

Experience of the workplace - case studies

1. By the age of 16, every student should have had at least one experience of a workplace, additional to any part-time jobs they may have.
2. By the age of 18, every student should have had one further such experience, additional to any part-time jobs they may have.

Gatsby Benchmark 6 describes experiences of workplaces as: “work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience”. It is important to be clear upfront that work experience is not synonymous with experiences of the workplace. We are approaching this topic with growth mindsets and can-do attitudes, taking the opportunity to reframe perceptions.

The Make it Work guide on [‘How to meet Gatsby Benchmark 6 more meaningfully and deliver positive student outcomes’](#) from The Careers & Enterprise Company supports shifting perceptions of experiences of the workplace.

We asked our network of Central Strategic Careers Leaders to share impact driven practice of experience of the workplace and the response was overwhelming in terms of the volume, scope and ambition for activities under Benchmark 6.

Each Trust and their individual academies have their own priorities and as such the aims and intent for experiences of the workplace are of course varied.

“Every student should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities and expand their networks.”



This article is designed to help institutions really refine the aim and intent of experiences of the workplace for students of all ages. The implementation and delivery will look different depending on your aims.

In the Make it Work guide, there are a range of potential aims for experiences of the workplace. No one experience will cover all of these and nor should they, yet a range of experiences within a progressive careers programme can cover all or most of these aims to support students in their career readiness journey:

We have grouped case studies and examples from across our Trust Community of Improvement by aims and have focused the examples on the following aims, which were most prevalent in the examples:

-  **Raising opportunity awareness**
-  **Getting 'real-life' experience of work via projects, etc**
-  **Understanding pathways at 16 and 18**
-  **Sense check of career interests/ideas**
-  **Supporting positive destinations data/reduce NEET**

“Everything works somewhere but nothing works everywhere”.

Dylan Wiliam

<input type="checkbox"/> Sense check of career interests/ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> Increasing student confidence	<input type="checkbox"/> Engaging the disengaged
<input type="checkbox"/> Raising opportunity awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Raising aspiration	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding workplace behaviours/expectations
<input type="checkbox"/> Exploration of career opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/> To support socialisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Developing competencies within recruitment processes
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding pathways at 16 and 18	<input type="checkbox"/> Essential skills development	<input type="checkbox"/> CV development
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding LMI (Labour Market Information)	<input type="checkbox"/> i.e. Developing teamwork	<input type="checkbox"/> Developing a student's network
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding growth sectors and the changing economy, including skills 'in demand, etc	<input type="checkbox"/> Increasing student maturity	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding enterprise and self-employment
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting positive destination data/reduce NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)	<input type="checkbox"/> Developing specific practical skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Getting 'real-life' experience of work via projects, etc
<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding specific sectors/roles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Securing part-time work
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Raising Opportunity Awareness

Raising student awareness of opportunities was a common aim shared and evidenced in lots of the examples that we got back from Trusts. This aim for experiences of the workplace is key in raising aspiration, widening horizons and challenging stereotypes.

Consilium Academies

Consilium Academies run Careers Cafés, which are short events designed around less formal conversations between students and local businesses. The intent is to raise opportunity awareness through developing students' confidence in networking. The discussion is around the employer's own career and the pathway they took as well as sharing what the business does. The event raises opportunity awareness and has secondary aims of helping students to access information about specific careers and local labour market information.

David Ross Education Trust

The academies from the David Ross Education Trust who are located in the Humber region are part of WiME's (Women in Manufacturing and Engineering) 'Raising aspirations' programme with the aim to inspire young girls and non-binary people to look at the renewable energy industry and careers in STEM as achievable and real opportunities.

To raise opportunity awareness and aspirations, challenge stereotypes and widen horizons (understanding the labour market), a range of workshops around roles are conducted at the schools, showcasing different roles in the wind industry from Offshore Coordinator to Media Manager to Wind Turbine Technician Apprentice.

Importantly, by offering this opportunity in Year 8 it is hoped students will know how to find information to help make education and career choices and so support these students to make informed choices as part of the options process in Year 9.

"This is a huge and fast-growing industry, and we want local girls to recognise the sector as a future career for them. We're seeing more and more women and girls apply for roles every year, but we still have a way to go in increasing the women in our workforce. I believe that diversity makes the industry better. By introducing girls to female role models at school, they can start to see the opportunities. I really believe if they can see it, they can be it and with our support they know how to achieve it."

Lauren Little,
Senior Stakeholder Advisor
Ørsted



Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust

To raise opportunity awareness and understand specific sectors and roles, Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust offer a 3-day programme for Year 10 consisting of an industry visit in a chosen company, exploring different roles and departments, and an employer insight day [see video](#)

Students are able to identify jobs or careers that match their interest and skills, understand the skills needed by employers and identify the support you need to help you make education and career choices.

Futura Learning Partnership

Over 400 Year 5 children participated in an immersive day at KidZania, a role play experience to develop future aspirations and explore future career opportunities.

The children took on a wide variety of jobs from fire fighters, police, paramedics, surgeons and vets, to pilots, hoteliers, bankers, journalists, DJs and even members of the Secret Service.

They completed training and tasks that earned KidZania's own currency, which was then saved in the city's bank. The event showcased careers other than those of their family/friends and identified what they might do for a job or career in the future.

“Our aspiration was to bring our young people to KidZania, to discover careers and jobs which may shape their futures. It was lovely to see all our children so immersed in role play and enjoying the various interactive games and activities. The children will take a lot away from the day and return to their schools with a fresh enthusiasm for their learning and future ambitions.”

Mark Davies
Head of Careers and Destinations

Getting 'real-life' experience of work via projects, etc

Schools which offer traditional block work experience sight the main aim of work experience as getting 'real-life' experience of work via projects etc. From this, outcomes can vary from being able to identify some of the businesses or employers in your area of the country, as well as understand the skills needed by employers in your local area.

The Priory Learning Trust

The Priory Learning Trust are strong supporters of in-person work experience and each year nearly 1000 placements are sought with a vast investment in preparation to ensure all students find a suitable placement. As well as the above intended outcomes, students also experience the flexible working approaches different businesses model themselves on and indeed, how the workplace is changing with working from home, flexible hours and different closure days. Such a flexible approach supports students to understand how jobs and careers may change in the future and includes a number of students doing the following:

- Half days
- Short weeks
- Work experience opportunities in holidays and outside the fixed-time period, or for specific examples such as army residential work experience
- Working in a group with multiple students in a single business

The work experience is part of a progressive programme including college taster days, CV builder and mock interview days. Another identified outcome is students feel confident talking about their skills in interview and indeed many secure apprenticeships or are offered part-time jobs as a result of successful placements and follow up activities.

Astrea Academy Trust

Another Trust's approach to getting 'real-life' experience with projects etc, is to work with businesses on a project called Shaping Futures. An additional aim is for students to develop competencies within recruitment processes. Year 10 students are invited to apply for a job role with a company and undertake a selection process. Once recruited, students work in small groups with employers who mentor them once a month and assign them a 'task' which will benefit the company. Students will also undertake a visit to the company to learn more about other job roles. They will showcase what they have learned at a large business networking event at the end of the year, proudly supported by their mentor/employer. The intended learning outcomes enable students to understand different types of recruitment and selection processes, be able to present yourself well in a selection process and feel confident talking about your skills in interview as well as gaining valuable experience developing a host of essential skills for work and life working in groups, with an employer, solving problems, culminating in a final presentation.

“What’s incredibly exciting is that the students will all have been through a live recruitment process and taken part in projects that contribute towards the company that they’re with.”

Catherine Carruthers



Archway Learning Trust

One experience of the workplace from Archway Learning Trust was a Design Thinking Workshop.

“What a way to start a new week! Bluecoat Sixth Form were delighted to welcome IED Milan and learn all about Design Thinking (DT). Working through the principles of DT our students explored client needs and creative solutions. As they grew in confidence across the workshops, culminating in presenting their collaborative ideas, they became more aware of the power of design thinking used in organisations on a global scale, whilst also recognising links to their current studies and learning skills they can now take with them on their own career journey.”

This enabled students to get ‘real-life’ experience of work via project etc and understand the skills needed by employers.

Aspirations Academies Trust

Aspirations Academies Trust is very committed to improving the employability curriculum and links with employers and integrate this into all aspects of the curriculum. They are currently working to develop and pilot a model of accredited experiences of the workplace by getting ‘real-life’ experiences of work via projects to increase: the quality of student experiences of the workplace; the volume of opportunities; support learner transitions through industry recognised accreditation.

The aims of the pilot will include finding ways to improve the accessibility of experiences and combat social mobility issues, create a consistent approach to preparation and reflection, and to develop student behaviours, skills and knowledge required in the workplace in alignment with existing frameworks. By aiming to attain accreditation for the qualification, they hope to demonstrate the benefits of a range of different experiences of the workplace.



Understanding pathways at 16 and 18

Meridian Trust

The pandemic provided Meridian Trust the opportunity to explore alternatives to traditional work experience. Whilst every school is expected to offer a physical or virtual work experience placement for Year 10 and Year 12, one school also complemented their work experience with a 'Destinations Fortnight'.

The aim was around understanding pathways at 16 and 18 as well as raising opportunities and understanding specific sectors and roles. A range of presentations, lectures and panels for students and parents involving a wealth of organisations from universities, apprenticeship providers and industry professionals, showcased their institutions and jobs, and provided further information, including entry requirements. Students had the opportunity to ask questions and find out more about the opportunities available. Events were delivered during the day as well as in the evening, specifically tailored for parents: apprenticeships for parents; emotional well-being; transitioning to university; student finance; as well as a Q&A panel hosted by parents for parents.

The event supported students and parents to understand pathways at 16 and 18 as well as understand why apprenticeship or higher education might be right for them and identify the support they need to help them make education and career choices.

Aldridge Education

Curriculum opportunities within the UTC has resulted in a breadth of valuable industry experience for students, and in particular developing their entrepreneurial skills needed to have a competitive advantage for the Creative Digital Media industry pathways at 16 and 18.

Varied placements from within television and broadcasting, radio, and local charities help students understand how to build a network of people who work in industry as well as to understand all options at 18 including apprenticeships, higher education and employment.

Bohunt Education Trust

Some of the Bohunt Education Trust schools are located near the UK Space 'Corridor' and to help students understand pathways at 16 and 18 and understand growth sectors and changing economy, including skills in demand, they offered a group of 23 budding scientists the opportunity to visit the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida. This included tours, talks and information gathering and insight into space as an industry and career path from industry experts. Interactive experiences enabled students to 'be an astronaut'.

Back in the UK the Space South Central exhibition and workshops were designed to explore the range of careers and qualifications within the industry alongside opportunities to engage with employers and employees to explore what working in the space industry might be like. These events have enabled students to understand the skills needed by employers in your local areas, the support you need to help you make education and career choices, to identify jobs or careers that match your interest and skills and understand all options after Year 11, including apprenticeships, A-Levels, traineeships and T-Levels.



Sense check of career interest/ideas

There are students in each year who believe they have determined their best next step at 16 or 18 and have a clear vision of which career they wish to follow. One aim of experiences of the workplace can be to sense check these interests and ideas by providing experience of the particular workplace so they gain a greater understanding of the roles available.

Futura Learning Partnership

As such Futura Learning Partnership gave a group of Year 10 and 12 students who had expressed an interest in joining the Police Force an opportunity to visit the Avon and Somerset Constabulary's HQ and Blackrock Firearms Training Centre in Portishead. The intent was to sense check career interests and ideas. Students were toured around Blackrock's tactical training facilities, firing ranges and mock-up hostage house, meeting with the firearms officers and instructors. The event raised awareness of jobs or careers that match student interest and skills. The visit to the Constabulary's HQ gave them understanding of different types of recruitment and selection processes as they toured the central strategic call centre for emergency calls and were provided with an in-depth presentation around the careers available within the Police Force, as well as information on the application process.

South Somerset 14-19 Partnership

As well as sense checking career interests and ideas, the 'My Future: experience of the workplace' activity supports students to identify what subjects they might want to study for GCSE.

900 Year 8 students from six partner secondary schools attended Yeovil College and had the opportunity to select a work sector-based activity they had an interest in finding out more, from: Construction, Motor Vehicle, Hospitality, Hair and Beauty, Performing Arts, Health and Social Care, Education, Uniform Protective Services, Digital Sector, Business, Engineering. In addition, the Thales Apprentices delivered a robotics challenge where the students from across the Partnership worked together in groups to deliver the challenge outcome - replicating not only the skills and knowledge needed for the challenge but also the employability skills of teamwork/co-operation, resilience, problem solving, etc.

The Thales Apprentices were also asked what they got from being involved and why they believed it was important for employers to be involved in such activities. Their reflections can be viewed in the [following film](#) of the day.

"...Upon every visit, I was greeted by students with massive smiles on their faces; there is a positive buzz and students are thinking about how their work in class links to their future."

A senior leader

Supporting positive destinations data/reduce NEET



Turner Schools

Experience of the workplace is outlined as one success criteria in Turner School Trust's priorities. Following a review, they re-focused their aim of supporting positive destinations data in recognising that placements for pupils with SEND were more likely to report a negative experience whilst with employers. Statistics also show that these young people are significantly less likely to secure work following education and on average, have substantially lower earnings 15 years after Key Stage 4. For this reason, positive experiences of the workplace whilst at school are critical for this cohort.

Partnering with Kent Supported Employment, experts in supporting people with additional needs in the workplace, intensive training to one of our Careers Advisers, focused on two aspects:

1. Identifying individual barriers that can prevent pupils from being successful in the workplace;
2. Coaching employers to understand pupils' needs and the best ways to support them.

The training provided a framework for supporting pupils from Year 9 onwards: vocational profiling, including: interests, challenges, strengths, family set up, and willingness to travel on public transport; creating individual action plans, accompanied taster sessions, travel training or training/information sharing for the employer.

This practice is now embedded in their work experience programme and whilst it is early days, their hope is that it will enable more pupils to successfully access meaningful work placements and have the confidence to progress into stable employment in the future.