



Standard 1: Provide meaningful opportunities

Workplace experiences for young people guide

This guide is designed to support employers who have used the Employer Standards self-assessment tool. If you have not yet used the tool, we encourage that as a first step, so you can benchmark your careers education outreach and identify areas for improvement.

Take the free 25-minute self-assessment [here](#)



How to use this guide

Looking to provide impactful and meaningful workplace experiences for young people, simply and effectively? You're in the right place.

No matter what your business size or experience level, we're here to help you take the right actions and support your efforts.

If you've offered workplace experiences in the past, this guide will inspire you to build on them and make improvements. But if you've never offered them before, don't worry – we'll help you take the important first steps to get started. Let's go!

What's inside:

To make things easy, our guide has been structured into two parts:

1. The big picture

Why workplace experiences matter—and why it's time to reimagine workplace experiences that work for everyone.

2. Getting started

Discover innovative approaches, along with ready-to-use templates and resources to put ideas into action.

Good to know:

While our guide focuses on workplace experiences, its core principles also apply to activities you deliver in schools, special schools and colleges.





The big picture

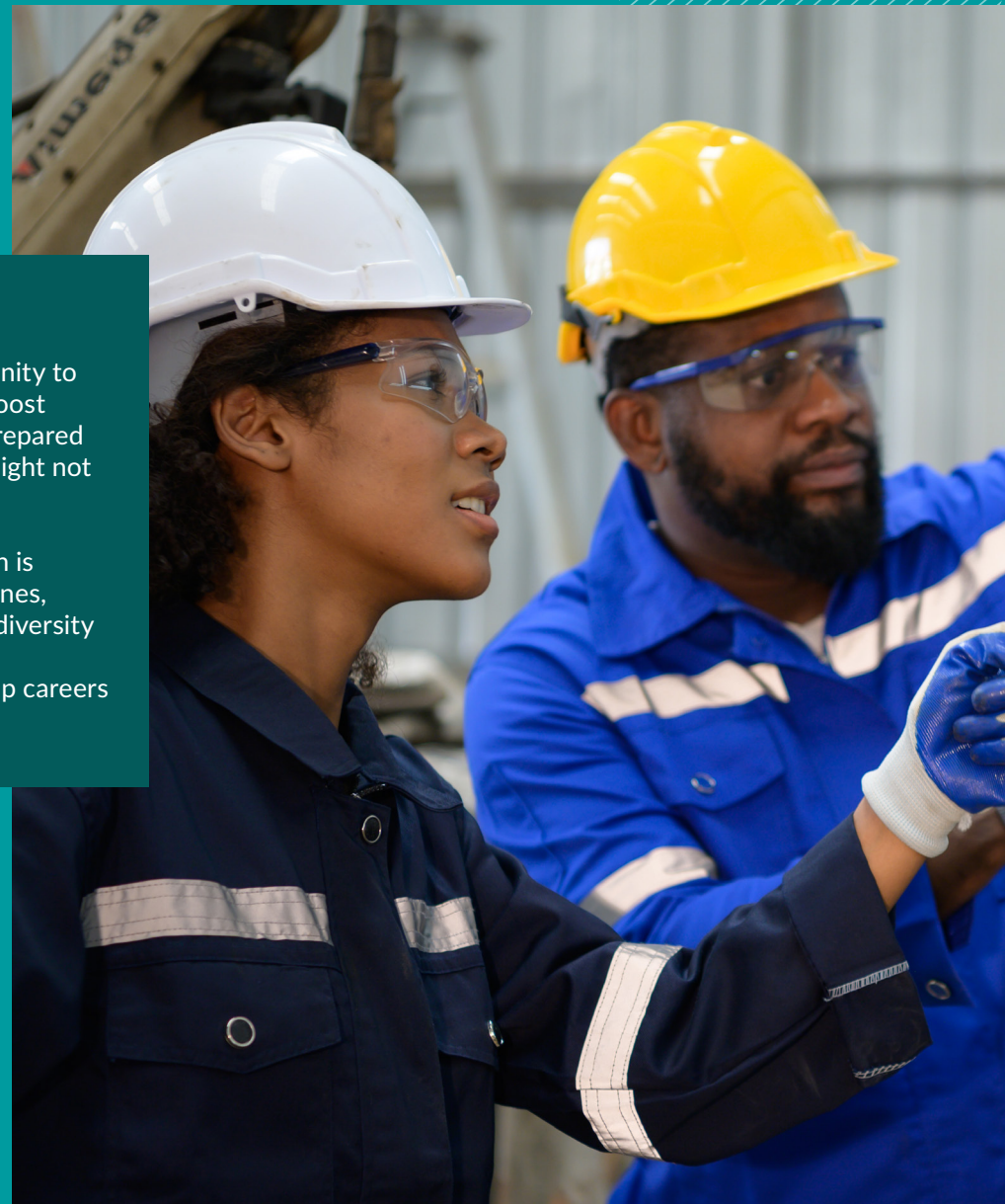
Why do workplace experiences matter?

The impact of high-quality workplace experiences should never be underestimated:

1. Workplace experiences introduce young people to what the modern workplace looks and feels like, inspiring them to find out more.
2. Time with employers broadens their understanding of industries, the local labour market and informs decisions on subject and career choices.
3. Multiple experiences can support essential skills development, building confidence and networks.
4. Evidence also shows that high-quality workplace experiences and meaningful employer engagement lead to better outcomes for young people.

Business Benefits:

1. Employers have an exciting opportunity to develop staff and their wellbeing, boost sector visibility and build a better prepared talent pool – including those who might not have considered the sector before.
2. 81% of employers say their outreach is helping to develop new talent pipelines, 67% say it's helping to improve the diversity of their workforce, and 87% say it's encouraging young people to take up careers in the sector.



Download our impact slide deck to help get colleagues on board with offering workplace experiences.





What makes a 'meaningful' experience?



"Most of my work experience was mind-numbingly boring—just people talking at us. I've found that small companies can make a huge difference: give us real tasks, let us solve problems, or think creatively!"

Tiffany, student

Watch this video to hear young people and employers share what makes workplace experiences more meaningful.



We understand the multiple pressures employers are facing and how that impacts on your capacity and capability to offer workplace experiences. This guide will support you to ensure that the time you can offer has the most impact. Whether your workplace experience supports learning about career pathways, labour market trends, self-employment or essential skills and workplace behaviours – building this knowledge in young people is invaluable.

While activities will vary in intensity – from brief workplace visits to extended industry placements – the core principles for making them meaningful remain the same:



1. **Establish purpose** - set clear learning outcomes.



2. **Be targeted** – understand the needs of the young people engaging in your experience, to better tailor to their needs.



3. **Showcase diversity** - offer the chance to meet with a diverse range of employees, ensuring they are relatable role models. Where possible, include opportunities to meet people from a broad range of backgrounds and experiences.



4. **Make it engaging** - enable meaningful two-way interaction and include hands on learning, ideally based on real work projects.



5. **Provide feedback** – ensure that you feedback on any work produced or presented as part of your workplace experience.



6. **Consider pre & post work** – work with the school, special school or college to ensure young people attending are prepared, knowing what to expect and have had enough feedback to reflect on their experience afterwards.



The challenges are...



The most disadvantaged young people are missing out

The Education Select Committee's most recent [careers inquiry](#) highlighted that too many young people were missing out on workplace experiences – particularly the most disadvantaged.

To try and tackle this, the government aims to guarantee every young person two weeks' 'worth' of meaningful workplace experiences over the course of their pre-16 education.

Schools serving the most disadvantaged young people perform worse on Gatsby Benchmark 6: Experiences of Workplaces. Only 69% of the most disadvantaged schools meet this benchmark, compared to 78% of the least disadvantaged schools. We need to increase the number of employers offering workplace experiences to ensure that those with the most barriers are not missing out.

Limited flexibility is excluding more employers from engaging

- Traditional models of work experience often do not reflect modern work practices or offer opportunities for skill development.
- Schools recognise the potential drawbacks of running blocked work experience but are faced with many barriers.
- Often workplace experiences do not have clear learning outcomes, missing the opportunity to evidence the development of skills and behaviours needed by employers.
- Employer capacity to engage with work experience is limited and requests flooding in during the summer term limits the number of young people an employer can reach.



The solution is...

Reimagining workplace experiences

Now is the time to rethink how you deliver workplace experiences, taking a quality first approach that supports young people to make informed choices and develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed for the modern workplace.

A flexible model can empower businesses of all sizes to contribute, guaranteeing every young person access to high-quality, multiple workplace experiences, totalling ten days' worth throughout secondary school.

Modern work experience

Developed by the CEC and supported by Careers Hubs, [equalex](#) is designed to support ten days' worth of structured high quality workplace experiences to all young people.

"We need to move from a single touchpoint to year-round engagement – virtual and in-person. Some roles, like train operators and customer-facing jobs, require in-person work experience, but for others, a continuous, blended and variety of experiences are essential. If I don't work in the office five days a week, why should we offer placements that don't mirror the reality of how we work now?"

**Karen Wallbridge, Head of Talent,
Transport for London**

Key features of equalx:

Quality: a framework of structured learning outcomes to raise the quality of work experience.

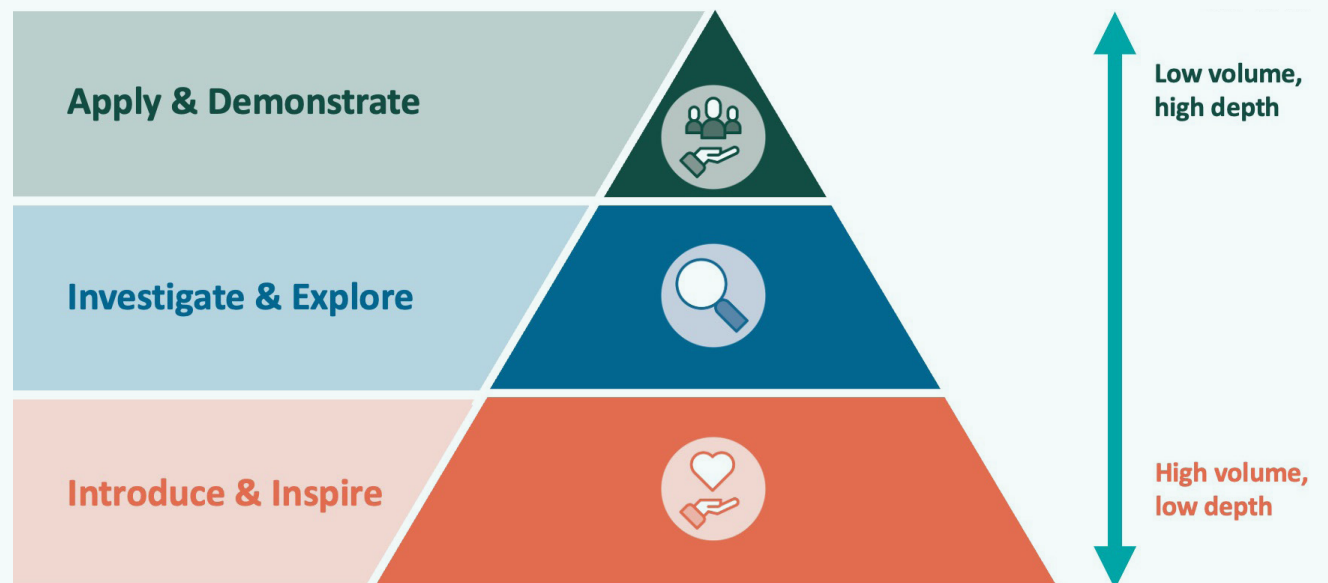
Equity: a multi-year, multi experience model supported by the curriculum offering a minimum of ten days' worth of workplace experiences for all young people.

Flexibility: a tiered approach offering breadth and depth of workplace experiences so that employers can engage to meet their business and resource needs, in the world of hybrid working, a five-day block can be increasingly challenging to achieve.

Each of equalx's tiers is underpinned by learning outcomes for young people. You can therefore map your workplace experiences against the three tiers to understand the appropriate depth of content required, linking it all back to your own business goals.

If you're a smaller business or resource-constrained, the different entry points mean you can contribute without having to commit huge amounts of time.

You can find out more about our piloting of the equalx framework in Manchester [here](#). If you're feeling inspired, read on for support to help you start offering workplace experiences that fit with your business.





Getting started

Dive in to discover innovative approaches, along with ready-to-use templates and resources to put ideas into action.

Be inspired

Before you start planning, take a moment to explore what other employers are doing. Watch the short video and discover how other employers are offering innovative workplace experiences.

Watch our video example.



“Offering work experience is a key part of how we recruit and helps our team grow by developing their coaching and mentoring skills. We create flexible opportunities, from week-long placements to virtual insight days, which fit around our business. At the end of each placement, students share what they’ve learned, and that’s when we know we’re making a difference.”

Davinder Lotay, Managing Director, Altimex Ltd





Plan your workplace experience

Now it's time to plan your own workplace experience. Follow the steps here to get started.

Download our planning template for hosting a workplace experience activity. This template will help you:

- Define clear outcomes
- Design an effective structure
- Identify necessary staffing and resources



Considering these steps, planning a meaningful workplace experience becomes simpler and more manageable.

Need inspiration? Download our example activity plans for a detailed look at how other employers are organising workplace experiences.



Workplace experience planning checklist

This checklist is designed to guide you through key considerations such as communication, objectives, pre- and post-event logistics, while ensuring inclusivity remains at the core of the experience.





Flexible approaches

There are many types of workplace experiences that you could offer. The flexible approaches we've provided below can achieve a range of meaningful outcomes. Keep in mind that these are only examples to inspire you and are not prescriptive, choose the best delivery model to achieve your intended outcomes.

Type of experience	Description	Business benefits
2-hour workplace experiences	A structured introduction to the workplace, including the opportunity to complete a work-based task or skills development session. This could include a tour and should provide the opportunity to meet a range of staff—ideal for larger groups.	Staff development Inspire students to consider your sector Break down stereotypes about your sector
Workplace visit day	An interactive day of micro experiences where students tour your workplace, network with team members, complete tasks and get feedback, join small discussion groups to explore the different types of job roles which they may not have otherwise considered.	Foster staff collaboration across departments Support greater diversity of young people interested in your sector
Workplace safari	A day of structured activities, typically coordinated by a school, college, provider or Careers Hub where multiple employers showcase a variety of careers on one site. The day helps students understand a broad range of businesses and career opportunities.	Connect and network with different businesses Meet larger numbers of students in one day
Shadowing	A personalised experience where student(s) shadow and actively engage with a single member of staff carrying out their role for a day or longer, gaining a deeper understanding about the role, responsibilities and career pathway.	Improve staff wellbeing Support talent pipeline into early careers
Short workplace experience (generalist)	Student(s) spend a week or more in the workplace observing different roles, activities, with opportunities to complete tasks or produce a piece of work developing their essential workplace skills.	Better prepare talent pool
Short workplace experience (specialist)	Similar to the generalist workplace experience but focused on a specific occupation, offering deeper insight into a role of interest (typically after students have explored various sectors and roles).	Nurture future talent in key skills-gap occupations
Multi-stage project	A real-life project set by an employer which involves multiple touchpoints, such as visits with tasks in-between – e.g. students take part in an enterprise competition to set up a business or create a product/service.	Gain fresh perspectives and ideas
Virtual experiences	Half day, project led, one or two day experiences that are online and could include interactive career chats, virtual tours, work-based tasks and problems, essential skills development and should include feedback on work and the chance to meet a range of employees.	Reach young people in locations that could not access your workplace due to travel distance audience



Making it more meaningful by embedding projects

“Project-based learning was a game changer for me. Instead of sitting through boring PowerPoint slides, I got to dive into real projects and see how things work. This hands-on experience helped me understand different roles within construction and gave me a real taste of what the industry was like. It made me fall in love with construction even more.”

Rylie, Management Trainee at Willmott Dixon

Real project tasks and constructive feedback are key to creating meaningful experiences for young people. Download the example project briefs shared by other employers and explore how incorporating a project could enhance your offer.

[Download project brief examples](#)





Being inclusive

The case for being inclusive

Making it meaningful is even more important for young people facing barriers to engaging with the world of work. Barriers could include socio-economic disadvantage, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), experience of the care system, or a lack of representation.

These young people benefit even more from employer engagement and the opportunity to experience modern workplaces. [Our evidence](#) shows that good careers provision, including employer engagement, has double the impact for disadvantaged groups.

What are others doing?

Many employers have designed workplace visits and experiences specifically to help overcome these barriers. By taking a few simple steps, you can access valuable opportunities to connect with a diverse range of talent.

Castle Green Hotel provides tailored workplace experiences for students with additional needs, building a more inclusive workforce. [Learn more about their approach in this video.](#)

Cocoa Amore, a SME chocolatier, has created an inclusive packaging and chocolate design challenge for young people of all backgrounds. [Be inspired in this video case study.](#)



Looking for more inspiration? Download our case studies from employers who are proactively offering inclusive workplace experiences.





Tips and considerations to help you

Our checklist on page 8 offers a range of ideas to help you take an inclusive approach.

We recommend that you:

1. Target your work to schools and colleges that need it most
2. Engage under-represented groups and those facing barriers
3. Consider the relatability of the messenger
4. Actively challenge stereotypes and preconceptions
5. Be adaptive and accommodating to include all young people

More help is available via the following specialist organisations

Our Careers Hubs offer support to engage with SEND and Alternative Provision schools. [Contact your local Careers Hub](#)

- [Social Mobility UK](#)
- [BASE](#)
- [Care Leaver Covenant](#)
- [Access to Work](#)
- [Disability Confident Employer Scheme](#)

You can also look for activity providers who specialise in inclusion [here](#)



“Working with SEND young people has truly opened my eyes. The impact on my business has been profound—from how we recruit, to how we engage our staff, to how we contribute to society”

Richard Osborne, Founder and CEO of Business Data Group Ltd



Creating an impactful skills and workplace experience programme

Take inspiration from Lloyds Banking Group, one of the UK's largest financial services organisations. Through strong partnerships, cutting-edge research, and innovative solutions, they provide valuable skills and workplace experiences to over 60,000 students.

Download the Lloyds Banking Group prospectus



Wire Belt, a leading SME in manufacturing, offers hands-on, real-world work experience, tailored to students' skills and career goals. Explore how they design and deliver impactful opportunities in their prospectus.

Download the Wire Belt Educational Prospectus



"In the world of hybrid working, the traditional five-day work experience is ever challenging to achieve. Our approach offers experiences of the workplace of different lengths, intensity and venues for maximum flexibility and scale"

Ian Brown, Early Careers Professional, Lloyds Banking Group

"We provide everything from one-day taster sessions to immersive, hands-on work experiences, tailored to the needs and aspirations of students. Even as a smaller business, you can get involved, and from our experience, the benefits far outweigh the effort"

Gary Allen, Managing Director, Wire Belt



Get the support you need

Still have questions? Explore this section to help address common questions about offering workplace experiences.

Check out the frequently asked questions



Connect with your Careers Hub

[Careers Hubs](#) are partnerships between The Careers & Enterprise Company and Combined and Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships. They operate across England and, through dedicated teams, support over 92% of schools and colleges and thousands of employers. You can:

- Access schools and colleges in a coordinated way
- Target your experience to young people who need it most
- Kickstart or improve your workplace experience offer

[Contact your local Careers Hub.](#)

Connect directly with a workplace experience provider

Another good option is to connect directly with a workplace experience provider. Use our handy tool to find and contact delivery organisations who can help facilitate workplace experience opportunities. You can:

- Find an organisation who can support your activity
- Ensure quality by aligning with the Employer Standards for Careers Education
- Improve the impact for young people as well as your business

[Connect to an activity provider.](#)

THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

This guide is designed to support employers who have used the Employer Standards self-assessment tool. Once you have implemented some of these recommendations, we encourage you to re-assess and see how the quality of your education outreach has improved. We'd love to hear your feedback: employerstandards@careersandenterprise.co.uk