THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

Work experience reform: Education leadership implementation map

A suite of resources to support meaningful achievement of Gatsby Benchmark 6 and work experience reform

If you want to...	Use...
Start strategic reflection and/or discussion about work experience reform	Work experience reform: A strategic reflection tool for Education Leaders
Understand the evidence and effective work experience practice	An Education Leader's guide to work experience reform
Plan implementation and monitor progress of work experience reform in your setting	Work experience reform: Education leadership implementation map
See examples from practice of high-quality progressive work experience	Work experience reform in practice

When to use this resource

Use this resource when you want to:

- Translate strategic intent into practical action.
- Identify implementation priorities and responsibilities.
- Understand what needs to happen next and who should be involved.
- Monitor progress and review readiness for the next stage of reform.
- Embed workplace experiences within existing improvement, quality assurance and review processes.

Suggested users

We suggest some or all of the following use this resource: Headteachers, Principals, CEOs, Education Leaders, Trust Leaders, Governors and Careers Leaders.

What this resource will help you do

Move from understanding work experience reform to implementation, improvement and long-term sustainability.

Purpose

The **Work experience reform: Education leadership implementation map** is designed to help education settings strengthen the design, delivery and impact of workplace experiences in line with evolving expectations within Gatsby Benchmark 6 and statutory guidance.

For many settings, this is not about creating something new. It is about building on existing strengths, identifying opportunities for improvement and strengthening how workplace experiences contribute to learner outcomes over time.

This implementation map provides a practical route from awareness to action, helping Education Leaders embed workplace experiences within wider improvement priorities and create a progressive learner journey that evolves over time.

The work experience reform journey

Work experience reform is an ongoing improvement process. Education Leaders are likely to revisit each stage as their understanding, capacity and evidence base develop over time.

Understand the change → **See the opportunity** → **Build capacity** → **Strengthen practice** → **Review impact** → **Plan forward**

The focus of each stage will evolve over time.

Leadership checkpoint 1: We understand our starting point

At this stage:

- Senior leadership team and governors have a shared understanding of work experience reform.
- Work experience is being considered as part of a progressive learner journey rather than a standalone placement.
- Priority learner groups and intended outcomes have been identified.
- Strengths, gaps and opportunities within current provision are understood.
- Leadership ownership and accountability are clear.

Reform stage	Leadership responsibility	Lead responsibility	Implementation actions	Tools & resources	Success indicators
Understand the change	Build strategic understanding and commitment.	Senior Leadership Team Governors	Review statutory guidance alongside current Gatsby Benchmark 6 delivery. Build a shared understanding of what is already in place, what is changing and where opportunities exist to strengthen provision.	Careers guidance and access for education and training providers Gatsby Benchmark Toolkits Work Experience FAQs	Shared understanding established.
See the opportunity	Agree why work experience matters and what learner outcomes matter most.	Senior Leadership Team	Identify priority learner outcomes and discuss how workplace experiences could support wider priorities.	Strategic reflection tool	Strategic rationale agreed.
See the opportunity	Ensure learner need is informing decisionmaking.	Careers Leader SENCO Attendance Lead Pastoral Lead	Establish a learner insight baseline and identify learners most likely to benefit from meaningful workplace experiences.	Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) OnTrack+ Your Child's Future (YCF) Destination Data Attendance Data	Learner needs understood. Priority learner groups identified.
Build capacity	Understand readiness, leadership ownership and capacity.	Careers Leader Senior Leadership Team	Undertake a Careers Impact internal leadership review. Participate in a peer-to-peer review. Agree accountability and ownership.	Careers Impact internal leadership review peertopeer review	Leadership ownership agreed. Strengths, gaps and priorities understood.
Build capacity	Review strategic capacity and partnerships.	Careers Leader	Review employer partnerships, trust relationships, community links and Careers Hub support.	Careers Hub support Trust relationships Employer partnerships	Partnership opportunities identified. Capacity gaps understood.
Strengthen practice	Understand current provision.	Careers Leader Curriculum Leaders	Commission a curriculum audit. Map current workplace experiences across Years 7–11. Identify strengths, duplication and gaps.	Curriculum Audit Tool	Existing provision mapped. Development priorities identified.

STRENGTHENING & EMBEDDING

Building coherence, capacity and quality

Leadership checkpoint 2: We are strengthening and embedding provision

At this stage:

- Work experience reform is reflected within school improvement planning and/or strategic careers planning.
- Workplace experiences are increasingly informed by learner need.
- Progressive learner journeys are starting to emerge across year groups.
- Workplace experiences are becoming more meaningful, multiple and equitable.
- Strategic partnerships are expanding capacity and opportunities.
- Senior leadership team and governors are beginning to review evidence of impact, not just participation.

Reform stage	Leadership responsibility	Lead responsibility	Implementation actions	Tools & resources	Success indicators
Build capacity	Build whole-setting ownership.	Senior Leadership Team	Embed work experience reform within wider improvement planning, school development planning and strategic careers planning. Strengthen collaboration between careers, curriculum, SEND, pastoral and attendance teams.	Careers Impact internal leadership review	Shared ownership emerging.
Build capacity	Strengthen strategic partnerships.	Senior Leadership Team Careers Leader	Develop employer, trust, community, Careers Hub and sector partnerships. Increase opportunity capacity where required and secure strategic support for longer-term sustainability. Increase opportunity capacity where required.	Careers Hub and Employer Networks	Opportunity capacity increasing.
Strengthen practice	Build progressive learner journeys.	Careers Leader Curriculum Leaders	Review how workplace experiences develop across Years 7–11. Reduce reliance on one-off experiences.	equalex	Progressive learner journeys emerging.
Strengthen practice	Improve quality and coherence.	Careers Leader	Use equalex to strengthen the planning, sequencing and evaluation of workplace experiences. Review how preparation, employer interaction, feedback, reflection and learner outcomes are embedded across provision.	equalex	Workplace experiences aligned to learner need.
Review impact	Begin monitoring contribution to learner outcomes.	Careers Leader Data Leads	Establish participation and outcome measures. Review emerging evidence alongside participation data and use findings to inform leadership discussions and future planning.	Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) OnTrack+	Early impact measures are informing leadership decisions.

SUSTAINING & IMPROVING

Embedding impact and continuous improvement (ongoing)

Leadership checkpoint 3: . We have embedded work experience reform within improvement and review processes

At this stage:

- Workplace experiences are contributing to identified learner, curriculum and organisational priorities.
- Impact measures are considered alongside participation measures when evaluating effectiveness.
- Senior leadership team and governors routinely review learner outcomes, participation patterns and learner voice to inform decision-making.
- Participation, progression and outcome gaps are understood, discussed and acted upon.
- Evidence is used to refine provision, target support and prioritise investment.
- Work experience reform is embedded within existing improvement, quality assurance and review cycles.
- Responsibility for workplace experiences extends beyond the Careers Leader and is shared across senior leadership, curriculum, pastoral and inclusion teams.
- Continuous improvement processes are established and inform future planning.

At this stage, work experience is no longer viewed as a standalone careers activity. It has become an integrated part of how your setting improves learner outcomes, develops learner readiness for future transitions and evaluates impact over time.

Reform stage	Leadership responsibility	Lead responsibility	Implementation actions	Tools & resources	Success indicators
Review impact	Shift accountability from activity to impact.	Careers Leader Senior Leadership Team	Move beyond reporting placements, participation and employer numbers. Review contribution to learner outcomes and consider impact alongside attendance, behaviour, attainment, wellbeing and destination measures.	Careers Impact internal leadership review Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) OnTrack+ Destination Data	Impact measures embedded.
Review impact	Review impact through an equity lens.	Careers Leader SENCO Pastoral Lead	Identify participation, progression and outcome gaps. Review which learners benefit most, and which remain underserved.	Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) Your Child's Future (YCF)	Participation and outcome gaps understood.
Plan forward	Use evidence to refine provision.	Senior Leadership Team	Review which approaches are having the greatest impact. Refine priorities, investment and support.	Careers Impact internal leadership review	Provision increasingly targeted and effective.
Plan forward	Embed continuous improvement.	Senior Leadership Team Careers Leader	Establish annual review cycles. Repeat internal leadership reviews and peer-to-peer reviews. Revisit learner insight and progress against priorities.	Careers Impact internal leadership review peer-to-peer review Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) OnTrack+ Your Child's Future (YCF)	Continuous improvement established.

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Our Impact **Our Evidence**