



# MORE THAN A JOB'S WORTH:

## Making Work Experience Fit for Purpose



Will Millard, Bart Shaw, Dr Sam Baars  
and Loic Menzies – LKMco

May 2019



lkm<sup>co</sup>



Workfinder

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$





**Workfinder** connects young people with placements at great companies in just a few taps. Workfinder commissioned this research and we are particularly grateful to the Peter Cundill Foundation and ACS for funding this work.

At Workfinder, we inspire young people to find a future they'll love, to discover exciting career opportunities and explore the working world on their terms.

Our mission is to inspire the next generation and create a pipeline of talent to drive the UK's most ambitious growth companies. We believe work experience is at the heart of this – and our aspiration is that 100% of young people get 100 hours of work experience that is 100% satisfactory every year.

Find out more at [www.workfinder.com](http://www.workfinder.com)



**LKMco** works across the education, youth and policy sectors. We help organisations develop and evaluate projects for young people and carry out academic and policy research and campaigning about the issues that experience tells us matter.

Find out more at [www.lkmco.org](http://www.lkmco.org), or get in touch at [info@lkmco.org](mailto:info@lkmco.org).



**Will Millard** is Head of Policy Advocacy at LKMco, working to ensure LKMco's research leads to action that will improve the lives of young people. He has extensive experience designing and implementing research projects. Will has worked with a wide range of organisations, helping them develop and enhance their strategy and impact. Recently he led the development of the GLA's strategy for supporting boys' achievement across London. He has authored research on oracy, enterprise education, and assessment, and has presented at events across the country. He began his career as a teacher. Will is a Clore6 Fellow.



**Bart Shaw** is a Head of Policy Development at LKMco and has spent the last 8 years working in education in the UK and overseas. He combines experience of policy making at the heart of government with hands-on experience as a teacher and middle leader in school. He is lead author of LKMco and Joseph Rowntree Foundation's report Special Educational Needs and their Link to Poverty, as well as the LKMco and Social Mobility Commission report Ethnicity, Gender and Social Mobility. He recently completed a report on good practice in mentoring for the Office of the Children's Commissioner providing evidence-based advice to mentoring organisations on how to maximise their impact. He was co-author of our study of school cultures for the Department for Education.



**Dr Sam Baars** is Director of Research at LKMco. He has particular interests in youth research, area-based inequalities and social science impact, and has experience designing and conducting research projects drawing on a range of methods, from film-based work in schools to rapid research reviews and large-scale survey analysis. Sam believes that robust, innovative social research is the key to tackling the barriers that prevent some young people from making fulfilling transitions to adulthood, and he channels this belief into his role overseeing research at LKMco. Sam holds a PhD in Social Change from the University of Manchester.



**Loic Menzies** is Chief Executive of LKMco and has worked in education research, evaluation and policy for the last nine years. He has previously worked as a teacher, youth worker and tutor for Canterbury Christ Church's Faculty of Education. He has authored numerous high profile reports and works with policy makers to communicate the implications of research, for example presenting to the Education Select Committee on White Working Class Underachievement or presenting to civil servants on teacher recruitment, retention and development.

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# Foreword



Time and time again, businesses tell me about the importance of work experience in the young people they recruit. The CBI's own research shows nearly one-third of employers rank work experience among their top three factors when recruiting school and college leavers, alongside broader skills like resilience, communication and time management. Work experience not only shapes a young person's decision about their future career, but also prepares them for the modern world.

Offering work experience is hugely beneficial for business too, helping both to nurture future talent and to engage with their local community. It should be no surprise that over four in five of our members who work with schools provide work experience.

There is room to improve however. Recent research by the CBI, Accenture and Hays found that one in four young people still do not feel prepared by their education for the world of work. This demonstrates a clear opportunity for firms to support young people in their career aspirations, including through initiatives such as Workfinder. This is important as young people who have at least four interactions with business at school are five times less likely to be unemployed as an adult, with early exposure to business – whether through work experience, internships, mentoring or career talks – helping young people to feel better prepared.

This report is a welcome contribution to the discussion and can help employers better engage with schools and colleges. The CBI will continue to work with Founders4Schools, LKMco and others to ensure more young people benefit from the interactions with employers they need to succeed.



Carolyn Fairbairn,  
Director-General, CBI

# Executive summary

## What is the impact of work experience?

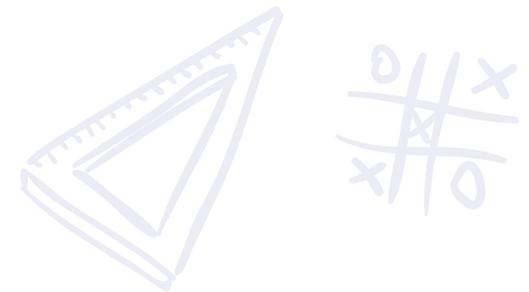
Work experience encompasses young people's experience of work tasks in work environments on time-limited placements, alongside their education. It offers a range of benefits for young people, including providing:

- **Insight into the world of work** that improved their ability to make decisions about the future, understand workplace 'norms' and behaviours, and to understand different sorts of workplaces;
- **Development of career-relevant skills valued by employers** including communication, teamwork, resilience and confidence, and;
- **Improved long-term careers outcomes**, including wage-premiums, employability, and a reduced likelihood of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

However, work experience's potential to achieve these benefits remains untapped. The quality of work experience is hugely variable, and often very poor. A large proportion of young people do not think the work experience they undertake is good quality. However the quality is likely to be higher for more affluent pupils, who have access to stronger, higher-status networks relevant to their needs and aspirations.

Furthermore, despite being an entitlement across the UK, access to work experience is currently hugely variable:

- Many young people do not have access at all. Survey data indicates that half of young people aged 14- to 25-years-old have not participated in work experience.<sup>1</sup>
- Demographic characteristics affect access to work experience opportunities. Poverty, minority ethnic status, gender and special educational need or disabilities all reduce pupils' likelihood of participating.<sup>2, 3</sup>
- Access is also affected by subject choices. Pupils choosing 'academic' routes in school are less likely to participate in work experience. In addition, work experience is more readily available in certain sectors and organisations than others.<sup>4, 5</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Youth Employment UK (2018) Youth Voice Census Report. Available at: <https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/dev/wp-content/themes/yeuk/youth-voice-census-report-oct-2018.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> British Youth Council - Youth Select Committee (BYC) (2018) Realising the potential of work experience, London: BYC. Available at: <https://www.byc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Youth-Select-Committee-Realising-the-Potential-of-Work-Experience.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Archer, L. and Moote, J. (2016) Aspires 2 project spotlight: Year 11 students' views of careers education and work experience. Available at: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/research/aspires/ASPIRES-2-Project-Spotlight---Year-11-Students-Views-on-Careers-Education-and-Work-Experience.pdf>.

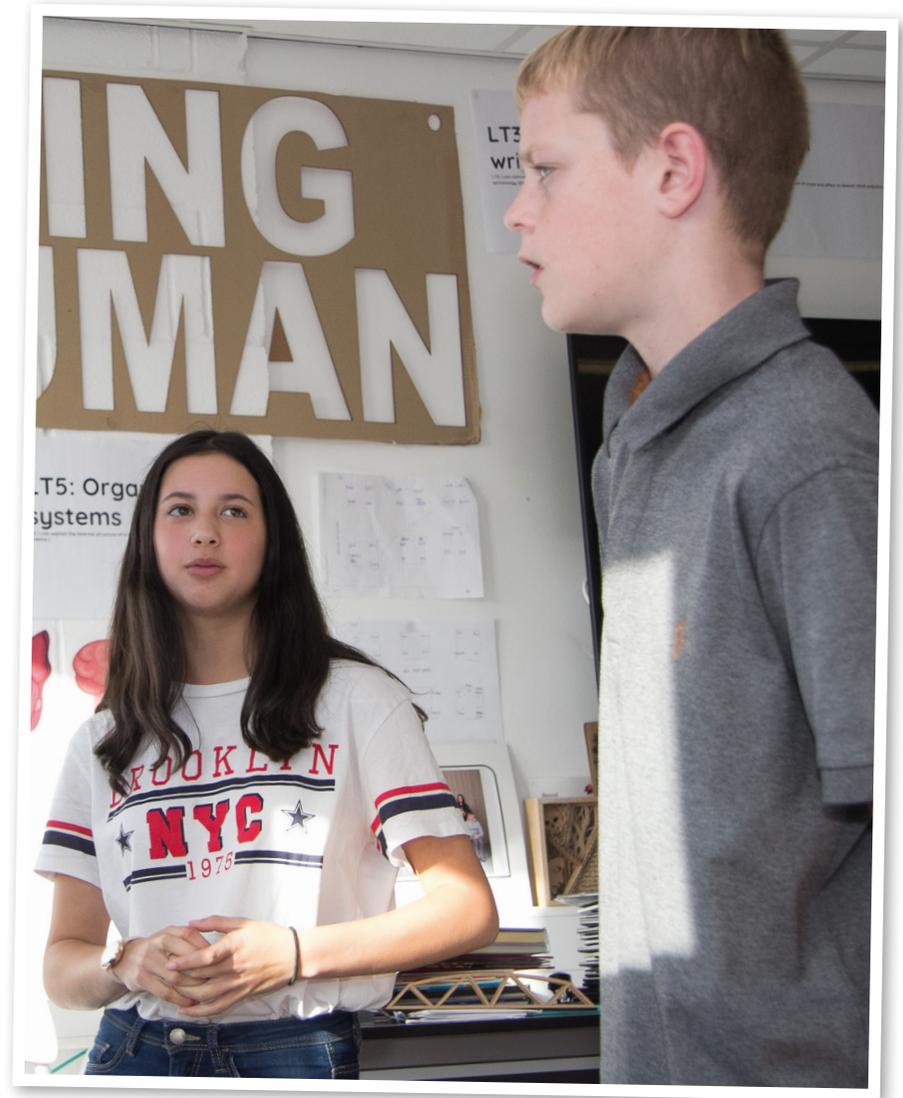
<sup>4</sup> NatCen Social Research and SQW (2017) Work Experience and Related Activities in Schools and Colleges, London: Department for Education. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/601373/Work\\_experience\\_and\\_related\\_activities\\_in\\_schools\\_and\\_colleges.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/601373/Work_experience_and_related_activities_in_schools_and_colleges.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Mann, A. (2012) Work Experience: Impact and Delivery - Insights from the Evidence, London: Education and Employers. Available at: [https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/work\\_experience\\_report\\_\\_april\\_2012\\_.pdf](https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/work_experience_report__april_2012_.pdf).

# What needs to happen to ensure work experience delivers on its promise?

This research outlines how schools, parents, employers, government and other, supporting organisations can increase work experience's efficacy for schools and employers, and most of all, for young people.

<b>Schools and colleges should:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Match pupils with appropriately stretching opportunities;</li><li>2. Outline the benefits of hosting young people for work experience;</li><li>3. Support opportunities for work experience throughout the academic year;</li><li>4. Increase post-16 students' access to work experience;</li><li>5. Help pupils prepare for and debrief after work experience;</li><li>6. Support repeated interactions with employers;</li><li>7. Support host employers and businesses;</li><li>8. Support work experience opportunities within school and with suppliers;</li><li>9. Monitor and evaluate the quality of work experience;</li><li>10. Identify and address inequalities in access to work experience.</li></ol>
<b>Employers should:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Publicise the benefits of hosting work experience placements;</li><li>2. Set up meaningful experiences for young people;</li><li>3. Make work experience authentic;</li><li>4. Increase efficiency;</li><li>5. Provide feedback to young people;</li><li>6. Ensure opportunities are available to all young people;</li><li>7. Monitor the cost of placements.</li></ol>
<b>Government, funders and third sector organisations should:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ensure a wider range of sectors provide work experience, and;</li><li>2. Broker relationships between schools and employers.</li></ol>



# 1. Introduction and methodology

## 1.1 Message from Sherry Coutu, Founder and Chairman of Founders4Schools

WorkFinder<sup>6</sup> enables young people irrespective of background or geography to experience the workplace, connecting them with employers in their local area or region.<sup>7</sup>

All too often young people miss out on opportunities to explore and understand the workplace. When they do, the experience young people have often lacks substance and purpose. It is also worrying that, as this research has found, the young people who would benefit most from work experience are often those most likely to miss out.

How schools and employers approach work experience needs immediate action. We have the knowledge and means to make a positive difference for children and young people today, and especially for those young people more at risk of being left behind. Everyone – employers, parents, teachers, and society at large – stands to benefit from improving young people's access to purposeful work experience.

We commissioned this research from LKMco because we know that while work experience can be hugely beneficial for young people, its potential remains largely untapped.

This research sets out how work experience can be restructured so that it works for everyone, most of all young people. It reveals steps schools and employers can take right now to dramatically increase access to, and the quality of, work experience. It suggests a framework to tackle this head on.



Sherry Coutu, Founder and  
Chairman, Founders4Schools

## 1.2 More Than A Job's Worth: The case for change in careers education

Many young people face barriers in making the transition from education into meaningful employment, and this is reflected in the comparatively high rates of unemployment among young people aged 16 to 24 in comparison with older groups, both in the UK,<sup>8</sup> and OECD countries.<sup>9</sup> Barriers impeding a smooth transition between education and work can disproportionately impact certain groups of young people, including young women, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, or low-income backgrounds.<sup>10</sup>

Commentators attribute this difficulty in part to a break in the chain between the worlds of education and work. As one contributor to this research said:

“*The job situation's changing so rapidly that there's a whole plethora of jobs out there that young people have no cognisance of. ...The jobs we're doing today won't be the jobs that they'll do tomorrow, and so it's about widening [young people's] appreciation of that.*”

Morag McLoughlan, Service Manager For Schools,  
Learning and Education at Stirling Council

Surveys of employers and young people as they leave compulsory education support this idea, indicating that employers sometimes struggle to find young people with the right skills or the right level of skill<sup>11, 12</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.workfinder.com/>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.founders4schools.org.uk>.

<sup>8</sup> Office for National Statistics (2018a) UK labour market: December 2018. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/december2018>.

<sup>9</sup> Musset, P. and Mytna Kurekova, L. (2018) Working it out: Career Guidance and Employer Engagement, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 175, Paris: OECD Publishing. doi: 10.1787/51c9d18d-en.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> McKinsey Global Institute (2017) Technology, Jobs And The Future Of Work - Briefing Note Prepared For The Fortune Vatican Forum, December 2016 Updated February 2017. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Featured%20Insights/Employment%20and%20Growth/Technology%20jobs%20and%20the%20future%20of%20work/MGI-Future-of-Work-Briefing-note-May-2017.ashx>.

<sup>12</sup> CBI/Pearson (2017) Helping The UK Thrive: CBI/Pearson Education And Skills Survey 2017, London: CBI. Available at: [http://www.cbi.org.uk/index.cfm/\\_api/render/file/?method=inline&fileID=DB1A9FE5-5459-4AA2-8B44798DD5B15E77](http://www.cbi.org.uk/index.cfm/_api/render/file/?method=inline&fileID=DB1A9FE5-5459-4AA2-8B44798DD5B15E77).

Teachers feel they support pupils to develop skills that employers value,<sup>13</sup> although many young people feel they do not acquire the career-relevant skills they need during their education<sup>14</sup>. Paradoxically, though, these young people tend to be more highly educated than older generations<sup>15, 16</sup>.

These challenges look set to become more pronounced, as employers seek more highly skilled workers.<sup>17</sup> Simultaneously, social and technological changes will continue to create jobs, while changing and eradicating others. As the Department for Education's 2017 Careers Strategy states:

“*Now is the time to act so that everyone has the skills and the knowledge to thrive in our fast-changing work environment.*”<sup>18</sup>

The fragility of young people's transitions into the labour market is also reflected in the fact that few young people achieve, as adults, the aspirations they articulate in their youth. A minority of young people pursue or achieve their 'dream' career pathways as adults,<sup>19</sup> and this is partly due to limited opportunities: a higher proportion of young people aspire to higher-level study, and professional and managerial occupations, than the proportion of adults that hold these positions.<sup>20, 21</sup> However, young people's job-related hopes and dreams extend beyond job titles, occupational status and remuneration; although these are important, young people tend to rank having interesting jobs, a positive work/life balance, and helping others as more important to them than pay.<sup>22</sup> Participants in our research noted that young people's hopes and dreams increasingly encompass a 'way of life':

“*When I was a child, when someone said 'what do you want to do when you grow up?', you named a job: 'I want to be a teacher, a truck driver, a whatever'. When I ask young people today..., they give me list of lifestyle requirements. They say 'I want to work internationally', 'I want to do something good for society', ...and 'I want to do something that earns a lot of money'. They don't think about a named, targeted job.*”

**Dr Anne Bamford, Strategic Director for Education, Culture and Skills, the City of London Corporation**

Work experience offers one important means by which young people can formulate and test ideas about their futures, learn about different roles and how organisations function, whilst developing work-relevant skills and habits. It forms part of a broader careers education that children and young people should receive as they progress through school and beyond, and which is explored in 'More Than A Job's Worth: Making Careers Education Age-Appropriate'<sup>23</sup> which sets out how the gap between educators', businesses' and young people's needs can be bridged.

<sup>13</sup> Kashefpakdel, E. T., Newton, O. and Clark, J. (2018a) Joint Dialogue: How Are Schools Developing Real Employability Skills?, London: Education and Employers. Available at: <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Joint-Dialogue-FINAL-REPORT-2019.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Mourshed, M., Farrell, D. and Barton, D. (2013) Education to Employment: Designing a System that Works. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Industries/Social%20Sector/Our%20Insights/Education%20to%20employment%20Designing%20a%20system%20that%20works/Education%20to%20employment%20designing%20a%20system%20that%20works.ashx>.

<sup>15</sup> Musset and Mytina Kurekova, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> McKinsey Global Institute, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> CBI/Pearson, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Department for Education (2017) Careers strategy: making the most of everyone's skills and talents, London: Department for Education, p. 7. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/664319/Careers\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664319/Careers_strategy.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Office for National Statistics (2018b) Young people's career aspirations versus reality. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/youngpeoplescareeraspirationsversusreality/2018-09-27>.

<sup>20</sup> Kintrea, K., St Clair, R. and Houston, M. (2011) The influence of parents, places and poverty on educational attitudes and aspirations, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/young-people-education-attitudes-full.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Croll, P. (2008) 'Occupational choice, socioeconomic status and educational attainment: a study of the occupational choices and destinations of young people in the British Household Panel Survey', Research Papers in Education, 23(3), pp. 243–268. doi: 10.1080/02671520701755424.

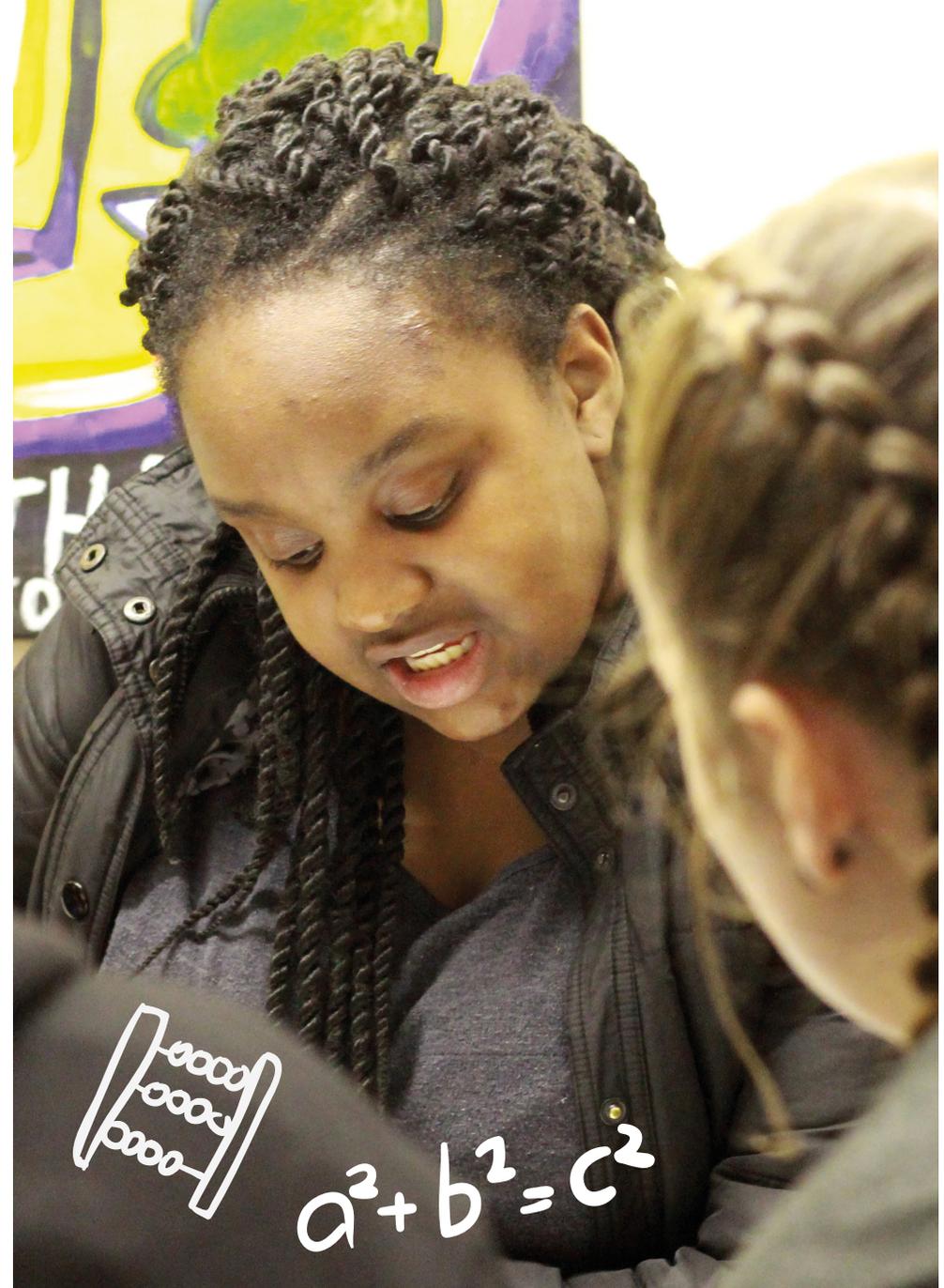
<sup>22</sup> ONS, 2017b.

<sup>23</sup> Millard, W., Bowen-Viner, K., Baars, S. and Menzies, L. (2019) More Than A Job's Worth: Making Careers Education Age-Appropriate, London: LKMco/Founders4Schools. Available at: <https://www.lkmco.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Making-Careers-Education-Age-Appropriate-digital-report.pdf>.

### 1.3 Methodology

This report was written alongside the first report in the 'More Than a Job's Worth' series, 'Making Careers Education Age-Appropriate'<sup>24</sup>. It draws from a wide range of evidence on the impact of and access to work experience, including:<sup>25</sup>

- Literature reviews of the best-available evidence, using search portals including Web of Science. We focused on studies and evidence relating to the efficacy of work experience. The existing studies we identified included a mixture of quantitative and mixed-methods designs including small- and large-scale surveys and randomised control trials. This provided insight into careers education across educational phases, ranging from descriptive information about how young people perceive careers interventions to causal claims about the impact of specific activities;
- Two roundtables, which were attended by more than 40 careers education experts and practitioners including educationalists and employers;
- Interviews with four experts in careers education, and;
- Nine case studies of primary, secondary and FE settings across the UK identified by LKMco, Founders4Schools and roundtable participants as having adopted innovative approaches in order to provide high quality careers education and work experience.



<sup>24</sup> Millard et al., 2019.

<sup>25</sup> Further information about the research design and the contributors involved in the research is available in the appendices.

## 1.4 A brief overview of work experience policy in the UK

### Northern Ireland

- The Northern Irish government's strategy for careers education and guidance sets out its policy commitment that 'work experience for young people, schools and employers will be improved to ensure equality of opportunity'.<sup>26</sup> (DoE, 2016).

### Scotland

- The Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (CDSYW) calls for 'the quality of work experience ... to be significantly enhanced'.<sup>27</sup>
- The Scottish Government outlines how it intends to implement the Commission's recommendations in its strategy 'Developing the Young Workforce', committing to a new standard for work experience.<sup>28</sup>
- Education Scotland outlines workplace standards for children and young people aged 3 to 18, outlining the 'universal entitlement for young people to gain experience of work',<sup>29</sup> and guidance for schools and employers on developing work placements in new guidance.<sup>30</sup>

### Wales

- In 2008 the Welsh Assembly Government publishes its statutory framework for 11- to 19-year-olds in Wales, specifying the need for young people to 'develop Key Skills and other skills required by employers'.<sup>31</sup>

- In 2018, Career Wales launches its 'Education Business Exchange', linking schools and employers.

### England

- Professor Alison Wolf's review of vocational education is published, suggesting the focus of work experience should shift to 16- to 19-year-olds who are closer to entering the workforce.<sup>32</sup>
- In 2011 the government responded, removing the statutory duty on schools in England to provide pupils aged 14 to 16 with work-related learning.<sup>33</sup>
- The Gatsby Foundation publishes its eight benchmarks on good careers guidance. While focused primarily on the English context, 'the benchmarks would be equally applicable to the other nations of the UK.' The sixth benchmark says pupils should 'have first-hand experiences of the workplace' including through work experience.<sup>34</sup>
- The Department for Education's 2017 Careers Strategy discusses the important role of work experience in developing pupils' work-related skills, building their networks, and providing opportunities to experience the workplace.<sup>35</sup>
- In 2018, the DfE's statutory guidance for careers guidance and education builds on the Gatsby Benchmarks, calling on schools to 'ensure that by the age of 16, every pupil has at least one experience of a workplace, and one further such experience by the age of 18'.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Department of Education (DoE) (2016) Preparing for success 2015 - 2020 : A strategy for careers education and guidance, Northern Ireland: Department of Education. Available at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/Careers-strategy.pdf>.  
<sup>27</sup> Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (CDSYW) (2014) Education working for all: developing Scotland's young workforce, Edinburgh: The Scottish Government. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/education-working-commission-developing-scotlands-young-workforce-final-report/pages/0/>.

<sup>28</sup> The Scottish Government (2014) Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy, Edinburgh: The Scottish Government. Available at: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/43857/developingtheyoungworkforce2014.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Education Scotland (2015a) Developing the Young Workforce Career Education Standard (3-18), Livingston: Education Scotland. Available at: <https://education.gov.scot/documents/dyw2-career-education-standard-0915.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> Education Scotland (2015b) Developing the Young Workforce Work Placement Standards, Livingston: Education Scotland. Available at: [https://education.gov.scot/documents/dyw\\_workplacementstandard0915.pdf](https://education.gov.scot/documents/dyw_workplacementstandard0915.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2008) Careers and the world of work: a framework for 11 to 19-year-olds in Wales, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government. Available at: <http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/static.live.careerswales.net/careers%20and%20the%20world%20of%20work%20framework.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Wolf, A. (2011) Review Of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/180504/DFE-00031-2011.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180504/DFE-00031-2011.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> Department for Education (2011) Wolf Review of Vocational Education Government Response, London: Department for Education. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/180868/Wolf-Review-Response.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180868/Wolf-Review-Response.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> Gatsby Foundation (2014) Good Career Guidance Reaching The Gatsby Benchmarks, London: The Gatsby Foundation. Available at: <http://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/good-career-guidance-handbook-digital.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> Department for Education (2017) Careers strategy: making the most of everyone's skills and talents, London: Department for Education. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/664319/Careers\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664319/Careers_strategy.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> Department for Education (2018) Careers guidance and access for education and training providers, London: Department for Education. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/748474/181008\\_schools\\_statutory\\_guidance\\_final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748474/181008_schools_statutory_guidance_final.pdf).

# 2. Making work experience work for everyone

Drawing together definitions of the term 'work experience' available elsewhere in the literature,<sup>37, 38</sup> we use the term to describe young people's experience of work tasks in work environments on time-limited placements, alongside their education.

Young people's access to work experience is limited by their:

- Age
- Geography
- Gender
- Subject choices
- Socioeconomic status
- Special and additional educational needs and disabilities

## 2.1 Young people's access to work experience

### 2.1.1 Access by pupil characteristics

#### Age

In the last decade, opportunities for young people to access work experience have been widespread but not universal. A recent survey by Youth Employment

UK found that 51% of young people aged between 14 and 25 had participated in work experience.<sup>39</sup> However, another study found that access can vary by age; one-quarter of 14-to-16-year-olds and three quarters of 16-to-19-year-olds in Britain have not taken part in work experience.<sup>40</sup> This is disconcerting because, as we explore in section 2.3 below, older pupils aged 16 and over may benefit more from work experience and employers tend to prefer to offer opportunities to post-16 students.

#### Geography

One large-scale survey of pupils aged 15 and 16 in England during the 2014/15 academic year found that fewer than half had taken part in work experience.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, in 2016, an Ofsted review into work-related learning found that, of 109 schools inspected in the Spring Term 2016, 46 schools did not offer work experience to pupils aged 14 to 16 approaching their exams.<sup>42</sup>

Some evidence indicates access to work experience is higher in Scotland. One study conducted in 2007/08 (which therefore may not be reflective of the current situation) found that 86% of pupils aged 14-to-16 in Scotland took part in work experience.<sup>43</sup> However, more recent assessments indicate the level of employer engagement may not support such high access, with an estimated 21% of employers offering work experience to pupils in Scotland in 2016/17, although this does reflect an increase from 10% in 2014.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Buzzeo, J. and Cifci, M. (2017) Work experience, job shadowing and workplace visits: what works?, London: Careers and Enterprise Company. Available at: <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploaded/careers-enterprise-what-works-report-work-experience.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> Hooley, T. and Barham, L. (eds.). (2015) Career Development Policy and Practice: The Tony Watts Reader. Stafford: Highflyers.

<sup>39</sup> Youth Employment UK (2018) Youth Voice Census Report. Available at: <https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/dev/wp-content/themes/yeuk/youth-voice-census-report-oct-2018.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> Mann, A., Kashfipakdel, E. T., Rehill, J. and Huddleston, P. (2016) Contemporary transitions: Young Britons reflect on life after secondary school and college, London: Education and Employers. Available at: <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Contemporary-Transitions-30-1-2017.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> Moote, J. and Archer, L. (2018) 'Failing to deliver? Exploring the current status of career education provision in England', Research Papers in Education, 33(2), pp. 187–215. doi: 10.1080/02671522.2016.1271005.

<sup>42</sup> Ofsted (2016) Getting Ready for Work, Manchester: Ofsted. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/577236/Getting\\_ready\\_for\\_work.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/577236/Getting_ready_for_work.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> Eddy Adams Consultants with Smart Consultancy (Scotland) Ltd and Training and Employment Research Unit (2008) Work Experience in Scotland. Glasgow: University of Glasgow. Available at: <https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/249899/0072298.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> The Scottish Government (2018) Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy - 3rd Annual Progress Report 2016-2017, Edinburgh: The Scottish Government. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/report/2018/01/developing-young-workforce-scotlands-youth-employment-strategy-third-annual-progress/documents/00530056-pdf/00530056-pdf/govscot%3Adocument>.

A report published by the Welsh schools inspectorate, Estyn in 2017 found that access to work experience had declined in Wales since 2012:



*'The use of work-focused experience placements has decreased substantially in the majority of schools surveyed. In 2012, in nearly all schools at least 90% of pupils undertook a work-focused experience placement [aged 14 to 16]. ...now only 38% [of schools surveyed] reported that at least 90% of their pupils [aged 14 to 16] undertake a work-focused experience placement. In 29% of schools, no pupils participate in work-focused experience. The use of work experience in sixth forms has declined by a similar degree.'*<sup>45</sup>



Access is also more limited for young people living rurally, as placements can be harder to find and harder to reach.<sup>46</sup>

## Gender

The 2018 Youth Voice Census of 14- to 25-year-olds found that more young men (55%) than women (49%) had participated in work experience during secondary school.<sup>47</sup> There were also differences in the support male and female students received, with males being more likely to use their schools to find a placement. Furthermore, young women were more likely to report that their work experience 'had not helped them to develop contacts and networks'.

There are also disparities in access between different sectors.<sup>48, 49, 50</sup> Boys dominate work experience in sectors such as engineering, construction,

Information Technology and manufacturing, while girls dominate in the beauty, sport and leisure and retail industries.

## Subject choices

Pupils interested in pursuing certain career paths including medicine, veterinary science and dentistry are more likely to be required to undertake work experience in order to support their applications compared to pupils applying for law, engineering, or business and management.<sup>51, 52</sup> Furthermore, research participants highlighted that whereas many vocational qualifications contain a work experience component, many academic qualifications do not. This means young people's subject choices for both pre- and post-16 study can affect access to work experience opportunities. In addition, many schools tend to privilege discussing academic pathways (such as universities) with pupils, over and above vocational routes.<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore, work experience is harder to obtain in some sectors than others (NatCen Social Research and SQW, 2017),<sup>54</sup> an issue explored in more depth in section 2.3. The Wellcome Trust's Science Education Tracker survey found in 2016 that, of over 4,000 students in years 10 to 13 in state-funded schools across England, 28% wanted to take part in STEM-related work experience but were unable to.<sup>55</sup>



<sup>45</sup> Estyn (2017) Careers The implementation of the careers and world of work framework in secondary schools September 2017, Cardiff: Estyn. Available at: [https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/29984/1/Careers%20-%20Thematic%20survey%20report%20%28002%29\\_0\\_Redacted.pdf](https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/29984/1/Careers%20-%20Thematic%20survey%20report%20%28002%29_0_Redacted.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> British Youth Council - Youth Select Committee (BYC) (2018) Realising the potential of work experience, London: BYC. Available at: <https://www.byc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Youth-Select-Committee-Realising-the-Potential-of-Work-Experience.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> Youth Employment UK, 2018.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Moote and Archer, 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Mann, A. (2012) Work Experience: Impact and Delivery - Insights from the Evidence, London: Education and Employers. Available at: [https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/work\\_experience\\_report\\_\\_april\\_2012\\_.pdf](https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/work_experience_report__april_2012_.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> Mann, 2012.

<sup>52</sup> Rehill, J. (2016) The importance of experience of the world of work in admissions to health-based undergraduate courses at Russell Group universities: A desktop review, London: Education and Employers. Available at: <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/The-importance-of-experience-of-the-world-of-work-in-admissions-to-health-based-undergraduate-courses-at-Russell-Group-universities-A-desktop-review-JR-29-11-16.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup> Millard et al., 2019.

<sup>54</sup> NatCen Social Research and SQW (2017) Work Experience and Related Activities in Schools and Colleges, London: Department for Education. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/601373/Work\\_experience\\_and\\_related\\_activities\\_in\\_schools\\_and\\_colleges.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/601373/Work_experience_and_related_activities_in_schools_and_colleges.pdf).

<sup>55</sup> Hamlyn, R., Matthews, P. and Shanahan, M. (2017) Young people's views on science education Science Education Tracker Research Report February 2017. Available at: <https://wellcome.ac.uk/sites/default/files/science-education-tracker-report-feb17.pdf>.

## Socioeconomic status

Young people's socioeconomic status (SES) affects their access to work experience, with one qualitative study indicating that lower SES young people were:<sup>56</sup>

- Less likely to have access to work experience in 'high status' workplaces such as those requiring higher academic credentials;
- More likely to be influenced by school staff in their choice of work experience, and less able to make use of family contacts;
- Less confident in their choice of work experience, and;
- More likely to be given menial tasks, and less likely to have access to shadowing or mentoring as part of their work experience.

This aligns with findings elsewhere in the literature, suggesting that young people from poorer backgrounds are less likely to access quality careers education opportunities, even though these young people might disproportionately benefit from such activities.<sup>57, 58, 59</sup> Experts and practitioners reiterated this during roundtables, interviews and case studies:



*The people that don't have such strong social capital and don't know people who can help them in the jobs market tend to benefit more from employer support than others*

**Chris Percy, Strategy and Research Contractor,  
the Careers and Enterprise Company**



## Special and Additional Educational Needs and Disabilities

Access to work experience is limited for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This is particularly the case in schools, where only 60% of schools secured work experience for pupils with SEND compared to 80% of colleges.<sup>60</sup> Witnesses to the 2018 Youth Select Committee on work experience said this imbalance could be less to do with young people's capabilities, and more to do with educators' and employers' expectations:



*'Witnesses told us that this is often less a reflection of their ability or capacity to undertake such experiences, and more a lack of expectation on behalf of educators and employer and an unwillingness or lack of understanding of how to make adjustments that could enable them to take placements up.'*<sup>61</sup>



In Scotland, special schools appear to offer widespread work experience for pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN), although mainstream schools are not always able to provide work experience for pupils with ASN.<sup>62, 63, 64</sup> Young people with ASN are therefore more likely to be excluded from work experience, although qualitative evidence suggests that young people with ASN can thrive during the process of preparing for and taking part in work experience.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Hatcher, R. and Le Gallais, T. (2008) The work experience placements of secondary school students: widening horizons or reproducing social inequality?, Birmingham: Faculty of Education, Birmingham City University. Available at: [https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/the\\_work\\_experience\\_placements\\_of\\_secondary\\_school\\_students.pdf](https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/the_work_experience_placements_of_secondary_school_students.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> Moote and Archer, 2018.

<sup>58</sup> Archer, L. and Moote, J. (2016) Aspires 2 project spotlight: Year 11 students' views of careers education and work experience. Available at: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/education/research/aspires/ASPIRES-2-Project-Spotlight---Year-11-Students-Views-on-Careers-Education-and-Work-Experience.pdf>.

<sup>59</sup> Mann et al., 2016.

<sup>60</sup> NatCen Social Research and SQW, 2017.

<sup>61</sup> BYC, 2018: 7.

<sup>62</sup> The Scottish Government, 2018.

<sup>63</sup> CDSYW, 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Eddy Adams Consultants et al., 2008.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

This is problematic, as young people with additional needs can disproportionately benefit from careers encounters such as work experience:



*A young person can easily feel labelled when they know they have special needs.... They too can discover they have areas of strength where they can say 'I am really good at this...' allows them to celebrate and articulate that, rather than being reminded of the things they're not good at or not capable of doing. ...A young person with these kind of challenges and additional hurdles should discover that they too have got something to shout about*

Gerard Liston, Director, Forum Talent Potential CIC



Furthermore, if organisations are worried about offering work experience because of the legal and pastoral obligations, these may be heightened if young people have additional or special needs. Similar issues may occur for pupils perceived to have bad behaviour.

### **2.1.2 Differences in access to work experience for private versus state schools**

In a survey of 19- to 24-year-olds, fewer former independent school pupils recalled taking part in work experience aged 14 to 16 (52%, compared to 77% in comprehensive schools, and 79% in grammars).<sup>66</sup> However, this trend is reversed for most other aspects of careers education, with independently educated young people recalling greater levels of employer engagements during school.

In contrast, amongst older pupils aged 16-19, a smaller proportion of comprehensive school pupils had taken part in work experience compared to pupils in grammar schools and independent schools (24% of pupils in comprehensive schools, compared to 40% in grammar schools, and 45% in independent schools).<sup>67</sup> This could suggest that independent schools offer work experience to older pupils, believing it to be of greater value at a later stage.



<sup>66</sup> Mann et al., 2016.  
<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

## 2.2 What does the evidence say makes work experience effective?

**Section summary:** Where schools and employers take work experience seriously, evidence suggests it has important, positive benefits on a range of outcomes, including:

- **Young peoples' employability;**
- **Academic outcomes such as attainment, or engagement with academic work;**
- **Wider developmental outcomes, and;**
- **Outcomes for employers.**

### 2.2.1 Overview of evidence

Evidence indicates that work experience can have important, positive benefits for young people, particularly in terms of non-academic outcomes such as communication and interpersonal skills. There is also evidence work experience can improve academic outcomes, and help young people find work.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, and as we outline in section 2.3, below, the impact of work experience is stymied by its often variable quality, and structural factors that limit young people's access to it.



### 2.2.2 Effectiveness in terms of employability outcomes

#### Career-relevant skills valued by employers

According to young people, teachers, school leaders and employers, the main benefits of work experience are in helping young people develop a range of career-relevant skills (sometimes called 'soft skills'<sup>69</sup>) and competencies, such as:<sup>70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75</sup>

- Teamwork;
- Communication and interpersonal skills;
- Resilience, and;
- Confidence.

Work experience can also help young people feel positive about going into work having developed these skills.<sup>76</sup>

However, the extent to which pupils are able to reflect and build on the skills developed through work experience appears to have a socio-economic dimension. Pupils in schools with more socio-economically disadvantaged intakes are less knowledgeable than pupils from schools in more affluent areas about the competencies they developed through work experience, and how these might apply to their career aspirations.<sup>77, 78</sup>

<sup>68</sup> A number of studies examine perceptions of impact, both from the point of view of young people, their teachers, and their parents, as well as the employers that offer the work experience. However, a lack of quasi-experimental studies into the impact of work experience means caution should be exercised in making causal claims about its impact.

<sup>69</sup> The utility of the term 'soft skills' is debated as delineating between 'hard' and 'soft' skills is problematic (Kashefpakdel, Newton and Clark, 2018a). We therefore refer throughout this report to 'career-relevant' skills.

<sup>70</sup> Kashefpakdel et al., 2018.

<sup>71</sup> Youth Employment UK, 2018.

<sup>72</sup> Buzzeo and Cifci, 2017.

<sup>73</sup> NatCen Social Research and SQW, 2017.

<sup>74</sup> EY (2017) A Framework for Success: connecting Young People with Employers from School to Work A White Paper, London: EY. Available at: [https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-foundation-school-to-work/\\$FILE/EY-Foundation-School-to-Work.pdf](https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-foundation-school-to-work/$FILE/EY-Foundation-School-to-Work.pdf).

<sup>75</sup> Sims, D., Southcott, C., Lynch, S. and Wade, P. (2013) Evaluation of the Work Experience Placement Trials, London: Department for Education. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/246182/DFE-RR298.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/246182/DFE-RR298.pdf).

<sup>76</sup> Ofsted, 2016.

<sup>77</sup> BYC, 2018.

<sup>78</sup> Hatcher and Le Gallais, 2008.

Importantly, the development of employability skills through work experience also appears to vary by age with young people over the age of 16 more likely to develop the skills valued by employers as a result of participating in work experience, compared to younger pupils.<sup>79, 80</sup> This may help explain independent and grammar schools' preference for delivering work experience with pupils aged 16 and over. Therefore despite schools' preference for providing work experience for pupils aged 15 and 16,<sup>81</sup> there could well be value in schools and colleges shifting their focus onto ensuring universal access for post-16 students.

Roundtable participants said work experience helps young people develop work-relevant skills, including teamwork and communication skills.

### Insight into the world of work

Young people value work experience's role in helping them make decisions about future careers. Survey data from three UK studies, with a combined sample of 35,000 young people, revealed that approximately two thirds of young people believed that work experience was 'helpful' or 'very helpful' in helping them make informed decisions about their future careers.<sup>82</sup> This was the case both in helping young people determine what choices might not be suitable for them, and helping to positively reinforce their career aspirations.<sup>83, 84</sup> This was a sentiment was echoed by practitioners and pupil participants in this research:

*“ Often students complete work experience [aged 14 and 15] and ... instead of it re-affirming that that's the career they want to do, it changes their mind. This shouldn't be viewed as a negative; I feel all experiences are useful experiences and help students make informed decisions.*

Pippa, Allner, Head of Careers and Employability, AIBEAT

*“ Getting general skills that you can apply to every single workplace, no matter where you did your work experience, is important, but it also gives you a sense of what you do and don't like within that field, and if there's certain elements of that career that you don't like that you need to be more wary of, you've got that knowledge going into it*

Pupil, West Hill School

Work experience's influence on young people's decisions about future careers may play a role in reducing their likelihood of becoming NEET. Two studies report a significant correlation between career uncertainty aged 16 and NEET status aged 16 to 18.<sup>85, 86</sup> Controlling for attainment, young people who had taken part in four or more work-related activities, including work experience, were five times less likely to become NEET than those who had taken part in none.<sup>87</sup> However, given the design of this study, this may reflect the characteristics of the pupils participating in these encounters, rather than the actual effect of the encounters.

Work experience can provide an opportunity for young people to learn about particular career pathways, although some young people need more support than others when narrowing down career options. One expert, reflected on the benefit of work experience from the point of view of a young person:

*“ Say there are three jobs I'm quite interested in, one of which is HR. But I've never felt certain. I might do work experience in HR to help me decide if I should investigate an HR career further*

Chris Percy, Strategy and Research Contractor,  
the Careers and Enterprise Company

<sup>79</sup> Buzzeo and Cifci, 2017.

<sup>80</sup> Sims et al., 2013.

<sup>81</sup> NatCen Social Research and SQW, 2017.

<sup>82</sup> Mann, 2012.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ofsted, 2016.

<sup>85</sup> Mann et al., 2016.

<sup>86</sup> Mann, 2012.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

Work experience can also help address misconceptions about particular roles or sectors. One roundtable participant explained that, at her workplace (a bank), work experience participants were encouraged to share their concerns openly so that these misconceptions could be addressed:

“

*We run a structured, week-long work experience program that aims to myth-bust some of the common misconceptions about banking.*

**Lauren von Stackelberg, Head of Female Client Strategy, J. P. Morgan**”

At the same time, there is some qualitative evidence that work experience may reinforce social inequalities in career choices. For example, a study of five schools conducted in 2008 found that they were not effective in using work experience to broaden pupils' career aspirations and their understanding of the opportunities available.<sup>88</sup> Other more recent studies (including large-scale, quantitative analyses) suggest this may continue to be the case.<sup>89, 90</sup>, particularly for lower-income pupils who are more likely to participate in work experience as part of a vocational course. Consequently, lower-income pupils' (or their schools') earlier decisions about which subjects to study can result in work experience being strongly linked to their (vocational) subject choices. This may limit the extent to which work experience helps pupils from low-income backgrounds explore the world of work beyond their vocational courses. It may therefore constrain rather than expand their career horizons.<sup>91</sup>

Pupils' experiences of work experience can mean they derive differing levels of value from the opportunities, particularly if some young people are better prepared for the placement or can draw on more developed personal, social and emotional skills:

“

*You end up with some youngsters having a fabulous time, others coming back having been bored for a week, and others being sacked after a day or so because they just couldn't hack it or hadn't been prepared properly.*

**Gerard Liston, Director, Forum Talent Potential CIC**”



<sup>88</sup> Hatcher and Le Gallais, 2008.

<sup>89</sup> Moote and Archer, 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Archer and Moote, 2016.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

## Opening young people's horizons using work experience – Stirling Council

Stirling Council and its schools believe careers education can help young people encounter opportunities that may be of greater benefit to them than purely academic routes, and simultaneously help to stretch all pupils to fulfil their potential:

“  
*We are trying to support young people to develop resilience and give them encouragement to just spread their wings and fly.*

Morag McLoughlan, Service Manager For Schools,  
Learning and Education at Stirling Council

To achieve this, Stirling is making efforts to provide more work-based opportunities, especially for vulnerable or disadvantaged young people. This involves making work-based learning a core part of young people's education:

“  
*We're in the early stages of trying to redesign the system to open up a lot more learner pathways for young people, particularly vulnerable young people. ...[We want] work-based learning [to] become a core part of the learning offer. So rather than sit in a traditional classroom environment and try to learn a particular academic subject, we're trying to modify the offer so that work-based learning is seen as just as valuable, if not more valuable, for some of our young people*

Kevin Kelman, Chief Education Officer, Stirling Council

A greater breadth of pathways also increases the likelihood that education will 'work' for young people. Stirling Council has explored how and why some young people become NEET when they leave school, finding some

young people felt they were pushed into pathways that were neither suitable nor appealing:

“  
*They feel the current education system funnels you into Higher Education and ... it's difficult to push back against that funnel. ...Some of our more entrepreneurial young people are saying, actually, 'that's not what I want to do. I might be more interested in going out into the world of work starting my own business', but there's something in the system that kind of holds them back from doing it.*

Kevin Kelman, Chief Education Officer, Stirling Council

During secondary school, pupils increasingly have opportunities to experience a range of jobs through work placements, careers talks and mentoring. Pupils attend workplace visits when staff feel it is appropriate to do so. Formal work experience usually takes place when pupils are aged 14 and 15, for a week, although this is something Kevin Kelman and Morag McLoughlan at Stirling Council would like to change:

“  
*We're actually wanting to push the boundaries and say, 'Well, could work placement be every Wednesday afternoon, for example, if it was something a young person was really motivated by and if it could support them to achieve their goals and aspirations in their career pathway'.*

Morag McLoughlan, Service Manager For Schools,  
Learning and Education at Stirling Council

## Impact on labour market outcomes

Survey data collected by WISE (the World Innovation Summit for Education) indicates that 80% employers say they would rather hire young people with relevant experience and lower grades, over and above a young person with better grades and no relevant experience<sup>92</sup> – though it is not clear whether this stated preference is born out in practice.

These preferences may translate into labour market outcomes for young people. For example, research commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills showed that undergraduates who gained work experience during their degrees were more likely to be employed after graduating.<sup>93</sup>

It is estimated that taking part in memorable activities with employers whilst aged 14 to 19 (such as work experience), is associated with a boost to 19- to 24-year-olds' early career earning potential of approximately £900 a year in the UK (or 4.5% of median earnings)<sup>94</sup>. Moreover, taking part in work experience as part of a longer-term, repeated course of work-related learning appears to have a stronger influence on future earnings.<sup>95</sup> Young adults who had taken part in four or more instances of work-related learning, including work experience, earned 16% more, on average, than those who had taken part in none<sup>96</sup> (and as was previously mentioned are less at risk of becoming NEET aged 16).

### 2.2.3 Effectiveness in terms of academic outcomes

#### Applying to university

A growing body of research indicates work experience can support pupils' successful applications to Higher Education.<sup>97</sup> However, the benefits of work experience in supporting HE applications are not spread evenly across the pupil population. More affluent pupils have access to a wider range and greater number of meaningful work experience placements, which can help with their

personal statements, while state school pupils appear to be at a disadvantage in comparison with their independent school peers in gaining 'high quality' work experience valued by high-tariff universities.<sup>98</sup> As we suggest in section 2.3, employers should therefore ensure work experience opportunities are available to pupils from lower SES backgrounds.

#### Exam grades

Very few experimental or quasi-experimental studies exist that measure the work experience's impact on pupils' attainment, although some studies from the US find evidence of positive effects for employer engagement programmes that include an element of work experience.<sup>99</sup>

Despite the lack of measurable impact, teachers perceive work experience as having positive effects on pupils' engagement with their school work.<sup>100, 101</sup> Focus groups with teachers reveal two mechanisms by which teachers believe work experience helps young people to engage with school:<sup>102</sup>

- Young people directly experiencing the value of GCSE and A-level qualifications in the labour market
- Young people contextualising classroom learning in the work environment.

<sup>92</sup> World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) (2015) 2015 WISE Education Survey: Connecting Education to the Real World. Qatar: WISE. Available at: [https://www.wise-qatar.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/wise\\_survey\\_report\\_2015.pdf](https://www.wise-qatar.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/wise_survey_report_2015.pdf).

<sup>93</sup> Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) (2013) 'Learning from Futuretrack: The Impact of Work Experiences On Higher Education Student Outcomes' - Bis Research Paper Number 143, London: BIS. Available at: [https://hecsu.ac.uk/assets/assets/documents/Futuretrack\\_BIS\\_Learning-\\_from\\_futuretrack\\_work\\_experience.pdf](https://hecsu.ac.uk/assets/assets/documents/Futuretrack_BIS_Learning-_from_futuretrack_work_experience.pdf).

<sup>94</sup> Mann, A. and Percy, C. (2013) 'Employer engagement in British secondary education: wage earning outcomes experienced by young adults', *Journal of Education and Work*, 27(5), pp. 496–523.

<sup>95</sup> Mann et al., 2016.

<sup>96</sup> Mann, 2012.

<sup>97</sup> Mann, 2012.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Air UK (2008) *The Involvement of Business in Education : A Rapid Evidence Assessment of the Measurable Impacts*, London: Department for Children, Schools and Families. Available at: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8585/1/DCSF-RW052.pdf>.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Buzzeeo and Cifci, 2017.

<sup>102</sup> Mann, 2012.

Furthermore, there is evidence that work experience can benefit university students' academic outcomes. For example, one study found that of 290 university students surveyed, 58% who had been on a work experience placement achieved an upper second or first class degree, while this was true for only 37% of non-placement students<sup>103</sup> and other studies have yielded similar findings.<sup>104, 105</sup> One proposed explanation for these findings is that 'when students return from work placements they appear to be more driven to succeed'.<sup>106</sup> Whilst these studies are not able to prove causality, and they acknowledge that more motivated students may self-select onto placements to begin with, this does not appear to account fully for the observed impact on academic outcomes. In other words, these results do not appear to be due to work placement students being academically more capable to begin with.<sup>107</sup>

## 2.2.4 Outcomes for employers

As Carolyn Fairbairn, Director-General of the CBI, explains in her foreword to this report, many employers believe that work experience has benefits for the organisation providing the placement. Most frequently, employers report that work experience enables them to:

- Develop the skills of young people who may become their future workforce;<sup>108</sup>
- Give back to their local community for altruistic reasons,<sup>109</sup> and;
- Increase the recruitment of apprentices.<sup>110</sup>

The CBI and Pearson's 2017 Education and Skills Survey collected responses from over 300 organisations from a variety of sectors across the UK, with SMEs accounting for nearly a third of the sample. It found that four in five businesses have 'at least some links with schools or colleges', and that, of these, around 80%

offer work experience placements.<sup>111</sup> This broadly aligns with the 71% of SMEs that professional services firm EY estimates offer work experience.<sup>112</sup> However, figures elsewhere indicate engagement by employers with work experience may be lower than these estimates suggest, with an estimated 21% of employers offering work experience to pupils in Scotland in 2016/17, an increase from 10% in 2014.<sup>113</sup>

However, employers in the UK do not always feel that they benefit from offering work experience placements. Ofsted conducted two 'expert engagement groups' with organisations representing employers, as well as a number of individual meetings with organisations supporting links between schools and businesses. Participating employers expressed criticism for schools that approached them, arguing that they lacked a clear agenda or objectives.<sup>114</sup> We explore the ways in which work experience might become more effective in section 2.3.



<sup>103</sup> Patel, N., Brinkman, W. and Coughlan, J. (2012) 'Work placements and academic achievement: undergraduate computing students', *Education and Training*, 54(6), pp. 523-533. doi: 10.1108/00400911211254299.

<sup>104</sup> Jones, C. M., Green, J. P. and Higson, H. E. (2017) 'Do work placements improve final year academic performance or do high-calibre students choose to do work placements?', *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(6), pp. 976-992. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2015.1073249.

<sup>105</sup> Mansfield, R. (2011) 'The Effect of Placement Experience Upon Final-Year Results for Surveying Degree Programmes', *Studies in Higher Education*, 36(8), pp. 939-952. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2010.486073.

<sup>106</sup> Jones et al., 2017.

<sup>107</sup> Patel et al., 2012.

<sup>108</sup> NatCen Social Research and SQW, 2017.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Sims et al., 2013.

<sup>111</sup> CBI/Pearson (2017) *Helping The UK Thrive: CBI/Pearson Education And Skills Survey 2017*, London: CBI. Available at: [http://www.cbi.org.uk/index.cfm/\\_api/render/file/?method=inline&fileID=DB1A9FE5-5459-4AA2-8B44798DD5B15E77](http://www.cbi.org.uk/index.cfm/_api/render/file/?method=inline&fileID=DB1A9FE5-5459-4AA2-8B44798DD5B15E77).

<sup>112</sup> EY, 2017.

<sup>113</sup> The Scottish Government, 2018.

<sup>114</sup> Ofsted, 2016.

Offering work experience could be more challenging for some organisations than others. Participants in our research noted that larger organisations with established work experience programmes have more capacity than smaller organisations that may not have any dedicated or additional capacity (including to cover the background legal, insurance and health and safety checks). This may exacerbate the imbalanced mix of work experience opportunities available to young people:

“

*A fast growing start-up doesn't have a lot of time and energy to be [offering] work experience around the business, and to be diverting resources to [it].*

Jessica Butcher, Co-Founder and Director, Blippar.

”

“

*A youngster can find themselves dumped on employers who haven't a clue what they're going to do with this child for a week. ...It's a lot to ask an employer to plan something for a young person that is constructive and purposeful for a whole week, or even two weeks in some cases*

Gerard Liston, Director, Forum Talent Potential CIC

”

This can be exacerbated if schools' and employers' practical needs do not overlap, and data on schools' and colleges' rationale for structuring work experience suggests there is a disconnect between education settings and businesses' needs.<sup>115</sup> For example, only 13% of placements for pupils aged 14 to 16, and 27% for pupils in post-16 study, were arranged by settings to fit around employers' needs.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>115</sup> NatCen Social Research and SQW, 2017.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.



## 2.3 What needs to happen to make work experience more effective?

Schools, employers and other organisations including government and brokerage services can take a range of steps to support effective work experience. The emphasis must be on ensuring work experience is structured so that it helps young people learn, and convenient for schools and employers.

Schools and employers should work more closely together, ensuring pupils undertake purposeful tasks that develop their understanding of the world of work and career-relevant personal, social and emotional skills. Meanwhile, work experience should be more widely available to pupils in post-16 education.

### 2.3.1 Recommendations for schools and colleges

From our review of the literature and primary research involving practitioners and experts, we identify ten key actions that schools should take in order to support effective work experience:

1. Match pupils with appropriately stretching opportunities;
2. Outline the benefits of hosting young people for work experience;
3. Support opportunities for work experience throughout the academic year;
4. Increase post-16 students' access to work experience;
5. Help pupils prepare for and debrief after work experience;
6. Support repeated interactions with employers;
7. Support host employers and businesses;
8. Support work experience opportunities within school and with suppliers;
9. Monitor and evaluate the quality of work experience, and;
10. Identify and address inequalities in access to work experience.

### 1. Match pupils with appropriately stretching opportunities

Work experience led by schools has a greater chance of reducing social inequalities than work experience led by pupils, as placements arranged by schools are not constrained by pupils' and families' social networks or social capital.<sup>117,118</sup> Despite this, a large proportion of work experience placements are arranged through parents' social networks.

As section 2.2 set out, work experience can help expand young people's horizons. Schools therefore need to find a way to balance pupils' interests and existing ideas about their careers with options that help them see beyond their immediate context. Contributors to this research suggested that networks and brokerage are key to this, a point discussed in specific detail in section 2.3.3, below. Brokerage between schools and employers can reduce reliance on teachers' individual networks, ensuring pupils have access to a wider range of opportunities. Better support for employers (in the form of background checks, and information and guidance) would enable more organisations to host work experience placements. This would help more pupils to access suitably stretching placements.

Work experience is likely to be effective when young people attend workplaces that are relevant to their career aspirations (while ensuring this is not dampening their ambitions about the future), and when placements are well planned so that they make use of the young person's skills and interests.<sup>119</sup> Schools can contribute to effective matching by arranging pre-visits and meetings, and involving young people in classroom research about employers. Schools can also undertake other careers-focused activities, such as careers carousels, inviting in external speakers, and mentoring.<sup>120</sup>

Employers can play their part by preparing the equivalent of a job specification for the young person so that their role and responsibilities are clear and by helping the young person to reflect on the skills they might develop through the placement.

<sup>117</sup> Rolfe, H. and Crowley, T. (2008) Work-related learning for an innovation nation: Engaging with employers to improve work-related learning opportunities for young people aged 14-19, London: NESTA. Available at: <http://niesr.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publications/NIESR-Nesta%20Work-relation%20Learning%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>118</sup> Buffeo and Cifci, 2017.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Millard et al., 2019.

## 2. Outline the benefits of hosting young people

Schools should ensure they keep administrative burdens on employers to a minimum although, as we suggest, there is also an important role here for government and third sector organisations here. Ofsted found that many employers were unwilling to work with schools due to the time and administrative burden involved.<sup>121</sup>



*Businesses are saying... their reluctance to take younger children is because they don't know what to do.*

**Dr Anne Bamford, Strategic Director for Education,  
Culture and Skills, the City of London Corporation**



According to Ofsted's research, employers were most likely to be involved when there was little or no cost, and when there was a clear 'business case' for supporting work experience.<sup>122</sup> For example, there is some evidence to suggest that employers may be more inclined to offer work experience if they understand both how the experience will support young people, and the school, but also if employers may benefit from:<sup>123, 124, 125</sup>

- Young people's perspective on their products or services;
- Heightening young people's awareness of their products and services;
- Insight into how products or services might need to change for future customers or markets, and;
- Opportunities to identify talented young people to take part in longer-term placements or employment in the future.

This was strongly emphasised by roundtable participants and interviewees who said schools should stress benefits of hosting work experience to employers.

## 3. Support opportunities for work experience throughout the academic year

The majority of work experience opportunities are offered to pupils aged 15 or 16 (in years 10 and 11), and pupils aged 16 to 18 (in years 12 and 13).<sup>126</sup> These placements are normally arranged as single blocks of time during the summer term, often after exams have finished in June and July,<sup>127</sup> something experts and practitioners contributing to this research also observed:



*Schools can avoid doing work experience because it's seen as difficult and it has a price tag attached. I think they're also quite inflexible about how they think about it and tend to view work experience as only being about a two week placement [for 15- and 16-year-olds].*

**Tristram Hooley, Professor of Career Education, University of Derby**



<sup>120</sup> Millard et al., 2019.

<sup>121</sup> Ofsted, 2016.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Workfinder and Cambridge Judge Business School (2017) Employer Survey on Work Experience, unpublished (data provided to LKMco by Founders4Schools).

<sup>124</sup> CIPD (2017) Employer-supported volunteering guide, London: CIPD. Available at: [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/employer-supported-volunteering-guide\\_tcm18-27612.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/employer-supported-volunteering-guide_tcm18-27612.pdf).

<sup>125</sup> Rolfe and Crowley, 2008. <sup>126</sup> NatCen Social Research and SQW, 2017. <sup>127</sup> Ibid.

Schools are more likely than colleges to run work experience in a single block.<sup>128</sup> This is partly due to the pressure of covering other curriculum content.<sup>129</sup> However, evidence suggests that a week or fortnight of work experience at the end of the summer term is less effective than models that spread work experience through the school year. Though timetabling presents considerable challenges for schools, flexibility around the timing of placements - moving away from two-week placements on fixed dates in the school year - helps employers<sup>130, 131</sup>. Furthermore, work experience conducted earlier in the year allows for repeated interactions with employers, which the literature suggests increases effectiveness in a number of domains (see point 6, below). Additionally, timing work experience shortly before the summer holiday removes the opportunity for pupils to reflect on their experiences and link them with learning in school on their return.<sup>132, 133</sup>

Whilst host organisations may also prefer to offer these opportunities in the summer months (June to September), existing survey data indicates that greater flexibility from schools would open up additional placement options.<sup>134, 135</sup>

Contributors to this research (and other research on this topic<sup>136</sup>) suggested schools could potentially increase opportunities for young people to experience work and the workplace by considering a mix of:

- School-based placements (working within school);
- Short-term work experience opportunities, lasting one or two weeks;
- Extended work experience placements, for example taking one afternoon a week across a term;
- Internships and holiday placements;
- Social action and volunteering opportunities, and;
- Part-time jobs



<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Kashefpakdel et al., 2018.

<sup>130</sup> BYC, 2018.

<sup>131</sup> Sims et al., 2013.

<sup>132</sup> Mann, 2012.

<sup>133</sup> Ofsted, 2016.

<sup>134</sup> Workfinder and Cambridge Judge Business School (2017).

<sup>135</sup> BYC, 2018.

<sup>136</sup> BYC, 2018.

## Case study: Revising the structure of work experience placements – Stirling High School

### Structure

Pupils at Stirling High School undertake work experience at the end of their fourth year, normally aged 16, during a two-week window after exams have finished, but before the summer begins. However, the school's deputy headteacher Alan Hamilton feels this model limits opportunities because:

- It reduces the number of businesses able to receive a pupil;
- More young people might want to go to a business than there are spaces, and;
- The week might clash with other schools' work experience weeks.

Currently, the school sends one group out one week, and the other group during a second week, to help mitigate some of these challenges, although Alan feels this is beneficial in terms of logistics, rather than for students' learning.

The school would like to move to a model where young people participate in work experience one day a week, aged 16 and 17, using one 'subject' as a time for going off site and gaining work experience. Alan feels this would need at least a two-hour chunk of time a week to make it worthwhile. Another alteration Alan would like to make is to make work experience selection align more closely with course choices. Alan says the points at which students select subjects could be a good point at which to identify industries in which they would like to gain work experience.

### Resources and infrastructure

The school uses 'Gateway', a database of work experience opportunities ([www.ceg.org.uk](http://www.ceg.org.uk)), though around half of students find their own options and Alan has noticed that pupils from more affluent backgrounds are more likely to find their own work experience opportunities:



*My issue is that students from more affluent backgrounds may have a better understanding of what they want to do, and those that don't have a wide family network are limited to...a database which has maybe been there for a while and has maybe not got a choice that ... they really wanted.*

Alan Hamilton, Depute Headteacher, Stirling High School



### Setting clear expectations

Alan says it has been important to set clear expectations about work experience for receiving businesses, such as:

- Outlining the skills a young person wants to develop, and;
- Identifying things the young person wants to learn about the business.



*[Businesses] ask [for more information] if we just go to them and say, 'Can you have this young person one day a week?'. That is too broad. They need a bit more structure of what you want and what we are looking for from them*

Alan Hamilton, Depute Headteacher, Stirling High School



### Getting meaningful feedback

Alan wants the feedback young people receive from the host organisation to be useful. While feedback can be hugely valuable, it is currently variable in quality, and sometimes non-existent. Alan said that it is most useful where it identifies specific actions or behaviours a young person demonstrated or developed, and could be given either verbally or in writing.

## Impact

Pupils felt that undertaking placements relating more closely to their areas of interest or possible future career pathways are more rewarding:

“ *I found mine really rewarding because that's the route I want to go in like for my job (conservation). For me it was just getting more experience in what I need to be good at, rather than picking a job that I had no idea about.*

Pupil, Stirling High School ”

Pupils also talked about work experience helping them to improve their career-relevant skills:

“ *I think like for me one of the biggest challenges was building my confidence to be able to talk to people who I'm not usually comfortable with. ...So it was good to like build my confidence to talk to different people that I've never met before.*

Pupil, Stirling High School ”

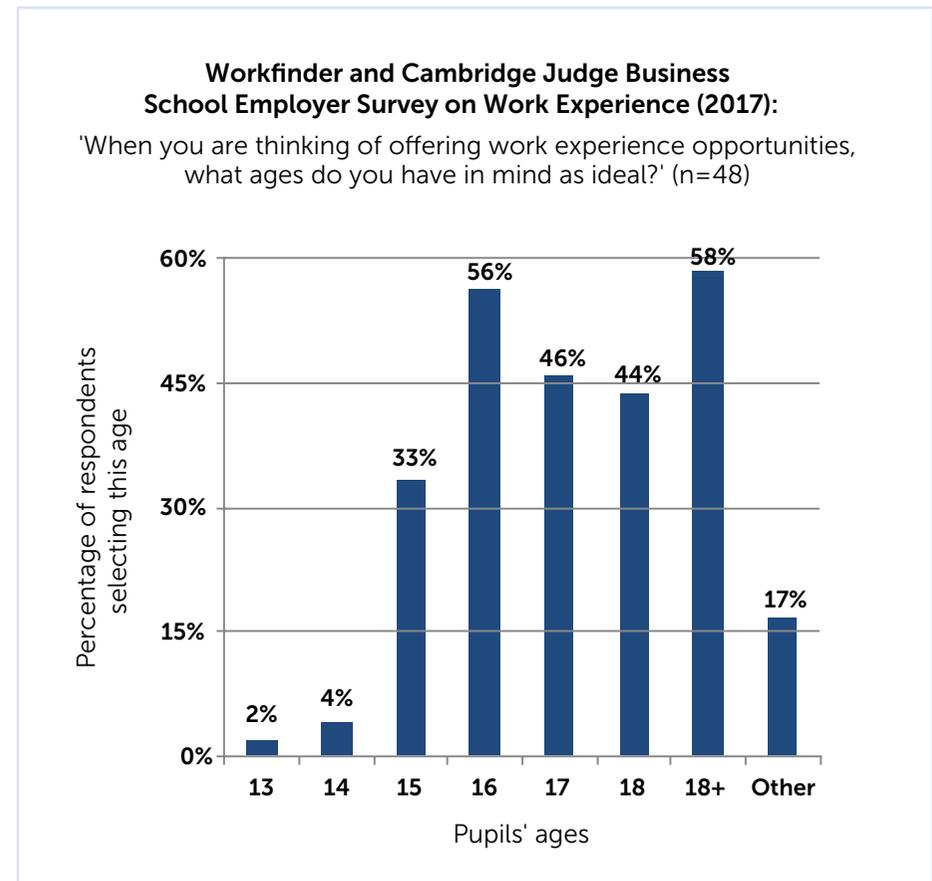
## 4. Increase post-16 students' access to work experience

As was outlined, above, opportunities for work experience tend to be more commonly available for pupils aged 14 to 16, than for pupils in post-16 study (although many post-16 students undertake work experience as part of programmes of study). However, even in post-16, work experience is often governed by schools' needs, rather than what evidence indicates is likely to support learning.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, as was described in section 2.2.2, above, evidence suggests that pupils over the age of 16 get more from

work experience than younger pupils.<sup>138</sup>

Organisations hosting young people tend to agree with this view and also prefer to host this age group.<sup>139</sup> A small-scale 2017 survey (n=48) conducted by Workfinder and Cambridge Judge Business School in 2017 corroborates this view (see below).

Roundtable participants said work experience placements could generate multiple benefits for young people younger than 16, but the education and business sectors should work together to ensure all young people aged between 16 and 19 participate in work experience.



<sup>137</sup> NatCen Social Research and SQW, 2017.

<sup>138</sup> Sims et al., 2013.

<sup>139</sup> Workfinder (2017) Experience Works: Our Opportunity to Inspire a Generation, London: Workfinder. Available at: [https://www.wearesevenhills.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Workfinder\\_Experience-Works.pdf?f2ca35](https://www.wearesevenhills.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Workfinder_Experience-Works.pdf?f2ca35).

## Structuring work placements as part of post-16 study – Access Creative College

Access Creative College is a Further Education provider with three thousand students at seven centres across the country, between London and York. Centres vary in size from 100 to 550 students. Mark Compton is Director of Employability, Partnerships & Adult Learning, and explained the College was involved in the DfE's T-levels work-placement pilot, which involved over twenty post-16 providers. Mark set out his vision for how work placements (whether part of T-levels, or otherwise) should be structured in order to support both employers and post-16 students.

### Structure

Placements can be structured as stand-alone, larger blocks of several weeks, or shorter blocks spread over time (including day-release). However, Mark said that what is important is that decisions about the structure of placements (especially in the arts and creative industries) take into account employers' needs:

*“Employers have different peaks and troughs in their business and working practices can be seasonal. For example, a festival organiser came to us and said, ‘I can offer opportunities, but it will be five days in the run-up to and including a festival and then I’ve got another five days in the run-up to and including delivery of another festival and I’d like to offer those opportunities to different people.’ Other providers said that they would prefer a day release and some said that they would like a block.*

Mark Compton, Director of Employability, Partnerships & Adult Learning, Access Creative College

One way of helping students access a range of work experience opportunities could be by arranging multiple placements. This mirrors working practices in the sector where freelance practitioners have portfolio careers.

### Content

Rather than explicitly linking placements to an area of study, Mark suggested schools, colleges and hosting organisations think more flexibly and emphasise the development of young people's transferable skills. This

would increase access to placements, allowing pupils to work in a wider range of settings (rather than somewhere directly linked to their area of study). Mark said that developing communication skills by working for a call centre, for example, could benefit the learner in their ambition to be a self-employed creative, as they will be better able to network and communicate effectively with clients. Schools, colleges and providers should work with the young person to identify the skills they could develop on the placement.

Flexibility of this kind, aimed at increasing the potential pool of host organisations, is crucial because many employers struggle to find capacity to support placements, particularly if they are SMEs or sole traders:

*“Some employers would say, ‘That’s going to take me away from the income generating part of my work – there’s only me and my colleague here’, or, ‘There’s only three of us here and we need to be focused on bringing in money for this business to survive and grow’.*

Mark Compton, Director of Employability, Partnerships & Adult Learning, Access Creative College

One potential way forward is helping employers see the benefits of working with young people, learning from them, and keeping their business 'cutting edge'. Mark suggested placements offer employers a chance to 'try before they buy':

*“The employer might get the benefit of insight into what young people listen to, what their interests are, new skill sets that they're developing, software applications they are using – certainly in the area of social media, young people have got a lot to offer employers. Just that breath of fresh air as much as anything else; insight into what a young person could offer their business before them taking the step of paying for an apprenticeship, which is a longer-term commitment.*

Mark Compton, Director of Employability, Partnerships & Adult Learning, Access Creative College

### **Mimicking self-employment**

Mark said there is little preparation during a young person's education for the life skills required for self-employment, although such experience could be invaluable for students entering sectors where self-employment is the norm (such as music). Mark suggested that shadowing a professional, or working with a mentor while building professional networks, could be valuable.

### **Support and network-building**

Mark set out two different ways his college had searched for placements. One method was more 'salesy', and involved trying to quickly secure relationships with a large number of employers. However, Mark felt the relationships he and his colleagues built more slowly with employers had a higher 'success rate', leading to more placements. Mark acknowledged, though, that building relationships in this way is time consuming and therefore costly.



## 5. Help pupils prepare for and debrief after work experience

'Matching' a young person with a work experience placement based on the young person's current skills and aspirations is an important success factor, as we outlined above. As such, schools that help young people prepare for work experience by providing repeated opportunities for students to clarify their career goals (through coaching, for example) increase the chances of the matching process being successful. While students are unlikely to have finalised their career choices by the age of 16, this kind of preparation can help young people find work experience that helps them crystallise ideas about careers in various sectors.<sup>140</sup> The case studies of Stirling High School and School 21's approaches to matching pupils to placements illustrate how schools and colleges can approach this.

Participants in our research explained how preparation for and debriefing after work experience could be undertaken during form time. Either way, schools need to adopt a coherent and deliberate approach:

“

*It's about preparation and follow up. If you've got a strong careers education and guidance programme throughout the school that integrates these things well then those activities should happen naturally. It's when they're bolted on ..., then you have to start creating loads of systems to make it work.*

Dr Siobhan Neary, Associate Professor and Head of  
iCeGS, the University of Derby

”

“

*[Pupils] will definitely learn something by going on work experience but would learn an awful lot more if [they] had spent time acquiring information about what the company does and how it works prior to [their placement], and spent time reflecting on it and talking about it with peers and educational professionals afterwards.*

Tristram Hooley, Professor of Career Education, University of Derby

”

Debriefing after work experience is also critical, because this gives pupils a chance to reflect on what they enjoyed more and less about a placement:

“

*Even if you had a terrible time, understanding why you didn't like it, what the employer did that was rubbish, and therefore what you need to look for in a good employer in the future [is valuable]. Even the worst experience is a learning opportunity*

Chris Percy, Strategy and Research Contractor, the  
Careers and Enterprise Company

”

“

*The last and most crucial bit of it is the debrief, and too often, that's missed out in schools. ...That opportunity to debrief and share [learning], that's the richest part.*

David Andrews, Careers Education and Guidance Consultant

”

Thorough preparation for and debriefing after work experience can also help teachers ensure young people's experiences in school and on work experience dovetail. For example, one roundtable participant said that young people were sometimes frustrated when they went from being treated like an adult on a work experience placement, to being treated like a pupil again on return to school:

“

*One of the dangers is there's a real inconsistency in experience for a young person who goes and spends two weeks in a fantastic corporate, where they're treated as an adult..., and then they go back into the classroom and they're a 16-year-old (again).*

Joanna Cruse, Independent Education Consultant

”

<sup>140</sup> Buffeo and Cifci, 2017.

Participants in our research, including case study schools, suggested the following ways to help pupils prepare for work experience:

- One-on-one mentoring or coaching sessions between the young person and their teacher (or an external careers coach), identifying the roles and sectors the young person would like to explore through work experience, and the skills they would like to develop;
- Pupils 'applying' for work experience placements by writing a letter and/or CV, and possibly interviewing with teachers internally (or, if capacity permits, with the employer). This can be beneficial because it requires the pupil to research the organisation and set out their goals. In one school we visited where pupils apply for work experience in this way, teachers explained that this made placements more prestigious:



*At the beginning I was struggling a little bit, because it was quite hard to get a place because a lot of people were trying to apply for probably the same firm and same job role. But at the end, I got a placement at an estate agency and I managed to keep working with them for a whole summer, and I still do work for them during half terms and holidays.*

Pupil, AIBEAT



- Visiting the work experience setting in advance, and meeting representatives from the hosting organisation. This can be especially beneficial for pupils with additional needs or lower confidence.
- Pupils conducting desk research before embarking on their placements, including on dedicated careers websites, researching the roles and sector they are interested in.
- Pupils undertaking peer mentoring, or group mentoring sessions during form time or in PSHE lessons, giving them the opportunity to reflect on the sorts of work experience they would find useful.

After work experience has taken place, participants suggested pupils could debrief by:

- Reflecting with an adult coach or mentor (including a teacher), or with peers, on the experience, identifying what went well, areas in which they developed new or existing skills, what they learnt about the role and/or sector, and ways in which the experience could have been improved (both through their own actions and the employer's). This process of reflection could be performed verbally and/or in writing.
- Presenting to teachers, parents, other external visitors, and/or to peers about their experience.

## 6. Support repeated interactions with employers

As noted earlier, work experience appears to work best as part of a series of work-related learning opportunities. 19- to 24-year-olds were more likely to feel that work experience had prepared them well for the world of work when they had taken part in multiple careers education opportunities, including work experience.<sup>141</sup> The proportion that felt work experience had prepared them well increased in line with the number of times they had taken part in work-related learning.<sup>142, 143</sup> Repeated interactions throughout schooling, and throughout the school year mean young people have more opportunity to reflect on the learning that took place on the work experience.

Repeated interactions with employers also mean that each placement need not provide all the possible benefits of work experience on their own. Instead, benefits can accrue cumulatively over the course of multiple opportunities.

<sup>141</sup> Mann et al., 2016.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Sims et al., 2013.

## 7. Support host employers and businesses

Schools and brokers have an important role to play in supporting host organisations. This is crucially important, since many employers are put off from offering work experience because of factors including:<sup>144</sup>

- Burdens on employees' and the organisation's time, including the administration of the placements.
- The nature of the work the organisation undertakes (possibly involving confidential or sensitive work with clients or customers).
- The legal and pastoral responsibility associated with taking on young people.

Contributors to our research suggested schools could help mitigate some of these factors by providing information about:

- The young person including any specific learning, physical or emotional needs, and his or her learning objectives.
- The young person's objectives for the placement specifically, and more broadly in school and life;
- How to deal with unforeseen situations, such as the young person arriving late, being absent, or not completing work within the allotted time.
- Legal, administrative and other bureaucratic obligations including health and safety.
- Communicating and working with young people.

“

*We should remember that for a lot of people in their workplace, they've forgotten how to communicate with young people other than maybe in their own families, and actually giving them some tips on how to connect with young people might really help [them ensure work experience is useful for the host organisation and young person].*

**Mary Curnock Cook OBE, Independent Educationalist**

”

One suggestion proffered during a roundtable was for schools to work with host organisations on a quid pro quo basis, offering organisations space rent-free or cheaply in return for providing work experience opportunities to pupils:

“

*On our doorstep we had a whole lot of micro-IT companies and new tech companies who were really struggling with their cash flow, who were paying rent for micro-spaces in the city that they couldn't afford. Why not bring them in the schools on an exchange: free rent, but they have to do some work around careers?*

**Dr Anne Bamford, Strategic Director for Education, Culture and Skills, the City of London Corporation**

”

Another advantage for employers of offering work experience is in securing a talent pool for the future. Employees of Stirling Council emphasised how organisations in Stirling have embraced work experience for this reason:

“

*What employers and particularly those in the digital industry are telling us is that, by the time a young person goes to university and studies for three or four years to obtain their degree, their knowledge base may be out-dated because technology has already moved on, even within that period of study. They (the employer) would rather employ someone and basically train them in a bespoke fashion so that they are familiar with products and processes and are therefore more effective within their particular sector.*

**Morag McLoughlan, Service Manager For Schools, Learning and Education at Stirling Council**

”

<sup>144</sup> Workfinder and Cambridge Judge Business School, 2017.

## 8. Support work experience opportunities within school and with suppliers

Some schools partner with other schools to offer pupils access to work experience opportunities as is the case at St. Mary's School (see below). This can give young people a valuable insight into working in education, and could therefore even help address future teacher shortages.

One interviewee suggested that schools could also extend access to work experience opportunities by partnering with their suppliers (covering a range of functions including financial services, IT support, procurement, and human resource).

### Offering work experience to pupils – St Mary's RC Primary School, Stirling

St Mary's RC Primary School in Stirling partners with local secondary schools, to offer work experience in the classroom to pupils aged 14 and 15. Thomas Joyce, the school's depute headteacher, explained that secondary pupils attend the placements once a week. The length of the placements is agreed with the secondary school, but can last up to a term. Thomas explained that the benefits of this include giving secondary pupils direct experience of working in a classroom setting 'as an adult', and helping the young people make informed decisions about whether to pursue a career in teaching.

## 9. Monitor and evaluate the quality of work experience

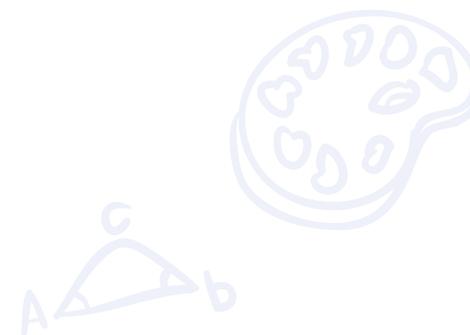
Most schools do not attempt to assess the quality of the work experience that their pupils undertake (Ofsted, 2016). Furthermore, there is a lack of research into the 'opportunity costs' of work experience. In other words, headteachers are often uncertain about whether pupils' time is best spent in the classroom or in work experience, especially among pupils aged 14 to 16.<sup>145</sup> This concern may often be warranted, with young people saying their work experience opportunities can be very variable in value, despite the fact that it has a knock on impact on time spent learning in lessons.<sup>146, 147</sup>

Schools and organisations that facilitate work experience should therefore work together to develop simple tools for evaluating work experience. This could include collecting experiences into a careers passport, student diaries, or surveys and questionnaires, or the use of validated metrics for measuring pupils careers-relevant skills development.<sup>148</sup>

Support and resources currently exist to help schools and employers provide high quality work experience opportunities, such as the Industrial Cadets (see the Example Innovation box, below). Examples of ways schools could monitor the impact of work experience highlighted by research participants included written surveys exploring pupils' responses to their placements, or, at a more advanced level, pupils' debriefing by giving presentations about what they learnt whilst on placement.

## 10. Identify and address inequalities in access to work experience

Building on improvements to monitoring and evaluation set out above, schools, further and higher education settings, and careers education providers should review the opportunities they provide to young people from different demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>149</sup> Identifying patterns in access to particular types of work experience (by sector and/or quality) would allow these settings to reduce social inequalities in access by diversifying and carefully targeting the placements they offer to different learners.



<sup>145</sup> Ofsted, 2016.

<sup>146</sup> Youth Employment UK, 2018.

<sup>147</sup> EY, 2017.

<sup>148</sup> A range of examples are offered in Gutman, L. M. and Schoon, I. (2013) The impact of non-cognitive skills on outcomes for young people: Literature review, London: Education Endowment Foundation, Cabinet Office and UCL IOE. Available at: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f4a5/2db3001fb6fb22eef5dc20267b5b807fd8ff.pdf>.

<sup>149</sup> Moote and Archer, 2018.

## Experiencing the world of work – XP School, Doncaster

XP School runs a series of work shadowing placements for all its pupils aged 14 to 16 (in years 10 and 11). These are organised through the Doncaster Chamber of Commerce. Placements last two or three days and take place throughout the year so pupils can reflect on their experiences in school. The school's CEO argues that this structure offers learning and logistical benefits:

*“ We do work shadowing, so rather than two weeks, which sometimes can lack purpose, because the organisations have so much energy that they can give, maybe two weeks is too long.*

**Gwyn ap Harri, XP CEO**

Pupils help set up their placements, creating CVs and interviewing for placements:

*“ The Doncaster Chamber people came in and you have one-to-one meetings with them and they organised where you'd want to go and the possibilities, and then you have to ring up individually and talk to them about it and see if they would actually take you for work experience.*

**Pupil, XP School**

In general, pupils were positive about the work shadowing experiences they had taken part in. One pupil described meeting the challenge of “being in a different place and not knowing people who you are talking to, but [getting] used to it”. Another pupil spoke about the benefits of finding out about different roles within an organisation:

*“ I went to Wabtec Rail. It was really good because we went for two days and we got to see all the way from the actual working shop floor, with trains, all through to the design lab with CAD, and up to management. So we got to see all the different levels... It's something that really interests me and just speaking to someone who's been there and done it, they know what really works for them and they passed it on to us*

**Pupil, XP School**

Pupils understood the rationale behind shorter placements, perceiving two-week placements as more of “an internship” with time spent “sitting around” being “more of an assistant”. However, pupils also felt that they would benefit from longer placements. One pupil mentioned that they had spent the first day of a two-day placement being inducted, which they felt was time wasted:

*“ So, for example, I sat there for about an hour, looking at a tablet, about all the permits that they've been given and all of that, whilst he was answering emails*

**Pupil, XP School**

Another pupil felt that the two-day placement was “a little bit rushed”. This pupil felt that it would have been useful to spend time with the employer at the end of the placement reviewing the experience:

*“ I felt that it needed to be a bit more of a time to sit down and actually discuss it and review the placement... We were meant to have our employer fill out a form in [the] booklet but because it was only those two days, and you were working right from the moment you go there, right to the moment you left, there was no time for it. So I feel like, if it was maybe a little bit more relaxed, there would have been the opportunity there to have further discussions in terms ... how you get there and learning personal stories*

**Pupil, XP School**

## Real World Learning Projects – School 21, Newham

School 21 believes work experience should be meaningful, challenging and authentic. Pupils aged 14 and 15 (year 10) and 16 to 18 (in years 12 and 13) undertake work placements, each lasting between 10 and 16 weeks, with students spending one afternoon a week working on a project for an employer. Initial placements run between September and February, and the second between February and June.

While on the placement, pupils work in small groups of between two and four on an enquiry-led project where they solve problems with or for an employer. This approach has several benefits, meaning pupils work on issues that genuinely reflect challenges the employer faces, learn about workplace behaviours and norms, and in turn are treated like employees rather than pupils. One pupil commented in the focus group:

*I feel like, when I went on my placement, I was treated like a colleague rather than a student. The fact that I was a student didn't really limit them from giving me tasks that others that worked there would also be doing, which I think is a benefit because you're given the full experience of being that in workplace. Whereas if you're treated as a student, it can be very limiting.*

Pupil, School 21

As with careers education more generally, the programme leader oversees real world learning and employer engagement sessions at School 21. The partnerships team builds relationships with employers and organisations, and supports communication while pupils are on their placements.

Staff at School 21 encourage pupils to take on challenging, high-profile work placements, for example at the Ministry of Justice and the Metropolitan Police. Work placements are intended to broaden pupils' experiences and opportunities. Therefore, pupils will not always be given a placement that reflects their favourite subject. Pupils occasionally find their own placements, if they have a specific interest or relationship with an employer.

Rather than being given a place at a specific organisation, pupils have to write an application letter where they outline their preferences. This is then read by staff at the school which, mimicking the real-world labour market,

means there is an element of competition to attain a work placement:

*As many as possible can apply for [a] work placement, but only a few can be selected. It kind of pushes you to take it more seriously, because you understand that you are up against your schoolmates.... So, you kind of have to like fight and be serious about it.*

Pupil, School 21

As with careers education more generally, the school make reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND to take part in real world learning, such as ensuring they attend the placement with a mentor. Every student completes at least one work placement.

Pupils we spoke to were particularly grateful for the real world learning opportunities at School 21. Indeed, students aged 16 and 17 (in year 12) who had attended another secondary school before joining School 21's sixth form compared the school's approach favourably compared to work experience opportunities in their former school. Whilst the school does not objectively assess the impact of real world learning, pupils' responses and attitudes suggest the programme is working well. There is work underway to put evaluation measures in place.

Supporting the placements is intensive and time consuming, and staff at School 21 work hard to overcome practical challenges. For example, Hannah Barnett, the school's Programme Lead for Real World Learning, attends events and publicly promotes work-related learning in order to build a network of employers who can offer work placements. Without this work, she feels the school would struggle to find partners. Networking will therefore become more important as the school expands and more placements are required. This makes a dedicated person crucial in her view.

School 21 also take steps to ensure that pupils are safe and fulfilled during work placements. The partnerships team:

- Conduct risk assessments on each of the work placements;
- Visit pupils on their work placements, and;
- Run training sessions with employers – many of whom have not worked with young people before – so that they know what is expected of them, how they can support pupils, and set appropriately challenging tasks and projects.

### Case study: Experiencing the workplace during primary schooling – Torriano Primary School, Camden

Pupils in older year groups at Torriano School have numerous opportunities to visit workplaces. For example, pupils aged 9 and 10 (in year 5) visited KPMG and worked with employees there to develop pitches for the pupils' own businesses. Meanwhile, 30 pupils went to visit an office in Kings Cross through a Founders4Schools connection.

Securing work experience for younger pupils is more challenging, as is finding workplaces that have sufficient staff to welcome large numbers of pupils.

“ *Most places will only take a small group and we're a two form entry, so it's 60 children in each year group.* ”

School leader, Torriano School ”

The school has therefore tended to prioritise disadvantaged pupils' access to out-of-school opportunities.

Headteacher Helen Bruckdorfer explained that Torriano is currently working to create more work experience opportunities through the 'Kids in Museums' programme in collaboration with the Canal and Foundling museums. However, working with museums has been difficult, partly because there is no central point of contact. The school suggested that help building these connections from Founders4Schools would be valuable.

Employers' tendency to underestimate younger pupils' readiness for work experience also acts as a barrier in providing work placements or experiences. Some of the pupils we spoke to highlighted some employers' tendency to underestimate or patronise them:

“ *They can be quite down talking to somebody because they think that, 'oh, they're children, we can speak to them as if they're not on the same level as us'.* ”

Pupil, Torriano School ”

Staff at Torriano believe workplace visits will be more meaningful for children if they have a meaningful role whilst there. For example, as part of the planned museum work, pupils will act as tour guides.

Torriano's approach to work experience does not only involve out of school activity; in-school work experience opportunities are also provided, even for the youngest pupils, including running the school's sustainable kitchen, meeting chefs (who come into the school to work with the children), and selling the food they make.

Torriano also runs a job-shadowing programme, whereby pupils gain direct experience of different staff roles within the school, including teachers, kitchen staff, and even the headteacher. Pupils apply for these roles, setting out objectives, and discussing the tools and resources they will need, as well as the competencies they will bring to the role. The School Council reviews the applications, and if too many pupils apply for one job, children are sometimes expected to work with a group and come up with a way of working on the role together as a team.

Staff at Torriano argue that it is hard to objectively judge the impact of careers education and work experience *“because there's nothing actually out there for us to be able to measure it with, at the moment, for primary”*. However, as one teacher explained, *“the children are motivated and inspired by it... they develop considerable knowledge and awareness of the world around them and this connection between... academic success... not just success, but engagement to employability, from a young age”*.

### 2.3.2 Recommendations for employers

Employers and businesses offering work experience can support its effectiveness in seven broad ways:

1. Publicise the benefits of hosting work experience placements;
2. Set up meaningful experiences for young people;
3. Make work experience authentic;
4. Increase efficiency;
5. Provide feedback to young people;
6. Ensure opportunities are available to all young people, and;
7. Monitor the cost of placements

#### 1. Publicise the benefits of hosting work experience placements.

Employers often do not realise how hosting work experience can benefit them and their employees. Organisations hosting work experience, and organisations supporting employers such as the CBI, should talk publicly about the benefits of doing so.

Hosting work experience means employers can benefit from young people's perspectives and insights on their products or services, developing their employees' skills sets, and establishing a talent pipeline.<sup>150, 151</sup>

At our roundtable, several employers talked about how hosting work experience placements has been hugely beneficial for their organisations and employees (see below).

#### 2. Set up meaningful experiences for young people

Many young people undertake activities while on work experience that they feel lack meaning and substance, including administrative tasks.<sup>152</sup> Contributors to our research stressed that undertaking administrative tasks could be useful for young people, as long as the learning from such tasks is made explicit, and these

form part of a wider range of tasks and activities they undertake. Businesses and employers should therefore offer young people a range of experiences as part of work experience placements. This might include getting young people to work on dedicated projects (see below)

Contributors to our roundtables and case studies also talked about the importance of young people witnessing a range of different business functions, involving job shadowing in different areas of the organisation or asking a range of employees about their job roles and the sector:

“ *They [need to] understand how a business hangs together and they understand business functions. So, they understand how marketing connects with sales and it connects with operations and how the boring accountant is actually fundamentally important to how a company runs.*

Jessica Butcher, Co-Founder and Director, Blippar ”

Alongside helping young people understand how organisations work and fit together, rotating between departments or business functions can also help expose them to a more diverse range of people:

“ *We do rotate work experience candidates through the business to give them exposure to different types of people and different roles, so that they can see the range of careers at a bank and the diversity of our employee population.*

Lauren von Stackelberg,  
Head of Female Client Strategy, J. P. Morgan ”

This approach also has benefits for staff, who learn and develop skills through teaching and mentoring young people. Some research participants stressed that work experience programmes form an integral part of the career development opportunities available to their employees.

<sup>150</sup> Workfinder and Cambridge Judge Business School Employer Survey on Work Experience, 2017.

<sup>151</sup> CIPD, 2017.

<sup>152</sup> EY, 2017.

### Seeing different business areas – Ted’s Extraordinary Diplomas

Jessica Edwards, a Graduate Apprentice at Ted Baker, talked at our roundtable about Ted’s Extraordinary Diploma, a scheme that rotates young people around the business for a year, so they can experience different departments. Applicants can be graduates or school leavers and Jessica explained that rotating between departments has provided her with invaluable experience:

“ I understand how the business actually works as a whole and the importance of relationships between one department and another. ... You get to see the design side, production, wholesale and everything. There is a lot going on in Ted that you probably wouldn’t realise if I had gone straight in with a job.

Jessica Edwards, Graduate Apprentice, Ted Baker ”

The Diploma placements were advertised, and Jessica was one of six successful applicants from 600. The application process was rigorous, involving more traditional activities such as an interview, and less traditional activities such as writing a Tweet “to capture [the company’s] attention and say why they would want us there.”

The placements are paid positions, and Jessica said that organisations would stand to benefit from introducing similar schemes:

“ Just be willing to take on people. ...[There’s] so much talent and potential coming out of uni. I know Ted’s is a very special scheme and it’s something that not every company can do. But even if [companies] just take little bits from it ... I think it would be really beneficial. It would appeal to younger kids as well; if they know that they’re going to get these opportunities, people would be more willing to look into work experience or invest in their career path a little bit more.

Jessica Edwards, Graduate Apprentice, Ted Baker ”

### 3. Make work experience authentic

Making work experience meaningful hinges on what young people do while on their placement. Roundtable participants stressed that working on a specific project could support this, and that it does not matter whether these projects are ‘real’ (feeding into current work the organisation is conducting) or ‘made up’ (authentically simulating something the organisation would normally deal with).

Such projects can help young people develop greater understanding while also honing and extending work-relevant skills:

“ How do you work as part of a team, how do you communicate clearly, how do you network effectively, how do you get comfortable talking to a range of people you’ve never met before at all levels of seniority? I think a good work experience placement can help to develop all those softer skills. So it shouldn’t be just doing the photocopying. Rather, it’s doing something purposeful that delivers against clear objectives.

Dr Helen A. Brown, Business Leaders Advisory Council, Founders4School ”

Several roundtable participants ran businesses that offer work experience. They suggested that ideal projects lay at the “intersection of what the company’s doing and what young people are doing.”



### Accreditation, networks and employer support – Industrial Cadets

Industrial Cadets (overseen by the Engineering Development Trust charity) offers employers, schools and young people with guidance and support, and seeks to enhance the quality of workplace learning and boost the talent pipeline for UK industry ([www.industrialcadets.org.uk](http://www.industrialcadets.org.uk)).

Employers participating in the programme commit to offering young people a structured programme of activities including site visits, mentoring, presentations, hands-on team tasks, and workshops. Industrial Cadets helps employers design new programmes, and get these – or existing programmes – accredited.

Industrial Cadets says that young people aged 9 to 21 can participate in the programme, and benefit from gaining insights into different career pathways in UK industry, and from developing career-relevant knowledge and skills. Graduates also join the Industrial Cadets network, an online portal containing careers information and tips, and apprenticeship and graduate opportunities, and the opportunity to network with employers accredited by Industrial Cadets.

### 'Real-life' experiences of business problems – The Ted Baker Challenge

Peter McDonough, Historian-in-Residence at Ted Baker, spoke to participants at our roundtable about a programme he has developed called 'The Ted Baker Challenge'. This gives groups of young people aged 13 to 15 the opportunity to work in teams on real-world business problems related to questions facing Ted Baker. The week-long project involves tasks including designing a new clothing collection, choosing a suitable location for a new store, creating a social media campaign, and costing the ideas. It culminates in the teams presenting to a panel of judges from Ted Baker and other local organisations (including Camden Council). Members of the winning teams were selected to host the Camden Business Pledge launch at the Francis Crick Institute.

The young people went through an induction with some of Ted Baker's employees, including directors. Peter said participants "were knackered at the beginning", as a lot was demanded of them in terms of the problems they were given to solve.

The Ted Baker Challenge stemmed from Peter's work with 'Urban Partners', a consortium of around 70 businesses in the Euston and Kings Cross area of London that seeks to help businesses undertake work of benefit to the local area ([www.urbanpartners.london](http://www.urbanpartners.london)). When it came to offering work experience to school pupils, Peter found that many businesses were "resistant to doing anything with any young people." Urban Partners and Ted Baker established the challenge, in the hope it would encourage other local organisations to "step up and do something similar." Peter said this was proving successful, with Eurostar among the organisations to begin designing a similar programme.

#### 4. Increase efficiency

Roundtable participants reported that sometimes sending pupils out in groups could help schools host organisations provide placements more efficiently, whilst also increasing impact on young people. They argued that this approach could:

- Allow multiple young people to participate whilst only marginally increasing the administrative and organisational requirements for schools and hosting organisations.
- Increase access to placements, enabling more young people to participate. One roundtable participant explained that his organisation requires all male pupils offered work experience to bring a female peer along with them, increasing female pupils' access to STEM work experience opportunities.
- Enable young people to work together on meaningful projects (see above), building their understanding of the role and workplace, while also developing their personal, social and emotional skills including teamwork and communication.
- Reduce the level of supervision required by the hosting organisation, as young people could work together on projects rather than needing the full attention of an employee.

This approach could facilitate a move away from the week-long model of work experience in the summer term, as pupils could attend in groups throughout the week, and throughout the year.

One way in which roundtable participants suggested businesses could secure efficiencies is through multiple organisations working together to provide opportunities (as is the case with the Cambridge LaunchPad and RSA Academies, below). Other suggestions included using technology or 'outsourcing' work experience.

#### Using technology to experience the workplace – Barclays LifeSkills Pod

Roundtable participants highlighted the Barclays LifeSkills Work Experience Pod, a virtual reality pod that enables individual pupils to complete short (10- to 20-minute) exercises that mimic real-life work experience. These tasks involve problem solving and deciding how best to communicate.



Chris Percy, Strategy and Research Contractor at the Careers and Enterprise Company, said that the pod (which is currently a prototype) would not replace work experience, but could enable more young people to experience "some bits" of work experience:

“ *If there are types of work experience that we think children aged twelve and thirteen should do but it's really hard to get the employers to do that type of thing or to get it to all the young people who might want it, can we attack that constraint with tech?* ”

**Chris Percy, Strategy and Research Contractor, the Careers and Enterprise Company**

Other participants said resources available through Barclays LifeSkills ([www.barclayslifeskills.com](http://www.barclayslifeskills.com)) such as opportunities to practise interviewing, were useful for young people preparing for work experience placements.

## Supporting collaboration between schools and STEM industry – Cambridge Launchpad

Cambridge LaunchPad was described as a successful collaboration between STEM organisations and schools by roundtable participants. The initiative is based in the Greater Cambridge region and seeks to inspire young people aged 8 to 17 to pursue STEM careers ([www.cambridge-launchpad.com](http://www.cambridge-launchpad.com)).

Cambridge LaunchPad is a three-tiered scheme, structured around pupils' ages:

- **Stars:** This tier is for students aged 8 to 11 years of age, who attend Project Days and take part in hands-on activities relating to STEM, all hosted by LaunchPad's industry partners. The programme seeks to develop children's understanding of STEM career pathways, while also helping them develop 'Cambridge LaunchPad Core Skills' including problem solving, teamwork and communication.
- **Innovators:** This tier is for young people aged 11 to 15, and encourages participants to apply what they have learnt in the classroom to real-world settings. Students apply for industry partners' Project Days by submitting a STEM-focused presentation, and work with pupils from other schools if successful.
- **Scholars:** Students aged 16 and 17 apply knowledge and skills accumulated in the classroom to problems in 'real-world' settings, with pupils from other schools and colleges. Participants meet different STEM professionals, learn about STEM-focused career pathways, and also develop career-relevant skills.

The tiers are not based on academic ability, but on the 'Cambridge LaunchPad Core Skills' including communication, teamwork and problem solving. Young people and teams who demonstrate these skills during project days receive invitations to an awards ceremony and rewards trip.

The Cambridge LaunchPad says employers benefit from supporting their local communities, while also providing their employees with opportunities to develop their own project management, leadership and communication skills.

## 5. Provide feedback to young people

Organisations that host young people for work experience have a unique opportunity to observe and support young people working in varied and unfamiliar circumstances, often outside the young person's comfort zone.

Pupils and teachers in case study schools said organisations hosting work experience should provide some form of feedback to young people. Importantly, the burden of doing so should be kept to a minimum with feedback covering:

- The young person's experience of the placement, including what they enjoy, how they have developed in terms of their personal, social and emotional skills, what they have learnt about the role or sector, and how they would have improved the experience.
- The organisation's experience. This should cover the organisation's perceptions of the young person's skills and attributes, and how these might have developed during the placement.
- Feedback from the hosting organisation on any specific tasks undertaken by the young person (such as projects the young person undertook, or support they provided).

The feedback itself could take a variety of forms such as:

- An in-person debrief between the young person and work experience coordinator at the host organisation. While a longer feedback session lasting between 30 minutes and an hour will likely allow the organisation to provide detailed feedback, even a 5- to 15-minute conversation with the young person will be valuable for them (and the employer).
- 360 feedback from different people the young person met while on the placement. To keep the administrative burden on the host organisation to a minimum, this could be one or two sentences from different people the young person met. Host organisations' ability to provide this information will depend on the number of employees young people met, and the number of young people hosted simultaneously (the more people that are involved, the harder this will be to arrange).
- The young person presenting on what they learnt to the receiving organisation and/or teachers, and then discussing this presentation with the adults afterwards, or;
- Completing a journal or diary of the young person's experiences.

## 6. Ensure opportunities are available to all young people

Because young people and families' ability to arrange their own work experience placements can rely on their own networks (as noted in earlier sections), employers should ensure opportunities for work experience are available to young people from all backgrounds.

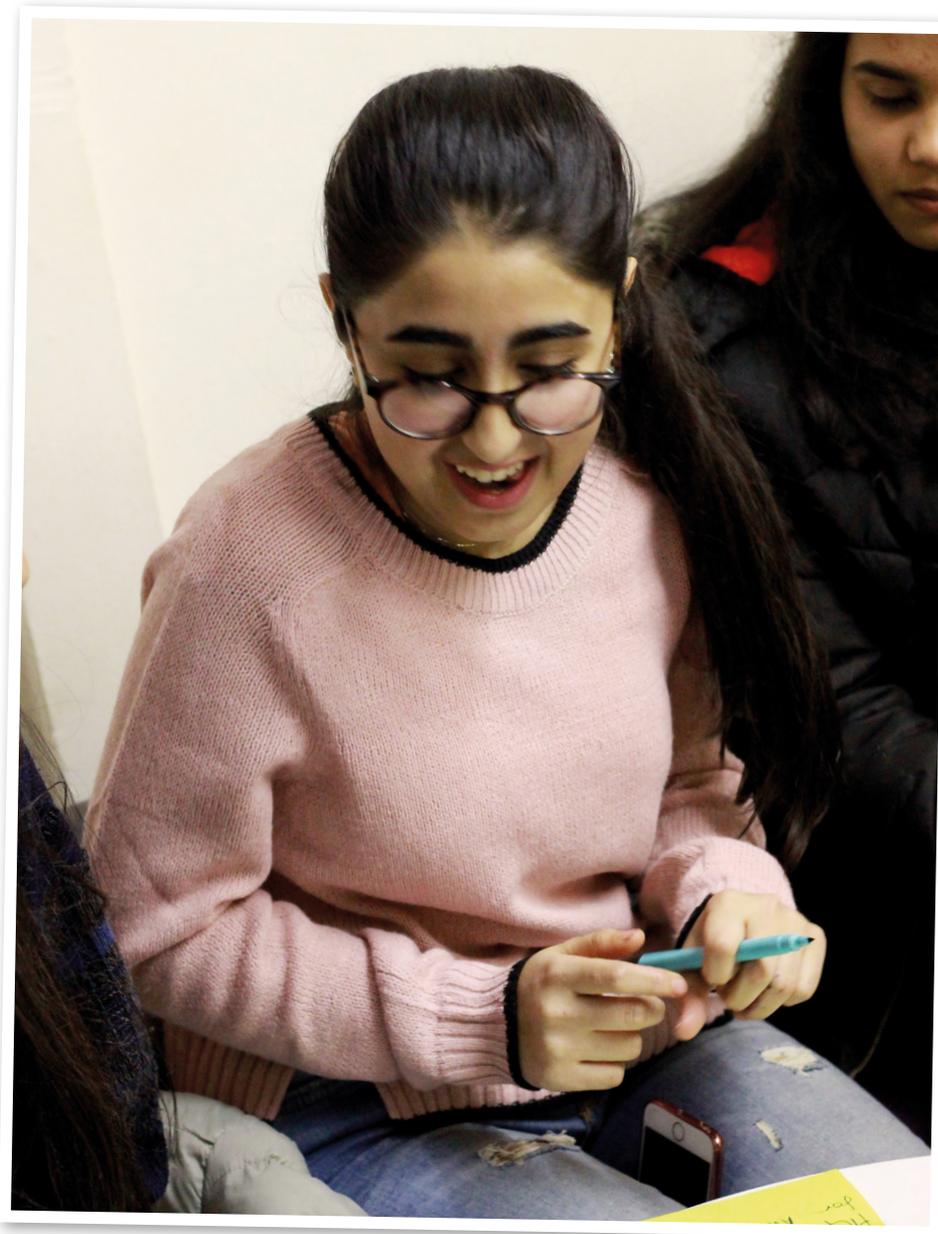
## 7. Monitor the cost of placements

Roundtable participants highlighted the need for employers hosting work experience placements to review the cost of placements per young person. For example, Peter McDonough, Historian in Residence at Ted Baker, explained that the cost of interventions such as the Ted Baker Challenge (see the Example Innovation box, above) is "not inconsiderable". However, "people give their time willingly and the business is hugely supportive of it" because the cost is deemed acceptable when compared to the benefits for the young people and business. Understanding the cost implications, particularly in terms of employees' time, is important so the business can make informed decisions about future programme delivery.

### Simulating authentic work experiences – KidZania

Roundtable participants highlighted KidZania, an activity centre at Westfield Shopping Centre that allows children and young people aged between 4 and 14 to experience 'real-life' jobs ([www.kidzania.co.uk](http://www.kidzania.co.uk)).

Activities allow participants to get a sense of what it is like to be a doctor, window cleaner, police officer, actor and cricketer (among other occupations). Participants argued these experiences might be useful for introducing children to careers and occupations they might not have otherwise thought of. However, as one participant put it, "where's the algorithm department? Where's the rocket scientist department?", making the point that it is challenging to provide children and young people with experiences that reflect the myriad possible future career pathways they might pursue.



### 2.3.3 Recommendations for governments, funders and third sector organisations

Our research revealed two key ways in which governmental bodies, funders and other third sector organisations can support quality work experience

1. Ensure a wider range of sectors provide work experience
2. Broker relationships.

#### 1. Ensure a wider range of sectors provide work experience

As noted earlier, some sectors (such as engineering, manufacturing, creative and media, public services, law and education) offer fewer work experience placements.<sup>153</sup> Research participants also noted that some industries (for example, technology and fashion) are more popular than others (such as insurance), but felt that young people needed opportunities to experience working in a range of sectors and organisations.

Government could support this by making sure organisations applying for government contracts offer work experience placements.

#### 2. Broker relationships

Contributors to this research argued that brokerage organisations including local government and other, dedicated organisations have an important role to play in initiating and supporting partnerships:

“

*It shouldn't ever just be a question of saying, 'Well we'll hand you over to an employer, that's it.' There should be a teacher or some kind of brokerage organisation involved who helps to put the whole thing together, but also thinks about the learning aspect of it.*

Tristram Hooley, Professor of Career Education,  
University of Derby

”

Furthermore, schools do not always 'market' and discuss the benefits of work experience in a constructive way with employers, and brokerage forums and organisations can support with this:

“

*Schools often find it difficult to understand the needs of businesses and too often go cap-in-hand to employers, rather than saying: 'We would like to give you the opportunity to work with your local school and we have considered the possible benefits for you'. They tend not to use that language of partnership about the mutual benefits.*

Gerard Liston, Director, Forum Talent Potential CIC

”

'In person' brokerage, though, is time consuming and costly, and contributors to this research – including schools – felt that digital platforms brokering work experience opportunities between young people and employers could be augmented to provide administrative and background checks, removing this burden from schools and employers and, in turn, increasing engagement (particularly among employers). Contributors to this research suggested that teachers, schools and employers can lack awareness about the availability of brokerage platforms (such as WorkFinder<sup>154</sup>), and that organisations (including government) should work together to signpost this support that is already available to young people, careers leaders and classroom teachers.

Digital brokerage platforms could also be strengthened by linking young people with placements of differing lengths, and by providing employers hosting work experience with access to guidance and resources enabling them to support efficient and meaningful placements.

<sup>153</sup> NatCen Social Research and SQW, 2017.

<sup>154</sup> <https://www.workfinder.com/>

### Building relationships with employers – RSA Academies

Arvind Batra, Careers Coordinator at RSA Academies, highlighted the programme 'Opening Doors to Business' in Redditch, the local authority in which four of the RSA's schools are based.

Launched in January 2018, the initiative encourages businesses across the Redditch authority to 'open their doors' and receive pupils aged 11 to 16 from local schools. Arvind explained that a wide range of businesses have participated, from aerospace and creative arts industries. During their visits, pupils take part in career related activities such as speed networking with employees, hands-on projects, and presentations from the CEO. More information about the programme is available in an online brochure: [http://pub.lucidpress.com/openingdoors/#gelXV3\\_f\\_S3S](http://pub.lucidpress.com/openingdoors/#gelXV3_f_S3S)



### Work experience support and brokerage – Stirling Council

Schools in Stirling have access to a range of support and brokerage services.

#### Work experience portals and brokerage

Stirling Council commissions a brokerage organisation called WorkIT ([www.workit.info](http://www.workit.info)) to help connect young people with work experience opportunities. WorkIT has a database of organisations (called 'Gateway') offering work experience from which young people can select possible placements for themselves, or register their own placement. WorkIT then undertakes health and safety checks of work placement settings, and no young person is allowed to go out on work experience unless WorkIT has completed these checks. Staff and pupils in the schools we visited said the websites were useful, although more-so for older pupils who have a clearer idea about their future pathways.

#### Careers education coordinators

Most schools have a Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Coordinator, who coordinates careers education and works with Skills Development Scotland to broker and sustain relationships with employers. Alan Hamilton at Stirling High School said the coordinator at his school plays a crucial role in supporting access to quality careers education, including work experience.

#### Sector specialist groups

Stirling Council has established sector groups, comprising representatives from schools and colleges, businesses, and universities. These groups include the Digital Industry Group, Creative Industries Group, Food and Drink Group, and Construction Group. Kevin and Morag at Stirling Council explained the groups help build understanding and networks between schools and businesses. They also help bring into focus employers' need, with one employer saying to Kevin: "we will not stay in Stirling if we cannot get young people coming through the system that can move into our jobs."

## Supporting work experience through sustaining relationships – Stirling

Arranging work experience presents a range of challenges as Kevin Kelman explains:

“ *It's a big thing for a young person to be catapulted into a work environment. To try and forge positive relationships within a week can be really challenging. It can feel a bit tokenistic. We're hoping though if there are more embedded relationships between schools and businesses, then that can build up a mutual confidence in one another.*

Kevin Kelman, Chief Education Officer, Stirling Council ”

Practitioners in Stirling therefore emphasised the need to build and sustain longer-term arrangements between schools and employers. To this end, Bannockburn High School has developed a partnership with Robertson's, a construction firm with several different positions open to young people including a graduate apprentice post, a 'modern apprentice' working in the office, and a 'construction apprentice'.

This ensures young people's experiences are more meaningful since they engage with more sophisticated and authentic work, and the firm benefits from developing its talent pool while also contributing positively to local young people's development.

“ *Robertson's are seeing this as a really positive move because they're ... they're getting young people who they've mentored into this position, and so they think they will sustain that. [Robertson's] can shape them (the young people) and mould them to the employees that they want and need.*

Morag McLoughlan, Service Manager For Schools,  
Learning and Education at Stirling Council ”



# 3. Conclusion

Work experience has significant potential to impact positively upon young people's employability and career-relevant skill development. There is also some evidence to suggest it may have a beneficial impact on young people's academic outcomes.

However, access to quality work experience is variable, and its potential benefits remain largely untapped by schools and employers. Too often, young people's age, gender, ethnicity or affluence limits their access to quality work experience opportunities.

This report sets out key ways in which work experience can, and should be, reformed. Critically, schools and employers need to work more closely to ensure work experience opportunities are not dependent on teachers', pupils' or parents' contacts, and that the timing of work experience placements is more responsive to young people's decision-making processes and the pressures they face across the academic year.

Alongside benefits to young people, this report also highlights how organisations hosting work experience can benefit from doing so. It is therefore crucial that schools, parents, employers, government and supporting organisations all play a role in increasing work experience's efficacy, and this report sets out a number of steps that need to be taken to ensure that this happens.



<b>Schools and colleges should:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Match pupils with appropriately stretching opportunities;</li><li>2. Outline the benefits of hosting young people for work experience;</li><li>3. Support opportunities for work experience throughout the academic year;</li><li>4. Increase post-16 students' access to work experience;</li><li>5. Help pupils prepare for and debrief after work experience;</li><li>6. Support repeated interactions with employers;</li><li>7. Support host employers and businesses;</li><li>8. Support work experience opportunities within school and with suppliers;</li><li>9. Monitor and evaluate the quality of work experience;</li><li>10. Identify and address inequalities in access to work experience.</li></ol>
<b>Employers should:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Publicise the benefits of hosting work experience placements;</li><li>2. Set up meaningful experiences for young people;</li><li>3. Make work experience authentic;</li><li>4. Increase efficiency;</li><li>5. Provide feedback to young people;</li><li>6. Ensure opportunities are available to all young people;</li><li>7. Monitor the cost of placements.</li></ol>
<b>Government, funders and third sector organisations should:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ensure a wider range of sectors provide work experience, and;</li><li>2. Broker relationships between schools and employers.</li></ol>

# 4. Afterword



This report, and its sister report on age appropriacy, are timely.

Alongside high-quality careers education, meaningful work experience is a core requirement to prepare children for adult life. This report challenges schools, employers and government to up their game in this area. Young people are entitled to a meaningful series of stretching work experiences at different stages of their school careers, and the demand for improvement needs to be heard.

The cliché is that “it is not what you know but who you know”. Clichés are often underpinned by truth and that certainly applies to work experience.

None of us from advantaged backgrounds, who are in powerful positions, are going say to our loved ones “no, I won’t use my contacts to help you get a great work experience opportunity, because that is unfair on those not as lucky as you are.” We may be committed to offering others help as well, but it is natural for parents to want the best for their own children.

This is how advantage becomes entrenched, and is well demonstrated in work experience.

Children from homes where no one knows professionals or people in other graduate careers, are at a disadvantage. They rely on schools and other brokers, to find them aspirational opportunities. These can transform lives as they open up possibilities, and spark dreams.

Achieving at school requires children to be engaged and excited about learning, and to be willing to struggle through some of the curriculum. Work experience brings both engagement through relevance and the motivation of aspiration. And yet geography, gender, and socio-economic status are all factors skewing access away from pupils.

This report sets out what the stakeholders should do so that all pupils have more universal access. At its heart this needs leadership. School leaders need to see that time and resources spent on work experience will indirectly improve outcomes, rather than distract from the accountability measures. Employers need to see this as part of the long-term solution to their talent problems. Government needs to ensure the system knows this is a priority.

The consequences of not improving work experience maybe severe. Our economy is defined by the value added by human talent. We are currently wasting so much potential because young people are growing up with no experience of the wealth of opportunities available to them in work.

I commend this report.



Lord Jim Knight

# 5. Appendices

## 5.1 Research design

### 5.1.1 Literature review

The literature review we undertook for this report and its sister report, 'Making Careers Education Age-Appropriate', set out to answer the questions:

1. 'What careers and employability interventions are appropriate for children and young people of different ages?'
2. 'What does high quality work experience look like, and how can existing provision be improved?'

A literature search was carried out using the Web of Science, Google Scholar and British Education Index databases. In each database, the following search terms were used to generate results:

- ("careers" OR "work experience") AND ("education or school") AND ("primary" or "key stage 2" or "key stage 1")
- ("careers" OR "work experience") AND ("education or school") AND ("secondary" or "key stage 3" or "key stage 4")
- ("careers" AND "education OR "work experience") AND ("Key Stage 5" OR "Further Education") AND ("effective")
- ("careers" AND "education" OR "work experience") AND ("university") AND ("effective")

These initial keyword searches generated over 1,000 results. These results were then sifted in two stages to generate a short list of articles for inclusion. Firstly, titles were screened for relevance and then, from the resulting subset of literature, abstracts were reviewed for relevance. Literature was judged to be 'relevant' if it addressed one or more of the following:

1. The proven or potential benefits of careers education for particular phases (including early years, primary, secondary, further education, university);
2. The current careers education policy-offer for particular phases, or;
3. Impactful interventions for particular phases (for example, an evaluation of the effect of a careers education programme for primary pupils).

References in the sifted literature were also followed up in order to generate further results, particularly when we identified gaps in the literature we had already examined.

All sifted literature was published in the last 30 years and was from the UK, other European countries or the USA. The studies found were based on a range of methodological approaches, including randomised controls trials and quasi-experimental designs, surveys, and qualitative approaches including interviewing and focus groups.

## 5.1.2 Roundtables

Two roundtables were held, bringing together experts and practitioners in the field of careers education. Attendees gave informed consent before participating. A semi-structured interview script was used to guide the discussion, which centred on the two research questions (see above). The roundtables were recorded, and the recordings transcribed and then analysed.

Will Millard, Head of Policy Advocacy at LKMco, chaired both roundtable discussions.

### Roundtable #1

The first roundtable took place on 12th September 2018, and was kindly hosted by the Headland Consultancy. It was attended by:

- Alice Oakley, Founders4Schools.
- Ashley Friedlein, CEO and Founder, Guild.
- Cecile Memhave, Founders4Schools.
- Cleo Chalk, Founders4Schools.
- Dr Helen A. Brown, Business Leaders Advisory Council, Founders4Schools.
- Edward Goff, Marketing Director, EE.
- Isabella Rose Alexandroff, Founders4Schools.
- James Holland, Director of Philanthropy, Founders4Schools.
- Jason Elsom, Chief Operating Officer, Founders4Schools.
- Jenk Oz, CEO, iCoolKid.
- Jessica Butcher, Co-Founder and Director, Blippar.
- Joanna Cruse, Independent Education Consultant.
- Jonathan Pearl, Founders4Schools.
- Lauren von Stackelberg, Head of Female Client Strategy, J. P. Morgan.
- Mark Gettleson, Founders4Schools.
- Mary Curnock Cook, Founders4Schools.
- Nadia Woodhouse, EY.
- Oliver Beach, Campus Director, Flatiron School.
- Richard Higgs, Founder, AngSco Ltd.
- Robert Marshall, CEO, Marshall Group.

- Sherry Coutu, Founder and Chairman, Founders4Schools.
- Stephen Bolton, Group Controller, Diageo plc.
- Vikki Kirby, Vibrato Consulting.

### Roundtable #2

The second roundtable took place on the 6th November 2018, and was kindly hosted by Nesta. It was attended by:

- Dr Anne Bamford, Strategic Director for Education, Culture and Skills, the City of London Corporation.
- Arvind Batra, Careers Coordinator, RSA Academies.
- Chris Percy, Strategy and Research Contractor, the Careers and Enterprise Company.
- Emily Tanner, Head of Research, the Careers and Enterprise Company.
- Janet Colledge, Education Director and Company Secretary, National Careers Week.
- Jenny Barber, Director of Programmes, Career Ready.
- Jessica Edwards, Graduate Apprentice, Ted Baker.
- Jordan Rehill, Research Analyst, Education and Employers.
- Joysy John, Director of Education, Nesta.
- Kate Madelin, Founders4Schools.
- Kim Elms, Education Programmes, ACS International Schools.
- Lorraine Lawson, Brokerage Manager, Camden Learning.
- Peter McDonough, Historian in Residence, Ted Baker, and Next Generation Coordinator at Urban Partners.
- Sharmila Metcalf, STEM and Digital Skills Seconded, the Department for Education (and Nuffield Foundation).
- Sherry Coutu, Founder and Chairman, Founders4Schools.
- Dr Siobhan Neary, Associate Professor and Head of iCeGS, the University of Derby.
- Sir John Holman, Emeritus Professor of Chemistry at the University of York, and lead author of the Gatsby Framework.
- Skye Fenton, Founders4Schools.
- Tom Ravenscroft, Chief Executive, Enabling Enterprise.

### 5.1.3 Interviews

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with the following careers education experts, all of whom gave informed consent before participating. These experts were interviewed in a personal capacity, as opposed to representing the organisations for which they work. Transcriptions of the recordings were made, then analysed in order to identify the main themes arising in each interview, and then to identify common themes across all the interviews:

- Chris Percy, Strategy and Research Contractor, the Careers and Enterprise Company.
- David Andrews, Careers Education and Guidance Consultant.
- Gerard Liston, Director, Forum Talent Potential CIC.
- Tristram Hooley, Professor of Career Education, University of Derby.

### 5.1.4 Case studies

Nine case studies were conducted, involving in-person visits to schools (with the exception of Access Creative College) where semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with school staff and pupils, alongside informal observations of school practice. LKMco selected schools from a long-list supplied by Founders4Schools, ensuring a breadth of coverage in terms of phase and geography.

For each case study, the teacher or teachers responsible for careers education were interviewed, and a group of randomly-selected pupils took part in a focus group about careers education. All participants gave informed consent, and recordings were transcribed then analysed.

Case studies were conducted at:

- Access Creative College (multiple FE colleges);
- Avonbourne Trust (AIBeat) (all-through including sixth form), Bournemouth;
- Borestone Primary School, Stirling;
- School 21 (all-through including sixth form), Newham;
- Stirling Council, Stirling;
- Stirling High School, Stirling;

- St Mary's RC Primary School, Stirling;
- Torriano School (primary), Camden;
- West Hill School (secondary without sixth form), Tameside, and;
- XP Free School (secondary with sixth form), Doncaster.

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This report was written by the education and youth development 'think and action tank' **LKMco**. LKMco is a social enterprise - we believe that society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood.

We work towards this vision by helping education and youth organisations develop, evaluate and improve their work with young people. We then carry out academic and policy research and advocacy that is grounded in our experience.

[www.lkmco.org.uk](http://www.lkmco.org.uk) / [@LKMco](https://twitter.com/LKMco) / [info@lkmco.org](mailto:info@lkmco.org)



Society should ensure that all young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood

[www.lkmco.org](http://www.lkmco.org) | [@LKMco](https://twitter.com/LKMco) | +44(0)7793 370459 | [info@lkmco.org](mailto:info@lkmco.org)

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