support and access to more than 30,000 live jobs and apprenticeships.



**SUSTAINABLE  
FUTURES**



**Over the last 34 years, Toque d'Or® has shown students and apprentices the breadth of career opportunities the hospitality industry has to offer, by providing up-to-the-minute learning and real-life challenges.**

Showcasing the various channels and roles in hospitality and foodservice, Toque d'Or provides first-hand experience for how dynamic and exciting the industry is, while giving participants the chance to try different roles in the foodservice industry, so they can choose a career path that's right for them.

A high-profile role call of industry professionals has competed and supported the competition's development – from James Martin to Anton Mosimann.

Rooted in the Industry, Toque d'Or has adapted to the changing needs of the UK foodservice sector and education. And it has gone on to become a highly prestigious catering competition, unique in focusing on both back and front-of-house college students and, since 2016, apprentices.

**Find out more:**

[www.nestleprofessional.co.uk/toque-dor](http://www.nestleprofessional.co.uk/toque-dor)

