Written evidence submitted by Laith Abbas (BYC053)

Laith Abbas- Current student at Longhill High School

# Executive summary

* Work experience is vital for the development and education of students.
* Schools do not have adequate resources to have effective work experience.
* There needs to be more infrastructure in place with the local authority to aid schools to find work experience.

# Introduction

I believed it was necessary to share my experience of work experience to shed light on students that are part of schools that are often disregarded and share my unique perspective and understanding having attended the Longhill High School for over 4 years. I share this information and experience in hope that future generation at my school and at others around the country have a better experience of education in the UK.

# Main Body

1. Before I begin, I think it is necessary to provide some context, Longhill High School is a State-funded school located in Rottingdean, a rural and isolated local area with little to no businesses operating in the local vicinity. The school had also received “required improvement” in its last Ofsted report. Longhill High School is one of many schools across the UK that are often ignored and disregarded by members of the community, public and government. Due to the school’s unique placement, it accommodates over 1000 students.
2. Longhill has held its work experience every year ounce students reach year 10, traditionally these placements are provided and sought after by the school. This year (2018) the school was required to provide 190 placements for these students in year 10. Despite the school and its staff’s efforts they only managed to find 110 placements. The school had then taken the decision to inform the students that for there to be enough placements, they required the students to find placements for themselves.
3. To better understand why this had happened, I spoke with one of the staff responsible for organising that year’s work experience at Longhill High School. The primary cause of the issue was clear, there was a lack of connections between the school and the business across Brighton and Hove. This became more apparent when you looked at the job placements that were being provided by the school; The majority of these placements were at other high schools and primary schools in the local area, which made sense when you consider that these were the only other organisations that Longhill High School would have strong enough connections with.
4. When students were asked by the school to obtain their own placements, these students had fewer links to businesses than the school, which resulted in a large proportion of the students resorting to having to work with their parents. When this occurs, it amplifies the differences between students in terms of their level of competency in the workplace depending on their socioeconomic background. As students couldn’t rely on the school to find placements, they would have to rely on connections their family would’ve formed with businesses, which would vary between the different backgrounds of these families.
5. After speaking further with the member of staff responsible for this year’s work experience, I began to understand where further issues were underlying the primary problems. Longhill High School and the other schools in Brighton and Hove did not have the resources to make work experience happen effectively or happen at all. Out of the 9 secondary schools in Brighton and Hove, Longhill was one of 2 that conducted work experience for their students. I was told by the member of staff at Longhill that they did not have enough of the resources required to make the lasting and meaningful connections with business that enabled students to further their education. He also informed me that Longhill High School used to employ staff that were dedicated to obtaining, organising and conducting work experience for their students, now Longhill no longer employs those staff due to budget cuts to the already strained school. The responsibility to conduct work experience now relies upon volunteers from staff that already have roles and responsibilities in the school. This has a knock-on effect on the quality and number of work experience placements that the school can provide, and in the case of those 7 other schools in Brighton and Hove, schools cannot conduct any form of work experience at all.
6. Some solutions suggested by members of staff were that the local authority help these schools to make these connections with businesses, to provide a directory of businesses that were willing that offered placements to students that were safe, inspiring and valuable. When I asked the member of staff on weather having work experience being compulsory, the response was that the school had fears having to compete with other schools for the already limited work placements, which would place more pressure on the already exhausted resources.
7. To understand why work experience is vital across schools around the country, you need to understand the background of some of their students. There is a visible attitude in some students that education is not a vital opportunity to improve themselves as individuals and an affecting factor of their future. These students see education as a chore that they have to endure through, rather than to thrive and better themselves through. This attitude can be passed on through generations have also not seen the need for education. One of the goals of education in the UK being legally required and free is to abolish differences between the different socioeconomic backgrounds that students come from; to provide an opportunity for all to shape their own future instead of conforming to one predefined by their backgrounds. Work experience is not only a fantastic opportunity to obtain skills for the modern workplace, but it also gives students something to aspire to, to break that negative attitude and make the most of their education. But this can only happen when work experience is done right. The government cannot provide a comprehensive education for its population without providing students with an effective and impactful work experience.

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