



The work experience system isn't working

Dr Elnaz Kashef
Director of Policy, Research and Impact
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Declining trends in work experience participation

- Since 2012, after school-age work experience was removed as a statutory requirement, we are seeing decline in participation rates with some stark differences regionally. This trend changed slightly when the Career Strategy and the Gatsby benchmarks were published in 2017 but never fully recovered.

Year	Participation (state secondary school)	Reference
2010	82%	https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/employer_engagement_in_english_independent_schools_july_2012_.pdf
2017	74%	https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/contemporary-transitions-young-britons-reflect-on-life-after-secondary-school-and-college/
2023	50%	https://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Learning-from-experience-March-2023.pdf

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Evidence of the positive impact correlated with participation

£1,088

Respondents in full-time work reported a 3.4% higher average wage; that is £1,088 per year using the sample average salary of £32k.

**4% less
NEET**

Attending work experience reduces the probability of being NEET from 11% to 7%

x2

Young people from independent schools are twice as likely to have attended 3 plus work experiences than state school peers.

**55%
more
confident**

Young people who reported attending work experience at school age believed their confidence and self belief was improved (31%). This is higher for older age group (55%).

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Other life outcomes

- Applicants from affluent areas of the UK are nearly **six-times more likely** to have a prestigious university offer, such as from a Russell Group institution, than those living in a disadvantaged area
- **On at least a third of occasions**, evidence of work experience and enrichment activities is used to assess university applications
- **Half of state-school students** leave secondary school without having had access to work experience
- **30% of young people attending state schools** stated they would have welcomed more help from their school or college on how to get into university, compared with just **13% attending independent schools**



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Speakers for Schools impact data 23/24

86% increase in understanding of how employers recruit after completing their placement

85% of our work experience participants reported that their placement helped them learn about opportunities within the industry or sector they were placed

76% agreed that their placement raised their awareness of the various routes into the industry or sector. This highlights how work experience is empowering young people to explore different career paths they might not have considered before.

Nearly **9 in 10** young people on FSM, reported that the placement helped them decide on their future career path.

90% of young people who took part in a Virtual Work Experience placement agreed that the placement provided a valuable opportunity to become familiar with modern workplaces



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Current approach to work experience delivery



School-Led Organisation: Schools coordinate with local employers and through parental networks.



Local Authority Support (career hubs): Some authorities assist with databases or schemes.



Curriculum Integration: T-Levels, BTECs, apprenticeships with mandatory placements (mainly post-16)



National Platforms: Speakers for Schools, Springpod, Barclays LifeSkills.



Employer-Provided Programmes: Larger corporations offering specialised placements.

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Key Challenges for Educators, Employers, and Young People



for Educators:

Coordination: Difficulty in finding enough suitable placements.

Quality Assurance: Ensuring meaningful and educational experiences.

Time Constraints: Limited staff resources to manage work placements.

Inequality: Disadvantaged schools struggle to secure quality placements.



for Employers:

Resource Demands: Time, mentors, and planning required.

Health and Safety: Ensuring legal compliance and safety for young people.

Administrative Burden: Managing paperwork, risk assessments, etc.

Perceived Lack of Return: Some employers see little direct benefit.



for Young People:

Access: Opportunities vary by location, background, and school support.

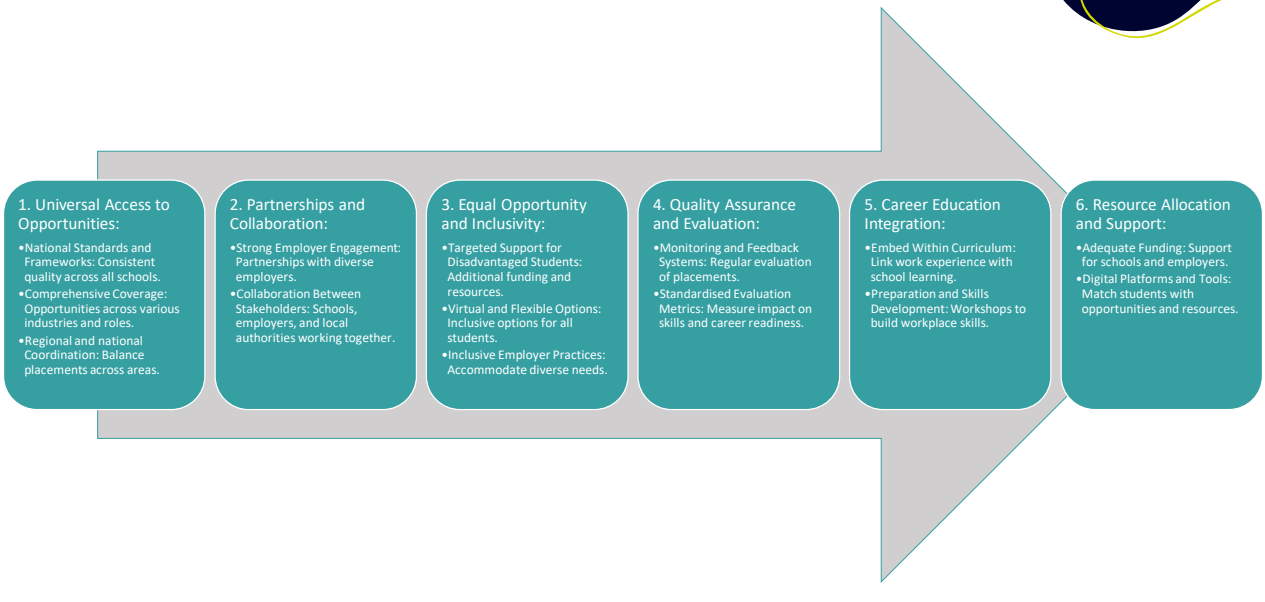
Relevance: Difficulty finding placements aligned with career goals.

Confidence: Some young people feel unprepared for workplace settings.

Postcode lottery: Fewer work experiences in some areas and relying on who parents know

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Features of an Effective and Equitable Work Experience System



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Opportunity for change

The fact that universal work experience has been achieved in the past should give us confidence that we can do it again, even if it takes time. The challenge is to ensure it is high-quality and equitably shared.

5 key considerations for change:

1. Work experience is achievable and affordable.
2. We should move forward, not backwards.
3. Make the system easy for everyone.
4. Scale back before scaling up; an evidence-led approach must be taken.
5. This is a devolved matter but needs central support.

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Implications for policy

Incentivise employers

- Just seven per cent of employers offer work experience to teenagers. Only 40 per cent engage in any kind of career activities.
- Labour's proposal to a growth and skills levy could give flexibility in how funds can be spent and could help employers invest more in talent pipeline development
- The government should work with existing providers to give clear guides on what 'good' looks like and what it requires based on models of best practice.

Prioritise investment and capacity expansion

- successful models dedicate resources to finding and coordinating placements and delivering other career activities.
- the estimated cost of delivering good career provision via the Gatsby benchmarks is about £38,000 to £76,000 per school but careers education spending is currently estimated at £5,000 annually.
- If we are serious about competing with other global economies on career readiness, this must be substantially increased. This could be done through the revision of devolution deals and the levelling up agenda.

Democratise access to opportunities

- There should be a single, quality-assured clearing house or marketplace where those seeking work experience placements can see the full range of opportunities in their local area and nationally.
- This platform should not replace the shoe-leather work of identifying employers, working with them to develop effective placements, and briefing, debriefing, learning and iterating.
- Warp around support and access to quality careers provision before and after work experience is essential for meaningful experiences.

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Thank you

<https://www.speakersforschools.org/work-experience-for-all/>

Elnaz.Kashefpakdel@speakersforschools.org

@elnazkashef @speakersforschools

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