

A large, thick, stylized swoosh that starts as a straight orange line from the top left, curves into a purple line, and extends towards the bottom right.

Supervision for success:

Helping young Tasmanians succeed in work

University of Tasmania - Tasmanian Behavioural Lab

Date: 5 June 2026



Acknowledgment of Country

Social Ventures Australia acknowledges and pays respect to the past and present traditional custodians and elders of this country on which we work.

'After the Rains' by Richard Seden for Saltwater People 2024

Over several years SVA has worked with employers on projects to improve access to quality jobs for young people who might otherwise miss out. Throughout this work, SVA has heard from both employers and young people about the critical role that frontline supervisors play in helping young people thrive at work.

This research was commissioned by SVA to better understand the factors that contribute to effective supervision of young workers and to help identify practical approaches that can improve outcomes for both employers and young people.

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Executive summary

For many young Tasmanians, early employment is a major transition. Young workers are not only learning the technical tasks of a job; they are also learning the hidden expectations of working life: how to communicate, ask questions, interpret feedback, manage responsibilities, and navigate workplace relationships.

This report focuses on the workplace side of that transition. It shows that improving young people's early employment experiences is not only about making young people more "work ready". It is also about making workplaces more ready to support young workers.

The project involved semi-structured interviews with 9 young workers and 10 frontline supervisors across a range of Tasmanian industries, workplace settings and organisational sizes. The findings should be read as qualitative insights rather than representative population estimates. Many participants described broadly positive current work experiences, so the findings should be read as identifying practical enablers and risks rather than estimating the prevalence of poor supervision.

Central finding: Supervision is a workplace capability

Across interviews, young workers described settling in, learning and remaining engaged more easily when workplaces made expectations clear, explained the "unwritten rules" of work, demonstrated tasks, built responsibility gradually, welcomed questions, corrected mistakes constructively, made support visible, and gave supervisors the time and backing to support young workers well.

The central implication is that good supervision is not only an individual supervisor skill. It is a workplace capability that needs to be supported, resourced and made easier to provide consistently.

Practical priorities for action

The findings point to seven practical priorities for workplaces and workforce-development partners:

- 1. Make workplace expectations explicit early** so young workers understand communication norms, routines, safety practices, support pathways and what good work looks like.
- 2. Treat supervision as everyday teaching** by demonstrating tasks, breaking work into manageable steps, checking understanding, giving feedback and increasing responsibility gradually.
- 3. Make questions and mistakes safe during learning** by inviting questions, responding respectfully to uncertainty and correcting mistakes constructively while maintaining clear standards.
- 4. Make support visible and easy to access** so young workers and supervisors know where to go for help before problems escalate.

5. **Support supervisors, not just young workers**, by giving supervisors time, tools, peer learning, escalation pathways and managerial backing.
6. **Strengthen retention through developmental work experiences** by improving task variety, learning opportunities, respectful relationships, recognition and positive feedback, manageable workloads and progression conversations.
7. **Improve the quality of entry-level opportunities** by helping employers design roles that include real training, supervision, feedback, task variety and future pathways.

These priorities are intended to support practical reflection and improvement by supervisors, managers, HR staff, training providers, industry bodies and workforce-development partners. *Appendix 2 (Potential supervisor-support tools)* provides examples of potential supervisor-support resources that could inform future design and implementation. They are offered as starting points for development, piloting and adaptation, not as a fixed toolkit.

The practical implication is that workplaces should not treat early exits, low confidence, repeated mistakes or reluctance to ask questions only as issues located in the young worker; they should also examine whether expectations, task teaching, feedback, support pathways and supervisory backing are clear enough.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Tasmania continues to record one of the highest youth unemployment rates in Australia (Jobs and Skills Australia, 2025). For young people aged 16–19, early employment experiences can shape long-term work attitudes, confidence, engagement, and career pathways (AIFS, 2022; Connell & Burgess, 2006; Smith, 2003). Poor early employment experiences may contribute to disengagement, repeated job loss, lower lifetime earnings, labour market exclusion, welfare dependency, and mental health challenges (Borland, 2020; Mavromaras et al., 2015).

Research suggests that frontline supervisors play an important role in shaping young workers' early experiences of work (Mulla & Krishnan, 2022; Staff et al., 2012). Supervisors influence how young workers are introduced to workplace expectations, how feedback is delivered, how mistakes are handled, and whether support feels accessible. Research by Social Ventures Australia (SVA) in 2024 found that young Tasmanians described supervisors as central to their ability to remain in and succeed at work (Mackaway & Amigó, 2024).

At the same time, many supervisors receive limited preparation or support for supervising young workers effectively (Howe et al., 2023; Mackaway & Coulson, 2025). Australian evidence suggests that poor supervision and unsupported early employment experiences can negatively affect young workers' confidence, wellbeing, safety, and willingness to remain in work (SVA, 2025).

Prior research suggests that differences in communication styles, workplace readiness, confidence, and work habits across age groups can influence workplace expectations and support needs (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). However, these differences should not be assumed to amount to generational conflict. They may instead reflect different levels of workplace experience, familiarity with professional norms, and exposure to work environments. At the same time, younger workers can also bring fresh perspectives, skills, and experiences that benefit workplaces (Amayah & Gedro, 2014).

1.2. Project aims

While investment in preparing young people for work remains important, greater attention is also needed on the workplace conditions that help young workers settle in, develop confidence, and remain engaged over time (Mackaway & Coulson, 2025). Research suggests that workplaces can either undermine wellbeing or provide positive and protective environments for young workers (van Veen et al., 2023).

This project sought to generate practical insights to help Tasmanian employers better support young people in the early stages of employment. It was aligned with the Tasmanian Government's Youth Jobs Strategy (2024) and focused on a crucial but often overlooked factor: *the quality of day-to-day supervision*.

The project aimed to understand:

- the experiences of young workers entering employment,
- the challenges faced by frontline supervisors supporting young workers,
- and the workplace conditions that help young people build confidence, capability, wellbeing, and longer-term workforce attachment.

1.3. Project design

This project used semi-structured interviews (*Appendix 1: Interview Guide*) to explore the perspectives of frontline supervisors and young workers on:

- pathways into work,
- onboarding,
- everyday supervision,
- communication and feedback,
- learning and confidence-building,
- workplace culture,
- employment conditions,
- retention and turnover,
- barriers to support,
- and broader workplace, sectoral, and regional influences affecting youth employment in Tasmania.

The project received ethics approval from the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics Committee (H40528), and all participants provided informed consent.

Participants and recruitment

The project involved interviews with two participant groups:

- frontline supervisors, and
- young workers.

The study was cross-sectoral and included workplaces of different sizes.

Frontline supervisors included managers, team leaders, owner-operators, and other staff with direct or indirect responsibility for supervising young workers' tasks, performance, wellbeing, or workplace culture. The focus was on everyday supervisory practice rather than formal organisational hierarchy.

Young workers were eligible if they:

- were aged 16–19 when they commenced their current employment,
- had legally exited school or held an appropriate exemption,
- and were engaged in paid entry-level employment, including apprenticeships and traineeships.

The project focused on young people establishing an early foothold in the workforce, rather than students undertaking casual work alongside schooling.

Participants were recruited through employer and workforce development networks, with support from Social Ventures Australia and partner organisations. Recruitment aimed to include a range of workplace settings and perspectives across both young workers and supervisors.

Recruitment targets and final interview numbers were guided by recruitment reach and thematic saturation principles in qualitative research (Guest et al., 2006; Hennink et al., 2017).

Participants interviewed

In total, 19 participants were interviewed between March and May 2026 (*Table 1* provides participant characteristics):

- 10 frontline supervisors, and
- 9 young workers.

Table 1. Participant characteristics

	Frontline supervisor (n = 10)	Young worker (n = 9)
Region		
Southern Tasmania	8	6
Northern Tasmania	2	3
Gender		
Male	3	5
Female	7	4
Age Range	28–52	18–22
Industry		
Construction site	1	3
Electrical trade		2
Member service	1	
Retail		1
Health service	1	1
Hospitality	3	1
Public sector	2	
Media	1	1

Note: Southern Tasmania included participants from Hobart, Acton Park, Glenorchy, Howrah, Lindisfarne, Sorell and Derwent Park. Northern Tasmania included Launceston, Youngtown and Legana.

1.4. Report guide

The remainder of this report is structured as follows.

- Section 2 presents findings from young workers' experiences of entering and navigating work, including onboarding, supervision, learning, confidence-building, workplace culture, and retention.
- Section 3 presents findings from frontline supervisors' experiences supporting young workers, including onboarding practices, communication, capability development, workplace relationships, and retention.
- Section 4 synthesises findings across young workers and supervisors to identify cross-cutting insights and enabling conditions that shaped early employment experiences.
- Section 5 outlines practical recommendations for strengthening supervision, improving early work experiences, and supporting young workers' retention, wellbeing, and development.

Notes on interpretation

The findings should be read as insights from a small qualitative sample rather than as representative of all young workers or employers in Tasmania. Many participants described broadly positive current work experiences. This may partly reflect the recruitment approach, which drew on employer and workforce-development networks and may have reached workplaces and supervisors already relatively engaged in supporting young workers. The findings should therefore not be read as representing all Tasmanian workplaces.

Some participants also reflected on previous jobs when describing poor experiences. These examples are included because they illustrate how supervision, support, and workplace culture can shape young workers' confidence and willingness to remain in work, even when the experiences did not occur in their current role.

The contribution of this study is not simply to show that supervision matters. Rather, it identifies the everyday practices through which participants described supervision as shaping young workers' early work experiences: explaining hidden expectations, demonstrating tasks, making questions and mistakes safe, noticing stress early, and giving supervisors organisational backing. These practices provide practical design points for workplace routines, supervisor-support resources, and future workforce-development activity.

2. Young workers' experiences of work and supervision

2.1. Entry into work: pathways, expectations and early clarity

Young workers often entered employment with only partial understanding of what the role or workplace would actually involve. While previous exposure to workplaces, training, or work experience sometimes made employment feel more accessible, much of the practical and social reality of work was learned after starting.

Early exposure and familiarity helped young workers enter work

For several participants, school-based training, work experience, family networks, and existing employer relationships provided early exposure to workplaces before formally entering employment. These experiences often helped young workers build confidence, develop interest in a particular field, or see employment in that industry as achievable.

"I knew I wanted to do carpentry for years ... I did my construction cert two course and did work experience with this company, and when they were hiring, I applied" (YW02, trade apprentice).

"I started off doing some work experience at [company name] and that's kind of how it flowed on to me getting a position there" (YW06, media receptionist).

Not all pathways were carefully planned. Some participants applied for roles simply because they appeared approachable or manageable at the time.

"I discovered it by accident ... because it had the word assistant in it ... and then I just thought, you know what, I could do that" (YW09, health assistant).

Expectations were often broad rather than detailed

Although many participants had a general sense of the industry or type of work they were entering, expectations about workplace routines, communication styles, responsibilities, and workplace culture were often vague before starting.

Several young workers described uncertainty about how different workplaces operated and what would actually be expected of them day to day.

"I think I've done quite a bit of work experience at different companies, and they all seem to ... manage their apprentices and ... manage their work sites quite differently, so I didn't really know what to expect, to be honest" (YW02, trade apprentice).

Others described being surprised by the nature or pace of the work once they started.

“I didn't really expect to be working on any of this type of gear. It's very unique and very different” (YW07, trade apprentice).

Some expectations also related to workplace culture and the people they would be working with.

“You're a bit scared and you always hear like, oh, people in trades can be a bit grumpy, but it's very much different from my perspective” (YW08, trade apprentice).

At the same time, some participants entered work with relatively open expectations and adapted as they became more familiar with the workplace.

“I didn't have any massive expectations going in, but I'm just excited to try something new really and yeah, it worked out well” (YW06, media receptionist).

Early clarity helped the first weeks feel manageable

Participants consistently described the early weeks of work as easier when workplaces provided clear guidance, introduced support people early, and explained how the workplace operated on a day-to-day basis.

Being shown around, introduced to staff, and given practical explanations about routines and responsibilities helped workplaces feel more manageable and reduced uncertainty during the transition into work.

“They took me around. They showed me the place ..., they showed me everyone, introduced me to all people from down here to people in the exec offices. So that was really lovely to meet everyone, and they made me feel really welcome” (YW01, admin trainee).

“It was pretty good. She explained everything really clearly. She had sort of a set list of all of the duties that we need to do” (YW03, retail assistant).

Where this clarity was less available, participants described relying more heavily on observation and gradual trial-and-error learning to understand workplace routines, relationships, and expectations.

“The only thing... is just trying to figure out who to go to with certain questions. Or... where to sit at lunch” (YW02, trade apprentice).

“Most confusing thing is probably getting into the rhythm really, like knowing what is needed a step ahead, like if you know they're about to need a tool to be run at a level” (YW08, trade apprentice).

Key implication:

Early work experiences were easier to navigate when workplaces made expectations, routines, relationships, and support pathways visible from the outset.

2.2. Supervision in practice: being taught, supported and corrected safely

Young worker participants described good supervision as practical, calm, and available. They valued workplaces where tasks were demonstrated clearly, questions were welcomed, and mistakes were treated as part of learning rather than as evidence that they were failing. Supportive supervision helped young workers feel more confident learning unfamiliar tasks and navigating new workplace environments.

Importantly, support did not only come from formal managers. Young workers often relied on tradespeople, buddies, senior workers, supervisors, and team members who were willing to explain tasks, answer questions, and provide reassurance during the early stages of employment. In contrast, poor supervision often involved being left alone too early, criticised harshly, or treated as though they should already know what to do.

Practical guidance and feedback made tasks easier to learn

Young workers consistently described supervision as most helpful when tasks were demonstrated clearly, broken down practically, and reinforced through feedback. Seeing tasks performed first, attempting them independently, and then receiving guidance helped participants understand both the expected standard and how to complete work safely.

“They explain it to you, they show you how it’s done, and then usually you will have a crack after that” (YW08, trade apprentice).

“He’s been really good at figuring out the best ways that I learn... letting me do things myself, and then saying what I’ve done wrong, what I’ve done right” (YW02, trade apprentice).

Participants also valued feedback that was calm, constructive, and focused on improvement rather than blame. Supportive responses to mistakes helped young workers continue asking questions and reduced anxiety about “getting things wrong” while still learning.

“It’s never like, ‘oh, you did something wrong’ ... it’s always supportive and helpful” (YW03, retail assistant).

Several participants described how experienced workers normalised mistakes by sharing their own experiences as apprentices or junior staff. This helped mistakes feel manageable rather than something that immediately damaged confidence or trust.

“If I stuff up at work ... you go to your supervisor and you tell them, and it’s more than likely something they’ve done four years ago when they were an apprentice ... they can show you a trick ... to make it better” (YW08, trade apprentice).

Feedback worked best when it corrected the task without shaming the young worker.

Support often came from teams, buddies and senior workers

Support and supervision often came from more than one person within the workplace. Some young workers had formal buddies or designated supervisors, while others learned from a broader mix of tradespeople, managers, senior workers, and team members.

What mattered most was having approachable people nearby who were willing to answer questions, explain tasks, and provide guidance when needed.

“With my buddy, it’s really good because you are together every day, so you just kind of work really well together ... it doesn’t feel like he’s any better than me. It just feels like he’s there to help me out ... Once I get the hang of things, I can go off and do the same thing” (YW02, trade apprentice).

“I’m the only apprentice here, and we have... six tradesmen and a supervisor and a workshop boss ... I’m kind of ... learning from everyone. It’s not just one person” (YW07, trade apprentice).

Some participants also valued having access to support outside the immediate workplace hierarchy. External contacts or training organisations provided reassurance that concerns could still be raised safely if workplace conversations felt difficult or uncomfortable.

“It kind of helps having people from outside the company to talk to if I have any worries ... if I’m worried about something and I don’t feel comfortable, I can literally just shoot someone else a text and they can help me navigate it” (YW02, trade apprentice).

Poor supervision made work feel more stressful and less safe

When discussing negative work experiences, young workers most commonly linked them to supervision that felt dismissive, inconsistent, unavailable, or emotionally reactive. These experiences often made it harder to ask questions, reduced confidence, and increased stress during an already unfamiliar stage of employment.

Several participants described being criticised or left unsupported while still learning basic tasks and workplace expectations.

“Some tradesmen don’t know how to teach ... three weeks into the job I was yelled and screamed at and called useless ... I didn’t know what I was doing, but that’s because I was three weeks into my apprenticeship ... you have to then prove yourself that you’re not useless. Whereas it shouldn’t be like that” (YW05, trade apprentice).

“[Previous job] I didn’t really get much support or training ... I was quite young ... a lot of the times I would sort of be left ... I’d done everything I could have ... and they’d call me lazy. So it definitely wasn’t a very nice workplace” (YW03, retail assistant).

Key implication:

Young workers settled into work more effectively when supervision was practical, calm, available, and treated mistakes as part of learning.

2.3. Learning and confidence: building capability over time

Young workers described confidence as something that developed gradually. It came through repeated practice, familiarity with workplace routines, seeing their own progress, and being trusted with more responsibility. This subsection builds on the previous discussion on supervision by focusing on what changed in young workers over time as they became more capable, confident, and independent.

Confidence grew through repeated exposure

Young workers described confidence as something that built over time. Tasks, conversations, and responsibilities often felt unfamiliar or intimidating at first, but became easier as participants repeated the work and saw that they were capable.

Confidence was not only about technical skill. It also included speaking up, asking questions, dealing with customers or patients, and handling unfamiliar situations.

“When you look back when you first started, it’s like, did I seriously not know how that worked? ... I feel like subconsciously you gain skills as well as consciously” (YW01, admin trainee).

“I’m a really anxious person. I grew up struggling with anxiety my whole life and being in a job where I have to talk to people every day and sort of put myself out of my comfort zone has been really helpful for confidence” (YW03, retail assistant).

“Coming into a male-dominated workplace, not knowing much ... I feel really comfortable and I feel like I’ve definitely gained a lot more confidence to speak up, but also to be able to do things” (YW02, trade apprentice).

Independence grew through gradual responsibility

Young workers also described becoming more independent when responsibility increased gradually. Stronger examples involved being trusted to try more tasks, work with less direct oversight, and take on small responsibilities while still knowing help was nearby.

“They’ve definitely been letting me do a whole lot more without having somebody right behind me, watching every step ... he’s only ever just around the corner, so if I have questions, he’s there straight away” (YW02, trade apprentice).

“As you progress throughout the years, they give you more and more tasks and less and less help with the tasks” (YW07, trade apprentice).

Development depended on varied work and clear next steps

Young worker participants were more motivated when they could keep learning and see possible next steps. This included varied tasks, exposure to different parts of the industry, and chances to build skills beyond their usual role. When work felt too narrow or progression was unclear, participants were more likely to think about moving elsewhere.

“In my field of work, it's a bit hard to learn everything because not every place does everything required. But they managed to push me out to other places so I can learn the things that I don't learn here” (YW07, trade apprentice).

“If I keep just doing the same work that I'm doing, I won't have enough experience ... as in like I won't learn what I want to learn” (YW05, trade apprentice).

Development also depended on opportunities to broaden experience, build transferable skills, and see future pathways.

Key implication:

Confidence and independence developed gradually through repeated practice, increasing responsibility, varied work, and visible next steps.

2.4. Staying in work: culture, fit and sustainability

Young workers described staying or leaving as influenced by the overall quality and sustainability of the work experience. Participants talked about whether they liked the work, felt respected, had good relationships, could continue learning, and could see useful next steps. Pay, hours, stability, costs, and fatigue also mattered, but these were usually considered alongside workplace culture, fit, and future opportunities.

Workplace culture and relationships influenced whether work felt worth staying in

Feeling accepted, supported, and respected at work strongly influenced whether participants wanted to remain in a role. Positive workplace relationships helped young workers feel settled, particularly while they were still building confidence and learning workplace expectations.

For these participants, workplace culture was not separate from retention. It shaped whether work felt comfortable, sustainable, and worth continuing.

“The main thing for me is relationship with others at work. Because I'm new, I really care about what others think of me ... their feedback” (YW01, admin trainee).

“All the boys get along and ... it's like you're working with your mates, really” (YW08, trade apprentice).

Everyday appreciation also mattered. Small signals of respect, such as being thanked, spoken to respectfully, and having effort acknowledged, helped young workers feel that they belonged in the workplace, rather than simply being assessed while they were still learning.

“Please and thank you goes a really long way” (YW09, health assistant).

In contrast, participants were more likely to question staying when they felt disrespected, bullied, dismissed, or under pressure to prove themselves before being taken seriously. Although these experiences were not common across all interviews, they showed how quickly poor workplace culture could affect confidence and willingness to remain in a role.

“I was quite close to leaving because of the tradesmen that bullied me. But I moved teams to my current manager who I do like ... and that was definitely something that made me choose to stay for a bit longer” (YW05, trade apprentice).

“Yeah, I think it's kind of a thing you have to earn at a workplace. It shouldn't be that way. But I find that you kind of have to prove yourself as such” (YW04, trade apprentice).

“You have to go above and beyond ... do everything that you possibly can to please your boss ... you shouldn't ask them things” (YW03, retail assistant).

Fit, learning and future pathways shaped longer-term engagement

Young workers were more likely to see a future in a role when the work suited their interests, helped them build skills, and offered useful next steps. Staying was not only about whether the workplace was positive.

Some participants described enjoying the workplace but still seeing the role as temporary if it did not align with their longer-term goals or provide opportunities to continue learning.

“I'm just not really excited about retail anymore. It's not my forever job ... to be honest, even better pay I don't think would keep me there” (YW03, retail assistant).

Others described how limited learning opportunities or repetitive work could reduce motivation over time.

“If I was just stuck doing the same thing for all of my apprenticeships ... that'll probably turn me off that company and make me want to leave” (YW02, trade apprentice).

For some participants, remaining in the role was closely connected to completing qualifications or building broader industry experience.

“I definitely had thought about [leaving]. But ... just sticking around to get it done and get my certification” (YW07, trade apprentice).

Pay, hours and flexibility influenced whether work felt sustainable

Pay, hours, and stability also shaped how participants assessed the sustainability of work, although these factors were usually weighed alongside workplace culture, learning opportunities, and future goals.

Some participants accepted lower apprentice or trainee wages because the role offered training, qualifications, or a more supportive work environment.

“I actually took a pay cut to be an apprentice compared to my retail job, but ... I don't think the money matters too much if I love the job” (YW02, trade apprentice).

“Being through work and training, it is a bit lower than most other workplaces ... but I'm still happy with the work and the people I work with. I need to get qualified at the end as well” (YW01, admin trainee).

Participants also described practical pressures associated with transitioning into full-time or near full-time work, including fatigue, long hours, fuel costs, and adjusting to new routines.

Flexible and predictable work arrangements helped make this transition feel more manageable. Stable hours, some control over overtime, weekends off, and supportive managers contributed to a stronger sense of work-life balance and sustainability.

“I wasn't sure how I would handle full-time. I know that sometimes just jumping into full-time work can be a bit of a shock to the system... they supported me and actually encouraged it ... ‘so yeah, we'll do four days a week’. That's been really good” (YW01, admin trainee).

“Going from school from 8:30 to 3:30 to working from 6:00 till 6:00 is a big change ... But right now, I think it's really good. I kind of choose the hours I want to work ... if I need a day off, my manager is really easy-going” (YW04, trade apprentice).

“That was something I was really looking when I came into this job ... I was really looking forward to not working weekends, like you've got two days, they're your days” (YW09, health assistant).

Sustainable work also depended on whether hours, routines and practical demands felt manageable.

Key implication:

Young workers described staying in work as linked to whether the job felt worthwhile, manageable, respectful, developmental, and sustainable, and whether their effort and contribution were recognised over time.

3. Supervisors' experiences and practices in supporting young workers

3.1. Making expectations visible: hiring for potential, onboarding and communication

Frontline supervisors described early supervision as partly a process of making hidden workplace expectations visible. Rather than expecting young workers to arrive fully work-ready, supervisors often looked for willingness to learn, reliability, attitude, communication, and fit, while recognising that workplaces needed to explain tasks, systems, standards, workplace norms, and communication expectations clearly from the beginning.

Recruiting for potential and fresh perspectives

Supervisors were often willing to hire young workers based on potential rather than finished skills. Technical capability was generally expected to develop on the job, while greater emphasis was placed on attitude, learning readiness, reliability, and willingness to engage with the workplace.

"I'm really more looking for the right fit in terms of attributes and attitude towards work. Especially with school leavers, they don't really have experience ... more than anything, just that learning preparedness, that is probably the biggest thing. What we don't want to see is people that just want a job" (FS02, media).

Several supervisors also described young workers as bringing value to workplaces through fresh perspectives, curiosity, energy, and different ways of thinking.

"You sort of get a little bit of ... sameness where they are just so used to the role and how they're doing things that you're just missing that fresh approach and a little bit of energy sometimes. And I think that's something that younger people definitely bring to a business" (FS02, media).

"Young people are the future. Like how can you expect your organisation to ... grow and move on and be innovative if you don't ever employ young people" (FS03, health).

Making workplace expectations and communication norms explicit

Once young workers entered the workplace, supervisors described the importance of making workplace expectations explicit rather than assuming they would be picked up informally. This involved more than formal induction processes.

Supervisors often described needing to explain how the workplace operated, what standards applied, how communication worked, and where young workers could seek support.

“The worst thing you could do is get a new starter of young age into a business environment and say, here’s your workstation, ... go do it. It’s about nurturing them, slowly introducing them to everyone, ... outlining each task in detail and giving a lot of support, especially at the start” (FS02, media).

Some supervisors also described using trial periods or workplace shadowing to help young workers understand workplace expectations before formally commencing employment.

“As part of our recruitment, we found it really important to have the candidate join us for a short trial. It might even just be 3 to 4 hours, come in and they shadow one of our qualified assistants” (FS03, health).

Communication was one of the most common areas where supervisors described needing to provide direct guidance. Several supervisors said young workers often needed support transitioning from more informal school-based communication styles into workplace and customer-facing environments.

“I like them to talk 80% of the time and me only talk 20%... they do tend to lack a little bit of that face-to-face, in-person conversation” (FS07, hospitality).

“We find some students will want to just do a text message, whereas we’ve sort of encouraged them to ... just make a phone call, just pick up the phone and give us a call and then have a chat” (FS04, public sector).

“There is sometimes can be that little bit of a knowledge gap, especially around ... things like language, like what kind of language to have in a workplace, like how to be presentable” (FS06, member service).

“If you’re in a high school job, chances are you probably... talk quite casually and relax, but it’s about kind of like guiding them on how to enter the professional world as well” (FS08, member service).

Supervisors often saw their role as helping young workers interpret workplace norms that more experienced workers may take for granted.

Clear expectations reduced confusion and uncertainty

Supervisors also described the importance of making expectations, standards, and workplace processes explicit in order to reduce confusion and uncertainty.

Several participants suggested that young workers were more likely to succeed when expectations were explained clearly and discussed directly rather than implied.

“Being descriptive, and giving the most amount of detail in terms of expectations of performance is very helpful ... Where is the expectation? What should I be doing?” (FS03, health).

Some supervisors also described needing to explain workplace systems, rules, or employment conditions that young workers had not encountered previously.

“It’s almost that fear of when somebody talks to you about something that ‘I’m in trouble’. I’m like, this is an adult workplace, and I know you’re only just turned 16. But I had to educate this young fellow what an enterprise agreement was” (FS09, construction).

Key implication:

Supervisors helped young workers succeed by hiring for potential and making workplace expectations, communication norms, and support pathways explicit.

3.2. Building independence: close support, safe learning, and gradual responsibility

Supervisors described independence as something that developed gradually rather than something young workers were expected to demonstrate immediately. Building confidence and capability involved staying close at the beginning, making it safe to ask questions, giving regular feedback, and gradually increasing responsibility as competence developed. The level of support depended on the young worker’s confidence, the complexity of the task, and the level of risk involved.

Close task-based support helped young workers build confidence

Supervisors consistently described early support as most effective when it occurred alongside the work itself. Common approaches included shadowing, buddy systems, task demonstrations, and breaking training into smaller stages so young workers could learn progressively without becoming overwhelmed.

“For the first four to six weeks, they have someone with them, shadowing them ... As they get more confident... give them some space... ‘I’m going to assist this time so you can see how it’s done. And then next time you can have a turn’” (FS03, health).

“Our training, whilst there’s so much to learn, that would be really overwhelming if you had to learn everything in one go ... it’s all broken down into bite-sized chunks, which can be a lot easier for them to absorb, and retain that information and repetition is key” (FS07, hospitality).

In safety-critical environments, close support was also described as necessary to prevent young workers from being left with tasks they were not yet trained or competent to complete independently.

“There is always an ideal one-to-one ratio. So as an apprentice or a trainee, you should never be left to conduct a task that you haven’t been deemed as trained or competent in doing” (FS09, construction).

Making it safe to ask questions and speak up

Supervisors also described the importance of creating environments where young workers felt comfortable asking questions, admitting uncertainty, and raising concerns before small

problems became larger issues. This was especially important for young workers who were quiet, inexperienced, or still learning how workplaces operated.

“I just want them to feel comfortable to come to me and ask, quote unquote, silly questions... more often than not, they're lacking a lot of life experience that you see in some of my older staff members. And so they kind of do have different questions than you would expect. And it's just being patient with them ... I try and be relatable with them ... but then also professional. So I can also lead by example” (FS08, member service).

“It can be really difficult with some individuals who are generally very quiet to get them to that place. All we do is we try to make sure they feel comfortable ... I would hate for someone to be sitting there worrying about something and not asking a question. It's just very much a case of just ask a question ... we're here to support and help.” (FS04, public sector).

In trade and safety-focused environments, speaking up was also framed as part of workplace safety and shared responsibility. Supervisors wanted young workers to understand that being inexperienced did not exclude them from identifying concerns or noticing risks.

“I like to make anybody, especially in that younger demographic, understand that they're in a safe environment ... if they feel that something isn't quite right ... even though you're the brand new person on the floor ... we all have a role to play. You're not excluded” (FS09, construction).

Feeling safe to ask questions also supported learning, participation and workplace safety.

Feedback, check-ins and gradual responsibility supported learning

Supervisors described check-ins, feedback, and coaching as important for helping young workers understand priorities, correct mistakes, and develop judgement over time. Learning was often described as an active process where support was gradually reduced as confidence and capability increased.

“We've had to put in kind of morning check-ins, afternoon check-ins to make sure that she's clear on the priorities for the day and doesn't kind of go off and do the things that are fun, but maybe not urgent” (FS01, human resources).

“Where time permits, give constructive feedback ... ‘what you did was not wrong. It's just for this purpose, we needed to change the framing slightly’” (FS05, public sector).

Several supervisors also described encouraging young workers to think through problems themselves, attempt tasks independently, and take greater responsibility once they showed readiness.

“If they come to me with a question, rather than answering it, I kind of ask them, well, what do you think the answer is?” (FS08, member service).

“The moment you see they are comfortable and confident ... I’m about delegating and saying, here’s the job, can you do it? Reach out if you need help” (FS02, media).

“Go on, mate, you know, go and try, and if you mess up, it’s OK. I can fix it, you know” (FS10, hospitality).

Supervisors also emphasised that support needed to be adapted to the individual, the task, and the situation. Some young workers required closer guidance, while others benefited from greater space to try tasks independently or from information being explained differently.

“I recognise that that’s different for each individual person. What she needs might be different from someone else, and it is just having to adapt and try things differently when maybe things don’t work the way we thought” (FS01, human resources).

Key implication:

Supervisors built independence by staying close early, making questions safe, giving feedback, and stepping back gradually as confidence and competence developed.

3.3. Supporting connection, contribution, and fair team dynamics

Supervisors described the relational side of supervision as an important part of everyday management. Young workers were often easier to guide and support when they felt known, had someone safe to approach, believed their contribution mattered, and worked in teams where expectations and relationships were managed fairly.

Building connection through buddies and everyday interaction

Supervisors described connection as something built through introductions, buddy systems, informal conversations, and everyday interest in the young worker as a person.

Several participants suggested that the right buddy or workplace relationship could strongly influence how comfortable young workers felt, particularly in larger teams or unfamiliar environments.

“It’s important that they have a buddy ... somebody they really connect with... If we have a very quiet person, we do potentially put them with a very quiet person so they don’t feel too overwhelmed ... It’s about making sure there are the right people helping the right students” (FS04, public sector).

Supervisors also described the importance of adapting communication styles and building professional relationships that recognised young workers as individuals rather than simply employees.

“You need to adapt your style ... get to know them a little bit more than just an employee number ... know a little bit about their family or pets or interests ... If you don’t have that relationship, you’ll tend to butt heads” (FS07, hospitality).

Encouraging contribution and recognising effort

Supervisors also described the importance of giving young workers opportunities to contribute ideas, participate in decisions, and receive recognition for their efforts.

Several participants suggested that empowerment helped young workers feel included in the team rather than positioned only as inexperienced staff being supervised.

“The key thing with youth of today is to empower them, to make them feel comfortable being uncomfortable, to allow them to grow and see what they can actually aspire to and do” (FS07, hospitality).

Some supervisors described creating opportunities for young workers to suggest improvements or contribute to workplace processes.

“They have control over certain things. Like if they are seeing something that’s not working for the team, they know that they can just run it by me and make changes if they need to. I think that kind of builds a trust within the team and sort of like a collaborative sort of culture” (FS08, member service).

Recognition and appreciation were also described as important for reinforcing effort, participation, and positive contribution.

“They do enjoy seeing themselves being recognised ... Our kids also love pins and recognition... they do a good job, and they get a pin as recognition of their efforts” (FS07, hospitality).

Recognition and appreciation were not described as superficial rewards. They were part of how young workers came to feel that their effort, learning and contribution were noticed. For young workers still building confidence, timely positive feedback helped clarify what they were doing well, reinforced expected behaviours, and strengthened their sense of belonging in the workplace.

Noticing stress and disengagement early

Supervisors also stressed the importance of noticing early signs that a young worker might be struggling. Changes in tone, body language, confidence, engagement, or work patterns were often treated as signals that additional support or conversation might be needed before problems escalated into disengagement or resignation.

“I could tell from her tone and her body language that something was up. So I sent her a message and said, are you okay? ... We just left together and talked while we were on the way to the car about what happened” (FS05, public sector).

Several supervisors also linked stress and disengagement to workload pressures, long hours, fatigue, or sustained pressure over time.

“If they’re having to work long hours, if they’re having to work across lunches, if they are looking not like themselves ... normally quite a chatty, bubbly person, then all of a sudden they’ve gone very quiet ... we try to have regular meetings and check in on

individuals where we need to ... If someone is genuinely burnt out, they'll just leave ... we don't want that under any circumstance" (FS04, public sector).

Informal check-ins and relational awareness were part of retention and wellbeing support.

Managing differences in age, experience, and work habits

Supervisors generally described age differences as practical workplace issues to manage rather than major generational conflict. Common challenges included phone use, workplace language, work pace, workload fairness, and balancing established workplace norms with new ideas or different working styles.

"They can get on their phones and on social media whilst working ... they can be very relaxed with their language ... it's like, guys, we're in a workplace. That's not appropriate language when we've got customers" (FS07, hospitality).

Several supervisors described the importance of maintaining consistent expectations and distributing work fairly across mixed-age teams.

"I wouldn't say tension as such ... we've got people working for us that are late 60s versus 14, 15 year olds, and they all just work together ... the biggest challenge is making sure that you're delegating tasks evenly ... with the same expectation and standards regardless of age" (FS07, hospitality).

At the same time, some supervisors also described younger workers as bringing useful ideas or alternative perspectives that could contribute positively to workplace culture and practice.

"If you've got an existing worker, and you've got someone young with new and fresh ideas, that can sometimes cause tension ... but it just goes back to ... creating that collaborative space ... anyone can share any ideas that they have, and we can trial and error, we can see what works" (FS06, member service).

Key implication:

Supervisors supported young workers by building connection, encouraging contribution, recognising effort, noticing stress early, and managing differences in age, experience, and work habits fairly.

3.4. Retaining young workers: meaningful work, pathways, and practical fit

Supervisors described retention in pragmatic rather than purely long-term terms. They wanted young workers to stay long enough to learn, contribute, and benefit from the role, but they did not always define success as remaining in the same job indefinitely. Retention was linked to meaningful work, role fit, practical conditions, visible pathways, and whether young workers could see useful next steps.

Retention expectations were realistic rather than indefinite

Outside structured apprenticeships or traineeships, supervisors often described one to three years as a reasonable outcome in entry-level or casualised settings, particularly if young workers gained skills, confidence, and clearer career direction during that time.

Some supervisors also described pathway visibility as important for helping young workers imagine future opportunities beyond their initial role.

“Nowadays, most people are staying in roles between one and two years. That’s probably a good success story for us ... but there are career opportunities within hospitality ... we need to give them that awareness and hopefully retain them that way and help them with their career progression” (FS01, human resources).

Very early exits were viewed differently. Several supervisors described turnover within the first 90 days as a signal that workplaces should review recruitment, onboarding, rostering, training, or role fit rather than simply attributing turnover to the young worker.

“Ideally for us, we want to get at least, you know, one or two, up to three years out of them ... We do track our 90 day turnover because we feel if we’re having a high 90 day turnover, we’ve got to do some self-reflection and go, okay, what are we doing wrong?” (FS07, hospitality).

Meaningful work and visible pathways helped maintain engagement

Supervisors described young workers as more likely to remain engaged when work felt meaningful, varied, and connected to future opportunities. Entry-level roles could become repetitive or disengaging if tasks felt too narrow or disconnected from learning and progression.

Some workplaces responded by rotating tasks, increasing variety, or helping young workers understand different parts of the organisation or industry.

“It can be very repetitive, very boring ... So I’ve been able to work with the operations manager to find a bit of diversification in that entry-level role ... getting to know different areas so they can get that variety” (FS01, human resources).

Supervisors also described the importance of feedback, contribution, and ongoing conversation as part of maintaining engagement.

“Making sure that you give them meaningful work, making sure that you give them feedback, making sure you ask them for feedback” (FS05, public sector).

Several supervisors suggested that progression conversations often needed to be initiated proactively because young workers did not always know what opportunities existed or feel confident putting themselves forward.

“When they first come in ... they don’t really know where they want to go... I’ll say to them, have you had a little think about what you want to do, what are your goals, what do you want to achieve while you’re here?” (FS08, member service).

“Trying to bring in a bit more of a performance career review cycle so that people can indicate what their preferences might be ... if opportunities do come up, we can approach them for conversations, not necessarily rely on them the whole time because some people just won't put themselves out there” (FS01, human resources)

Leaving did not always mean failed retention

Supervisors also distinguished between problematic turnover and positive progression. In several workplaces, leaving for further opportunities, career progression, or broader experience was not necessarily viewed as a failure if the young worker left with stronger skills, confidence, or qualifications.

“It's a success if they leave due to fulfilling the next progression in their career” (FS08, member service).

“We're certainly not oblivious to the fact that people may want to move outside of our organisation. If we've given them a good start through our training ... we're then moving healthcare” (FS03, health).

Some supervisors also described leaving on good terms as important because young workers might later return with broader experience and stronger skills.

“If you need to go away from [the organisation] to be a stronger, qualified, experienced professional ... then we absolutely support that. And if you leave on good terms ... the door is always open ... they come back a more skilled individual” (FS09, construction).

Together, these accounts suggest that supervisors often understood retention broadly rather than simply as keeping young workers in the same role indefinitely. Positive outcomes could include progression, broader experience, returning later with stronger skills, or leaving with greater confidence and clearer direction.

Key implication:

Retention was strengthened when workplaces made work meaningful, developmental, manageable, and connected to realistic future pathways.

4. Cross-cutting insights and enabling conditions

This section synthesises findings from both young workers and frontline supervisors to identify the broader conditions that supported positive early employment experiences. Across interviews, participants consistently pointed to the importance of:

- making workplace expectations visible,
- supporting gradual learning,
- creating conditions where young workers felt safe to ask questions and learn from mistakes,
- providing visible and practical support,
- and ensuring work felt meaningful and sustainable over time.

The findings also suggest that successful supervision was shaped not only by individual capability or motivation, but also by the broader workplace systems and organisational support surrounding young workers and supervisors.

4.1. Early work successes were supported by making hidden expectations visible

Across interviews, many early workplace difficulties appeared to reflect hidden or assumed expectations rather than unwillingness or poor attitude. Young workers were often learning not only the technical aspects of the role, but also:

- workplace communication,
- behavioural expectations,
- organisational routines,
- safety practices,
- and how to seek help appropriately.

Young workers consistently described needing patience, clear communication, and explicit guidance during the transition from school into work, rather than being expected to immediately understand workplace systems or norms.

“Remember that ... Someone who’s just come out of high school and joined the workforce isn’t going to understand everything straight away” (YW05, trade apprentice).

Young workers also described needing explicit permission and encouragement to ask questions early on, particularly when they lacked confidence or feared appearing incompetent.

Supervisors similarly described onboarding as a process of making workplace expectations visible rather than assuming young workers would simply “pick things up” independently. This included:

- explaining routines,
- clarifying communication expectations,
- modelling workplace behaviour,
- and making support pathways visible early.

On the whole, these findings suggest that effective onboarding involved helping young workers interpret workplace expectations that more experienced staff may take for granted. This makes hidden workplace rules and unwritten norms an important focus for future resource development, particularly because these expectations are often assumed by experienced staff but rarely explained explicitly to young workers.

4.2. Supervision functioned as everyday teaching

Across both participant groups, supervision was consistently described as a form of everyday teaching rather than simply oversight or task allocation. Learning was most effective when support stayed close to the work itself. Young workers described learning more confidently when supervisors:

- demonstrated tasks practically,
- broke work into manageable steps,
- provided feedback while tasks were being completed,
- and gradually increased responsibility over time.

Supervisors similarly described supervision as a staged process involving:

- shadowing,
- buddying,
- repeated practice,
- gradual responsibility,
- and regular feedback.

The findings suggest that young workers learned more confidently when they felt safe to ask questions, admit uncertainty, and make mistakes. They were more likely to continue developing when mistakes were treated as part of learning rather than incompetence.

This did not mean lowering standards. Rather, participants described learning as more effective when standards were explained clearly, questions were welcomed, and mistakes were corrected constructively.

Supervisors similarly emphasised the need to adapt support to different:

- confidence levels,
- communication styles,
- learning styles,
- and neurodiversity needs.

“Additional support in training of supervisors around neurodiversity ... what it can translate to in behaviours or reactions on the floor... [so] you’re able to adapt your supervisory style to get the best out of them” (FS07, hospitality).

Taken together, these findings suggest that capability and independence developed progressively when workplaces balanced:

- close support,
- opportunities to practise,
- constructive feedback,
- and gradually increasing autonomy.

4.3. Support worked best when it was visible, relational, and practical

Across interviews, support was most effective when it was:

- visible and consistent,
- easy to access,
- grounded in everyday workplace relationships,
- and practical rather than highly formalised.

Young workers valued knowing where to go for help before problems escalated. Visible and consistent support systems reduced uncertainty and helped young workers feel that they would not be left alone to navigate unfamiliar situations independently.

Support was also relational rather than purely procedural. Both young workers and supervisors emphasised the importance of:

- approachable supervisors,
- buddies,

- mentors,
- peer support,
- and everyday interactions that helped workplaces feel safe and navigable.

Supervisors similarly described buddy systems as practical mechanisms for helping young workers understand informal workplace processes and routines.

“Your buddy is there just to help you get settled in and help you with the day-to-day support of how do I submit annual leave? How do I complete my timesheet? I need a copy of my payslip. How do I get that? Where’s the bathroom?” (FS09, construction).

Both groups also consistently emphasised that useful support needed to be practical and grounded in real workplace situations. Supervisors valued:

- case studies,
- peer learning,
- practical examples,
- and low-burden tools

because they reflected the complexity and variability of everyday supervisory situations.

“I like case studies on things that worked ... and how to differently approach things ... You can keep it in the back of your mind those different scenarios that other people have encountered” (FS06, member service).

These accounts indicate that support systems worked best when they:

- reduced uncertainty,
- distributed support beyond one supervisor,
- and were embedded within everyday workplace relationships and routines.

4.4. Supervisors were central, but often under-supported

Supervisors consistently described supervision as involving substantially more than overseeing tasks or allocating work. Their role often included:

- onboarding,
- teaching,
- communication,
- emotional support,
- conflict management,

- workload management,
- wellbeing support,
- and retention support simultaneously.

However, many supervisors also described developing these capabilities informally through experience and peer support rather than through structured preparation.

“There is a bit of an expectation from the business: ‘they just know how to’. But if you’ve never supervised someone, you don’t know how to do it ... I really had to self-teach myself how to supervise others ... I wasn’t provided that sort of training from the business” (FS02, media).

Several supervisors also described a gap between being technically competent at the job and being prepared to supervise young workers effectively.

Some supervisors also felt under-supported by broader managerial expectations within the business. In particular, several described situations where managers expected young workers to arrive already “work-ready,” without recognising that many were still developing workplace communication, confidence, self-management, and professional norms.

“A lot of the challenges we’ve faced have actually been from the managers and their bias towards young people ... maybe not wanting to give them a go because they have a perception ... that the younger cohort have been unreliable or don’t take instruction as well” (FS01, human resources).

Operational pressures also affected supervisors’ ability to provide close support. Participants described balancing supervision alongside:

- staffing shortages,
- customer demands,
- administrative work,
- and competing operational responsibilities.

“It is a lot to juggle. You have to wear lots of hats ... you’re the shift manager, but you’re also handling customer complaints, or a team member’s breakup ... you become the counsellor and the mum and the dad ... as a supervisor” (FS07, hospitality).

The interviews also suggested that organisational scale influenced the kinds of support available. Larger workplaces appeared more likely to have formal induction, review, wellbeing and progression systems, while smaller workplaces often relied more heavily on informal relationships, supervisor judgement and day-to-day adaptability.

Peer support therefore became an important source of supervisory learning, reassurance, and problem-solving.

“I’ve got like a really supportive peer network and my lead herself is super supportive ... My colleagues, ... we often just bounce things off each other, we all have different

strengths and ideas, which I found really helpful when I'm not sure" (FS08, member service).

Supportive supervision was easier when workplaces provided:

- enough time,
- practical systems,
- peer support,
- wellbeing supports,
- and organisational backing for developmental supervision.

Together, these findings suggest that supervisors' ability to support young workers effectively depended on more than individual skill or goodwill. It also depended on whether organisations gave supervisors the time, systems, peer support, managerial backing and escalation pathways needed to supervise well.

4.5. Retention was shaped by the overall quality and sustainability of work

Across both participant groups, retention was described as shaped less by simple job availability and more by whether work felt:

- supportive,
- manageable,
- developmental,
- meaningful,
- and sustainable over time.

Young workers consistently linked positive work experiences to:

- respectful everyday communication,
- recognition and positive feedback,
- learning opportunities,
- practical support,
- consistency,
- and visible future pathways.

Consistency of supervision also mattered. Frequent changes between supervisors, teams, or expectations could make learning more difficult and increase uncertainty.

“I think it’s hard from jumping from people to people, because each person has different expectations” (YW04, trade apprentice).

Supervisors similarly described retention as connected to:

- meaningful work,
- skill development,
- supportive supervision,
- and realistic progression pathways.

The findings also suggest that retention should be understood broadly rather than simply as remaining in the same role indefinitely. Positive outcomes could include:

- building confidence,
- gaining experience,
- completing qualifications,
- progressing internally,
- or leaving with stronger skills and clearer direction.

Across interviews, participants understood retention as linked to the overall quality and developmental value of the work experience, rather than to pay or job availability alone.

4.6. Support and culture mattered more than generational stereotypes

Across interviews, differences in young workers’ workplace experiences appeared to be associated more with:

- workplace culture,
- supervisory support,
- organisational expectations,
- and the consistency of guidance
- than with generational stereotypes alone.

Although some supervisors discussed differences in communication style, confidence, or workplace readiness among younger workers, these issues were generally framed as practical management challenges rather than major generational conflict. Supervisors who described positive outcomes typically focused on:

- setting clear expectations,
- building relationships,

- adapting communication,
- and creating environments where young workers felt safe to ask questions, seek help, and learn, rather than expecting them to immediately be like experienced employees.

As one supervisor noted:

“Having that awareness that a young person is not going to come into your organisation and hit the ground running necessarily” (FS04, public sector).

Young workers themselves rarely described problems in generational terms. Instead, they focused on whether workplaces felt:

- supportive,
- respectful,
- safe to ask questions in,
- and willing to teach.

On the whole, these findings suggest that participants' workplace experiences were described less in terms of age itself and more in terms of whether workplaces created conditions that supported learning, communication, inclusion, and gradual capability development.

4.7. Local labour market conditions perceived to shape access to opportunity

Participants also described broader conditions affecting access to work in Tasmania. Their accounts suggested that opportunities often depended on:

- local networks,
- word of mouth,
- employer willingness to train,
- and the availability of quality entry-level opportunities.

Several participants also described their concerns about limited opportunities and narrower pathways compared with mainland Australia.

“In Tasmania it's very hard though. There's very limited and very small selection base. It's more through word of mouth than it is advertised ...” (YW07, trade apprentice).

Participants also perceived tensions between labour shortages and employers' willingness to hire and train inexperienced workers.

“People say, oh, we always need more trades and stuff, but no one's willing to put on the apprentices” (YW02, trade apprentice).

Supervisors similarly observed that many entry-level opportunities still expected prior experience, making it harder for young workers to enter the workforce unless employers were willing to invest in training and development.

Across both young workers' and supervisors' accounts, participants saw early employment experiences as shaped not only by workplace supervision, but also by broader conditions affecting access to meaningful entry-level pathways.

These cross-cutting insights provide the basis for the practical recommendations that follow.

5. Recommendations

The recommendations below translate the central finding — that effective supervision is a workplace capability, not only an individual supervisor skill — into practical areas for action. The first four recommendations focus on everyday supervisory conditions: making expectations clear, teaching tasks gradually, making questions and mistakes safe, and making support pathways visible. The remaining recommendations focus on the organisational and system conditions that make this possible: supporting supervisors, strengthening developmental work experiences, and improving the quality of entry-level opportunities.

The recommendations are designed to support workplace reflection, improvement, and the development of supervisor-support resources. They are not a compliance checklist, but identify areas where workplaces can reduce avoidable uncertainty, improve early learning, strengthen support for supervisors, and make entry-level work more developmental for young people in Tasmania. They should be read as practical design points for future supervisor-support resources, not as a fixed set of tools.

5.1. Make workplace expectations explicit early

Primary audience: supervisors, buddies, HR/onboarding staff, managers.

Workplaces should make expectations explicit from the first weeks of employment. Supervisors, managers, and senior workers should be supported to explain:

- workplace communication;
- behavioural expectations;
- routines;
- safety practices;
- how feedback will be given;
- who to approach for help;
- and what good work looks like in that workplace.

This is particularly important because many workplace norms are obvious to experienced staff but unfamiliar to young workers entering employment for the first time.

5.2. Treat supervision as part of everyday teaching

Primary audience: frontline supervisors, senior workers, trade mentors, team leaders.

Supervisor resources should focus on concrete supervisory behaviours rather than abstract management theory. Supervisors and senior workers should be supported to:

- demonstrate tasks clearly;
- break work into manageable steps;
- check understanding;
- provide feedback during learning;
- respond constructively to mistakes;
- and increase responsibility gradually.

This is especially important in safety-critical or high-pressure environments where young workers may be reluctant to admit uncertainty.

5.3. Make questions and mistakes safe during learning

Primary audience: frontline supervisors, managers, team leaders.

Workplace guidance should help supervisors and managers create everyday conditions where young workers feel able to ask questions, seek help, admit uncertainty, and learn from mistakes without embarrassment or harsh criticism.

In practice, this means helping them to:

- normalise learning and mistakes;
- invite questions early;
- respond respectfully to uncertainty;
- avoid practices that discourage help-seeking;
- and recognise that young workers may still be developing workplace confidence, communication skills, professional judgement, and self-management routines.

Providing such safe conditions should not be understood as lowering standards. Rather, it helps young workers raise uncertainty early, before small mistakes become larger problems.

5.4. Make support visible and easy to access

Primary audience: employers, HR, supervisors, training providers, apprentice/trainee support services.

Workplaces should make clear who young workers and supervisors can go to for help before problems escalate. Support pathways may include:

- buddies;
- supervisors;
- mentors;
- peer supports;
- wellbeing contacts;
- apprentice support programs;
- HR contacts;
- and external support pathways where relevant.

These systems should reduce uncertainty and prevent young workers and supervisors from feeling isolated when questions, wellbeing concerns, or workplace difficulties arise.

5.5. Support supervisors, not just young workers

Primary audience: managers, employers, HR, workforce-development partners.

Organisations should support supervisors with the time, practical resources, peer learning, and managerial backing needed to supervise young workers effectively. This includes recognising that supervision and capability-building are part of early employment, rather than additional tasks sitting outside operational work.

Some barriers to effective supervision are unlikely to be solved through supervisor training alone. They may require changes to onboarding systems, job design, workload allocation, performance-management processes, escalation pathways and managerial expectations.

Supervisor capability-building should include practical support on:

- communication;
- feedback;
- staged learning;
- conflict management;

- wellbeing conversations;
- neurodiversity awareness;
- and adapting support for different young workers.

Managers and organisations should also ensure that supervisors are not left to manage complex support, wellbeing, or performance issues alone.

5.6. Strengthen retention through developmental work experiences

Primary audience: employers, managers, supervisors, workforce-development partners.

Employers can support retention by improving the overall quality and developmental value of early work experiences. This means creating roles and supervision practices that help young workers build skills, confidence, relationships, and clearer future pathways.

In practice, employers should consider:

- varying entry-level tasks where possible;
- creating opportunities for learning and progression;
- holding early career conversations;
- recognising effort and providing positive feedback as young workers develop capability;
- reviewing early turnover patterns;
- supporting respectful workplace relationships;
- and ensuring workloads and hours remain manageable during the transition into work.

Retention should also be understood broadly. Positive outcomes may include progressing internally, building confidence and skills, completing qualifications, returning later with more experience, or leaving with clearer career direction and stronger work readiness. However, this broader definition should not excuse avoidable early exits: very early turnover, repeated disengagement or exits linked to poor supervision should still prompt workplace review.

5.7. Broader implication: improve the quality of entry-level opportunities

Primary audience: workforce-development partners, industry bodies, government, employers.

The interviews suggest that supervision alone is not enough if entry-level roles do not provide genuine training, task variety, support, and realistic opportunities to build capability. Future workforce-development initiatives could therefore help employers design entry-level roles that are genuinely developmental, rather than assuming young workers will arrive with prior workplace experience.

This may be particularly relevant for sectors or regions where employers report labour shortages, but young people still experience difficulty accessing supported entry-level pathways.

This implication is not simply about creating more jobs. It is about improving the quality of entry-level opportunities so that young people can enter work, develop capability, and build clearer pathways over time.

Implementation levels

The recommendations operate at three connected levels (see *Table 2*): everyday supervisory practice, workplace-level support, and broader workforce-development action.

Table 2. Implementation levels

Level	What can be done	Relevant recommendations
Supervisor-level practice	Use first-week conversations, explain expectations, demonstrate tasks, invite questions, provide calm feedback, check understanding, notice early signs of stress, and step back gradually as confidence develops.	5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.6
Workplace-level support	Create buddy systems, support maps, escalation pathways, supervisor peer-learning opportunities, manager guidance, wellbeing referral processes, and early turnover review processes. Ensure supervisors have time, practical resources, and backing to support young workers well. Review job descriptions, onboarding processes and performance-management systems so that expectations for supervision are clear and realistic.	5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6
System and workforce-development level	Support employers to design higher-quality entry-level roles, share practical employer case studies, build peer-learning networks, and develop resources that help workplaces provide training, supervision, task variety, feedback, and progression opportunities.	5.5, 5.6, 5.7

Implications for resource development

The report should be read as a foundation for developing practical supervisor-support resources. It identifies the supervisory problems, workplace conditions and design principles that future resources should respond to. Because workplaces differ in size, structure, existing support and readiness to engage, future resources should be low-burden and usable in both less formal or less well-supported settings and larger organisations with dedicated HR or training capacity. These could include short onboarding, feedback, support, escalation, peer-learning, turnover-review and progression tools.

These resources will only be useful if they are short, role-specific and easy to use within normal work routines. Resources that add administrative burden, assume dedicated HR capacity, or require supervisors to step outside operational demands are unlikely to be adopted consistently. Implementation should therefore prioritise simple prompts, checklists and conversation guides that can be embedded into existing onboarding, rostering, team meetings, supervision, training and progression conversations.

Future resources should prioritise practical, coaching-oriented and workplace-embedded supports over lengthy written materials or compliance-style training. Potential formats could include conversation prompts, real-time nudges, peer-learning activities, scenario-based coaching resources and mobile-accessible supports. These formats should be tested through co-design to ensure they are feasible for busy workplaces and useful for supervisors with varying levels of prior experience and engagement.

Resource development should also consider alignment with existing employer-facing initiatives and supervisor capability work in Tasmania, so that new resources complement rather than duplicate current supports.

Closing

These recommendations position supervision as a workplace capability, not only an individual supervisor skill. Strengthening supervision requires workplaces to make expectations visible, support learning gradually, provide accessible help, and give supervisors the time, tools and backing to do this work well. Done well, this can help young workers build confidence, capability, wellbeing and clearer pathways into sustained participation in work.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

A1.1. Young worker		A1.2. Supervisor
1	Pathways into work and early experiences Entry into employment, expectations of work, induction, and early onboarding experiences.	Recruitment and onboarding of young workers Hiring pathways, expectations of young workers, induction approaches, and early training.
2	Everyday supervision and communication How supervisors explained tasks, communicated expectations, gave feedback, and provided guidance.	Everyday supervisory practices How supervisors allocated tasks, oversaw work, communicated with young workers, and adapted their supervision style.
3	Learning, confidence, and responsibility Training, learning by doing, confidence building, independence, responsibility, and progression pathways.	Supporting learning and development Strategies used to build young workers' skills, confidence, independence, and workplace readiness.
4	Retention and turnover experiences Reasons for staying or leaving, feeling appreciated, motivation to continue, and what matters most in a job.	Retention and turnover patterns Expectations about how long young workers stay, reasons for leaving, and differences in retention patterns.
5	Workplace culture, inclusion, and wellbeing Belonging, respect, fairness, stress, speaking up, and clarity of workplace expectations.	Workplace culture, wellbeing, and team dynamics Inclusive culture, responding to stress or struggles, and supervising people of different ages or experience levels.
6	Employment conditions and job quality Pay, hours, treatment at work, job stability, predictability, and fit with life outside work.	Operational conditions and supervision constraints Workload, staffing, scheduling, balancing supervision with other duties, and organisational support.
7	Challenges and barriers to effective support Times when more support was needed, difficulty accessing help, and whether young workers felt listened to.	Barriers to effective supervision Challenges supervising young workers, uncertainty about support, expectation gaps, workload pressures, and generational differences.

8	Preferences for support and improvement Preferred types of support, what supervisors could do differently, and what better supervision would look like.	Enablers of effective supervision What successful supervision looked like, advice for other supervisors, useful tools, and workplace openness to new approaches.
9	Regional and sector influences Views on the Tasmanian job market, industry conditions, and challenges young workers face getting or staying in work.	Regional and sector influences Hiring and retention conditions, young applicant availability, industry-specific issues, and Tasmanian location factors.
10	Final ideas and suggestions Young workers' views on good workplace culture and how supervisors could better support people their age.	Final ideas and suggestions Final reflections on how organisations could better support supervisors of young workers.

Appendix 2: Potential supervisor-support tools

Appendix 2 provides examples of potential tools that could be developed, piloted, or adapted from the report recommendations. These are not proposed as a fixed toolkit. Rather, they indicate practical tool types that could support supervisors, managers, buddies, HR staff, training providers, and workforce-development partners.

As a starting point, the highest-priority tools are likely to be: a first-week conversation guide, a buddy checklist, a staged task guide, feedback prompts, a support map, an escalation pathway guide, and an early turnover review template. These tools address the most consistent findings in the report: early clarity, gradual learning, safe questions, visible support and supervisor backing. The tables below provide a broader menu of possible tools aligned with each recommendation.

A2.1. Tools to make workplace expectations explicit early (Related recommendation: 5.1)

Potential tool	Purpose	What it could include
First-week conversation guide	Help supervisors explain expectations early and consistently.	Prompts for discussing the role, routines, communication expectations, safety practices, feedback, and who to ask for help.
Onboarding prompts	Support practical onboarding beyond formal induction paperwork.	Short prompts for introductions, workplace tour, daily routines, break arrangements, timesheets, leave processes, and basic workplace norms.
Buddy checklist	Help buddies provide consistent informal support.	Checklist of practical things to explain, including where things are, who does what, how to ask questions, and common “unwritten rules.”
Plain-language workplace norms guide	Make implicit workplace expectations visible.	Simple explanations of what “good work” looks like, how to communicate, when to ask for help, and what to do if unsure.
Hidden workplace rules audit	Help workplaces identify expectations that are assumed but not explained.	Prompts for supervisors, buddies and managers to identify common unwritten rules around communication, punctuality, initiative, asking for help, phone use, breaks, safety, feedback and team norms.

A2.2. Tools to support supervision as everyday teaching (Related recommendation: 5.2)

Potential tool	Purpose	What it could include
Staged task guide	Help supervisors break tasks into manageable learning stages.	Steps for explaining, demonstrating, observing, checking understanding, supervised practice, and gradual independence.
Task-demonstration checklist	Support clear and consistent task teaching.	Prompts to show the task, explain the standard, explain safety risks, observe the young worker, and check understanding.
Feedback prompts	Help supervisors give constructive and positive feedback during learning.	Simple prompts such as “what went well,” “what needs adjusting,” “why it matters,” “what progress is visible,” and “what to try next time.”
Mistake-response guide	Help supervisors respond calmly and constructively to mistakes.	Guidance on separating the person from the mistake, explaining the correction, checking understanding, and preventing repeat errors.
Gradual independence guide	Help supervisors know when and how to step back.	Indicators of readiness, examples of staged responsibility, and reminders to remain available even after stepping back.

A2.3. Tools to help young workers ask questions and learn from mistakes safely (Related recommendation: 5.3)

Potential tool	Purpose	What it could include
Question-normalising prompts	Make it easier for young workers to ask questions early.	Phrases supervisors can use, such as “I expect questions at this stage,” or “It is better to ask early than guess.”
Check-in conversation guide	Structure informal conversations before problems escalate.	Prompts about workload, confidence, questions, stress, relationships, and support needs.
Supportive feedback examples	Show what calm, constructive and appreciative feedback sounds like.	Examples of feedback that corrects the task without shaming the young worker, acknowledges effort or progress, and reinforces expected behaviours.
Safe questions and mistakes guide	Help supervisors understand what it means to make questions and mistakes safe during learning.	Short guidance on welcoming questions, responding to uncertainty, avoiding humiliation, and maintaining standards while supporting learning.
Early warning signs checklist	Help supervisors notice when young workers may be struggling.	Signs such as withdrawal, reduced confidence, repeated uncertainty, fatigue, avoidance, conflict, or changes in communication.

A2.4. Tools to make support visible and easy to access (Related recommendation: 5.4)

Potential tool	Purpose	What it could include
Support map	Make clear who young workers and supervisors can go to for help.	Names or roles of buddies, supervisors, mentors, HR contacts, wellbeing supports, apprentice/trainee supports, and external contacts.
“Who to go to for what” guide	Reduce uncertainty about where to take different questions.	Examples of where to go for roster issues, pay questions, task questions, safety concerns, wellbeing concerns, or conflict.
Buddy guide	Clarify the buddy role and reduce reliance on informal guesswork.	Buddy responsibilities, suggested check-ins, practical topics to cover, and escalation points.
Regular check-in template	Support consistent early conversations.	Weekly or fortnightly prompts for the first weeks or months of employment.
Escalation pathway guide	Help supervisors and young workers know when and how to seek extra help.	Clear pathways for wellbeing, safety, conflict, performance, or personal issues.

A2.5. Tools to support supervisors, not just young workers (Related recommendation: 5.5)

Potential tool	Purpose	What it could include
Supervisor checklist	Help supervisors structure early support without adding excessive administration.	Key actions across onboarding, task teaching, feedback, check-ins, support pathways, and escalation.
Scenario-based learning modules	Build supervisor capability using realistic workplace situations.	Short scenarios on mistakes, conflict, low confidence, poor communication, fatigue, neurodiversity, or reluctance to ask questions.
Peer-learning session guide	Help supervisors learn from each other's experience.	Discussion prompts, case examples, reflection questions, and practical problem-solving exercises.
Wellbeing referral guide	Help supervisors respond appropriately to wellbeing concerns.	What supervisors can do, what they should not try to manage alone, and when to escalate or refer.
Manager guide for supporting supervisors	Clarify what supervisors need from managers and the business.	Guidance on time, workload, peer support, training, escalation, and realistic expectations about young worker development.

A2.6. Tools to strengthen retention through developmental work experiences (Related recommendation: 5.6)

Potential tool	Purpose	What it could include
Progression conversation prompts	Help supervisors discuss future pathways early.	Questions about interests, skills, goals, qualifications, role variety, and possible next steps.
Development check-in template	Track learning, confidence, and support needs over time.	Prompts about what the young worker has learned, what they want to learn next, and where more support is needed. Prompts to recognise progress, effort and contribution since the previous check-in.
Task-variety planning tool	Help employers avoid young workers becoming stuck in narrow or repetitive work.	Ways to rotate tasks, broaden exposure, and link work to skill development.
Early turnover review template	Help workplaces learn from early exits.	Questions about recruitment, onboarding, rostering, supervision, workload, role fit, and support.
Pathway map	Help young workers see possible next steps.	Simple visual map of possible internal roles, qualifications, progression options, or external pathways.

A2.7. Possible tools to support higher-quality entry-level opportunities (Related recommendation: 5.7)

Potential tool	Purpose	What it could include
Entry-level role design guide	Help employers create roles that provide real learning and development.	Guidance on reasonable entry expectations, training components, supervision needs, and progression pathways.
Employer case studies	Share practical examples of effective youth supervision and developmental entry-level roles.	Short examples showing what worked, what challenges arose, and what other employers can adapt.
Peer-learning network guide	Support employers to learn from each other.	Structure for employer roundtables, communities of practice, or sector-based learning groups.
Training investment checklist	Help employers assess whether entry-level roles are genuinely developmental.	Questions about training time, supervision, task variety, feedback, support, and progression.
Employer showcase or recognition framework	Provide a possible way to highlight employers investing in young workers.	Possible criteria for showcasing or recognising workplaces that provide quality entry-level training, supervision, and progression opportunities.



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