Sophie sent 150 emails looking for work experience. One led to an offer of a three-month paid internship and after that to the chance of a job, but then Sophie revealed that she was pregnant: “Okay, maybe not,” said the employer. Months later, in another interview Sophie was asked to name her biggest achievement and said it was her children. The tone of the interview suddenly changed and the employer even told Sophie she hadn’t got the job because she had a family.

Even though it made her feel guilty, Sophie didn’t mention her two children when she went for other jobs. This time she was successful and now works as a clinical trials research officer.

Sophie is now a member of our Advisory Panel and speaks out to try and ensure other young women do not face the same barriers she did.

What first inspired you to join our Advisory Panel?
I was quite passionate about raising a voice for young mums and found out about Young Women’s Trust. I wanted to get involved because the issues faced by young women are also faced by young mums.

What type of issues have you faced being a young mum?
I felt very isolated as I always thought that people around me were judging me for having a kid too young, even though I was in my early 20’s. Some said that I would amount to nothing and that my kid will be left out on the street. But I want to show that anything can be possible.

What has been your favourite part of being a part of our Advisory Panel at Young Women's Trust?
I obviously love the residential! It’s a great way to meet others and to encourage me that what I’m doing is not in vain. I also love taking part in events and meetings so that people know what a struggle it is to be a young mum and love to see the reactions when they say they always forget about us young mums!

What types of events and meetings have you been involved in?
I have been part of the Human Rights and Equality Commission meeting and Young Women’s Trust’s ‘Scarred for Life’ Inquiry launch. I think it is important to raise a voice for young women, make people aware of what we are going through and also to make young women feel less isolated. I am very excited about the local networks that will be launched later this year.

Can you explain to us what the local networks are and why you see them as important for the future?
Local networks will be a local hub for young women to support each other. We are all scattered and think we live in isolation when in reality there could be someone two doors from you going through the same thing as you. We need to support each other.

If I had access to a Local Network I would have felt less isolated and less lost as I had to learn everything myself and had to be my self-motivator to get me through hurdles! It was tough to be alone and I would have loved to have someone to tell me that everything will be alright.
Apprenticeships offer young people the chance to learn skills and make a start in a career. The positive stories we hear from young people tell us that apprenticeships can be a valuable route into employment.

However, these positive stories are rarer than we might hope, especially for young women who are facing many barriers to success.

Young women tell us that they do not receive adequate training; struggle to combine an apprenticeship and childcare; or are stuck in a system that pays little and offers limited opportunities to secure the long term employment they desire.

Their experiences are not isolated cases. We polled 1,300 young people and this is what we found:

- **FEMALE APPRENTICES EARN, ON AVERAGE, JUST £4.82 AN HOUR COMPARED WITH £5.85 AN HOUR FOR MALE APPRENTICES**

  “I think that’s why a lot of people drop out… When they’re faced with actually living with that much they realise how hard it is.”

  “It makes you want to give up on bettering yourself.”

- **AFTER COMPLETING THEIR APPRENTICESHIP, 16% OF WOMEN WERE OUT OF WORK, COMPARED TO 6% OF MEN**

  “There were no paid vacancies, they just bring on another apprentice because they couldn’t afford a paid member of staff.”

- **23% OF YOUNG WOMEN RECEIVED NO TRAINING OUTSIDE OF WORK, COMPARED TO 12% OF YOUNG MEN**

  “I don’t think I got any support to be honest… I know we have apprentices at our work and they have people coming in and seeing them, I didn’t have any of that.”

Without training, apprenticeships become a source of cheap labour for employers and offer little benefit to the employee.

One of the reasons why young women are paid less to undertake apprenticeships is that the sectors they tend to work in – such as administration, health care and retail – are likely to be poorly paid.

We will be campaigning to make a wider range of apprenticeships available to young women.

A third of women told us that if there were a wider range of specialisms available, apprenticeships would be more attractive.

The statistics highlight something wrong at the heart of the apprenticeship system that works against young women. This prevents thousands of young women making the most of their huge potential.

We need to address the barriers that stop young women from benefitting in the same way as young men if apprenticeships are to fulfil their true potential for individual young people and the economy at large.
OUR NEW SERVICE APPLY HAS BEEN HELPING YOUNG WOMEN WHO ARE STRUGGLING TO FIND WORK. SO FAR WE HAVE RECEIVED SOME GREAT FEEDBACK ABOUT HOW IT HAS HELPED.

We spoke to young women about their experiences in finding work, 60% of these young women had applied for over 10 jobs and 20% of these young women had applied for more than 200 jobs.

When asked what they had found most difficult about applying for jobs we often heard the same story from young women.

“Not hearing back.”
“Not feeling confident about having the qualifications for the position.”
“Not being invited to interviews.”

We saw that these young women need somewhere they can receive guidance on job applications. Often they have no one at home who can provide them with any advice about their CVs or how to best apply for jobs.

Our new service Apply is doing just that for these young women.

We send the CVs of young women who approach us to a group of expert volunteers. The young women are provided with detailed feedback explaining what they have done well and where they may be able to make improvements.

Young women have told us how useful this service has been to them.

“It was valuable tailored feedback and advice that I have since used to update my CV.”

“It was good to hear someone else’s opinion on my CV and covering letter. I’ve had feedback from a few people previously but it’s always good to have another opinion. I like the fact that it was specific and addressed all good and bad points.”

100% OF YOUNG WOMEN SAID THEY FOUND IT EASY TO USE APPLY.

80% FELT MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT APPLYING FOR JOBS.

93% OF PEOPLE SAID THEY WOULD RECOMMEND THE SERVICE TO A FRIEND.

“I APPLIED FOR JOBS DAILY TO THE POINT WHERE I LOST COUNT - I GOT TO ROUGHLY 300 APPLICATIONS WITH NO FEEDBACK.”

Kerri (24)

“Thank you for the feedback, this is the first feedback I have ever been given on my CV and it has been very helpful. Thank you!”

“Thank you so much for your help. I feel much more positive now and will hopefully hear back from someone soon about an interview!”
Victoria is one of our Innovators. She has helped Young Women’s Trust by campaigning, holding a fundraising event and volunteering for us.

“When a friend of mine introduced me to the Young Women’s Trust I typed the name into the search engine on my phone and didn’t move until I had read every page and document on the website, I was engrossed. I knew at that moment I wanted to be involved and I was instantly fired up to channel my passion and enthusiasm into action. My desire was increased because what I read resonated with some of my own personal experiences. I wanted to be able to contribute to help others find and access the support, services and tools to help make positive changes in their lives. I believe no woman should be trapped by low pay, no pay or face a life of poverty.

After talking to the charity, I decided the best use of my skills was to become an Innovator. I could assist in helping to shape, develop and deliver their campaigning and fundraising activities.

What’s great about being an Innovator is that whether I take a few minutes each day to share information on social media, talk to different people about the charity, or take a few hours to think about and implement campaigning and fundraising ideas, there is no pressure – I give what I can and that suits me.

This summer I hosted my first fundraising event which was a success. A success because I got to engage and raise the profile of Young Women’s Trust, their cause and why the work they do is so important. It helped inspire others to consider getting involved and I was also pleased to be able to achieve my fundraising target thanks to the generous donations received.

I am already planning my next fundraising event and continue to look forward to working with Young Women’s Trust.”